

Parish

Magazine

Jan/Feb 2026



Suggested

Donation: 50p

www.allsaintsandstjames.com



We are the Anglican Parishes of St Stephen's Elton and Kirklees Valley, which is comprised of All Saints Brandlesholme and St James Woolfold. We exist to worship God in the Anglican tradition, to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and to serve our neighbour in thought, word, and deed. We are warm, welcoming, and friendly communities in the Liberal Catholic to central tradition of the Church of England. We are proud to be the spiritual home of people of a variety of backgrounds and ages, and we love to welcome newcomers to our services and community events. We also host a variety of non Church-based activities in our buildings, and are always keen to support and welcome new community initiatives and activities.

Our **Sunday Services:**

All Saints 11am

St James 11am

St Stephens 9am

We share a single Vicar, Rev. Sam Eccleston, who can be contacted on brseclestonop@gmail.com. We are also served by a team of very generous and able Clergy, Readers, and ALMs, to whom we are greatly indebted.

www.ststephenelton.com

Vicar's Letter

In this month's magazine you will find; my usual ramblings, a whole host of advertisements for forthcoming events at our churches and in the wider Mission Community and Diocese, Ellise's entertaining account of her graduation, a letter from Bishop David, and much more. Every month there are thanks due to those who work so hard to contribute to the life of our churches. Of particular note are Carol for her tireless work on faculties, trees, and memorial gardens, Lynne for her continued help with printing new service sheets, and Leanne for arranging the fantastic new Junior Church notice board—thanks all.



Rediscovering Simplicity

I am sure members of all professions are familiar with the experience of being confronted by, and feeling obliged to dispel, popular misconceptions about their role. One of the most commonplace, in my experience, is the idea that the Church has lots of money. The problem with this idea is that it isn't wholly untrue— the Church has large amounts of money in a variety of forms— but in order to understand these assets properly, you have to weigh them against the financial liabilities the Church also has (buildings, pensions, operational costs), and understand that many of these assets are not liquid (they are not cash or easily convertible to cash) and therefore only have a notional value, or else are entailed in a specific way which means they can only be used for specific purposes. It is obviously hard to explain all of this concisely to those who raise the issue, informally, in conversation.

Another is the idea that clergy must love Christmas. I am sure many clergy do, but the issue is more complex than that— it is a bit like the issue of whether teachers love children; in principle they surely do, but children are also the cause and the focus of most of their stress. Teachers who really care may also have complex and ambivalent feelings about how they are expected to interact with children in their roles— what the curriculum includes, how it is taught, the methods of discipline/class control that are used etc. Like most things, the reality is far more complex than a simple like/dislike binary would suggest. I would imagine many clergy feel this way about Christmas— more than one colleague has remarked to me that their favourite thing about it is the rest at the end! But to avoid giving the impression that this is indicative merely of the workshy nature of those ordained to the priesthood, allow me to try to articulate what clerical ambivalence on this topic might reflect. In 1835 Alexis De Tocqueville published his masterpiece *Democracy in America*. What was revolutionary about this two-part book was that it was not simply an explanation of how American Democracy differed from other political systems, but rather of how being participants in a Republican Democracy with a market economy affected the American people at a cultural and psychological level. As such, it was one of the foundational texts of Sociology and Anthropology.

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De Tocqueville's observations are fascinating, even today. He claimed that, from his experience, the American people had perhaps the highest average living standards of any country of the time, but that they were nevertheless, in certain respects, some of the least contented people. He described them as being characterised by a kind of restlessness; so pre-occupied with securing the next form of material or financial advantage that they were unable to enjoy the most recently secured examples of the same. He related this to several causes. One was that the Declaration of Independence had made the 'pursuit of happiness' into part of the cultural creed of America, and the irony about the pursuit of happiness is that, by definition, it makes one feel that happiness is not already available. Another was that in a culture which permitted social mobility, far more so than the more aristocratic system in Britain, one's status and income implicitly reflected effort and ability, rather than the accident of birth, and thus a lowly social position was correspondingly more embarrassing for an American.



Perhaps most interestingly, he claimed that religion, or the lack thereof, was part of the equation: *'as the light of faith grows dim, man's range of vision grows more circumscribed'*. When people have *'lost the way of relying chiefly on distant hopes, they are naturally led to want to satisfy their least desires most'*. In other words, when people are focussed not on ultimate values and eternal goals; when they do not place their faith in something beyond this world, their ambitions become correspondingly terrestrial, empirical, and material, and thereby vulnerable to disappointment.

Every year, we trot out the usual reflections about the 'real meaning' of Christmas. We utter the familiar platitudes about consumerism, environmental despoliation, and resource misuse, and in doing so we are, in a sense, halfway to putting our finger on the problem. But I wonder whether actually, de Tocqueville got there first; I wonder whether our disquiet is based on the fact that, on some level, we recognise that in a largely post-religious culture, even the ostensive celebration of Christmas itself is actually part of a process through which values and ambitions are detached from the heavenly and located firmly on earth. In other words, Christmas itself has become a secular celebration. It is worth asking how much we as a Church actually play a part in reinforcing this process.

To return to my clergy colleagues, I don't think that valuing the rest after Christmas is irreligious at all; in fact, taking real, deep rest is a scriptural command— by contrast, celebrating Christmas isn't. One of my favourite bits of this Christmas season were those bits where there was less to remember and organise, and more space to simply focus on prayer, scripture and sacrament; the low-fi carol service at Cosalea, the quiet service of the word at St Stephen's on Christmas morning; the times when the performance ended, and was replaced by what the performance is supposed to point towards, but so often actually excludes.

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Our society, I would argue, increasingly resembles de Tocqueville's America; denuded of meaning and purpose, we rely instead on consumption, stimulation, and distraction as surrogates for what we no longer have the courage to hope for; deprived of a satisfying reality, we try to comfort ourselves with things we know to be mere appearances.

Interestingly, the symptoms de Tocqueville diagnosed are discernible not just in those who lose religious faith, but in anyone who loses faith in once fondly-held ideals. De Tocqueville's contemporary, the British Philosopher John Stuart Mill, suffered what would today be described as a nervous breakdown after the Utilitarian convictions he inherited from his father, James Mill, deserted him. This happened, seemingly, as a result of his having realised that, even if he were to succeed in making the various progressive causes he championed into official government policy, he would still not be happy. This was partly because he recognised that he would then have nothing to work towards and therefore nothing to do, but also because he realised that he had wrongly assumed that there was an intrinsic connection between the public good (which he was convinced would improve as a result of his efforts) and his own flourishing. On reflection, he realised that he would likely be no better off in terms of his day-to-day experience even if he were entirely successful in all he was attempting; he would still be the same man, with the same habits and the same outlook on life. Happiness was not a matter of public utility.

Traditionally, Christian theologians have been very sceptical of the idea that earthly goals contain the key to happiness; they have stressed that true, eternal, unending happiness is simply the experience of God itself. Insofar as happiness is available in this life, it comes from thankfulness for what already is (in other words, in cultivating an outlook which is the opposite of that experienced by de Tocqueville in the American of his day) and empathy with those around us (again, a countercultural stance in an individualistic world). This is the habit of contentment and the reward of love; to find the joy and peace of simple and commonplace experiences. Surely, if faith is to speak therapeutically into this cultural vacuum, it must be by re-centring the simple, the substantial, the perennially valuable; rest, silence, prayer; community, fellowship, and the duties that sustain them; truth, beauty, and love.

Ironically, I think perhaps the best time for us to do this is when the rush of the Christmas season is over; when the excitement ends, quiet falls, and people begin to ask what the rest of the year is going to contain. I also think that, despite appearance, this is good news, for two reasons. Firstly, the church simply cannot compete in the distraction/entertainment market—we just don't have the resources, the skills, or the ability. Secondly, if we are tempted to bemoan this, it is perhaps worth remembering how hollow entertainment and distraction feel to anyone engaged with the increasingly upsetting and volatile world around us; from the Israel/Palestine and Ukraine/Russia conflicts, to unrest in Iran, the U.S. intervention in Venezuela,



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and the escalating tensions between the great powers, in the near future, we may well find that only a consoling *reality* will do – and realities are things we can offer: real people, real community, real tradition, the real challenge of the Gospel, the real stillness of silence, the real peace of contemplation, the real protest of prayer.



Mirror, mirror on the wall... the most magical pantomime of them all is coming to St Stephen's School! Join us for a fun-filled, family-friendly production of Snow White, packed with laughs, music, boos, cheers, and a few "behind yous!" 🏰 🍷

📅 Thursday 19th, Friday 20th & Saturday 21st February 2026

🕒 Curtain up at 7:15pm

📍 St Stephen's School, Colville Drive, BL9 2DX

🎫 Tickets Adults: £7 Children: £3 🏫 Tickets on sale in school

🕒 Sunday afternoons, 2pm–4pm Perfect for families, friends, and panto lovers of all ages — don't miss out on a truly magical evening! ✨ 📞

For more information, contact Gill on 07872 389561

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Snow White

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St Stephen's School, Colville Drive BL9 2DX
Contact Gill on 07872 389561 for further details
In association with St Stephen's Church

Faith Online

There is a lot of fantastic Christian content online; it comes from Christians of different denominations, traditions, and languages, and encompasses everything from Bible Study and Theology to Christian music, architecture, and art. Every month I will aim to share some of it with you.

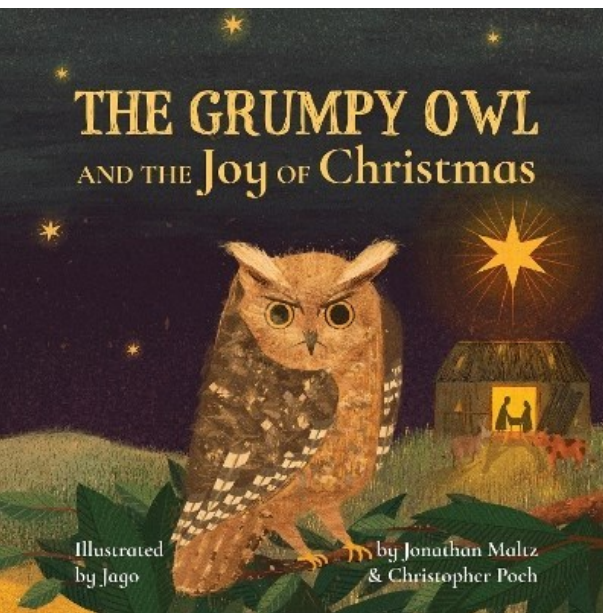
Tom Wright talks about his 'aha' moments with scripture here:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=qjnzWV2UlpE

BritMapped goes inside the oldest room in any English Cathedral here: www.youtube.com/watch?v=zYRYzRaEyiM

HeniTalks explores **Pugin's** masterpiece **St Giles' RC Church Cheadle** here: www.youtube.com/watch?v=0WIHxd2Zlxc

Peter Pringle sings an ancient **Anglo-Saxon** hymn on the lyre here: www.youtube.com/watch?v=A8WaPluItAc&list=RDA8WaPluItAc&start_radio=1



The **Church of England** has produced a Christmas Fable 'The Grumpy Owl and the Joy of Christmas' available to watch here: www.youtube.com/watch?v=8HgNSB6XafM

It is also available to purchase in paperback.

Go Chatter Studios' Lego Bible Christmas story is available to view here:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=U3u3HFYYKa8

The Petersens sing a bluegrass-style 'Amazing Grace' here:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=J7M8_8NO2zQ&list=RDJ7M8_8NO2zQ&start_radio=1

Following on from our discussion of **St Mark's Gospel** **The Bible Project** outline the Gospel here: www.youtube.com/watch?v=HGHqu9-DtXk

...and **Wes Huff** discusses the missing ending of the Gospel www.youtube.com/watch?v=B9RsHnb7huk&t=484s

History Alice gives us a tour of the shrine of **Edward the Confessor** here: www.youtube.com/shorts/ASatijF6DuM?si=W5UwsZIsBJYnTvp2

Bible Study/Study Group is typically recorded in an audio file as are sermons -if you have missed a session/service and wish to listen please contact the Vicar.



Bishop David's Epiphany Letter

Dear sisters and brothers,

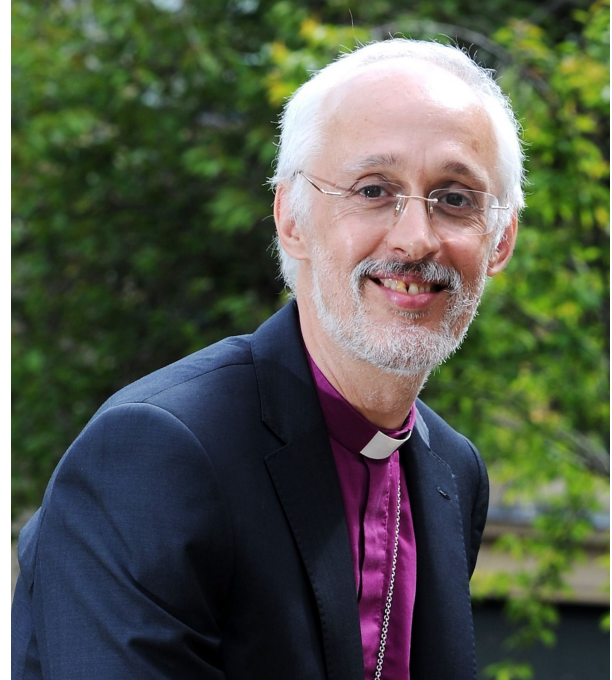
Back in my days as a suffragan, a fellow bishop reportedly said of me, "That David's not like a normal bishop. He believes in evidence". And it's true. I do. My Christian faith came alive in my late teens, when I found the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus to be compelling. I tested it out by trying to pray. Wonderfully, I found the same Jesus I read of in the scriptures meeting me in my prayers. 2026 sees us moving in Manchester Diocese to implement the strategy we have spent the last couple of years consulting on and refining. We hope that we have made a convincing case to the national church institutions and, when the next round of grants is announced later this month, will receive a sizable sum, enough to provide major support for our work over the next few years. Arriving at our four strategic priorities, hasn't simply been a matter of our parishes, schools and chaplaincies engaging in theoretical discussion. It has been underpinned by the evidence of where we have seen the Holy Spirit active amongst us. We have witnessed God blessing various projects in particular parts of the diocese, and of our work.

These can, over the next few years, be scaled up to impact all of us. We've seen how even modest one-off grants can be the catalyst for a local church to begin a new piece of outreach or ministry, renewing lay people and clergy in their discipleship and calling. Our training programmes have not only equipped us with a committed cohort of ALMs but have proved, for many, the first step on a continuing vocational journey. The diversity of those now entering ordained ministry, many of them full time, demonstrates that investment in forming missional leaders bears fruit. Our work with schools, parishes and young people, piloted initially in Bolton, has proved groundbreaking. Not only has it exceeded our hopes and expectations, it has given birth to two unexpected, and nationally recognised, blessings - Wiggle Worship and the Shades Project. Meanwhile, our church plants and revitalisations have reached out into parts of the population we have otherwise been struggling to reach, bringing the good news of Jesus Christ to inner city communities, outer estates, suburbs and the city centre. These too are producing a healthy flow of new candidates for ministry. These plans for the future build on the efforts and learning of so many people across our diocese in recent years, for which I thank you all.

Cutting across all four of our priorities lie our commitments to sustaining God's creation by radically reducing our carbon footprint, making a healthy safeguarding culture central to our ministry, and promoting racial justice in all aspects of our common life. All of this is, of course, underpinned by prayer. Manchester, as we know, contains a higher proportion of parishes among the poorest populations in the country than any other diocese.



We are fortunate that this is recognised in the grants we receive from the Church Commissioners each year. But national money, whether to address poverty or support mission, will only ever be a fraction of our income. Parish Share remains the bedrock of our finances. We will not sustain a growing church unless we can also grow our main source of money. Nor can we pretend that financial growth over the next few years will come predominantly from new people coming to faith. Today's new Christians are younger, more ethnically diverse, and from wider social backgrounds than before.



What these demographics have in common is that many are struggling to get by, in a society where standards of living have, at best, stagnated in recent years. The call to generosity needs to be heard by those of us mature in the faith. My ordination as deacon took place in 1983 on St Thomas's Day. Thomas famously demanded evidence that Jesus really had risen from the dead. Presented with that evidence, he was the first to declare Jesus as his Lord and God, and later took the Christian faith to India. We have, here in Manchester, the evidence of what God is raising up in our own generation. Like Thomas, the challenge for us is now to act on it. God bless you and your ministry in this year newly begun.

Bishop David Walker

Feast of the Epiphany 2026



John 13:34 'Love one another, as I have loved you'

School Places Available

To enquire about a place, or book a personal tour, please call 0161 764 1132
or email ststephens@thesycamoretrust.co.uk



Sycamore Trust
Grow together, Learn forever

Our school vision is about **celebrating the uniqueness of every individual, inspiring a life long love of learning and experiencing life in all its fullness.**



"St. Stephen's welcomes, nurtures and supports all children enabling them to flourish."

SIAMS Inspection, November 2023

To find out more about our school, please visit www.ststephensceprimary.co.uk or visit our social media page.



Graduation

In true Ellise style it was not a smooth journey!

Firstly, rushing out the house on a snowy day was bound to bring some issues. We loaded the boot with supplies, blankets, flask of hot water and a brew kit along with gloves, hats, and extra socks. Great! boot loaded, double check direction and timings! Yep, all sorted let us set off. Great timings were being made- motorway clear and some dodgy music on the radio things were off to a great start. Then! A message hey Ellise, I will see you at 10:45 in the castle hmmm what? No reply oh ok must be a timing mistake.

Get to the learning centre to collect robes hey I'm here for the 2pm graduation, lovely lady looking at me with blank expressions – slight panic started to wave over me. Awkward silence that felt like a lifetime as we both stared at each other wondering what the heck we both were puzzled about.

Yes, so erm where do I get my robes for the service? 'No sorry you have the wrong time it is at 12 you need to be in the castle in 10 mins!' Oh wait, quickly grabbing my email to show her and she states that is not the right time you have 10 mins to get your robes and be at the castle which is a 15 min walk away.

Well ok firstly what!?!? Panic mode activated got robes and get dressed by a lovely lady who told me I looked great ... hmm ok flustered I ran, yes that's right, I ran with the speed of a thousand gazelles (military joke).

Picture this I'm running around Durham in a graduation gown, doc martens for steadiness and a little map hand drawn by a lady who has probably never drawn a map and let's not dismiss the fact I get lost following a sat nav! But on this occasion, I was quite lucky as I'm running round this odd city, I see men in high vis jackets! Huzzah going the right direction!

Ok each turn a new high vis man pointing the way brilliant... a 15 min walk managed in 7 min run I'm quite impressed with this in all honesty, good steady pace kept ,all whilst going uphill and nearly very nearly landing on my bum a few times thanks to icy cobbles oh boy them cobbles

Ok so I've made it to the castle amazing only 2 mins late, I'm doing well here all while trying to breathe, I stood at the bottom of the steps when a lady comes out and says we are shutting the door going to speed up!?! Speed up? What? I just ran a 15 min walk in 7 min I can't breathe and I'm certainly redder than a tomato and she wants me to run up 2 flights of stairs like wow let's wait a little min ... right so I'm up the stairs trying to breathe while a man with a very loud microphone says right guys lets line up were off good grief no rest for me

Right, we've made it to the castle I'm getting in line then I remembered my husband oh shoot where did I leave him? did he make the shuttle (only for special people not me apparently)? Did he find his way? Too late now we are walking in, I am looking around desperately hoping for a glimpse .. There he is phew he made it!

Graduation

Right, we are in our seats its 12pm where are the people in daft hats that are supposed to be leading the ceremony? No signs ohhh they are running late, so just when I think I can relax the camera-man thought he would continue to test my day further and use my face to display around the cathedral, great. I'm puffy and red from running and being totally windswept and they are making me the face of the cathedral. Wait I'm holding a card with my number on; oh I forgot to mention you have no name at this stage they are just shouting numbers I was number 45 just so ya know! Ok I will use this to hide my face ... he moved great lowers card, camera comes back straight into my eyes, oh flipping heck raises card this continues for 10 minutes! The cathedral in stiches at my poor suffering and a very hilarious camera man!

Ahhh 'ladies and gents please stand for the ceremony' oh about time! Watching as names are called oh yes, we got our names back I realise we are getting nothing from them just a handshake?? Wait where is my degree? I worked hard for that. Nope we just get a handshake and it's a whole other graduation where I get my certificate

We travelled in snow and ice, I ran up hill, I had a peek a boo fight with a camera man for a handshake let that sink in! Leg it from cathedral takes a quick snap in robe and hand it back gets in car and laugh all the way home as we process the day 4 hours there and 4 hours back for a handshake none the less I present to you a graduate of theology who drove for a handshake and no paper! But in all this it has been a rewarding journey, and I just know God was with me every step of this path and will continue to be with me as I grow further in faith.



WCCM Quiet Day

The WCCM are holding a quiet day on the 14th of March at All Saints Church, starting at 10am. Those interested please contact Joanne Cain on c4lmly.wccm@gmail.com



WCCM
IN THE UK

Face of Christ Mosaic

Those of you who are regulars at All Saints may have noticed a new addition to the liturgical furniture– this fantastic mosaic of the face of Christ. It doesn't take Sherlock Holmes to work out it is a Fr Derek original, and matches our mosaic icon of St Francis. I had been intending to bring it to church to mark some specific liturgical season or festival, and thereafter employing it to mark the start and end of that season, but have had to bring it prematurely on account of my youngest daughter, Adeline. She is, for whatever reason, obsessed with the mosaic, and it is only a matter of time before she pulls it over and hurts herself. So, for the time being, it will remain in church rather than in my office, which is where it usually is. Please do take the time to have a look at it, it is quite something.



Porch Boxes

Just a reminder for St Stephen's folk that we are collecting for Porch Boxes. Here is their description of their work in their own words: *'Porch Boxes is a registered charity based in Bury, Greater Manchester, providing crisis packs of food and toiletries to local agencies to distribute to local people in urgent need.'*



We give out an average of 450 each month. Since we started in 2001, over 50000 packs have been given out. We are very grateful to the churches, schools, groups and individuals for supporting us in our quest to help local people.' We are currently very much in need of non-perishable food items. The basket for donations is in the entrance hall of church.

Electoral Roll Officer

St Stephen's currently needs a new Electoral Roll Officer. The electoral roll is the list of names and addresses of a church's membership. Every person listed on the roll is eligible to attend the Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM). The Officer effectively manages the roll, making sure it is accurate and kept according to data protection rules. Those interested to see the wardens or clergy.

News From St Stephen's School

As usual St Stephen's has been super busy across the festive period and into the new year term. School Council members and Well-being Warriors made a visit to Abbeydale Care home recently to spread kindness through connection across generations. Towards the end of last term the children also enjoyed performing in their Key Stage Nativity productions, and attending the Christingle service.

The school Facebook page is the best place to keep up to date with what is going on— it can be accessed here: www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61566049703516



Men's Group

The first session of the new Men's Group will be on the 5th of February at 9.30am St Stephen's church Centenary room— please come along for a bacon or sausage butty and help us set the direction for the rest of the year. Contact the curate for more details.

Carols at Cosalea

One of the yearly highlights of the season is being asked to lead the Carols and Communion service at Cosalea Brandlesholme. It is a place filled with happy memories, as my children attended the Tuesday craft group there for several years. This year it was even busier than last year, and I found myself confined to a corner! Many of those in attendance were from Killelea House itself, but one or two were familiar faces from within one or another of our parishes. As always, it was a warm and wonderful event—lots of singing, friendly fellowship and good conversation. Looking forward to next year!



All Saints Christingle

The Christingle Service at All Saints took place at its usual time of 4pm on Christmas Eve. Again, the church was full, as we welcomed families from our own congregation as well as from our local community. This year we tried a different format, with more carols and two Bible readings from Luke's gospel. Rev. Sam Eccleston led the service, and Anne Sugden provided the usual excellent piano accompaniment for the carols. One of the children was happy to read both Bible passages, making a brilliant job of it!

Sam's talk was an interesting take on Mariah Carey's song "All I want for Christmas is You", saying that relationships matter more than material things, and that God came at Christmas in the human form of Jesus to save, teach and guide, showing his love for us.

The Christingles had been fully assembled this year, and people remained seated while they were lit. After the blessing the service concluded with everyone singing Mariah Carey's song "All I want for Christmas is you". A total of £66 was raised on the evening for the work of The Children's Society. Many thanks to all who helped with the preparation and organisation of this service.— Rachel Gornall

Church Shop- Unfortunately due to an unforeseen change of circumstances the Church shop will no longer operate. Our current suggestion is that we hold a coffee morning bric-a-brac sale to sell off the remaining stock. Anyone who wishes to dispose of their donations in another way to contact the Church Wardens.



CHRISTINGLE 2025

Things Worth Arguing Over

Something that newcomers to the New Testament often find off-putting is the amount of arguing there is in it. Jesus spends an awful lot of time contradicting and criticising people around him. This can give the impression



that religion is largely about condemnation; that the religious impulse itself is simply one of censorious puritanism; a desire to command and control other people. People unversed in the context could be forgiven for reaching this impression, but it is nevertheless mistaken. Jesus was arguing with very good reason; he was caught in a fight to the death over something of ultimate importance— the soul of Judaism itself.

During Jesus' lifetime, there was not, in a sense, a single Judaism. Rather, the Jewish people were divided between several different sects, who were sufficiently different that it would not be disingenuous to describe them as different denominations or even different religions. The Sadducees were a largely aristocratic group who were associated with the Temple and its priesthood. Their focus in religious terms was Temple worship, and they were frankly more interested in ritual than they were in the rest of the law. They also only accepted the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Bible) and rejected all of the other texts we know as scripture, such as the prophets. Furthermore, they didn't believe in any kind of afterlife beyond a shadowy realm of sleep. The Sadducees were, as members of the cultural elite, widely seen as collaborators, firstly with the Greek Empires that dominated the Near East in the wake of Alexander the Great, and then with the Romans. Indeed, many of the high-priestly caste had taken Greek names and become uncomfortably embroiled in Greek cultural practices which were taboo to Jews, like exercising naked in the public *Gymnasium*.

Another group were the Pharisees; they were less preoccupied with the rituals of the Temple, which, as non-priests, they were unable to directly participate in, and more interested in following the law, and doing so perfectly. In order to do this, they practiced something called 'ring-fencing the law' by which was meant they followed a set of rules that had been developed by their sect that meant that, if they followed the additional rules, they could never even come close to breaking the law. They were typically sympathetic to nationalism and were often in outright conflict with the Sadducees. They also accepted the writings of the Prophets and believed in an afterlife.

Jesus agrees with neither group; he seems to think, alongside John the Baptist that the Temple is no longer capable of being a house for the Lord's spirit, indeed, he identifies his own body as that house. He also thinks that while the law is important, it needs to be understood both as *law*, a set of rules for conduct, and the other meaning of the word *Torah*, as *teaching*, a set

Things Worth Arguing Over

of practices which are supposed to teach compassion, decency, honesty etc. In saying this, he is entirely consistent with the prophets who say the same thing. His critique of the Pharisees is severalfold; that they have become obsessed with minutiae and therefore miss the wider moral message of the law; that they place their own system of interpretation on a par with the law itself, and that they are needlessly leading people into conflict with the Romans, a conflict which cannot be won.

Now, you may find yourself thinking, despite all this 'couldn't they just agree to disagree? Why can't they all just accept their differences and get along?'. Again, this would be to misunderstand the historical context. Firstly, until relatively recently in historical terms, religions was simply not understood as an individual phenomenon; it was by definition a set of rules and values and practices that a community did together, which shaped their common life and behavioural expectations that applied to everyone. Secondly, because of this, these issues were intrinsically tied up with politics. The pharisees and their fellow nationalists were posing the very real risk of provoking Rome, and as we see in the later history, this was eventually disastrous. The Sadducees, by contrast, were arguably quite cynical in their use of religion as a tool to pacify the Jewish people for their own benefit and the benefit of the Romans— we see some of this cynicism in John 11, in which the high priest Caiaphas claims that it is morally necessary that Jesus die for the greater good of the Jewish people, this despite acknowledging that he is a miracle worker; politics, on this view, is more important than God.

In order to see what is really at stake in human terms, we can consider the contemporary example of Iran. Iran too is dominated by a religious elite which in some ways combines the worst features of the Pharisees and the Sadducees. They enforce a puritanical form of religious legalism, and have a religious police force on hand to catch people who violate the rules against unsanctioned gender mixing or the uncovering of female hair. They also clearly and cynically prioritise their own survival, as we have seen in their reaction to the recent protests; thousands, possibly tens of thousands of unarmed protestors have been killed. In order to achieve this the regime seems to have relied in part on militias of Islamists imported from abroad to coerce and kill their own people, much like the Sadducees relied on the strong arm of Rome to ensure their continued pre-eminence. Many of those entering Iran are members of the various terrorist factions sponsored



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by the regime, who have been responsible for destabilising so many other middle eastern countries.

If they were consistent and sincere religious purists, this all might be somewhat easier to understand, but there is such a significant undertone of both sadism and opportunism in the attitude of the Iranian government that it is hard for many Iranians to see them as anything other than crooks using religious language as an expedient cover for their gangsterism. In the aftermath of the recent protests, relatives have been forced to buy back the bodies of their relatives, paying thousands of US dollars per bullet that was used to kill them. This is to add insult to injury, to profit from murder, and to mock the grief of bereaved families; it isn't just wrong, it is clearly evil—demonic is not an exaggeration. When phone lines were finally opened after the telecommunications black out, only calls out of Iran were allowed, precisely so the authorities could charge extortionate amounts of money for the calls, again, profiting from the grief of their people.

All of which goes to highlight two things. Firstly, Christ, in opposing cultural tendencies such as these, is not argumentative or puritanical, he is simply doing the right thing. Secondly, that many of the most Christlike people in the world today are likely to be disproportionately concentrated in the protesting masses of Iran, who go out, day after day, despite being fully aware that they may not come back again, to demand their freedom from their oppressors. The Times estimated the death toll this week at 16500. The protests continue.

A prayer for Iran by Bishop
Guli Francis-Dehqani

Ever loving God,
who hears us in our anguish and distress,
and longs for us to be free.
We pray for the people of Iran
and the wider Middle East,
at this time of fear and uncertainty.
Be near to those who are anxious;
bring comfort to all who are suffering.
Guide those with the power to make decisions,
and lead them in the ways of wisdom,
compassion and moderation:
that people of good will would seek
harmony and reconciliation.
Join us with our Christian brothers
and sisters in all places,
in praying for peace with justice,
through him who is the prince of peace,
Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Snow Days!



Manchester
Cathedral



HOW TO READ THE BIBLE

Build a Bible reading tool kit that allows you to understand what the Bible is, and how you can engage with this incredible text.

Led by Dr Anna
Budhi-Thornton

SUNDAYS IN THE CATHEDRAL LIBRARY,
AFTER THE 10.30AM SERVICE

25th Jan, 1st, 8th and 15th Feb 2026



Aimed at those who have never read the Bible, to those who know it cover to cover and want to discover new ways to engage with the texts.



We are Back!

Tuesdays 9.30-11.30am
at St Peter's Church Bury



Clothes
ages
0-5 years

growbaby

Bury

Are you or anyone you know in need of
children's clothes?

Here at Grow Baby Bury we have a range of clothes and essential items available for anyone in need. There is no cost for any items, everything we have has been kindly donated by members of our community.



canon.missioner@manchestercathedral.org

Yoga Timetable - St James Church Centre, Walshaw

MONDAY

**PREGNANCY YOGA: 18:15 -
19:45**

**YOGA FOR BEGINNERS: 20:00 -
21:00**

SATURDAY

**TRADITIONAL YOGA FLOW: 07:00
CORE STRENGTH FLOW: 08:10 - 09:10**

TUESDAY

**BEGINNER'S ADVANCED: 18:45 -
19:45**

**CORE STRENGTH FLOW: 20:00 -
21:00**

SUNDAY

**MONTHLY YIN AND
RESTORATIVE CLASSES**



0-5 Baby and Toddler Group

EVERY WEDNESDAY

9:30AM-11:30AM

ALL SAINTS CHURCH

HEBBURN DRIVE, BURY, BL8 1ED

**ALL WELCOME
FREE TO ATTEND**

January sees the launch of All Saint's new baby and toddler group. The group meets on Wednesday mornings straight after the school run, and provides an opportunity for unstructured play for the children and fellowship for parents/grandparents/carers. Please do share the poster or the details with those you know who might be interested. Our first session was lovely— we had about 25 people in attendance; there was lots of fun, play, and conversation. Enquiries to be directed to the Vicar.

FAITH, FRIENDS, FUN



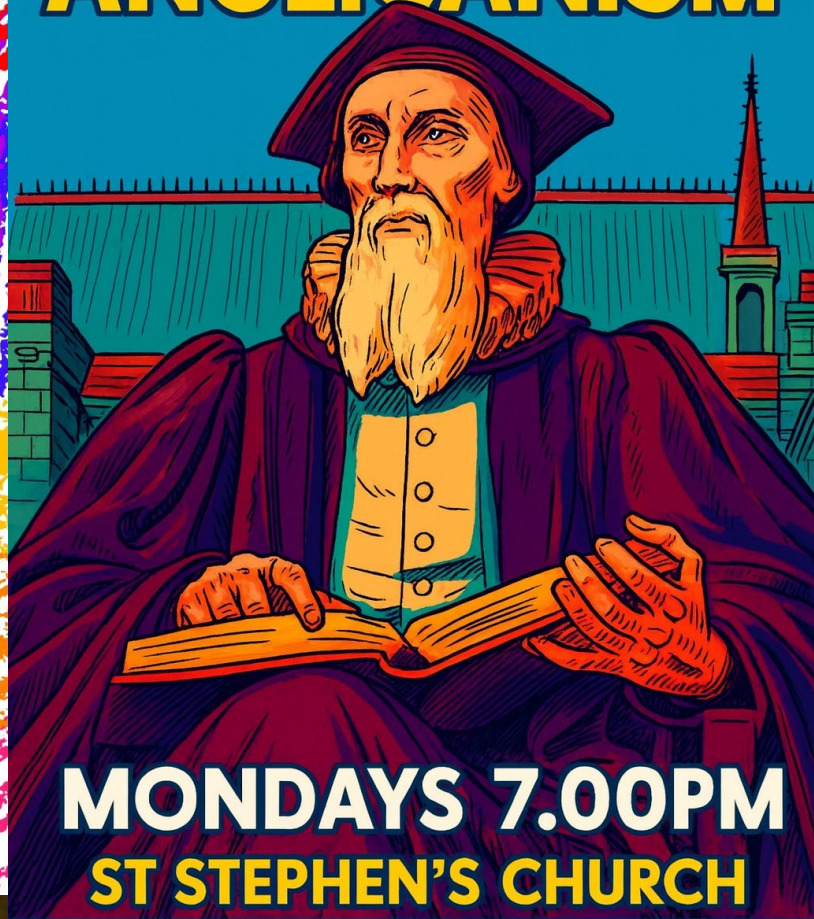
St Stephen's Sunday School

All Welcome

Weekly during the main service

Speak to Leanne or the Vicar

ANGLICANISM



MONDAYS 7.00PM ST STEPHEN'S CHURCH

STUDY GROUP

The Book of Samuel

POWER,
AUTHORITY, AND
LEADERSHIP IN
THE HEBREW
BIBLE

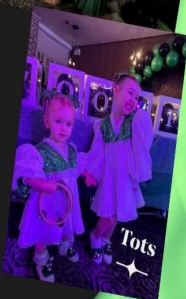
Weds 1.30pm All
Saints

WOOLFOLD MORRIS TROUPE

Now recruiting for
2026
3 years and above
Full Training Given



Family Troupe



Practice Thursday
St James Church, Bury
6.30pm-9pm
contact Sarah Greenlees
07772956681 or Facebook

Translating God



with Chris Curtis

Youthscape



As part of our commitment to helping churches connect with young people, we're excited to invite you to **Translating God** – an evening with **Chris Curtis** exploring how the world has changed for young people over the last decade and what that means for how they view Christian faith.

Chris will share research insights and practical ideas to help young people engage with the Bible and Christian faith in fresh and relevant ways.

Event Details:

Monday, 2nd February | 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM

St John's, Mosley Common, M28 1AN

Booking Link: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/1980626457050?aff=oddtcreator>

Tuesday, 3rd February | 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM

Oldham Parish Church, OL1 3UH

Booking Link: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/1980626881319?aff=oddtcreator>

You are welcome to attend whichever date works best for you – or join us for both!

Please encourage all those who help with youth and children's work in your church to come along.

Gain practical insights into youth culture & faith and learn strategies for engaging young people with Scripture.

Tuesday 10th February

Prayer Gathering

An event brought together
by young people from churches
throughout Greater Manchester.

7-9pm
Manchester Cathedral

The Lord's Prayer with Archbishop Steven Cottrell

Come along for a special evening of prayer and reflection at Manchester Cathedral on Thursday 19th March, led by the Archbishop of York. This inspiring gathering will focus on the Lord's Prayer, bringing together people from across our diocese to explore its meaning in our lives today. To book please follow the Eventbrite link here: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/lords-prayer-evening-with-archbishop-of-york-tickets-1980082308487#location>



Ash Wednesday

Ash Wednesday is early this year— 18th February. We will be holding a joint service for all three churches at All Saints Church at 7pm— all welcome.

All Saints Church ————— Presents



ASH WEDNESDAY



Parish Quiet Day

Our next parish quiet day with Fiona will be on the 28th March at the usual time and place. Attendance is free, bring your own lunch. Enquiries to the Vicar.

Parish Quiet Day

28th March 2026 10am

Hebburn Drive, Brandlesholme,
Bury BL8 1ED

www.allsaintsandstjames.com

Parish Information

Pastoral Teams

Visiting those who are infirm and providing home communion. If you would like to receive home communion, or join the team please contact the Vicar or:

All Saints

Mark Cresswell
Lynne Williamson

St James

Ann Redding

St Stephens

Celia Dutton

Study Group



Regular Events/Groups

Mon: Community Café Brandlesholme Community Ctr. 11am-1pm, **Ladies Club** 2nd Mon of Month 2.00pm St Francis House

Wed: St Stephen's (Centenary Room) **Midweekers** 1.30pm weekly, **Mothers' Union** 1st Weds of the Month 7.00pm, **Games evening** 7.30 pm 2nd Weds of the month, **Prayer meeting** 7pm 4th Weds of the month.

Thurs: Prayer Group 4th Thurs of month All Saints Church 10am **Arts and Crafts** Group weekly 2pm St Francis House

Children's Activities and Uniformed Organisations

Messy Church: 1st Sunday of the month 10am St Francis House **St Stephen's Junior Church:** every Sunday **Toddler Group:** Wednesdays 9.30 All Saints

Beavers: Mon 5.45 **Cubs/Scouts:** Mon 6:45 St Stephen's School **Rainbows:** Wednesdays 5.45pm St Stephen's School Thursdays 4.30 St James' Centre **Brownies:** Wednesdays 6.45pm St Stephen's School

Drama Group: Thursdays 7pm at St Stephen's School



January Rota

04.01.26		Pres	Preach	Deacon	Colour	Gold/White
	AS	11 S. Eccleston			Readings	Isaiah 60:1-6 Matthew 2:1-12
	SS	9 S. Eccleston		E. O'Hara		
	SJ	11 E. O'Hara				
11.01.26	AS	11 J. Partridge			Colour	Gold/White
	SS	9 S. Eccleston E. O'Hara 6 C. Dutton			Readings	Isaiah 42:1-9 Matthew 3:13-end Evensong
	SJ	11 S. Eccleston		E. O'Hara		
18.01.26	AS	11 D. Akker			Colour	White
	SS	9 S. Eccleston		E. O'Hara	Readings	Isaiah 49:1-7 John 1:29-42
	SJ	11 S. Eccleston F. Nuttall		E. O'Hara		
25.01.26	AS	11 S. Eccleston E. O'Hara			Colour	White
	SS	9 S. Eccleston		E. O'Hara	Readings	Acts 9:1-22 Matthew 19:27-end
	SJ	11 S. Stonestreet				

February Rota

01.02.26		Pres	Preach	Deacon	Colour	Gold/White
	AS	11 S. Eccleston			Readings	Malachi 3:1-5 Luke 2:22-40
	SS	9 S. Eccleston		E. O'Hara		
	SJ	11 E. O'Hara	E. O'Hara			
08.02.26	AS	11 J. Partridge			Colour	Green
	SS	S. Ec- 9 cleston	E. O'Hara		Readings	Genesis 1.1-2.3 Matthew 6:25-end
		6 J. Walk	S. Eccleston		Evensong	
	SJ	11 S. Eccleston		E. O'Hara		
15.02.26	AS	11 D. Akker			Colour	Green
	SS	S. Ec- 9 cleston	E. O'Hara	E. O'Hara	Readings	Exodus 24:12-end Matthew 17:1-9
	SJ	S. Ec- 11 cleston	F. Nuttall	E. O'Hara		
18.02.26	AS	S. Ec- 7 cleston	E. O'Hara		Colour	Purple
					Readings	Joel 2:1-2 Matt 6:1-6, 16-21
22.02.26	AS	11 G. Joyce	E. O'Hara		Colour	Purple
	SS	9 S. Eccleston		E. O'Hara	Readings	Genesis 2:15-17, 3:1-7 Matthew 4:1-11
	SJ	11 S. Stonestreet				

Contact Details

Vicar: Fr. S. Eccleston O.P. brseclestonop@gmail.com 07851121800

All Saints' Contacts:

Warden: Sue Stonestreet 07763 147598

Art and Craft Group: Joyce Abraham 0161 764 2247

Bible Study: The Vicar

Pastoral Visiting: Mark Cresswell 07521087791 Lynne Williamson 07722 624847

Choir: Stuart McArthur 07821 287018

Messy Church: Deirdre Watson 07733 008078

Prayer Group: Joyce Abraham 0161 764 2247 Lynne Williamson 07722 624847

St Francis' Ladies Club: Lynne Williamson 07722 624847

Room Hire at All Saints/St Francis: allsaints.kirkleesvalley@gmail.com 07368 460378

Website: www.achurchnearyou.com/church/16034/

www.allsaintsandstjames.com

<https://www.facebook.com/allsaintsbury>

St James' Contacts:

Mothers' Union Ann Redding 0781 112 9355

Room hire at St James' Centre Ann Redding 0781 112 9355

Website: www.achurchnearyou.com/church/16046/

www.allsaintsandstjames.com

St Stephen's Contacts:

Warden: Carol Heyes 07354902873

Email: ststephenelton@gmail.com

News sheet/rotas: Tony Parsons tony.parsons67@gmail.com

Christian Meditation: David McKenna 07442 534860

Reader Emeritus: Celia Dutton 0161 764 0583

Room Hire: Keith Hughes hughes_k4@sky.com

Website www.ststephenelton.com

<https://www.facebook.com/people/St-Stephens-Church-Elton/61575109828589/>