

January 2025



60p

Life



swcd-churches.org.uk



MAGAZINE EDITOR LIFE

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Articles for the February edition are due by **Sunday 12th January**

A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO YOU ALL

As this edition should reach you early, I hope you have a good Christmas also!!

You may have noticed a slight difference to the front cover....Yes! the cost has gone up to 60p per copy or £6 for the year 2025. I will be working out the costings with our administrator to weather a further increase is needed for 2026. Meanwhile I hope you will continue to enjoy reading the articles and keeping up with what's going on in our churches.

The 3 Kings from the 2024 Pantomime are the feature of this cover, (O yes it is!). On **Sunday 12th January at 6pm** in the Mission Church the talented cast will be entertaining us again!! So please go along and encourage them.

We welcome Gill Williams from Compton Dundon as their new correspondent for "Life", and on page 13 she reports on the splendid carol concert, and the pictures can be seen on the back.

Three volunteers of "Little Stars" can also be seen wrapping presents for when Father Christmas arrives at the Mission Church.

Also on the back are Trinity Handbells at Glastonbury Frost Fayre, and Elaine Howard, (pictured with Ana) at her confirmation, which she writes about on pages 14 and 15.

May God bless you all in 2025. Roger.

Rector's Letter

“But those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary; they will walk and not be faint. Isaiah chapter 40 verse 31.

Dear Friends,

Happy New Year!

I want to reflect with you on our thoughts and expectations for a new year.

My Dad is Scottish and during my childhood years, I have strong memories of New Year's Eve being celebrated at home in true Caledonian style – it was an exciting time for us as a family, we always started the new year in hopeful celebration. Whilst my dad is now in his early 90s, he does still try to stay up to see the new year in, although can be forgiven for occasionally dozing off and maybe first footing is no longer on the cards! What did your new year look like this year?

As we enter a new year, I wonder how you are feeling. Excited? Hopeful? Weary? Neutral? Or something else? It's so easy, isn't it to move forward from one year to the next almost without a second glance. Even if you don't have a tradition of celebrating at New Year, you can still anticipate all that is to come.

I recognise that for some, there are situations that we face that can make the future feel a frightening place. For many in different parts of the world where there is war, displacement, hunger and suffering, going into a New Year may simply mean a continuation of tough times.

Yet, as Christians, I believe that God has good plans for us all, no matter our age, background or how we might be feeling. God through Jesus offers us hope in a world that is far more prone to despair. Watching the news can be truly depressing, but amidst all that is going on, God still offers us the gift of hope. This hope is for us all to share to a broken, fractured and needy world.

Whether or not you are making new year's resolutions, can I encourage you to be people of hope, and bringers of hope. The verse above from the prophet Isaiah surely reassures us of God's promise.

I love candles, particularly the way such a small flame can transform a room bringing light, warmth and smiles. One of the prayers we sometimes pray at the end of our times of worship likens us to a candle flame. In 2025, can you as people of hope shine a small flickering light into situations where hope is so sorely needed, in your family, down your street, in your workplace or wherever God leads you.

With my love and prayers for 2025,

Ana

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CONGRATULATIONS



Edwin Reeve – Churchwarden of
Street

Who recently celebrated his 80th Birthday.

And Brian Moreby (Street Parish Church) who also
celebrated a significant Birthday recently.

Extended leave

As many of you will know, I will be taking some extended leave early in 2025, as Kevin and I travel to New Zealand to visit our son who is working there. I'm so thankful for the support of the Diocese, churchwardens and my clergy colleagues, which has made this trip possible, and I am confident that the benefice will be in good hands in my absence.

Whilst I'm away, please refer in the first instance, to Rachel Pengelly or speak to your churchwardens.

We are excited about this trip (although slightly dreading the jet lag) and I promise to return to you revived and re-energised for all that God will do in this place in the months and years to come! Ana Lawrence

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Christian singer Lou Fellingham live in Street.

Our friends at Street Baptist Church are delighted to be hosting **Lou Fellingham (and band) – Live in concert** on Friday 31 January 2025 at 7.30pm. (Doors open 6.30pm).

Venue Address:

Street Baptist Church
Glaston Road
Street
Somerset
BA16 0AN

You can purchase tickets (£12, £8 under 16) online at <https://www.loufellingham.com/pages/tickets> or in person from Street Baptist Church. Kevin Lawrence

2025, prepare to update your information

In the early months of 2025, we will not only be updating our church contacts list, but also the church electoral roll, which is due for a full revision.

A little explanation for those who would value it:

As a church we have a contacts list which lists all our church family members who wish their details to be made public. This list is not published anywhere the general public can see it but is made available to any members who are included on it to help us to connect with one another. Every two years we revise this list to check it is still accurate and up to date and you will hear more from us about this in the coming weeks. Please do respond either to let us know that your details are still accurate or inform us of any changes.

The Church of England also asks us to maintain an 'electoral roll' of all who associate with our churches. This is a public document that also helps to decide, for example, how many people serve on our Parochial Church Council and how many representatives we can send to Deanery Synod. Every few years this is fully revised and preparation for the next full review will begin soon. This means that even if you have been on the roll for years you will need to complete a new form to ensure you remain. You will hear more details from each parish electoral roll officer. Remember the side benefit for current electoral roll members of a free tourist pass to visit Wells Cathedral!

Watch this space for more details

Ana Lawrence

New Year Resolutions (might even save money)

The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it. (Psalm 24, v. 1)

And God saw all that He had made, and it was very good.

(Genesis 1, v. 31)

Scientists and environmentalists agree that our planet is in crisis. We are already experiencing changes in climate. A warmer atmosphere holds more moisture and increases airflow leading to flooding and destruction. In areas such as the Amazon and Africa higher temperatures lead to droughts. Our fellow Christians are suffering. We are depleting the earth's resources and harming the natural environment. At the root of many of these problems is over-consumption. The richest 20% of the world's population consumes over 80% of the world's resources; this is not sustainable. In a recent discussion a distinction was made between need and want, do we always distinguish between them when shopping? Because of our unique perspective as Christians we should be at the forefront of living more lightly upon God's Earth. New Year is a time for resolutions could we resolve this year to more thoughtful consumers? How might we do that? We are used to hearing repair, reuse, recycle, here are some wider reflections:

Rethink your choices. Choose to buy less or more carefully. Buy things that will last. If you have money in a bank account, ask questions, where do they invest it? If you are fortunate enough to have additional funds, including pension funds, think about investing ethically.

Refuse single use items. This takes effort when, for example, so much food is provided in single use packaging. More shops are now offering loose fruit and vegetables. Reuse bags rather than using a fresh bag for every purchase. Look for places such as Street Repair Café to refill plastic bottles rather than buying a new container each time. Some shops and takeaways allow you

to use your own containers. If you buy takeaway hot drinks take a reusable cup. Avoid single use plastic wherever possible.

Reduce Food waste: Supermarkets are responsible for some food waste but more food waste happens at home. With fresh produce buy only what can be used in a timely way, use up food before it goes out of date. Look for recipes to use them or leftovers up; or freeze to use later. Best before dates doesn't mean the food cannot be used beyond that date.

Other 'stuff': Buy only what you need, ask yourself do I really need it or could I manage without? If you do have to buy something, can you get it second hand, from charity shops or online? Borrow or hire equipment that you only use occasionally.

Reuse all sorts of things. For example, if you can't avoid plastic containers in food purchases reuse them for storing food in the fridge or freezer; or use them for planting seeds.

Refurbish old stuff. Renovate or find a new use. Use the opportunity to be creative.

Repair before you replace. If you don't know how to repair something get some advice. Of almost 300 items brought to Street Repair Cafe in 2024 around 70% were repaired. Advice was given about repairing other items.

Repurpose, reinvent. Rather than buying something new could you use something you already have for the same purpose?

Recycle If something is still usable sell or swop it, or donate it to a charity for reuse or sale. As a last resort sort rubbish so that it can be recycled. Metal (tins and cans), glass, paper and cardboard are the easiest waste items to recycle (follow guidance to rinse tins etc. to ensure materials don't have to be discarded).

What will you do to reduce your personal consumption in 2025?

Alpha

At the end of our recent Alpha Course, I asked those attending to offer some brief reflections of their experience of Alpha. This is what some of them said:

“Having just been part of the Alpha course at SWCD Churches, I realise how much I am going to miss the association, subject matter and group discussion. On one occasion one of the video presentations was about "What is Evil." Very thought provoking, as in my opinion, it is not always the obvious big things, but how much we accept as normal.” Paul

“Alpha is a great opportunity to ask big questions, in a safe, friendly, and non-judgmental atmosphere. To anyone sitting on the fence, and unsure as to whether they want to undertake the course, I would recommend at least trying it. There is nothing to lose and everything to gain.” Elaine

“Thank you for the alpha course it was very good and inspirational, nice to have a midweek meeting and to learn more about the bible and God's work - love the videos.” Joe

"We had a wonderful time, eating, learning and asking questions of our faith. We have met new friends from our Alpha community. Alpha is a joy to be a part of." Rachel

“I went to Alpha following a suggestion by a Christian friend. I had no church background but found everyone really welcoming and supportive. It was a very interesting course and helped to think about the church in a different way. At first, I found myself being sceptical but that changed as time went on. I am going to pursue my faith further in church and house group.” Sandra

"It was a tremendous privilege to be involved with the Alpha course. It is a wonderful resource, not only for those exploring

faith for the first time, but also for those who are looking for new insights and a fresh understanding of their faith journey. I have no doubt that every one of us experienced Jesus in new and exciting ways.” Gill

“The Alpha group was a great time for asking and discussing those big life questions in a friendly and open way: Who is Jesus? Why did He die? How can I have faith? What does the Holy Spirit do? How does God guide us? It was great to have lots

of contributions and help from the excellent video presentations. Recommended for anyone who is looking to ask questions about the Christian faith in a safe, relaxed environment.” Tim

It’s been a real joy to journey with this group of people through the Alpha Course. We look forward to future opportunities to run Alpha again in the benefice.

Ana Lawrence

Connections@theMission

Thursday 16th January

2-30pm

Mission Church Street

Come along with a New Year bible verse or poem that has encouraged you and share it while having a cuppa and cake.

Jane Tompsett

will be leading us this month. Pam.

Bishop's Letter

Bringing hope

“A leader” said Napoleon Bonaparte, “is a dealer in hope.” At the start of 2025, this is a tough challenge for leaders everywhere! Conflicts continue around the world. The climate emergency is ongoing. At the polls, voters in many countries express their dissatisfaction with the status quo. As we look around us, can hope mean anything more than mere wishful thinking? As we look on all the challenges that exist, have we anything more to say than “I hope that that somehow, somewhere, something will turn up”.

More than ever, the Christian understanding of hope is what we need. Christian hope is broader, deeper, stronger altogether than any ‘wishful thinking’. In scripture, hope is not just a vague desire that something good in the future will somehow happen. Rather, the Biblical understanding of hope is of a confident expectation and desire that good in the future will come. It’s an assurance based in our pre-existing experience of God’s goodness, God’s love, the faithfulness that he has already shown towards us.

Scripture also contains the idea that while hope is something which comes primarily from God, it is also something in which human beings have a part to play, a contribution to make. The letter to the Hebrews says this: “God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them. We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, so that what you hope for may be fully realized.” (Hebrews 6:10-11)

God graciously calls us to join in bringing hope into the world. Our work, our love, our diligence matter. The contribution we make is important in bringing into being the future that God wants for us. At the start of this new year, we are called to take the lead: to be signs, symbols, dealers in the hope for which our world longs today.

Bishop Michael

Compton Dundon

St Andrew's likes to thank our village for all the support it gives us during the year by putting on a family film, in collaboration with the Village Hall. This year, on St Andrew's day, 30th November, we invited the village to a showing of Despicable Me 4. The Village Hall Committee kindly paid for the licence and provided the hall free of charge and volunteers from St Andrew's served hot chocolate (with squirty cream and marshmallows, of course!) and a selection of home-made biscuits and cookies, some in the shape of minions! The film was fast and furious and enjoyed by young and old alike. We would like to thank everyone who gave so generously of their time and baking skills and also the Village Hall committee for their support.

On 8th December we had another opportunity to bless people with a Community Carol Concert, again in the Village Hall. The event was a mixture of traditional carols and Christmas songs, performed by the Kingsbury Episcopi Band (featuring our very own Pat King on trumpet). Sister Rachel was in charge of proceedings, our MP, Sarah Dyke read the first Bible reading and Ana opened and closed with prayer. After a break for tea, coffee and warm mince pies, kindly donated by Burns the Bread as well as cakes donated by Tesco, we were treated to Christmas songs from the band. It was a lovely way to welcome the season, enjoyed by all who came. Thanks again to the band, to Sarah Dyke and to the willing band of helpers, who served nearly 100 hot drinks! We also collected over £250 in donations for Winston's Wish.

Gill Williams.

Confirmation Service in Wells Cathedral

It was a joy and a privilege to attend the service in Wells at the end of November to support Elaine Howard (Parish Church) as she took this next step in her Christian journey.

Elaine shares her own reflections:

If anyone had told me two years ago, that I would return to faith, I would have politely laughed and walked away. After 30 years of being angry at God, for taking my father, with a rare form of leukaemia, when I was just 24, it was not something I ever envisaged. I then had a dreadful experience, with the Vicar conducting his funeral, whose bedside manner with a grieving family, left much to be desired. This God thing was definitely not for me.

In time, the remaining family elders followed my father, and I found myself even further away from faith. Now a member of the older generation, in my own family, I was having an existential mid-life crisis, with “something” undefinable missing.

Chats with a cousin, in South Wales, who is a confirmed Christian, hinted it might be the faith into which I was born, and baptised. Initially, I pooh-pooh’ed that idea quite swiftly. I was mad at God, and he with me, so we both understood and observed the rules of engagement, or so I thought. But, a few days later, the proverbial penny dropped, and I realised I had spent over half of my life, mad at a God I did not really know, and despite trying other faiths and beliefs, I still had not found the missing “piece” and that bothered me. It bothered me enough, to pray, for the first time in years, and I proposed a truce; if God had not given up on me, now was the time to show it, because I was willing to listen. I had nothing to lose and everything to gain, so I started attending church, as regularly as personal schedules would allow. Soon, I realised I was not feeling the missing piece so much.

I have never been a foot in/foot out type of person, and I soon knew, if I was doing this, I was committing to going the whole way, right up to the confirmation I never received as a child. So, after several months, and with my attendance on the Alpha Course, my confirmation was agreed. I knew at once I was now on the right path, and in just one short year, preparation for, and confirmation has, changed my perspective entirely.

Confirmation day dawned on November 23rd. Storm Bert raged outside Wells Cathedral, but despite that, the 130 Candidates had a huge amount of support in attendance, not only from the Clergy, but their family and friends. My cousin and her family braved the M4, and the Severn Bridge, so they could join my husband, and Frances, one of the lovely ladies I have come to know through church, to support me. All stood up for me, when my time came, along with Ana, and I had a message from Rachel - all for which I am eternally grateful. I really felt the support that day from the whole cathedral assembly.

I never expected to feel emotional at all, but the moment I stepped towards Bishop Michael, and felt his hands on my bent head, while he uttered the words, "God has called you by name and made you his own," tears fell, because I felt all those years of feeling something was missing, of feeling incomplete, and unworthy because of my anger, were at an end. This was a new beginning, and it felt like it.

On reflection, my confirmation completed the second half of the christening, that took place when I was barely six months old. Then, my parents and godparents made my choice for me, but this time I made my own, just me alone. Or did I? Because as I stood there, holding a pristine bible, that had been a Christening gift, from one of my Godmothers in February 1971, I finally understood that I faced none of it alone, that I was coming home to a faith chosen for me, when I was six months old, and which I now chose for myself. Elaine Howard (Street Parish Church).

CHARITABLE GIVING 2025

As you may know, each of our churches nominate charities and mission partners to support financially each year, with those nominations being considered and approved by the PCC.

We are now looking for nominations for organisations that we should support in the coming year. Our PCC's have agreed the following principles behind the selection of charities we will support.

1. Where possible we aim to support organisations who are specifically Christian, or where no such organisation can be found, those that have a Christian ethos.
2. We value personal contact with those we support and particularly welcome proposals from church family members with personal links to a particular charity or cause.
3. To ensure transparency and accountability, we will generally channel our support through UK registered charities.
4. Our PCC's will always make the final decision on which charities each parish will support, informed by recommendations from church members, which have been reviewed by the churches charitable giving committee from across the benefice.
5. Our support will be limited to a single year unless longer term support is specifically proposed and agreed by a PCC.

If you have a charity or mission partner that you think your church should support, please pass on nominations to me at lawrencekv@aol.com or by leaving a suggestion in the Church Office by mid-February, so that these can be considered by our March PCC's. It would be helpful to know not only what organisation but also specifically why you think we should

support them and whether you would be willing to act as a champion for that charity in your church.

One of the ways we have tried to raise the profile of those to whom we offer support is through intercessions and regular sharing of information on Sundays and in Life, but to make that happen we need people prepared to act as champions and pass information on.

Kevin Lawrence For the benefice Charitable Giving Group

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HIRING OUR CHURCH BUILDINGS IN STREET

Both the reordered Parish church in Street, and the Mission Church are great venues to hold events, celebrations, courses or other community activities.

It's been great to see an increasing number of groups booking in, either regularly or as a 'one off' to use our fantastic facilities. This is not only a great way of us fulfilling our vision to 'love our communities' but it also generates revenue for the church (and we all know how much this is needed at the moment!).

So, if you're part of a group or you want to organise an event or activity, why not consider using one of our church buildings to do so. You can find details on our website or pick up a leaflet in our church foyers about hiring our building.

For more information, please speak to Sonia in the church office

Kevin Lawrence

PS. There is also no reason why you cannot consider using our churches in Walton and Compton Dundon for suitable events and again please talk to Sonia in the first instance.

Walton

We had a good afternoon at Walton village Hall with the WI on the 15th November followed by a table at Compton Dundon's big breakfast and raised £280 for church funds. Thanks to Jackie, Philip and Maggie who gave their weekend and their crafts and produce.

It was such a joy to welcome Walton school for a Christingle service on the 27th Nov. A packed church enjoyed hearing about what a Christingle represents and of the wonderful work the Children's Society do and have done over the years.

Again, we welcomed KS2 from school at our coffee morning on the 28th where they sang some Christmas songs and a few songs about our world and creation. Everyone enjoyed this so much as we listened and watched their enthusiasm and happy faces. What a blessing.

We look forward to a variety of Christmas services available around the benefice thanks to Ana, David and Rachel for enabling this, setting us up for what Christmas is really about.

We will be having a meeting of the friends of Walton early in the new year but meanwhile look out for a date for a quiz evening.

Sandra

FIXING THE ROOF AT WALTON

In previous editions of 'Life' magazine we have shared details of the ambitious plans to reorder the inside of Holy Trinity as well as fixing some of the buildings more structural problems, particularly the roof.

We are continuing to plan for both and will organise further community consultations in the spring. In the meantime we want to get started on raising the money we will need to restore the roof.

We know that significant repairs are required to a structure that is now well over a century old and is showing its age. We have both leaks and damp problems, and we know, from professional advice, that if we leave it any longer things will only get worse. Internal reordering would also be more difficult without a structurally sound building.

So...

At our recent PCC meeting we agreed to launch an appeal to repair our roof and we would love to hear from church members throughout the benefice who can either contribute or fundraise for what will be a very large project for us.

Please have a word with Andy Savage if you want to know more. Financial contributions can be made in church or sent to our Treasurer, Sonia Beaty. Please ensure that you clearly mark any donation for the 'Holy Trinity Walton roof fund' so that we keep it separate.

This is a big project, but we believe in a big God!

Kevin Lawrence (for the Walton fundraising team)

Is There 'Junk' in Your Life?

'... LAY ASIDE EVERY WEIGHT, AND THE SIN WHICH SO EASILY ENSNARES ...' Hebrews 12:1 NKJV

Picture a big ship being worked on in dry dock. Beneath the waterline is all the 'junk' it has picked up during its voyages. Nobody can see it, but an experienced captain can feel it because his ship lacks the 'oomph' it once had. As a result, companies complain that it takes too long to get goods for their customers and the ship's owners are unhappy because it hurts profit margin in a competitive market. The effort required to remove the 'junk' is back-breaking and time-consuming, but there's no other way to do it. Finally, after months of hard work the dry dock is flooded with water, the gates open, and the big vessel heads out to sea and back into the profit column.

Writing to the believers at Corinth, Paul says, 'Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves ...' (2 Corinthians 13:5 NKJV). Let's be honest; it's easier to examine your neighbour than to examine yourself, or to talk about what you once accomplished rather than what you're accomplishing now. Are you slowing down? Are you losing spiritual momentum? Are you in the profit or loss column? You'll find the answer under the waterline where only God and you can see.

Carelessness, a critical spirit, compromise, conformity to the world, and coldness of heart – that's the 'junk' that builds up and slows you down. These are the subtle sins you must deal with in order to be everything God called you to be and enjoy the blessings He has in store for you.

From the daily readings in 'The Word for Today'. This booklet of devotional readings is published every three months and is available free of charge through the generosity of supporters, from: UCB Operations Centre, Westport Road, Stoke-on-Trent, ST6 4JF. Tel: 0845 60 40 401. Email: ucb@ucb.co.uk

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