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The Parish Magazine of The United Benefice of St Peter & St Stephen, Burnley
JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2026

He has made everything beautiful
in its time. (Ecclesiastes 3:11)



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Burnley Prayer Breakfast @St Stephen's

St Stephen's Church, Oxford Road, Burnley BB11 3JA

SATURDAY 10TH JANUARY at 9.00 am

this month ...

A New Year:

GRATEFUL FOR THE PAST
AND LOOKING FORWARD
TO THE FUTURE

All Welcome!



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WHO'S WHO IN THE BENEFICE?



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The next Magazine will be joint
MARCH/APRIL edition.

All items to be with the Editor
by 15th February
pamelamcgrath1@hotmail.com

Fellowship in the Benefice

Every Monday at St Stephen's
ST STEPHEN'S CRAFT GROUP
1.00 – 3.00 pm

Every Thursday at St Peter's
THURSDAY CHAT
10.00 am (coffee at 9.30)

1st Wednesday at St Peter's
WELCOME ON WEDNESDAY
1.30—3.00 pm

1st & 3rd Wednesday
at St Stephen's
FRIENDS, FOOD & FUN
2.00—4.00 pm

2nd & 4th Wednesday at
St Stephen's
LET'S DO LUNCH
12.30—2.00 pm

1st & 3rd Thursdays at
St Peter's
LUNCH CLUB - 11.30 am

Please check the Notices
for other events, or visit
the Websites



From the Rectory

New Beginnings and Hope in the New Year

Dear Friends,

As we step into a new year, my very best wishes for 2026. January, with its chilly mornings and lengthening days, brings a sense of renewal and hope. For many, it's a time of resolutions and new beginnings, a chance to reflect and look forward with fresh energy.

Our parish has journeyed together through another year – with its joys, challenges, and unexpected moments. Christmas, just passed, reminded us of the message of Emmanuel – God with us. This profound truth comforts us not just in festive moments but in the ordinary rhythms of our daily lives. As we pack away decorations and nativities, let us not pack away the spirit of hope and goodwill that Christmas inspires. Instead, may it shape our actions and our outlook as we embark on this new year.

January can sometimes feel bleak after the brightness of Christmas, but in the church's calendar, it's a time of ongoing celebration. The season of Epiphany invites us to remember the wise men's journey – seeking, searching, and finding Christ. Their journey is our journey, too: searching for meaning, for peace, and for God's presence in our lives. I encourage each of you to make space for quiet reflection this month. Where is God leading you in 2026? How might you step out in faith, try something new, or reach out to someone in need?

As your Rector, I am deeply grateful for the spirit of kindness and generosity in our community. Thank you to all who gave time, gifts, and goodwill over Christmas – whether through our charity collections, choir, or by simply checking on a neighbour. Let's continue to nurture this spirit all year round.

Looking ahead, we have much to anticipate. Bible study groups will resume, our youth and children's activities continue, and we'll be launching a new breakfast, 'Breakfast With ... (Not Just For Men)' Please do consider getting involved if you haven't before – there's a place for everyone, and your contribution matters.

Finally, if January finds you feeling low or anxious about the year to come, remember our churches are often open for prayer, conversation, and

/continued ...

support. Please don't hesitate to reach out if you need someone to talk to – you are never alone.

May God bless you with hope, health, and peace in 2026. Together, let's step forward in faith, trusting that each new day is a gift from God.

With love and every blessing,

Fr Andrew



Caroline Smith

We were deeply saddened to hear the news of Caroline Smith's death. Caroline had been a member of St Peter's Choir since the mid 1980s and was a talented soprano, having sung with a number of prestigious choral societies.

Caroline's skills were not limited to music. She was an active member of the needle-workers and flower guild in addition to being a talented artist and photographer.

Caroline and her late husband, David, were superb organisers of our Saturday Morning Concerts, with Caroline serving refreshments and chatting to members of the audience whilst David took care of the artists. Under their care, the concert series flourished from 1994 until the onset of Covid, when events were temporarily halted.

They were totally devoted to the many activities which took place at St Peter's. We extend our condolences to Jeremy and Rebecca at this difficult time.

Philip.

(on behalf of members of St Peter's).



Churchwardens' News from St Peter's

Hello everyone,

We wish you all a very Happy New Year and hope that 2026 will bring new opportunities and continued growth. For our friends on the prayer list, please remember we are thinking of you and praying for you.

We hope you had a wonderful Christmas and enjoyed all the events happening at church over the festive period. Thank you to everyone who put in so much effort to make it such a special time and ensure everything ran smoothly. From the ladies who prepared the delicious Christmas lunch, the singers in the church choir and Young Singers, to the sidespersons and those who participated in services, everyone played their part and contributed to our church family.

Thank you to the volunteers who did a fantastic job of clearing the church grounds of leaves in absolutely atrocious weather conditions. They were extremely wet and cold but did a wonderful job and deserve a huge thank you.

We were saddened to hear of the passing of Caroline Smith. She was a much loved friend, member of the congregation and singer in the church choir and she will be much missed. Our thoughts are with Rebecca, Jeremy and the family at this difficult time.

Volunteers are needed for the church cleaning rota as we move into the new year. If you are able to help around once every eight weeks, please speak to one of us. The cleaning volunteers make a big and noticeable difference to the upkeep of the church and any help would be much appreciated.

Sandra and Jason

In The Loop

... With Jean, Paul, Edith & Anita



Happy New Year to one and all!

We hope everyone has enjoyed a wonderful Christmas with family and friends, and that you are all keeping well. Here we are at the beginning of the second quarter of the current century, and my goodness, how time has flown by, but we have such a lot to look forward to! We shall soon see a change as the days start to lengthen, and hopefully we'll be able to enjoy an early Spring. Let's have a quick recap:

THE CHRISTMAS FAIR at the end of November was a huge success raising well over £2400, with money still trickling in. A huge thank you to everyone who participated in any way.

We began ADVENT in an atmospheric setting for our 'Darkness to Light' service. Starting off in the dark with only a few candles lit, and then gradually bringing up the lighting, we enjoyed a variety of carols, anthems and readings.

Both St Stephen's and Springfield Schools held their NATIVITY / CHRISTMAS services in church during December. It's always a pleasure to welcome not only the children and school staff, but the many parents who come to support their children, all of whom are so well behaved – a credit to their school!

As many of you will know, St Stephen's last headteacher, Jo Roberts, has now

moved on to pastures new, and so we wish her well and look forward to welcoming a newly appointed headteacher from the beginning of the Easter term.

Thank you to all those of you who made a donation for church CHRISTMAS FLOWERS in memory of a loved one. And grateful thanks to Jennifer who continues to produce our lovely flower arrangements throughout the year.

Our 'ST STEPHEN'S SINGS CHRISTMAS' carol service in mid-December was very well attended, and the church was resplendent with dozens of lit candles. What an absolute delight it was to see and hear our very own Ruby, Phoebe, Elena and Taylor performing – well done girls! Thank you to those persons who donated mince pies and mulled wine, which were enjoyed by all following the service. And thanks also to Keith for assembling our beautiful crib, which delighted the young and old alike. The retiring collection raised around £150 for THE CHILDREN'S SOCIETY.

Our Sunday Club children presented their version of 'THE NATIVITY' on the Sunday before Christmas, ably helped by 'older' shepherds and kings. It was a joy to see all the children taking part in the wonderful

story of the birth of Jesus, which is what Christmas is all about, and so, Christmas finally arrived with our MIDNIGHT MASS ON CHRISTMAS EVE – always a very moving and uplifting service.

Our own ST STEPHEN'S PATRONAL FESTIVAL was then held on the very last Sunday of 2025, when we welcomed friends from our sister church of St Peter and enjoyed nibbles and fizz following the service.

ON-GOING 'EVENTS'

After a short break, all is now getting back into action – 'Knit and Natter' has changed its name to reflect the various crafts enjoyed and is now 'ST STEPHEN'S CRAFT GROUP'. This takes place on Monday afternoons in the Community Room, and 'FRIENDS, FOOD & FUN' and 'LET'S DO LUNCH' are held on alternate Wednesdays.

Additional help is needed regarding our CHURCH CLEANING teams. If you feel you can offer to help (no more than an hour every three weeks) please see a warden for further information.

Our YELLOW WHEELIE BIN has been a huge success with all donated items forwarded on to school for distribution to needy families. Please continue to bring dried/tinned foods or items of warm clothing for school-age children – thank you.

And finally: It goes without saying that we are very blessed to be led by Fr Andrew, who works tirelessly, and enthusiastically, not only within the Benefice, but he has also covered services (baptisms, funerals etc) in other churches in the Burnley Deanery over the past few months. We all extend our heartfelt thanks to Andrew for all that he does, and pray that God will continue to bless and guide him in his ministry.

Do keep an eye on our notice board at the back of church, (and in this magazine) for further information about our future events and what's going on from week to week!

That's all for now everyone. We take this opportunity to extend our very best wishes to you all for a healthy, happy and blessed 2026!

Jean, Paul, Edith and Anita

*"My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness." 2
(Corinthians 12:9)*

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Every year we think how quickly the last has flown. Each year I vow to try my best to slow things down a bit. I haven't succeeded yet nor do I think I ever will. With just twelve days until Christmas as I write, I hope every one will have some happy Christmas memories to look back on as they read this.

Below is a summary of The Mothers' Union Theme for 2026, courtesy of AI

For 2026, as Mothers' Union celebrates its 150th Anniversary, the focus is on their global gathering's theme: **"Living Out Our Faith: Empowering Communities"** and a call to action, **"Join Us, Join In!"**, to grow the movement, tackle poverty, injustice, and violence, and bring hope through faith, fellowship, and action worldwide.

KEY THEMES & FOCUS FOR 2026:

- **"Living Out Our Faith: Empowering Communities"**: This highlights bringing hope and change by addressing poverty, injustice, and violence.
- **"Join Us, Join In!"**: An invitation to grow the movement by adding new members and strengthening faith, fellowship, and funding.
- **150th Anniversary**: A major milestone, with a global gathering in Durban, South Africa, planned for October 2026.
- **Membership Challenge**: Encouraging dioceses to welcome 150 new members/friends to join the movement.
- **Action Against Abuse**: Continuing campaigns like the **"RISE UP"** challenge to combat domestic abuse.

In essence, 2026 is about celebrating 150 years of faith-driven action while actively growing and empowering communities to create lasting change.

LOOKING BACK

In November we welcomed back Lynne Ward with a selection of her hand made Relax-U products. They proved very popular as people bought them with presents in mind.

We had a lovely, festive-looking room at the Golf Club for our Christmas meal. It was very well attended and the consensus was we all enjoyed ourselves and the meal was very tasty.

LOOKING FORWARD

The year starts with the AGM. Right now, the programme is still being put together.

All meetings are held at St. Stephen's on a Tuesday, 2pm, unless otherwise stated.

13th January: 2.00 pm - AGM

10th February: 2.00 pm - 'Cats, Caves & Catastrophes - Jackie's Balkans Road Trip'

LET'S CELEBRATE



January

Happy birthday wishes to Jackie Cosway, 10th, Barbara Catlow, 13th, and to Elaine Taberner on the 18th.

Happy anniversary to Jackie Cosway for the 3rd.

February - No birthdays or anniversaries this month

Jackie

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The Big Sleep Out for the Homeless Pastors

On a drizzly November night, 12 brave souls met in St Peter's to spend a night sleeping under the stars (well, clouds) in the Churchyard to raise money for the Homeless Pastors. The group included previously homeless people who had been helped by the programme and currently homeless who were being helped and were seeking company for the night away from the threats and temptations of the street.

We had great, inspiring conversations of people's journey's and reasons for doing the event and it was both uplifting and humbling to take part.

We all bedded down in bivi bags, makeshift tarpaulin shelters and sleep pods around midnight after being excellently fed by Sandra and Caz and when I got up to make the morning brews at about 5am I was swiftly joined by one of the chaps who said "I haven't slept a wink, I'm not cut out for being homeless!"

Sleep Outs are a great way to highlight the plight of homelessness in our town but those of us who take part in no way experience the hunger, cold and anxiety that is the reality of life on the streets. We so easily walk by those who are drunk or drugged in the doorways without realising that substance abuse is a way of hiding from the stark realities of a crumbled life. In our comfortable world it can be hard to imagine how someone finds themselves in that situation, in fact it happens surprisingly easily. Mental health issues, domestic abuse, release from care without support are



common pathways to life on the streets. Without an address there is no chance to find work. Social housing is in very short supply and Private landlords require a deposit, so even with benefits there is little chance to get back into society, and the next step? Well, in the last month two people have died on the streets of our town, lonely and unloved, but everyone who contributed to my part in the Big Sleep Out for the Homeless Pastors has helped to change lives and get people back onto the path to independence.

What does your money buy?

- £40 buys a sleep pod, a lightweight, insulated shelter giving a dry and (relatively) warm night.
- £30 buys a sleeping bag.
- £20 buys a set of thermals.

- And then, guiding people to support groups of addiction, housing help, therapy, truly life changing actions.

For everyone who sponsored me, thank you. Together we raised £1,400, and in the following week, Jack (not his real name), who had joined us on the sleepout as a homeless person, had the funds to pay for a week in a b and b and by the end of that week had got a job working shifts and if his was the only life changed it would all be worthwhile.

Paul H



Saturday Morning Concerts at St Peter's

After a break in January, our concerts resume on 7th February when we are delighted to welcome the return of talented local musicians Roberto and Joanna Garcia. Hailing from Argentina, Roberto Garcia trained as an opera singer at the Royal Northern College of Music and has undertaken many roles both nationally and internationally. Joanna Garcia, studied Music at Manchester University and the Royal Northern College of Music, where she became Junior Fellow in piano accompaniment.

As usual, the concert will start at 11am. Admission is £7 (free for U18s) and includes refreshments, served from 10.30am. Free parking is available in the school yard on Rawcliffe Street with disabled parking in the church grounds.

Philip.

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We look forward to welcoming you, come and see us soon!

We Love the Sausage Rolls – But We're More Than That!

By St Stephen's Friends, Food &

Fun Team

If you've ever popped into Friends, Food & Fun at St Stephen's on a bustling Wednesday afternoon, you'll know exactly what people mean when they say, "We love the sausage rolls!" Of course, that's thanks to Edith, whose golden, flaky pastry and perfectly seasoned fillings have become the stuff of legend at St Stephen's. But while those sausage rolls might draw people in, it's the friendship, laughter, and sense of belonging that truly keep everyone coming back week after week. Our dedicated team of ladies also prepare a wonderful afternoon tea that gives Betty's of Harrogate a run for their money — from delicate sandwiches to irresistible cakes, every detail is crafted with care and love.



Our gatherings have grown from a simple idea — sharing food and companionship — into a thriving community hub filled with smiles, stories, and song. Speaking of song, Father Andrew's karaoke has become one of the highlights of our afternoons. His rendition of New York, New York has everyone joining in — and yes, there are legs kicking in the air all around the room by the final chorus!

And then there's Keith's Crazy Bingo, where the numbers are just the start of the fun. With a dash of mischief and a lot of laughter, Keith manages to turn every game into an event all its own — proof that joy really is contagious.

Over time, Friends, Food & Fun has gone from strength to strength. We've seen new faces join, lasting friendships form, and a real sense of community flourish. It's something truly special — a reminder that a simple meal shared can build something far greater than the sum of its parts.

To show our continued support for the church that brings us all together, we are delighted to donate £200 towards the St Stephen's Church Restoration Clock Fund. It's our small way of saying thank you — and of helping keep time on our side for many more years of laughter, music, and yes... sausage rolls.

So come along, pull up a chair, and join us on the 1st & 3rd Wednesdays at 2.00 pm. You'll soon see — we may love the sausage rolls, but we're so much more than that!

Love and best wishes for the New Year from all of us to all of you.

The Great Brownie Adventure



Friday 14th November saw us “welcome” storm Ciara to the UK! This was just what we needed when taking 12 Brownies (6 from St Stephens and 6 from Wellfield) on a sleepover in Blackburn Cathedral.

As Carol explained nicely to the hospital they could have her on Saturday but not right now due to this event, she had one eye fixed firmly on the live train timetables. Cancellation after cancellation came up and it got a little stressful.

An urgent plan B was arranged to car share all over if the train was not running. However, God was definitely looking down on us and although we were 20 minutes later than planned, we were able to jump on a train and made it to Blackburn safely.

We quickly “lost” the children in the Crypt as there were 30 or so activities for them to take part in – from decorating bags, making bracelets, food based and I cannot remember the rest. They were happy until it was time to go upstairs! Seeing the Cathedral largely lit by Gaia was amazing and there was a sing song before beds were made up.

This is where it got really fun! We had one pedal cyler all night, a jack in the box, the 4 loud whisperers (yes we could hear you) a few who slept and 2 who, in their sleep, behaved like worms. I never knew children could travel so far across a Cathedral floor in their sleep and had to pull them back 15 or 20 feet every hour to put them with our group. Toilet trips galore were also undertaken. However, I can recommend any cold sleepers pop over and sleep there – the underfloor heating is something else!

Saturday morning and all too soon the time for return. It seemed to be going smoothly as we got on the train and set off. Then came the grinding to a halt in the middle of nowhere due to a trespasser on the line. As the driver walked up and down the train, receiving conflicting information on whether he would be taking us back or going forward, the football fans (on their liquid breakfast) got louder until ...

12 Brownies starting singing their favourite K Pop numbers at the top of their lungs. The football fans were taken aback and asked when we were getting off so I suggested it could be Burnley or, we could really make

their day and go to the end of the line with them. I think they were glad it was Burnley!

So 12 Brownies had an amazing adventure and I then surrendered to Blackburn Hospital.

Carol Pike





Sunday School News from St Peter's

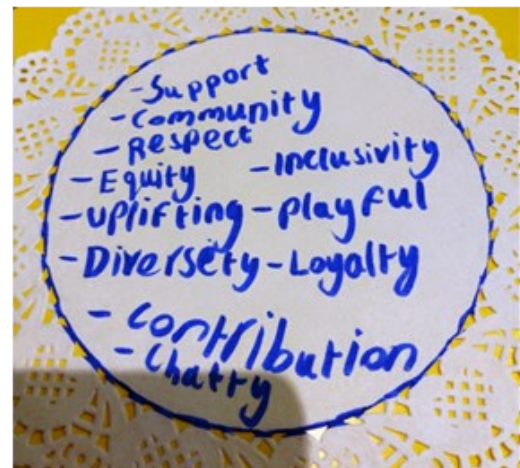
The Lord's people will return home to everlasting joy, while sadness and sighing will fly away ' (Isaiah 36v 1-10)

The inspired Advent readings have prompted lots of thoughts and discussions. Today we were asked to name 10 things that bring joy in the church/group context . Tying in with the reading from Isaiah we were proud that our Sunday School included all ages, was inclusive of all, those with disabilities of mind and body, sexual orientation, English as a second language. The children/young people also named happiness, smiles, caring, sharing, friendships, support, singing, eating cake, learning about Jesus, praying, taking communion and love as some of our many joys . This is the Kingdom of God we await and strive to be in now .

Next year we begin with the Epiphany and the associated readings when Jesus's divinity is seen and recognised . We will have our Christingle service and begin the season of Lent . Lots of learning. 😊

We send love to all and pray for peace in our world .

Meena





St Stephen's School News

WORSHIP

Our Christian Value for next half term will be Perseverance, and the British Value will be democracy. We have covered many topics in our worship this term with an emphasis on Black History Month. We learnt about the lives of Nelson Mandela, Rosa Parkes and Floella Benjamin to name a few.

Respect was a large part of these worships. We are in the SIAMs window now which is the Anglican inspection of church schools. A SIAMs inspector came into school and delivered training. She also went through the website and looked at our environment. Her feedback was very positive. We will also be back in an Ofsted inspection window after Christmas.

EVENTS IN THE COMMUNITY

Our Children in Need day was successful and the families raised well over £100. Our school choir opened the church Christmas fair with three songs. This was a very festive event. St Stephen's Christmas performances have been a huge success with our staff, children and families. Key Stage 1 performed a more traditional Nativity whilst Key Stage 2 performed a brilliant 'Rockin the Nativity' Nativity with lots of sparkle and dancing. The other special events are our St Stephen's school fair where all the classes make items to sell. We have a special visit from Santa and the Church service. The children (and staff) just love the Christmas jumper day too.

Mr Smart has organised so many sporting events this term and this really enhances the children's education and opportunities.

Mrs Ashworth will be taking the children to perform at Blackburn Ice Arena for the 'Sing Up' concert next year so they are practising hard.

Our Young Disciples have written a school prayer and they read this to the whole school. These will be displayed in all classrooms. This is the prayer:

Dear God,
Please look after us this night,
Help us to flourish and grow,
Help us to achieve great things,
We learn, grow and achieve through your love,
Shine on us to make us smile,
Christ you are at the heart of our school, Amen

/Continued ...

ALL CHANGE

I would like to take this opportunity to say thank you for making me so welcome here in the St Stephen's community. I have thoroughly enjoyed serving our families here for the last six and a half years. I will be very sad to say goodbye and will miss everyone terribly, particularly the children. I too have Learnt, Grown and Achieved through God's love. I am looking forward to the future and the new opportunities that St Paul's will bring. The Governors at St Stephen's have ensured that there has been a smooth transition and there will be a new interim headteacher called Mr Barnacle starting after Christmas until Easter and then Mrs Rostron will be the substantive Headteacher from Easter. I will think of you all often and keep you in my prayers.

Mrs Roberts
Headteacher



BREAKFAST WITH ... (Not just for Men)

One of the many changes that I've seen in my lifetime so far is the elevation of "Breakfast", especially at weekends and when on holiday, from a hurried bowl of cereals into a leisurely meal comprising several courses. And even more surprising is its evolution into an occasion suitable for sharing with friends and dining out. In fact when it comes to Dining Out, I probably do so more at Breakfast time than in the Evening!

St Stephen's Church have been hosting "Prayer Breakfasts" successfully now for several years, and the formula has been copied by other local Churches. It seems to work; Breakfast themed events of all types seem to go down well. But how many of you remember that originally at St. Stephen's they were called "Ladies' Prayer Breakfast"? Although men were never actually barred!

The reason I'm raising all this is because at St Stephen's we're looking to put on another Breakfast based event. It's not a Prayer Breakfast this time, but something slightly different, called "Breakfast With ..."

The idea is to meet, eat, drink and socialise and listen to a speaker talk about something that they are knowledgeable about and that hopefully will be of interest to those who come. And ... unapologetically, there will be a bias towards things that men might find interesting. Because we've identified that (especially at St Peter's), there is maybe not much in the way of Men's fellowship, and unless you happen to be a chorister, not a lot to do or join that caters for the interests, issues and specific concerns that men of all ages have. I stress all are welcome, and we'd love to have a mix of Church people and people who may never have been to Church.

We should be kicking off on Saturday 31st January when I'll be talking about my days driving trucks - the people I encountered, the ups and downs of the job, the vehicles I drove and what you really want to hear ... the times when I messed up and things went badly wrong!!

Look out for more information in the New Year or have a word with me or Fr Andrew about it.

Alan Roadley



You're invited to

BREAKFAST WITH ...

Alan Roadley

(A Lorry Driver's Tale)



Saturday 31st January

at 9.30 am in

St Stephen's Church. Oxford Road, Burnley, BB11 3JA

(Not just for men)

All Welcome



A Light In The Darkness by Christine Harbour

It was late December afternoon in Burnley. I had been visiting a friend. Her curtains had been drawn and when I reached the front door it was dark, and a deluge of rain was spilling out of a black sky. 4pm and a 10 minute uphill walk home!! I hurried out and heard a man's threatening voice which sent a chill down my spine. In spite of the fact that it was Advent, it was not a message of Christmas cheer, more like the chill of Christmas thuggery! The uphill walk was spooky and scary. Gratefully, I made my way through the little gate that leads into my cul-de-sac. The first house I passed had two little bushes that sparked with coloured lights and my heart was filled with joy . I turned the corner. I could see my own little house, where I could put on the lights and turn up the heating, and shut my door on that dreadful rainy night.

God in his wisdom made the dark and the light. Our bodies were awesomely made to sleep in the dark and wake up in the light.

I remembered a story I had heard on my Lectio 365 podcast, about a dark a stormy night when a farmer saw that the birds were huddled together for shelter in the trees, drenched with relentless rain. The storm was forecast to last many hours, so the kindly farmer decided to light up his barn so that the birds could be warm and in the light. Not one of the birds flew into the barn! They were afraid of the light!

How many people in our world are like those birds? Some do not know about Jesus, the Light of the world, or others are afraid thinking that following Jesus is too demanding. They misunderstand the message that He is a forgiving God who made himself incarnate in Jesus Christ to live with us and understand human frailty.

People often stay in the darkness because they fear change . Let's ask ourselves too, do we who are Christians really reflect God's love? Remember Moses when he came down from Mount Sinai he was dazzling with the radiance of God's light, that the people were afraid (a bit like those birds!).

I came across a fact that I had never heard before. I have always thought that giving birth was an amazing miracle . I was astounded to find a little known fact too, that when the male sperm swims to meet the ovum and conception happens, a spark of light flashes - it is called the zinc spark. Conception is a spark of light that turns into a unique human being! Hallelujah to that! Today reflect, that in an act of love and union, you were born. In the darkness of the womb you began as a spark. That that spark formed into a tiny baby who left a dark womb and came into the light.

As we approach a New Year may we move towards the Light so that we too may reflect God's light in a very dark world.

Christine H. ♥ xx



*'In the beginning was the Word and the Word was God.
He was with God in the beginning.
Through him all things were made,
without him nothing was made that has been made. In him
was life and that life was the light of all mankind.
The Light shines in the darkness ,
and the darkness has not overcome it.'
(John 1:1-5)*



... From our Vision Champions

Hi everyone,

ST STEPHEN'S SINGS CHRISTMAS

The church was filled with festive joy as the much-loved carol concert, St Stephen's Sings Christmas, returned once again this year. The church welcomed a large congregation, with many people coming together to celebrate the true meaning of Christmas through music, readings and fellowship, all set within a wonderfully warm atmosphere created by beautiful ambience lighting and softly glowing candles.

Children from the Sunday Club played a special role in the service, delighting the audience with their enthusiastic singing and poetry. From first time solo singing to duets everything was warmly received and proudly applauded by all present.

One of the highlights of the evening was a beautiful rendition of Mary, Did You Know?, enhanced by wonderful visual accompaniment that added depth and emotion to the performance. Throughout the concert, carefully chosen Bible readings were shared, guiding the congregation through the Christmas story and reminding everyone of its enduring message of hope and love.

The gentle candlelight and carefully designed lighting added to the sense of reverence and celebration, helping to create a peaceful and reflective setting for the concert. Following the service, people gathered to enjoy mulled wine and mince pies, providing a chance to chat, reflect and continue the celebrations together.

Grateful thanks for the generous donations made on the evening in support of The Children's Society. St Stephen's Sings Christmas once again proved to be a wonderful Christmas tradition at St Stephen's Church, bringing the community together and marking the season

with warmth, generosity and joy.

May I wish you all a very Happy New Year.

Linda

*Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace, good will toward men.
(Luke 2.14)*

**christians
against
poverty** news

CAP

The Burnley, Nelson and Colne CAP Debt Centre continues to make a life-changing impact across our towns, offering hope and practical support to individuals and families facing financial hardship. This year alone, 31 clients have gone completely debt free — a remarkable milestone that reflects both the dedication of the CAP team, our wonderful volunteers and the courage of those taking steps toward financial stability. Alongside one-to-one debt help, the centre has also invested in preventative support, equipping 50 people through Life Skills Courses in Burnley and Colne to manage everyday pressures, build confidence, and make sustainable changes for the future. In addition, 25 people have benefited from CAP's Money Coaching courses, gaining the tools they need to budget well, set goals, and develop healthier financial habits. These programmes continue to grow in demand as communities look for trustworthy guidance during challenging economic times. Responding to this need, the Debt Centre has expanded its services even further by launching Job Clubs in both Nelson and Burnley. Since starting in September 2025, the clubs are already making a difference, with several attendees successfully finding employment.

/continued ...

We meet people where they are by doing regular drop ins at Food Banks, Job Centres and other Community settings. Together, these initiatives demonstrate CAP's holistic approach to tackling poverty. Through it all we remain Christ-centred, prayerful and offering the hope we can only find in the Gospel to those we have the privilege of encountering. CAP remains a church based movement, not separate but part of the church. It is through the ongoing support of churches like yours that we can continue to do the work that we do. For that we are hugely thankful.

Katy Oehring
Debt Centre Manager
Life Skills Manager
Christians Against Poverty
Burnley, Nelson and Colne Debt Centre

For further information or help please contact CAP:
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News from Paul our Homeless Pastor for Burnley

Hello everyone,

I have been working here for a few months now, perhaps it's time to let you know who we are, what we can do and, if you want to, how to get involved.

My organisation is called The Light Group. I was an alcoholic and homeless, a lady befriended me and took me to church, where I connected with Father God and a lovely group of people. Several years on I am now free from alcohol, I have a home and work with homeless and needy people in Burnley. So what do I do and what does The Light Group do?

Every Tuesday Afternoon we go into the town centre and places around the town to feed the homeless in Burnley, our aim is to bring Jesus into seemingly impossible situations. It isn't enough to feed people - we want to help people out of destructive lifestyles and to be free to enjoy life.

We provide:

A 12 Step programme to help with all of life's difficulties eg gambling, addictions overeating, sex and help people to deal with all of life's problems.

A Light group dealing with everyday challenges will be starting soon with discussion and help.

All sessions are held in a safe, calm environment where people can share in confidence.

We have one-to-one meetings with rough sleepers and provide equipment to help.

We also are looking for volunteers who are asked to complete training which includes safeguarding, drug awareness, overdose how to administer medical aid.

Ministry into the Margins for volunteers is done through Leeds University and is free.

If you would like to know more or would consider volunteering please follow the link to our website <https://thelightgroupuk.org>



Time to say 'Thank You'

After November's little article about the clock, I wasn't entirely sure what sort of reaction we'd get. Mention the repair of an old clock and someone will always ask whether we couldn't simply give it a firm tap and hope it rights itself. But instead of raised eyebrows or suggestions involving a rubber mallet, what arrived was generosity. Donations have appeared in that wonderfully understated British fashion: quietly, modestly, as though people were popping round with a casserole and slipping away before you noticed. To everyone who has contributed so far: thank you. These small acts of kindness - an envelope through a letterbox, a folded note after a service, or the gentle "I hope this helps" - are what keep a community upright. They may not make headlines, but they do make a difference.

One particularly generous donation came from a lady who politely asked whether the clock's illumination might be softened a little - a gentler glow, she said, "less like a lighthouse and more like a warm smile." I replied, truthfully, that with a donation like hers she could have whatever colour she wanted. Twinkling in Morse code? No problem. Rainbow disco mode? Why not. In the end, she settled for a soft, butter-like glow, which seems sensible, though I am still quietly hoping the Morse code remains optional.

We have also been especially touched by the kindness of our friends at St Matthew's, who have sent donations of their own. There's something heartening about parishes quietly supporting one another - like neighbours leaning over the fence to return a borrowed trowel and slipping you a few spare bulbs while they're at it.

Following the article, I was asked whether Councillor Jeff Sumner might be willing to support the project. Many will remember Jeff's previous involvement in helping fund the installation of the oven - an undertaking that somehow required more paperwork than seemed humanly necessary. Despite this, Jeff approached it with his usual calm perseverance, and true to form, he has stepped forward again to help with the clock repairs. His steady presence is one of those reassuring constants, like knowing who's got the key to the church hall when you inevitably misplace yours.

The fund remains open for anyone who still wishes to donate, and every

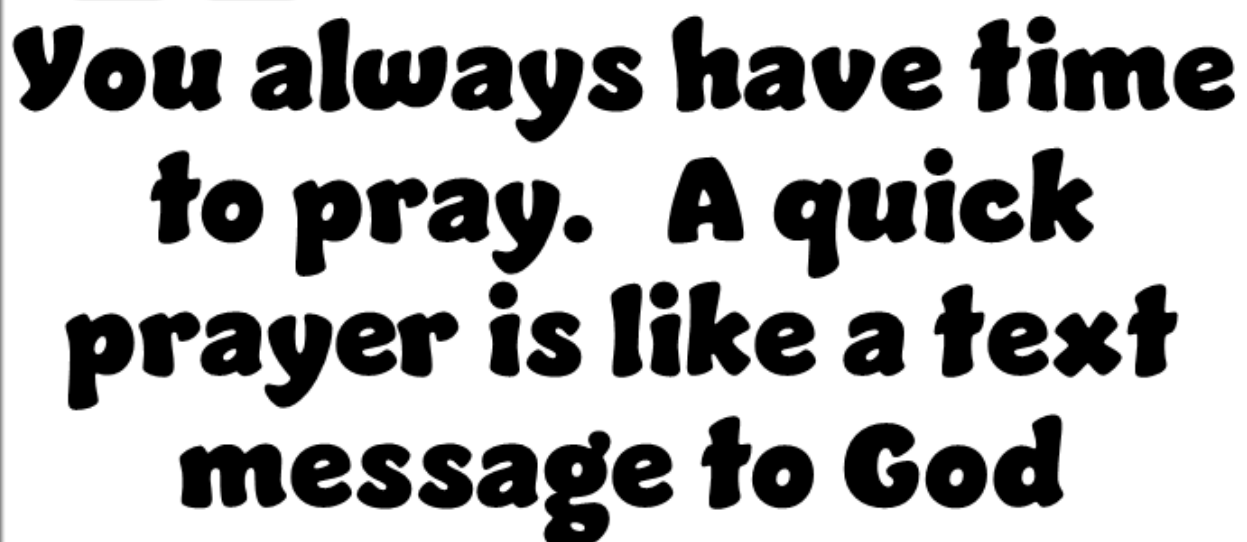
contribution - great or small - should hopefully be reported to the Parochial Church Council in January 2026, so that everything is properly accounted for.

With a little more goodwill - and perhaps the discovery of a forgotten £1 coin in the glovebox - the repair work should soon be underway. And when the clock finally ticks reliably again, as it once did, I hope it will stand as a quiet, slightly bemused reminder that time, when shared and given freely, is never wasted. As time is ticking on, and we gently head toward spring and the beautiful daffodils and spring flowers in the church gardens, it's TIME to wish everyone in our church family and friends a very Happy New Year.

Warmest regards,

Keith

Seen outside a Carmelite Convent on Malta ...



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Five Ways to Welcome Wildlife for a New Year ahead

January is the time for new starts so why not plan ways in which you can make your churchyard (or your garden) more wildlife friendly in 2026? Here are five simple things to try, maybe you could start with one or two.

Create a meadow - choose an area of grass in full sun, currently mown short. Leave it uncut for about 14 weeks over the spring and summer. See how many wildflowers come up naturally, you will probably be surprised. Scythe or strim the long grass, rake it up and remove it to a compost heap or use it to make hay.

Help your veteran trees - churchyards are fantastic for veteran trees, particularly yews. Gently clear below veteran and ancient trees, removing young saplings, piles of grass cuttings, sheds, grave spoil, old bottles and anything else that is there! Always remove ivy from yew trees but no need to do so from other trees unless advised to by an arboriculture expert.

Give wildlife a home - great fun for community events, how about making bird and bat boxes, bug hotels, deadwood piles and compost bays. Swift boxes can fit behind the church tower louvres. Try a range of different sized bird boxes, including open fronted ones for Spotted Flycatcher and Robin. Place a deadwood pile in a shady spot for frogs, newts, slow worm and hedgehogs to feast on the invertebrates there.

Be a little untidy – leave an area of tussocky grassland or scrub, perhaps against a wall or round the back. Cut and clear this every two or three years, doing a section each year. This will be fantastic shelter and great for overwintering invertebrates as well as amphibians and reptiles. Hedgehogs love places like this too.

Plant for pollinators – fill your flowerbeds or planters with species that are useful to insects. Include native plants and grasses as well as early and late flowering plants. How about some herbs which people can enjoy too? The wildflower Viper's Bugloss is outstanding for pollinators and very attractive too.

Enjoy watching the wildlife which will take advantage of these features.





Greetings from Buckinghamshire to all at St Stephen's!

Recently, during one of my occasional chats with Keith (of the Pounder variety), I asked if he was aware of the time when the National Theatre was based in Burnley. Our conversations invariably begin with reminiscences of the heydays and high days of St Stephens Operatic and Dramatic Society, which was very much part of my growing up opposite the school in Woodgrove Road.

We touched on the incredible talent of stage manager Victor Booth, who was responsible for painting the fantastic scenery and some rather beautiful backcloths for the musicals. Victor had once told me that before the Victoria Theatre in Burnley town centre was demolished, the Op and Dram acquired a couple of their huge backcloths, and due to their enormous size, he cut them into four in order to fit the stage at St Stephens School. It was on these backcloths that Victor painted some wonderful landscapes and interiors including A Tyrolean landscape for White Horse Inn and a magnificent interior for the King and I. These backcloths hung there for many years, often repainted, dangling over the heads of the children having school dinners during term time, as the stage area also served as the school dining hall! I digress – back to the Victoria Theatre...

In 1940, the London Old Vic Theatre was damaged by bombs forcing the company to find a safe location to operate from. The company was, at that time, run by Sir Tyrone Guthrie and was regarded as the national theatre of Great Britain, although not yet so named. Presumably, Burnley was deemed to be a safe area and became the most creative centre of English theatre. Saddlers Wells Ballet Company (later renamed the Royal Ballet) also relocated to Burnley with a young Margot Fonteyn amongst their ranks. Both companies embarked on tours of village halls and miners' institutes across the north of England and Wales.



Sir Tyrone, in fact, turned down an approach from Laurence Olivier, for his then wife, Vivien Leigh, to join the company in Burnley. Fresh from playing Scarlett O'Hara in *Gone with the Wind*, Guthrie said that her film star image meant that the audience would be there for "the wrong reasons" and besides she wasn't a good enough stage actress! The company finally returned to the Old Vic in London when it reopened in 1950.

Having myself worked at the National Theatre for three years, I was quite intrigued to discover the link between those old backcloths, that I performed in front of at St Stephen's, and the fledgling National Theatre in Burnley who were probably performing in front of the same cloths.



With all best wishes

Andrew C Wadsworth

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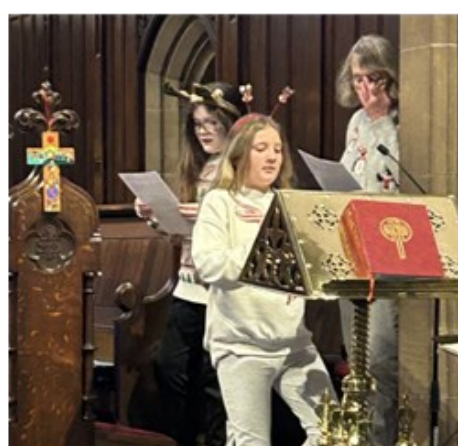
Email:
emmahopley70@gmail.com



At St Stephen's Sings Christmas we enjoyed some wonderful performances from Phoebe, who read her poem beautifully, Elena and Taylor whose Silent Night was so beautiful and Ruby, who proved to us all she didn't need any help at all as she sang 'Away In A Manger' to the delight of everyone - thank you, girls! - you were magnificent!



... AND St Stephen's Nativity ... the photos speak for themselves. A huge 'THANK YOU' to everyone who took part!



The Narrators



Mary & Joseph ... and of course ,Baby Jesus!



The Donkey



The Angels



The Shepherds



*And
last but
not
least,
The
Three
Kings*



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**St Stephen's Church,
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