

CHURCH ALIVE!

SWANAGE PARISH MAGAZINE

FEBRUARY 2026



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Rev Dave Richards writes:

As I write this, Christmas is still fresh in mind, and what an amazing Christmas it was! I saw some really significant signs of God at work over Christmas:

A large group of people joined in the Churches Together carol singing at the Christmas Market – we gave out all 150 Carol Sheets.

I was encouraged to see and hear about larger attendances at all our Carol Services. Studland attracted people from the whole village, the Christmas Celebration at St Mary's was a great coming-together of Church and Community, and the Christmas Eve service at St Mark's seems to be the Herston Community event of the year, (so much so that we are splitting it into two in 2026).

There was an openness to the Christian message which showed that the Holy Spirit is opening hearts and minds in our community.

With this in mind, let's trust that when we share the Good News of Jesus in a clear, confident and accessible manner, people will hear, and will come back to hear more. Let's pray that God will give us lots more openings to share the message.

Christmas is only just over, and we are already looking towards LENT; maybe time does go more quickly as you get older....

LENT gives us many opportunities:

It's an opportunity to be a little more reflective about our lives and our faith. Some people find it helpful to give up, or take up, something to this reflection.

It's an opportunity for learning. This year's Lent Course is all about Prayer – learning to pray more effectively is always a good idea!

It's an opportunity for greater fellowship through joining a Lent Group and sharing in Lent lunches. Many Christians in our 4 Team Churches, and in the wider Swanage Churches Together, will be studying the same material on Prayer. Learning together is a great way to promote greater Team and ecumenical unity.

It's an opportunity to prepare for Holy Week and Easter; the first Alleluia! of Easter is always a special moment for me. Lent reminds us that we need Jesus' help and grace to survive the temptations and trials of life, and, as we walk with Him through Passiontide, we see more clearly how much he loves us.

As we continue to serve the Lord as His Church in Swanage, we do so against the background of a growing interest in Christianity in our nation. Reports of the "quiet revival" are increasing. A recent YouGov study found that Gen Z were more likely to believe in a higher power than any other age group, with levels of faith now surpassing those aged over 65. According to the data, church attendance among 18 to 25 year olds rose from seven per cent in 2018 to 23 per cent in 2024, while belief in a higher power increased from 28 per cent to 49 per cent.

Perhaps this helps to explain the larger numbers at our Christmas services. It is good news, but it also presents a challenge. Are we ready to welcome more people to our churches, people with no Church background, who might have lots of questions, who might not understand much about church, and who might question "the way we have always done things"?

Maybe we need that teaching on prayer, available in our Lent Course, more than ever; if we are to respond to a growing interest in faith, and nurture those who are seeking Jesus, we need to be in touch with Him ourselves.

Have a Blessed Lent!
Rev. David Richards

St Mary's

February Services

Sunday Services

8.00am Holy Communion
10.30am Choral Eucharist
6.30pm Choral Evensong



Weekly Services/Events:

Tues	2.30pm	All Things Bright & Beautiful (particularly suitable for those living with dementia or any kind of special need)
Weds	10am-12.30pm	T-Pot in the Rectory Classroom
	11.00am	Holy Communion (every 4 th Weds with Healing)
Fri	5.45pm	Junior Choir practice
	6.30pm	Adult choir practice
	6-30pm	Friday Fun Club in the Rectory Classroom (term time only)

Sunday School (in St Mary's Rooms) follows the 10.30am
service on 2nd and 4th Sundays of the month

We now have a convenient QR code available for anyone who would like to make a donation to any of our three parishes. Simply scan the code shown here to give securely and support our parish.



Churchwardens' Challenge

You'll need to "bee" observant to find the answer to this clue!

"Where in St Mary's church can you find a beehive with saintly associations?"

Answers in writing to St Mary's churchwardens, please. A bottle of Prosecco or cordial for the first correct answer drawn at the Family Eucharist on 1st March.

St Mary's Notes

Preparation for an internal porch to replace the narrow double entrance doors continue. The Victorian Society has no objection to the plan – though the North Aisle was an Edwardian addition to the church in 1907/8. Achieving the repair of the North Gallery ceiling is going to take some time; while scaffolding is in place it will save money to decorate the Gallery rather than have a second lot of scaffolding when the church is redecorated at some point in the future.

As we hoped, Christmas was a busy time at St Mary's with all services except, surprisingly, the Crib Service, showing an increase in attendance. Because of practicality and concerns about their welfare, we no longer have calves and lambs in the church for the Crib Service but we do have a lively puppet sharing the story of the Nativity in an engaging way. It's not clear why attendance has reduced for this service: perhaps there are fewer children in the town, or more travel away to stay with relatives, or is there just more going on to spread attendance? The most noticeably increased attendance in 2025 was at the Advent Carol Service, rising year on year from 76 adults in 2021 to 119 in 2025.

As we go forward into 2026, two key volunteers are no longer able to help with practical tasks in church. They have left considerable gaps which we need to fill, so do please consider what practical tasks you are able to help with. Regular and occasional help is useful and a lot of tasks, like gardening and cleaning, can be done at a time of your own choice. The churchwardens will be glad to speak to anyone who wants to know more about what tasks there are.

At a recent Sunday 10.30am Eucharist, the church member leading intercessions asked us to take a moment and pray for one country. There is so much war and conflict in the world at present that the choice of just one to pray for was not easy..... .

Gracious Lord, in these troubled times, we lift our hearts in prayer for peace throughout the world. We pray for those suffering and living in fear through war and conflict. Bring them comfort and guide them to safer places. We pray that the world will experience a season of peace and tranquillity. Amen

Avril Harris, Churchwarden



**Regular Sunday Services
February**

8am Holy Communion

10.30am Family Worship with children's groups, except on
2nd Sunday All-Age Café Church.
1st Sundays Communion

6pm Informal Open Worship at Emmanuel Baptist church
on Feb 2nd and All Saints Feb 16th

a band from All Saints and EBC combine to lead an informal
hour of worship -all welcome

Weekly Calendar at All Saints

Coffee Pot Thursdays 10:30am

Art Workshop Fridays 10am

Opportunity to Pray together at All Saints

Weekly Thursdays 9:30 – 10am

Special events

7 February, Swanage Christian Men's Group Breakfast
@MacAllisters

All Saints News

Looking back into 2025 and forward to 2026, we have lots to be excited about. As all our team churches found, we were delighted to be able to welcome more people into our special services at All Saints to discover the JOY of Advent and Christmas and we are moving forward into the New Year with a real sense of anticipation for all that God has in store for us in 2026.

At All Saints, we generally have a verse for the year to focus on and encourage us. This year, we have a phrase from Hebrews 12v2 “fixing our eyes on Jesus”, which is the way in which we hope to do 2026, together working out in practice what it looks like to “run with perseverance the race marked out for us”. As we think about the diocesan strap line “making Jesus known”, it feels a pretty good baseline step to fix our own eyes on Jesus whatever else is going on.

In our café church service this week we gave the children 2 colours of playdoh: pink and blue, and asked them to mix them together. They created an impressive mass of purple playdoh - and then were challenged to separate out the 2 colours! Of course, impossible. We were thinking about how that is the level of integration we long for in each of our lives with Jesus – we are so closely connected that Jesus infuses every part of our life and cannot be removed.

I don't know if you remember that strapline from the Dogs Trust many years ago: “a dog is for life, not just for Christmas”. I've always liked the parallel – Jesus is for life – not just for Christmas. As we move into 2026, it is really good to pause and reflect; how integrated is Jesus into my life? Is he stuck in church on a Sunday – or is he intimately connected with everything I am and do. Always a good question to ask.

At our café church in January, we also welcomed Jackie Fowler, who will be doing some youth and children's work projects with us across the team over the next 7 months. As well as supporting us with existing activities and investigating new initiatives, she is exploring a longer-term commitment to chaplaincy in this area. And we look forward to sharing more with you as this takes shape.



Jackie's email address is ycprojects@swanageteam.com if you'd like to get hold of her.

On a really practical note, we are currently installing our new church computer -huge thanks to one of churchwardens, John Payne, for working on this: the congregation will be very pleased to have a computer that doesn't crash midway through services!

On Tuesday 27th January we will be starting our newest venture in the hall at All Saints – the 321 course. This is a 4 week course which looks at some of the big questions in life from a different perspective and invites us to see life through the eyes of Jesus. We will start with an informal meal, watch a film and share in interesting discussions. Particularly suitable for those who wrestle with issues of faith or have no faith at all. Do give me a call or email if you'd like to join, Jo 01929 208217 jo@swanageteam.com

With every blessing
Jo



DIARY DATES FEBRUARY 2026



Sunday 1st February - 10am Holy Communion

Tuesday 3rd February - 7pm Bible Study

Sunday 8th February - 10am Holy Communion

Wednesday 11th February - 11am Safeguarding Training
for St Mark's Church Committee

Sunday 15th February - 10am Holy Communion - with the
Rector

Tuesday 17th February - 7pm Lent Course begins

Ash Wednesday 18th February – Holy Communion at 5:30pm-
with Rev. John Cooper

Sunday 22nd February - 10am Celebration! Service
- 1pm Baptism of Ace Penny

Monday 23rd February - 7:30pm St Mark's Church Committee

Tuesday 24th February - 7pm Any Questions at All Saints Church
– No Lent Group

Choir Rehearsal – Mondays 6:15 - 7pm

Prayer and Share – Wednesdays 10 – 10:45am

LOOKING BACK..... As usual, we put a Christmas card through every door in Herston – many thanks to our dedicated team. St Mark's had a good Christmas, with a most enjoyable Christmas Dinner at the Village Inn, a post-Service Christmas party on the Sunday before Christmas (when we also celebrated Anne Roper's 70th Birthday) and a more than capacity crowd at our immensely popular Carols by Candlelight on Christmas Eve. As usual, we hosted the Team Epiphany Service. A surprising number of people, from all 4 Team churches, and EBC, turned out on a very frosty night. Many thanks to our Choir and Band, and to Colin Burgess, whose vision, skill and patience are endless.

The Junior Choir had a busy Christmas. They sang at the Christmas Tree Festival and a smaller group joined the adult choir to lead the singing at the Carols by Candlelight Service. A particular highlight was when the children joined the adults in singing "The Star Carol" by John Rutter. I am constantly amazed at the speed with which the children learn new music. We are working to include those who are able into the monthly Celebration! Service.

LOOKING FORWARD..... We had a very positive Church Committee meeting in January. We fixed dates for special events in 2026 and took further steps towards re-ordering the church to provide a more flexible space. We also decided to split the services on Christmas Eve 2026, with a shorter Nativity Service at 3:30pm and Carols by Candlelight at 5pm. People standing in the Porch for the whole Service is not very friendly, and we hope 2 Services will enable everyone to enjoy a less crowded Service. We also set a date for the whole Committee to undertake the basic Safeguarding Training Course, recognising our responsibility to make St Mark's a safe place for everyone.

Our fortnightly Bible Study transforms into a weekly Lent Group from Shrove Tuesday; this year we will follow the Church of England Prayer Course, developed by 24/7 Prayer International. With reports of a quiet revival gaining ground, prayer is a vital skill for all Christians.

As we look forward to 2026 we are always conscious of our purpose as God's people. We are not guardians of a listed building, not a music or flower-arranging society, not a social club or a self-help group; we are called to be Salt and Light in our community, and witnesses to the Good News of Jesus. We pray that all that we do will further His kingdom.

David Richards, Resident Priest

LENT COURSE 2026

In conjunction with other churches in Swanage we will be running a Lent Course, entitled 'The Prayer Course'. Based on the Lord's Prayer, this excellent 6 week course will enable us to grow and deepen our prayer lives.

Courses will be run in churches across Swanage and Studland. The ones being run in the Team are:

St Mary's (St Mary's Rooms) Mon 16th Feb 2.00pm

St Mark's Meeting Room Tues 17th Feb 7.00pm

St Nicholas Church Hall Thurs 19th Feb 11.30am

All Saints Fri 20th Feb 4.00pm

We will let people know what groups are being run in other Swanage churches soon.

We hope you can join us!

St Nicholas Studland News



**‘All you need is love, all you need is love,
All you need is love, love, love is all you need.’**

It can’t get much more explicit than that. John Lennon’s words in the Beatle’s song from 1967 are pretty direct. All you need is love. As St Valentine’s Day sidles up to us in February, with the shops filled with cards and treats for ‘that special person’ the theme of love is ever present. I know there are problems. Not everyone will have or will be that special person. Not everyone will get a Valentine’s card and yes, it’s getting very commercialised and the sentiments in the cards range from the soppy to the obscene, but in spite of all this, I think I’m willing to go along with the broad theme. So, I say, ‘Let’s get love moved up the agenda!’ After all, if I wanted to sum up the Christian message, I wouldn’t be far out in saying, ‘All you need is love’.

Some have actually described the Bible as ‘God’s Love Letter to the world’ and we can find evidence of that all the way through. Let’s have a quick look. Towards the back of the Bible we find a collection of letters, some written to whole churches and some to individuals. The author of one of them, St John (sometimes called the apostle of love) writes:

‘Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God.....This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him.....Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.’

And St Paul writing to the somewhat strife-torn church in Corinth reminded his readers that:

‘Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.’

I imagine those words would have been a great encouragement to their first readers and I hope might be the same to all of us now. We can love one another by being patient, kind, content, humble, selfless, forgiving, generous, trustful, protective, hopeful and persevering. This is not a list of sentimental feelings, but a call to action in gritty reality.

This sort of love makes all the difference to the world, all the difference to those who receive it and all the difference to those who give it. St. Paul is quick to remind his readers that of the three health measures by which he assesses a church, faith, hope and love, the most important is love. Love is the very nature of God. It is God’s gift to us. So, not just for St. Valentine’s Day, but for every day, not just for that ‘special person’ but for everyone, I say, ‘Let’s bring on the love!’

Revd. Tony Edmonds

Letter from the Bishop of Salisbury



It is rare to have the Feast of Candlemas, February 2nd, so close to the start of Lent, Ash Wednesday 18th February. With Easter very early this year, it means that there are only fifteen days between the end of the Christmas cycle and the start of

the season of reflection, abstinence and study. Not much time to change gear!

Or to use a liturgical description, only two Sundays of Ordinary Time. The name 'ordinary Time' comes not from the fact that some days are just plain 'ordinary' but that all time is ordered as part of the divine nature. Our telling and re-telling of the Christian Year is not merely a nostalgic rehearsal but the re-living of the truths that shape our lives as disciples of Jesus Christ.

Seeing life, and in particular living a Christian life as an expression of sharing in the divine nature is therefore anything but ordinary. If we believe that we are all created in the image and likeness of God, then how we live our lives can only ever be extraordinary, regardless of what happens to us. If God sees us and our 'ordinary' lives as a gift of himself, how are we to respond? I often wonder what God thinks of us when he sees what we do with this unbelievable gift.

The Christ-child was cared for by Mary and Joseph at his Presentation in the Temple (2nd Feb) cared for and carried. In Lent, we seek to care more for ourselves with a sacred sense of self-care. How different might this be if we see ourselves as

uniquely held by God, whatever the world thinks of us, and, even as we try to better ourselves, see ourselves as a gift, created in the image of God. Yes, this means you.

Psalm 139.13-14

"You are the one who created my innermost parts; you knit me together while I was still in my mother's womb. I give thanks to you that I was marvellously set apart. Your works are wonderful-I know that very well."

+Stephen, Bishop of Salisbury



Any Questions? next meets on Tuesday 24th February

at

All Saints' Church, Redcliffe Road,
Swanage,
when the speaker will be Kevin Burke.

His title will be:

"All done by Kindness - Magic,
Performance and Faith"

Kevin, who will be known to many locally, has spent his working life in the fields of theatre and performance as actor, director, playwright, magician, fire-eater, juggler and jester...etc, etc.

It should be an intriguing evening!

Doors open at 6.30pm (coffee/tea) presentation from 7pm
All are welcome!

Further details from d.stephen.w1@gmail.com

WORLD DAY OF PRAYER - FRIDAY 6th MARCH
EMMANUEL BAPTIST CHURCH at 10.30am
‘I will give you rest, Come’

The Christian Women of Nigeria are calling us to connect with their people. Despite living in an area of the world where there is ongoing conflict and the future is quite uncertain, the women of Nigeria are sharing in love, a service to give hope to everyone. The theme of the service, ‘Come, I will give you rest’ seems very appropriate for these women who will not give up sharing the love of Jesus Christ. World Day of Prayer is an international, inter-church organisation which enables us to hear about their hopes, concerns, reconciliation work and prayers in Africa. This was all meticulously prepared, translated, printed and distributed long before the current persecution began. This year, the World Day of Prayer falls on Friday 6th March .

The focus is from St Matthew ch11 v 28-30 ‘I will give you rest, Come’ and some lovely encouraging songs have been included. The WDP will be celebrated on this day in over 146 countries. We will share the same service , (which has been written in many different languages) and starts in Samoa on the International Date Line, then prayers continue and encircle the world - through Australasia, the Middle East, Europe, Africa, and the Americas before finishing some 38 hours later.

Please save the date and join us at 10.30am that day at Emmanuel Baptist Church and there will be time for fellowship over refreshments afterwards.

All are very welcome - men, women, children – there is great power in prayer.

Judy Forgan and WDP team

News from Swanage Depression Support

We are a small peer support group for adults experiencing, depression, anxiety or extreme stress, either in themselves or people close to them. We meet fortnightly on Wednesday evenings for confidential sharing and craft activities. Our meetings are usually positive as we share our problems and successes and talk over our lives. We have room for more members! Please get in touch if you are interested and we will arrange an informal meet-up. Alan's contact details are below.

Sadly, Natalie, one of our meeting facilitators, is having to resign due to pressure of work. That leaves us very fragile, so we are anxious to recruit a successor. Facilitators have some experience of depression - their own, in family or friends, or as mental health professionals. They need to be empathetic, good listeners and have skills in overseeing group discussions. Facilitators work in pairs, have time after each session to debrief and engage in professional supervision sessions, paid for by SDS. Appropriate insurance is in place. Commitment is one or two evenings a month.

If you think this could be you, please contact Alan at swanagedepression@outlook.com (phone 07748 672069) for a chat. We shall require a DBS check, references and an interview.

Christmas Day Meal

Thank you so much to everyone who prayed for and supported this event, which went really well. We entertained around 30 guests with a traditional turkey and Christmas pudding meal, followed by some community singing and a quiz. Unfortunately, people who stayed on



missed the King's Speech! We had about 30 helpers, mainly recruited through Swanage Matters, who helped with preparations, cooked, served, washed up and provided lifts.

We even had to decline some offers! Adam and Jo Garnish were heroes in the kitchen, but everyone worked well as a team. We were blessed with free use of the URC Hall, Christmas puddings from Love Cake, Hattie Browns ale from Jean and gift bags for everyone from Dorset Mums. This was Swanage community pulling together at its best!

There are many older people in Swanage who live alone and are often housebound. That can be very lonely! Swanage Linking Lives is looking for more volunteers to visit for one hour a week. That may seem daunting but it is very rewarding, as people are so grateful and real friendships develop. It is easy to fit one hour a week into even the busiest schedule. The people we visit are very flexible! Please contact Helen on 07495 534171 or email sllvolunteers1@gmail.com.



Swanage Medical Practice Patient Participation Group

Purbeck Integrated Neighbourhood Team Update

29 January 2026, 2:00-4:00pm, at Corfe Castle Village Hall

Everyone is invited to this event when the Purbeck Integrated Neighbourhood Team will be giving updates on all the work they have been doing over the last year - including the work they have been doing to develop a community approach to living well in Purbeck.

They will also be sharing the results of the survey about the health and wellbeing needs of people living in Purbeck, which was launched at the Health and Wellbeing Event held at The Mowlem in October.

The Purbeck Integrated Neighbourhood Team brings together all the providers of health and care services in Purbeck - including primary care, community care, adult social care, children and young people services and the voluntary sector - so they can work together more closely to help people stay well for longer and provide streamlined, personalised support when people need it.

The PPGs of all the GP Practices in Purbeck are also working with the Purbeck Integrated Neighbourhood Team to ensure people living in Purbeck are i

involved in improving and shaping local services.

Vaccinations

Flu and COVID-19 vaccinations are still available for those who are eligible.

Winter viruses spread more easily in cold weather - vaccinations can lower the risk of serious illness and help you avoid a hospital stay.

To find out more about how to get your vaccinations or about local walk-ins, visit the vaccination pages on the Stay Well Dorset website at: www.staywelldorset.nhs.uk/vaccinations/,

Staying Well this Winter

NHS Dorset is asking local people to plan ahead - and to use the right service, so care is available for those who need it most. They have created a simple guide to help you contact the right service when you or your family feel unwell - this can be found at: www.staywelldorset.nhs.uk/update/stay-well-this-winter/.



Elise and the team at James Smith Funeral Directors would like to extend our heartfelt thanks and deep appreciation for graciously allowing us to host our Christmas Mingle event in St Mary's Church.

Your generosity and hospitality played a significant role in making the event not only successful, but truly memorable for everyone who attended.



From the moment we arrived, we felt warmly welcomed and supported. The atmosphere of the church provided the perfect setting for fellowship, connection, and celebration during such a meaningful season. Your openness and kindness reflected the true spirit of Christmas—one of love, service, and community.

We are especially grateful for the time, care, and effort given by the team in accommodating our needs and ensuring everything ran smoothly. Please know that the willingness to partner with us did not go unnoticed and was deeply appreciated by all who participated.

Thank you for being a blessing to us and to the wider community. It is evident that the church is a place of generosity, compassion, and service, and we are truly grateful. We hope to host another Christmas Mingle with you next year.

Elise and the James Smith Team

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Please Help Request from Jocelynn

If anyone has got spare knitting wool, I knit scarves for homeless people. Not furry wool, just double knitting wool, bright colours please. My contact details are: Mrs Jocelynn Pfrangley, email lynnechurchserver@hotmail.co.uk

I attend St Mark's Church, Herston. Please leave in the church on the back pew with my name on it and your email address. Thank You!

Poem sent in by Rev Jo Levasier

We wake into a world
already held by God.
Before we've chosen our words,
before the lists start forming in our heads,
before confidence or doubt gets a say,
love has already spoken.
You're mine.
Belonging isn't a reward
for faith done well.
It isn't something we grow into
once we've learned the rules
or said the right prayers. It's the starting place.
Like water poured freely,
like a name spoken over us
again and again,
even when we forget it ourselves.
From here,
from this deep grounding of grace,
we step into the day
not trying to earn God's love
but learning how to live
as people who already have it.

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In Memoriam

Mrs Mary Teresa Dennis (91), St Aldhelms Court 24th November at St Mark's

Mrs Christine Ann 'Chrissie' Roberts (89), Hill View Road 22nd December at St Mark's

Mr Peter Christopher 'Pete' Dyke (82), Days Road 23rd December at St Mark's

Mr Roy Church (78), Burlington Road 16th January at All Saints

Mr Alan George Churchill (77), Heatherside, Studland 22nd January at St Nicholas

Mrs Carole Ann Gibson (87), Panorama Road 23rd January at St Mary's



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Crossword and Children's Page

This month and last month we have left out the Crossword and the Children's pages. If you would like these to be reinstated please let me know. Any feedback is very helpful.

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Hebrew Word of the Month

Derekh

Life is full of decisions. Some are small and everyday, others shape the direction of our future. In moments of uncertainty, many people ask the same question: Which way should I go?

The Hebrew Bible uses a simple but deeply meaningful word for this question: Derekh (דֶּרֶךְ, DEH-rekh). It means way, path, road, or manner of life. Derekh is not only about direction on a map; it describes how a person walks through life, the choices they make, and the values that guide them.

Throughout Scripture, derekh is used to speak about God's guidance. God does not only give instructions — He leads people step by step. He invites them to walk a path shaped by truth, obedience, and trust.

“Teach me Your way (derekh), O Lord, and I will walk in Your truth.” — Psalm 86:11

This idea becomes even clearer when we look at Yeshua.

Yeshua did not simply point people toward God's way — He walked it perfectly. Through His life, teaching, and actions, He showed what it looks like to live fully aligned with God's will. He guided His disciples not only with words, but by example. Following Him meant learning how to walk — how to live, love, serve, and trust God daily.

For believers today, Derekh reminds us that faith is not only about what we believe, but about how we live. God's way is not always the easiest, but it is always purposeful. Even when the path feels unclear, He continues to lead those who seek Him.

If you are facing decisions this week — whether big or small — let this word encourage you. You do not walk alone, and you are not left to figure things out on your own.

Derekh — The Way God Leads Us. As you move through this week, trust that God is guiding your steps, and that Yeshua walks ahead of you, showing the way forward.

Prayer

Lord Yeshua, thank You for leading me in Your way. Help me to trust Your guidance, walk in obedience, and follow You step by step. Give me wisdom for every decision and confidence that You are directing my path.

**With love and blessings,
Pastor Israel Pochtar**

Cover Page



The tree on the Cover Page is an Almond Tree . This will be the last of the “Trees of the Bible” covers, following the Fig Tree, the Olive and the Vine. The beautiful Almond Tree is the first tree to blossom in Israel and the last to bear fruit.



There are moments when the Lord gently stirs my heart to go up to Jerusalem—not for an appointment, not for an event, but simply to pray. Jerusalem has a way of slowing you down. It draws your attention away from noise and urgency and brings you back to what matters most: the presence of God and the faithfulness of His promises.

When I stand near the Western Wall, I am always aware that prayer here is never spoken in isolation. Every word is carried on the prayers of generations. For thousands of years, people have stood in this very place calling out to the God of Israel—kings and prophets, priests and pilgrims, mothers and fathers, soldiers and shepherds. Tears have been shed here.

Repentance has been whispered here. Faith has been declared here again and again.

This wall has seen destruction and exile, silence and return.

Yet prayer never stopped.

As I stand here, I often think of King Solomon.

When Solomon dedicated the Temple, he understood that this house was not only a building, but a meeting place between heaven and earth. His prayer that day was filled with humility, faith, and remarkable spiritual vision. Solomon did not pray only

for Israel's needs in his generation he prayed for people he would never meet, from nations he would never visit. He prayed that foreigners would hear about the God of Israel—about His great name, His mighty hand, and His outstretched arm. He prayed that they would come because of who God is. And he asked the Lord to hear their prayers when they turned their hearts toward this place.

“As for the foreigner who does not belong to Your people Israel but has come from a distant land because of Your name—for they will hear of Your great name and Your mighty hand and Your outstretched arm—when they come and pray toward this temple, then hear from heaven, Your dwelling place, and do whatever the foreigner asks of You, so that all the peoples of the earth may know Your name and fear You, as do Your own people Israel.”

1 Kings 8:41–43

This prayer reveals God's heart. From the very beginning, Israel was chosen not as an endpoint, but as a testimony. Through Israel, the nations would come to know the Lord. Solomon understood this—and he trusted God to carry that vision far beyond his lifetime.

Today, we are living in the fruit of that prayer.

Through Yeshua, the message of salvation went out from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth. The God of Israel is now worshiped in every language and on every continent. Believers across the nations pray to Him, trust in His Word, and stand with His covenant people. Many are drawn to this land not by politics or history, but by a deep spiritual connection to the God who keeps His promises.

Jerusalem itself stands as proof. Once destroyed and left in ruins, it is now rebuilt and alive. The people of Israel have returned. Prayer has returned. Worship has returned.

And alongside the people of Israel stand believers from the nations—lifting their voices together before the Lord. This is not a coincidence. It is fulfillment.

When I pray here today, I pray for the peace of Israel. I pray for protection, wisdom, and God's hand upon this nation. But I also carry you in my heart.

I pray for you because Solomon's prayer includes you.

I pray that the Lord would hear you from heaven and answer you according to His will. I pray for healing where there has been sickness, for restoration where there has been loss, and for comfort where there has been grief. I pray for provision for your family, wisdom for your decisions, and strength for your journey.

If you are standing at a crossroads, may the Lord guide you clearly. If you are waiting on Him, may He renew your faith and patience. If you are weary from long battles, may He surround you with His peace.

This place reminds me that God hears prayers that are spoken in faith—even when answers unfold slowly. Many kings, leaders, and ordinary people have come to Jerusalem seeking direction, and God has never failed to respond.

Christians from the nations have played a meaningful and personal role in my life and in the life of this ministry. I carry deep gratitude for that. So I stand here praying for you—not out of obligation, but out of love and thankfulness—trusting the same God who heard prayers here thousands of years ago.

May you rest in the assurance that the God of Israel sees you, hears you, and walks with you.

He is faithful.

He has not forgotten you.

And His promises endure from generation to generation.

Pastor Israel

Signs of the Times Day Conference

21 February 2026



For Zion's sake I will not keep silent...Isaiah 62:1

Be Not Silent with Zion Projects and Olive Branch

Join us for a day of teaching, prayer and worship.

The day will include inspirational teaching from Chip Kendal, Danny Stuppel and Anthony Malpas, who will be speaking about the importance of Israel to the Church in these times. All are welcome, please bring your friends and family. (No creche is provided).

Tickets available from www.benotsilent.uk

**Location: Harmans Cross Village Hall,
Harmans Cross, Swanage. BH19 3EB**

Times: 10.30:00- 20:00

Please bring a pack lunch, coffees and teas will be served from 09.30 and the intervals.

Letter from the Editor

Pastor Israel Pochtar's article page 31-33 from the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem, reminds me of a visit I made there in October this year. I had lunch with Israel in Ashdod, near the Gaza border. It was the week after the hostages that had been taken by Hamas on October 7, 2023, had finally been returned to their families in Israel. I was staying at the Jaffa Gate Hostel, just inside the old city walls, and on two occasions, in the evening, I walked through the narrow, ancient streets and sat down at the Wall amongst the many Jewish men who were praying fervently.

It always amazes me the energy and commitment that both the Jews and the Muslims put into their times of prayer. The Muslims pray five times a day, never missing even one of them. Maybe if we in the Church were as devout and committed as many of them, we would see far greater results. I find it a great challenge.

During February, there are two events that I would like to highlight. The first is the Any Questions? Evening "All done by Kindness – Magic. Performance and Faith." I have heard Kevin give his powerful testimony, and I am sure this is going to be an exceptional evening.

The second is a day conference I am organising at the Harmans Cross Village Hall, with the support of Olive Branch, on the 21st February. At the beginning of 2026 I'm sure that many of us are wondering what will happen in the Middle East, and how developments there will impact international events. At this event we will be seeking to discover what the Bible has to say on this subject.

God is faithful to His word
Even when there seems no way
Though time may pass, His memory will not fade
His promises will never fail

[Chorus]

Faithful He has been, faithful He will be
Time and time again, His Word returns complete
To His truth I cling, when the night is deep
Faithful He has been, faithful He will be

[Verse 2]

God is gracious when I doubt
He draws near though I retreat
Though I may wander through the wilderness
He goes with me and gives me peace

[Chorus]

Gracious He has been, gracious He will be
What I don't deserve, the Father gives to me
Where He leads my feet, I shall not want or need
Gracious He has been, gracious He will be
(Oh, You're gracious)

[Verse 3]

God is worthy of my song
Countless are His awesome deeds
His mighty hand has parted raging seas
For those He loves, He has redeemed

“He Will Be” by City Alive on YouTube