

# **Church Alive!**

## **Swanage Parish Magazine**

**October 2026**

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## **Rev Dave Richards writes:**

I have a had an interesting few months. Since June I have:

- Helped bless a sea rowing gig
- Helped with a large event for Primary School Leavers
- Presented Bibles to St Mark's School Leavers
- Taken part in a service in the Carnival Marquee
- Helped staff the Churches Tent at the Carnival
- Co-led a service from the Lifeboat (not for the sea-sick.....)
- Led Prayers at 2 Town Council meetings

Apart from keeping me quite busy, these events show that the Church is an important part of the wider community, and that we have many opportunities to serve our community in Swanage. It may be significant that most of this ministry took place away from our Church buildings and regular services. It is good to be reminded that there is life beyond our Churches, and that Jesus' commission is to be "salt and light" to the world around us.

Invitations for the Church to be involved in wider community events is part of a legacy, (possibly a dwindling legacy), of Britain as a "Christian country". They remind us that the hard work and service of previous generations of Christians has opened doors for ministry today. We should, however, never take these opportunities for granted; in a changing society they could disappear very quickly. There was, for example, a significant move, some years ago, to shift the Remembrance focus from Remembrance Sunday to Armistice Day; this was partly due to pressure from those who want to see a greater secularisation of society. In Swanage, at least, Remembrance Sunday remains an important event – possible because we are able to offer such a good Remembrance Service.

Service, (not only the sort with choirs and candles), is the key word here. We need to be ready meet people where they have a need – physically, (Foodbanks, Warm Spaces etc.), and spiritually. It is my experience that people are seeking a spiritual dimension in an increasingly materialistic world. Sometimes what we normally offer in Church just does not resonate with people; (if it did, we would be full every Sunday). Some people would not even think of entering a church building – they feel there is nothing there for them.

We Christians know that we have a great deal to offer people. We can introduce people to Jesus, who can transform lives in a way beyond our imagining. To do this successfully, we need to take every God-given opportunity to share what we have with the wider community. This might mean clergy blessing all sorts of things; (which will mean our congregations will need to free us for wider ministry). It will mean thinking and praying about services and events which reach out to those outside, rather than just satisfying those inside, our churches. It may, as in the case of St Mark's, mean adapting our buildings for wider ministry to the community.

All these things will be challenging, but the Christian message of the Cross challenges us to think, pray, and work in the service of others. We live in interesting times; post-Christian, but with a growing interest in “spiritual” things. We still have God-given opportunities to fill this spiritual void. The question I ask is: “do we have the faith and courage to take these opportunities?”

May the love of God, the new life of Jesus and the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit bless us and send us out in His service.

**Rev. David Richards**

## **Update on our Generous God, Generous People Stewardship series**

Back in June we looked Stewardship in our Generous God, Generous People preaching series, exploring our call to be generous in how we use our time, talents and treasure as Christians. In exploring giving, we encouraged the use of our Parish Giving Scheme (PGS) for regular giving, its advantages and encouraged those already using it to prayerfully review their giving.

We are very pleased to announce that 10 people/couples have now joined our PGS, an 8% increase in donors. Also, we have seen an increase in our regular giving to around £11,000 pa so far. Members of PGS are anonymous to us, but we want to offer huge thanks to all who have joined the scheme and all who have reviewed their giving. If you haven't yet joined PGS or reviewed your giving, it's not too late! Please contact one of us or John, our Treasurer, if you have any questions. The support of so many people is a great encouragement as we share the good news of Jesus Christ together.

**With our heartfelt thanks  
Ian and Jo**

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.



# St Mary's

## October 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<br><i>(particularly suitable for those living with dementia or any kind of additional need)</i> |
| Weds | 10am-12.30pm | T-Pot in the Rectory Classroom                                                                                                |
|      | 11.00am      | Holy Communion<br><i>(every 4<sup>th</sup> Weds with Healing)</i>                                                             |
| Fri  | 5.45pm       | Junior Choir practice                                                                                                         |
|      | 6.30pm       | Adult choir practice                                                                                                          |
|      | 6-30pm       | Friday Fun Club in the Rectory Classroom (term time only)                                                                     |

### Special Events

|                      |         |                                                                  |
|----------------------|---------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Sun 4 <sup>th</sup>  | 10.30am | Harvest Celebration and Family Eucharist                         |
| Sun 11 <sup>th</sup> | 6.30pm  | Come & Sing with Dr Philip Moore formerly at York Minster        |
| Sun 18 <sup>th</sup> | 10.30am | Luke the Evangelist: Choral Eucharist                            |
| Mon 19 <sup>th</sup> | 7.30pm  | Purbeck Film Festival 'H is for Hawk' with Q&A with the Director |
| Sun 25 <sup>th</sup> |         | Bible Sunday                                                     |

## **St Mary's Notes**

Last month, Cliff Sutton wrote about the importance of welcome and hospitality as a reflection of Christian faith, not just within our churches but to the wider community and to strangers. At St Mary's we have the opportunity to see a drawing of the proposed new interior glass porch at the west end of the church. There is also a picture of a porch built in a similar style to the one proposed for St Mary's. This new structure will offer a physically easier way into the church for everyone, particularly for those with mobility problems. It will also be a more welcoming and inviting way for visitors – “strangers” – to enter the church. We hope it will make the West Aisle less draughty too!

You might be aware of the children's area not only being refreshed with different tables and seats, and a more open arrangement, but also a slight migration of the area eastward. This is to allow space at the rear of the North Aisle where the Choir can assemble before services. There is also a bit of experimentation going on with repositioning chairs in a slight arc to give better sight of the pulpit, lectern, and chancel. Comments to the churchwardens welcome!

Given the financial pressures on our parish finances at present, you might be wondering how this new porch will be paid for. I'm pleased to say the Paul Baird, a stalwart of St Mary's, is giving his time and expertise to apply for grants towards the costs. Thank you, Paul, for your generous help. Whatever portion of the costs (towards £40,000?) that is not met by grants will come from capital reserves, including some part of legacies from departed church members. Of course, donations towards the cost of this project are welcome from current church members too.

The second week of September saw the Folk Festival as the first of our autumn/winter special services. Attendance was much increased this year; in 2025 about 133 adults attended but this year attendance was about 240. Also, we've been seeing some young faces in St Mary's congregation – very refreshing and very welcome.

Looking at the Lectionary for October, we have two Feasts, St Luke on 18th October and Saints Simon and Jude on the 28th. The C of E also commemorates William Tyndale, Nicholas Ridley, and Hugh Latimer, key figures in the English Reformation, all burned at the stake for their beliefs. I wonder where we would be now without their influence on the English Church? Not to mention the influence of Martin Luther, the great reformer, who is commemorated on 31st October. Food for thought!

**Avril Harris**

**Churchwarden at St Mary's**

## **'It Couldn't Happen Here'**

Thursday 8th October starting at 10:30 a.m. in The Rectory Classroom.

The first of our topical discussion meetings using themes from the 2026 Mothers' Union action plan. This month, 'It Couldn't Happen Here'.

You will also have the chance to enjoy coffee, cake, and general chat plus a little Origami!

Quite an experience, and we look forward to seeing you there.

Further details from Paul Baird ([pauldbaird@aol.com](mailto:pauldbaird@aol.com))

## **Purbeck Film Festival 2026 at St Mary's**

The film for this year at St Mary's is "H is for Hawk" at 7.30pm on Monday, 19th October. Actors: Claire Foy, Brendan Gleeson, Denise Gough, Lindsay Duncan. Rating: 12A

"Following the sudden, devastating loss of her father, Helen (Claire Foy) finds herself drifting in a fog of grief. Struggling to anchor herself to the world, she seeks solace in an unusual place: the training of a goshawk, one of nature's most ferocious and untameable predators.

Moving to a remote cottage to pursue this obsessive challenge, Helen attempts to channel her sorrow into the hawk's wild, instinctual spirit. As the bird begins to mirror her own isolation, the process forces her to confront the raw, uncomfortable realities of mourning and the long, fragile road toward healing."

Purbeck Film Festival was started in 1996 by a local group of cinema enthusiasts. If provided with a three-pin socket and a space, the Festival will put on a film. The upholstered chairs compare well with other venues' seating and the Festival provides a large screen. We have hosted the Purbeck Film Festival at St Mary's for about 10 years. A sponsor from the congregation makes a donation to cover the cost of hiring the church for the evening.

For the first time, this year we have a Q and A session after the film is shown with the film's director, Philippa Lowthorpe. She is an acclaimed BAFTA-winning British film and television director. Beginning in documentaries, she was the first woman to win a BAFTA TV Craft Award for Best Director for *Call the Midwife*. Her notable directorial work includes the hard-hitting mini-series *Three Girls*, the feature film *Misbehaviour*, episodes of *The Crown* and BBC drama *Prisoner 951* - which detailed the story of Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe's imprisonment in Iran.

## **Mark Crichlow's Epic Swim for Dorset and Somerset Air Ambulance (DSAA)**

Dear All,

I've been very grateful for the sponsorship and good wishes for this swim.

I completed a swim challenge around Brownsea island.

It wasn't the planned marathon swim, but instead a time trial of about 5 miles. I managed it in a very quick time. (8.1km in 2h 8m) It's being put forward for a merit award. This was to raise money for Dorset and Somerset Air Ambulance (DSAA). The amount raised is approaching £3,400, a fabulous amount. Still time to sponsor me. Photo of me at Brownsea castle.



I am presenting money to representatives of DSAA on Wednesday and can forward a photo from that.

**God bless.**

**Mark**

## **Christmas Cards**

The sale of Christmas cards last year across our three Swanage churches enabled a profit of £354 to be donated to parish funds. Many thanks to all who bought cards and to those who helped to display them at All Saints' and St Mark's. Sales were successful last year so I ordered more for this year. The cards have already arrived and will be displayed in our churches in early October.

If you are holding a parish event, and would like to have a card stall there, please get in touch with me at St Mary's.

**Avril Harris**



## Regular Sunday Services

8am Holy Communion

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

### **Weekly Church Calendar at All Saints**

TERMTIME All Saints Toddlers Mondays 9:15am

Coffee Pot Thursdays 10:30am

TERMTIME Art workshop Fridays 10am

### **Opportunities to Pray together at All Saints**

Weekly Thursdays 9:30 – 10am

*(with a focus on our mission partners on the final one of the month)*

## Special events this month

**Sun 27 Sept** Sea Baptism after the 10.30am service (approx. 11.50)

**Sat 3 Oct** 8.15am Swanage Christian Men's Group Breakfast @MacAllisters

**Sun 4 Oct** "host a roast" shared lunches around the parish – contact Jo to be involved

**Sun 4 Oct** Worship@6pm @EBC our joint bi-monthly worship event

**Thu 8 Oct** 7pm Any Questions @ Methodist church "Is God good for your [mental] health?"

**Sun 10 Oct** 2-5pm Fabulous Free Family Funday! Everyone welcome for this term's community event featuring huge bouncy slide, face painting, games, craft, nerf guns, free raffle and lots of cake! (offers of cake/assistance to Gill Kaiser)

**Sun 11 Oct** Harvest Sunday at All Saints – in aid of Swanage Food Bank

**Fri 16 Oct** 7.30pm Jonathan Veria Concert @ EBC, tickets £10 in aid of Allsort'd

**Sat 17 Oct** 7pm Light Up Dorset: Vision Prayer & Worship @The Lighthouse, Poole tickets £5 via Light Up Dorset website

**Sun 25 Oct** Lunch-after-church: BYO picnic & a bit to share, from noon.

## News from All Saints

As I write, Heather and I have just been dismantling our Prayer Room which we had open for 36 hours as part of the 24-7 Global Week of Prayer that took place Sunday 6 to Saturday 12 September.

The focus of the week of prayer was Philippians 2:10 “that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth” and so there were a wide range of prayer stations focusing on the names of Jesus and calling out in prayer for Jesus’ name to be lifted high across our world.

Highlights for me included praying with Jackie Fowler, who is currently in Australia for 5 months, via a WhatsApp video call at 5am our time, mid-afternoon for her. Isn't it a privilege to be able to connect across the globe? It was very much in the spirit of the global week of prayer – lifting up Jesus’ name across the world!



It was also great to welcome 13 young people from Friday Fun Club who came up for their regular Friday evening session. After the obligatory high-energy game outside and mountains of pizza, we took our shoes off, as a sign of going into holy space, and spent time allowing the young people to engage with the prayer activities as they chose. One of our teenage boys said that it was the best moment of his week. God really was at work!

It was also good to conclude the 36 hours with about a dozen of us gathering for a simple service of Compline, Anglican night prayer. We met as Christians old and new in the faith, rejoicing in the peace of this traditional form of worship.

We are also feeling grateful for the new Junior church team, leading our Sunday morning children's provision at All Saints. At the end of last term, many of our leaders had to step down and are delighted to welcome those who have stepped up, including 2 of our lovely teenagers who will be a great addition to the team.

On a personal front, it was good to get back into our local schools leading Collective Worship (that's assemblies in old money!) for the first full week of term. St Mary's RC school had Ofsted in whilst I was there – what a way to start the year – and it was really good to see how our schools are really trying to help their children engage more in collective worship and take part in a meaningful way.

Thank you for letting me use my time to get involved in local schools; it feels like a good investment!

Looking ahead at All Saints, we have another sea baptism at the end of the month: Lydia Elford will be braving the sea with myself and Cat Mutter to celebrate her new-found faith. Somehow, I don't think it will be as calm and hot as it was on the May bank holiday when we had our last baptism – but just as exciting.

October holds lots of exciting events up at All Saints: from our autumn Fabulous Free Family Funday (yes I do like "f"s) to our participation in wider Swanage and Purbeck events: Any Questions, the Jonathan Veira concert and Light Up Dorset Vison, Prayer and Worship night, to mention a few. It is such a privilege to work alongside Christians from all sorts of different churches both in Swanage, Purbeck and across the whole of Dorset. Let's make the most of all the amazing opportunities we have laid out in front of us.

**With every blessing**  
**Jo (team vicar)**

## DIARY DATES OCTOBER 2026



|                                                                     |                                                                                                                     |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Sunday 4th October                                                  | 11am Harvest Holy Communion<br>Followed by a Bring-and-Share Lunch                                                  |
| Thursday 8th October                                                | 1:45pm School Harvest Service                                                                                       |
| Sunday 11th October                                                 | 10am Holy Communion with Rev Dr Ian Bird                                                                            |
| Tuesday 13th October                                                | 7pm Bible Study                                                                                                     |
| Wednesday 14th October                                              | 7:30pm Churches Together (AGM) at EBC                                                                               |
| Friday 16th October                                                 | 7:30pm Jonathan Viera at EBC (£10 Tickets)                                                                          |
| Sunday 18th October                                                 | 10am Holy Communion with Rev John Cooper<br>Followed by refreshments in aid of 'Wear It Pink' for Breast Cancer Now |
| Thursday 22nd October                                               | 7:30pm Deanery Synod Meeting at All Saints                                                                          |
| Saturday 25th October                                               | Clocks go back 1 hour (an extra hour in bed!!)                                                                      |
| Sunday 25th October.                                                | 10am Celebration! Service                                                                                           |
| Tuesday 27th October.                                               | 7pm Bible Study                                                                                                     |
| Every Monday - 6:15pm Choir Rehearsal                               |                                                                                                                     |
| Every Wednesday - 10am Prayer and Share                             |                                                                                                                     |
| Junior Singing Club - - Tuesdays 3:30pm – 4:25pm (during term-time) |                                                                                                                     |

## St Marks Notes

I've said it before, and I will say it again .... There's always lots of events and happenings in St Marks and in beautiful Swanage. We had a really wonderful summer, although the lack of rain caused several heath fires and difficulties for farmers and gardeners.

We enjoyed music festivals, carnival, fireworks, and at St Marks, special birthdays and wedding anniversary celebrations, afternoon events including our annual BBQ, all very enjoyable and successful. We now have a shiny new BBQ, donated by Jean and Bernards' daughter, Helen, and partner Terry, and so we look forward to 'christening' it next summer for our BBQ, with the help of Helen, Terry, and Dave, once again!

On 12th September we opened the church for the annual Ride and Stride in aid of Dorset Historic Churches and welcomed some visitors to St Marks. After our successful walk last year, with other local churches, we hope to organise a walk, next year, raising money for all our churches.

As I write this, mid September, we are looking forward to Sunday 27th September, when we will hold a special Celebration Service of Thanksgiving and Blessing for our Pets. Both pets and their owners will be made to feel very welcome and I'm sure they will all be very well behaved! We will have plenty of refreshments, after the service, including coffee and cakes and special dog biscuits, for our furry visitors. Now, I wonder if I can borrow a lama for the morning.....!!

The 'Herston Our Village' Facebook page, is growing well and increasing in followers and local news blocs.

We are busy planning for our Harvest Festival celebrations, with our Harvest Service on 4th October, starting at 11am, with a Bring and Share Lunch to follow. We are collecting Foods for the Swanage Food Bank, (details in the pew sheet) I'm sure that the church will be full of wonderful autumnal colours and smells. Thank you, in advance, to everyone who has contributed to our Harvest Festival.

St Marks School will be having their Harvest Service in St Marks Church, on Thursday 8th October, when the children will be able to enjoy the wonderful harvest flowers and vegetable displays and to bring their harvest gifts for the Swanage Food Bank.



The nights are already drawing in and there is a slight chill in the air in the mornings and evenings. Summer is coming to an end, but Autumn is a wonderful time to admire the variety of colours and changes in the world around us.

The shops are starting to stock their winter goods, and I know I have already spotted some packets of Christmas cards on the shelves. Oh my!!!

### **A reflection:**

*Hope – giving God,  
thank you for creating a world full of seeds  
that testify to your loving investment  
in the land and in our lives.  
Just as you rejoice to see those seeds bear fruit,  
we come to you at this festival time  
with the fruit of praise and thanksgiving  
for your goodness and faithful love.  
Amen*

(by Martyn Payne)

**May God Bless and Keep You.**

**Anne Roper**

**Church Warden**

## **St Nicholas Studland News**



We have turned the corner of the year. The autumnal equinox has come and gone, daylight hours are shorter, more precious and the natural world begins its journey towards winter. At the end of this month British Summer Time will finish and the evenings will certainly come upon us more quickly. I have never felt the arrival of Autumn to be a time of darkness, though, rather it speaks to me of completeness: a beautiful completeness. Trees and shrubs bear their fruits of nuts and berries, of apples and plums. The oaks and ash, beech and birch, field maples and rowans shed the seasons leaves in a riot of browns and gold and reds and yellows.

The French existential author, Albert Camus said, “Autumn is a second spring when every leaf is a flower.”. Many of our summer visitor birds will have returned to their southern homes, but we may still see the swallows and House Martins for a while. Their place will be taken by Redwings, Fieldfares and Bramblings, coming here to escape the harsher winters of the far north. All that change, all that colour: in the end, October is a rather exciting month!

In the church year, many of us will be celebrating Harvest Festivals, singing the lovely familiar hymns, “We plough the fields and scatter” and “Fill your hearts with joy and gladness”. We shall celebrate the generosity of our creator God and speak of the wonder of creation and the beauty of the rhythm of the

seasons. There will be so much to say “Thank You” for and much to reflect on as we confront the terrible inequalities in our world, where a few have far too much and many have not enough. I think my favourite harvest hymn is “Come ye thankful people come”. It was written by Henry Alford who lived in the parish in which I did my curacy, (but somewhat before my time!) his rather grand rectory now a private home. He went on to be the Dean of Canterbury Cathedral. Alford gives thanks to God for the harvest, but then goes on to picture us as God’s harvest:

*We ourselves are God's own field,  
Fruit unto His praise to yield;  
Wheat and tares together sown,  
Unto joy or sorrow grown.  
First the blade, and then the ear,  
Then the full corn shall appear;  
Lord of harvest, grant that we  
Wholesome grain and pure may be.*

I like that picture. I like to think of us growing from seed, coming into vigorous growth and our full fruitfulness and then entering the beauty of Autumn, and finally being gathered into God’s eternal loving purposes. There is so much that is life-giving in that image. It points to a direction and meaning in our lives. It points to our lives as gifts to the world, to one another and to God. But perhaps best of all, it points to the value and beauty of getting older, entering that Autumn of life, where we can become more beautiful, where we can become more fully the person God made us to be. That is such a counter-cultural image, where age is more associated with decline and loss of worth.

Whether we are young or old, I hope we shall all enjoy October and its Autumnal feel. I hope we shall take time to stop and celebrate and give thanks to God for times and seasons and for His abundant gifts in creation.

I hope we shall reflect on the vast inequalities that we see in this world and ask ourselves how we might make sure that all share in the Earth's abundance. I hope we shall be inspired by the colour and fruitfulness around us to see through them to a creator and creative God, who shows us such kindness and love, especially in the gift of His Son, Jesus.

**Revd. Tony Edmonds**

### **Cover Story**

*I will lift up my eyes to the hills—  
From whence comes my help?  
My help comes from the Lord,  
Who made heaven and earth.  
Psalm 121. 1-2*

### **Quotation**

Christ is like a river in another respect. A river is continually flowing, there are fresh supplies of water coming from the fountain-head continually, so that a man may live by it, and be supplied with water all his life. So Christ is an ever-flowing fountain; he is continually supplying his people, and the fountain is not spent. They who live upon Christ, may have fresh supplies from him to all eternity; they may have an increase of blessedness that is new, and new still, and which never will come to an end.

**Jonathan Edwards**

## The Rev'd Natalie Davies

In mid August, we said 'goodbye' to the Rev'd Natalie Davies, our Team Curate and her husband Joseph. Natalie led her final Evensong at St Mary's on August 10th and there was a farewell reception afterwards. On Tuesday 1st September, a good number from both parishes in our Team attended a wonderful Evensong at St George's Chapel, Windsor Castle, and witnessed her installation as Succentor during the service. She is now also Chaplain to St George's School. We want to thank Natalie and Joseph for all they gave to our Team during their time with us. Please remember them in your prayers as they settle into life at Windsor Castle and for Natalie as she settles into her new post.



Photo Caption: The Rev'd Natalie Davies after her installation as Succentor at St George's Chapel, Windsor with Canon Dr Nick Brown and Bishop Christopher Cocksworth, The Dean of Windsor.

# ***IS GOD GOOD FOR YOUR (MENTAL) HEALTH?***



## **Any Questions?**

**Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> October 2026,**  
7.00 pm at Swanage Methodist Church  
105 High Street, Swanage, BH19 2LZ

**Doors open at 6.30 pm coffee/tea  
presentation at 7pm.**

**All are Welcome**

more information from David Williams: [d.stephen.w1@gmail.com](mailto:d.stephen.w1@gmail.com)

### **Speaker: Dr. Alan Kerry**

Alan was for over 30 years a GP, trainer and Course Organiser in the NHS, with a special interest in mental health. For many years he was administrator and Editor of Faith & Thought, a Christian forum for exploring issues of Science, Faith and Society.  
He loves skiing and being a grandad.



## Art Workshop

We have started the new year with enthusiasm, working with papier mache. We have room for more members, so if you would like to join us for the second half of this half term (Paper Clay), please get in touch (£28 for 4 sessions, starting 2nd October.). We also welcome visits from praying supporters. Please warn us first!





**Art and Craft @ All Saints**  
**Paper Mache and Paper Clay**

**Friday mornings 10—12    All Saints Church Hall**  
**£56 for 8 sessions starting 4th September 2026**  
Reduced Prices available.    Booking essential  
People facing challenging life situations especially welcome.  
Individual attention given.

Art Workshop, Swanage  
01929 475883  
manager.artworkshop@outlook.com  
artworkshop swanage

Supported by:  
Valentines Trust  
Dorset Community Foundation



**Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> November, 10am – 12.30**  
**All Saints Church Hall, Ulwell Road, Swanage.**  
**Entry £1 (under 16s, 50p)**

- \* Your Stall Here!
- \* Jams and chutneys
- \* Handmade crafts
- \* Bric a Brac
- \* Coffee and cake
- \* Connect with local groups and organisations
- \* Creativity by Art Workshop on show

**Table Hire (6' x 2') £5. Stallholders from 9am**  
**Book at [manager.artworkshop@outlook.com](mailto:manager.artworkshop@outlook.com) (07871 799479)**

**A local community event by** 

## Quotation

*Church isn't about bums on seats. It's about how we can share the love of God and what he has given us. Jules Murdy Chapel-en-le-Frith Methodist church*

Quotation sent in by a reader. We always like to hear from you!

# **Purbeck Christmas Tree Festival - Save the Date**

## **- December 3rd - 5th 2026**

Would you like to participate in this year's Purbeck Christmas Tree Festival at the beginning of December? Spaces are limited so you need to book soon - see below.

It is being held at Emmanuel Baptist Church, Swanage for three days from Thursday 3rd December to Saturday 5th December between 10am and 6pm. On Sunday 6th Dec there is a special remembrance service at 4pm called 'Lights of Love'.

How can I take part?

We invite you to sponsor a tree and decorate it to highlight your group, your church or business/charity in the local area. We source the trees locally for you to sponsor at £25 for a 4'6" or £29 for a 6' Norway Spruce. This year's theme is Favourite Christmas Songs.

We ask you to come and set up your unique tree between 9am and 4pm on Wednesday 2nd December when you will need to bring a stand to put your tree in, also decorations on the theme and a sign or emblem to advertise your sponsorship. LED lights will be provided so please do not bring your own. After the festival, the tree is yours to take away. You can dismantle it either after 6pm on Saturday 5th or on Monday 7th December between 9am and 12noon. This is a non-profit making event, and any donations received will go to two nominated charities which this year are Allsort'd and the Swanage Lifeboats.

To sponsor a tree, please request a booking form by contacting Janet Norley at Emmanuel Baptist Church by emailing - [administrator@emmanuelbc.org.uk](mailto:administrator@emmanuelbc.org.uk) or you can ring 01929 427706 and leave a message.

Early booking is essential for this popular event and the deadline for tree bookings is Monday 9th November.

**Judy, Janet and team**

## **Bishop Karen's Letter October 2026**

Who is my Neighbour ?

The tragic death of Dr Jason Arday over the summer caused many of us to ponder the treatment of those in our society different from ourselves. One of the basic teachings of pastoral care is that we all have prejudices, and a need to acknowledge them. The recognition of our own unconscious bias is a necessary and Godly habit we do well to attend to regularly before it mars our judgement or causes offence.

In a society which is increasingly governed by fear of the 'other', Christians are called to act justly and fairly, treating everyone with respect and honour. The parable of the Good Samaritan demonstrates that gift and care can come from where they are least expected.

October has for a good number of years now been Black History Month. Black history is an integral part of Britain's national story. This year's theme, "Honouring Our Communities," invites us to recognise the individuals whose everyday contributions shape, support and sustain Black life across the United Kingdom.

Andrew Bogle was a valet, butler and restaurateur. Born in Jamaica in the early 1800s he lived enslaved on a sugar plantation. He was brought to England by the state manager and worked as his valet in Upton House in Poole in 1828. In 1836 in Canford Magna Church Andrew married Elizabeth Young. Later Andrew retired to Australia to run a restaurant. Andrew's life is one of many highlighted by Dorset Hidden Histories, a resource supported by DEED which promotes global education and learning.

Black history is not a specialist subject. It is present in our towns and cities, in public service, in the arts, in business, in faith communities and in family memory. It forms part of the social, cultural and civic development of the United Kingdom. As we mourn the death of Dr Arday, let us pay attention to those who have been and who are marginalised around us, seek to learn about their lives and stories and continue to work for peace and justice.

Bishop Karen

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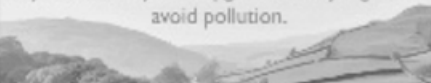
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## Family News

### Funeral at St Mary's:

Elizabeth 'Sarah' Claxton (58), Ballard Estate Swanage 11th September

### Wedding at St Mary's:

Robert Maugham and Zoe Johns 5th September

### Wedding at St Nicholas:

James Handley and Elizabeth Price 5th September

## Swanage Depression Support

It is with great regret that we have to announce the closure of this group. We have attracted so few people to our meetings that we are really not viable. We tried to revive an earlier group that had fallen into abeyance, but the situation seems to have changed – or perhaps we adopted an inappropriate model. We are disappointed to be letting down the 3 or 4 people who sporadically attended, but cannot see a viable way to continue. Perhaps there needs to be a more radical approach to supporting people with mental health needs in Swanage. We are grateful to people who have offered us encouragement over the past eighteen months, including pointing people in our direction.

**Alan Dominy**

**On behalf of the Steering Group.**



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**A thought-provoking reflection on the result of the Assisted Dying Bill vote on Friday 11 September [from Revd Charity Tozivepi-Nzegwu, a theologian, storyteller, justice centred Equality Diversity Inclusion specialist, author, Methodist minister, & speaker.]**

Beloved, yesterday, MPs rejected the Assisted Dying Bill by 286 votes to 270. Some people will have received that news with relief, while others will be heartbroken that the decision did not go the other way. I hold both in prayer. There is no win in this for me.

The questions surrounding assisted dying are profoundly human, and I cannot pretend that I have resolved all of them.

For many years I cared for people with cancer and palliative care needs, including when there was no further curative treatment to offer. I encountered people who desperately wanted more time and others who were ready for death to come. I learnt how physical pain, emotional distress and psychological suffering can alter the way someone sees their circumstances and imagines the future. I also cared for people who refused treatment and later changed their minds, sometimes only days later. That does not mean that decisions made in suffering should be presumed mistaken, nor does it give us permission to disregard people's choices. It has made me cautious about treating decisions made at the limits of human suffering as uncomplicated.

Twenty-five years ago, someone very dear to me took their own life. I know from that experience that a decision about one's own death, however personal, does not end with the person who dies. Its consequences continue in the lives of those who love them, and I still live with something of that pain. "Suicide and assisted dying" are not the same, clinically, ethically or legally, and I would never collapse the distinction between them.

But that experience inevitably makes me wary of treating decisions concerning death as belonging only to the individual. It does not give me an argument with which to defeat somebody else's experience. It gives me humility.

I am convicted that Christian faith should never romanticise suffering. There is nothing holy about untreated pain, and keeping someone alive at all costs is not necessarily the same as honouring life. There are times when treatment has reached its limits.

Recognising that burdensome or futile treatment should not continue, while continuing to provide excellent palliative care, is not abandonment. I have understood allowing death to come in those circumstances as morally different from deliberately bringing death about.

Yet I recognise that this distinction is itself contested, and it is one of the places where the ethical difficulty of assisted dying becomes particularly acute.

For this reason, I struggle with Christian responses to today's vote that stop at "Praise God". I understand why some Christians give thanks and why some people experience this decision as protection. Yet there are also people living with terminal illness who desperately wanted the decision to go the other way, and families whose experiences of difficult deaths have brought them to a different conclusion. They are not an argument to be defeated. They remain our neighbours, and I hold them in prayer too.

.As a Zimbabwean Christian woman, I was formed within an understanding of human life in which we belong to one another. Dependence does not diminish personhood because there are seasons when I carry you and seasons when you carry me. Needing another human being for food, washing, medication, movement or companionship does not make someone less human, nor should dependence make anyone feel that their continued existence asks too much of the people around them.

Yet I cannot speak about medicine, vulnerability and institutional power as though history began today. Black bodies, women's bodies, disabled bodies and poor bodies have not always been treated as equally valuable by medicine, the state or even the Church. That history does not decide the assisted dying question, but it should make us attentive to power. It should make us ask whose pain is adequately treated, whose testimony is believed and what happens when scarcity begins to shape what society describes as choice.

Paul's description of the body in 1 Corinthians 12 has stayed with me. He writes that "the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable" (1 Corinthians 12:22, NRSV). In a culture that can measure human worth through independence and productivity, that is a radical claim. Illness does not make someone dispensable, and dependence does not diminish their belonging

But Paul does not allow me to use that text simply to tell a suffering person what they must endure. A few verses later he writes, "If one member suffers, all suffer together with it" (1 Corinthians 12:26).

If I take that seriously, I must listen to the person who is suffering, including when what they tell me unsettles my theology.

To call someone indispensable while refusing to hear what life feels like inside their body would be a strange kind of Christian solidarity.

So I remain with the question at the heart of this debate for me: before society offers someone assistance to die, justice requires us to ask whether we have adequately assisted them to live and to die with dignity.

That question cannot be separated from the unequal provision of palliative and social care. We cannot speak confidently about autonomous choice while the quality of care available to a dying person can depend upon where they live or the resources available to them. If Christians insist that life is sacred, that conviction must have material consequences. It must be visible in properly funded end of life care, meaningful support for those providing it, and enough time for nurses to nurse. It must be visible in communities and churches willing to remain when there is nothing left to cure or fix. Dignity at the end of life should not depend upon the resources or social position of the person who is dying.

Yet good care cannot remove every form of suffering. Medicine can relieve much, but it cannot make every dying process bearable to the person experiencing it. Better palliative care cannot become a phrase with which we silence someone who tells us that their suffering has exceeded what they can bear.

Cancer and palliative care nursing taught me to take that voice seriously, just as it taught me how suffering can change, how decisions can change and how dangerous it can be to presume that one moment necessarily contains everything a person might later want. I can listen, care, advocate and remain present, but I cannot inhabit their body for them. That boundary has stayed with me.

Yesterday's vote decided the fate of this Bill. It has not resolved the moral questions that brought it before Parliament, and it has certainly not resolved them for me. Those questions will continue to arrive at bedsides, carried in human bodies rather than theories.

They will be lived by dying people and those who love them, and encountered by those called to care when medicine, law and theology cannot provide uncomplicated answers.

Nursing has taught me that suffering can alter what the future looks like, while also teaching me never to presume that I know another person's suffering better than they do. My Christian faith tells me that those who appear weakest among us remain indispensable. And my own experience has taught me that death reaches beyond the individual. These truths do not give me an easy answer. They are part of the reason I cannot accept one.

### **A prayer**

God of life and of our dying, hold tenderly those for whom these questions are painfully real. Give us grace to listen before we judge, courage to protect without silencing, and compassion to remain with one another when there are no easy answers. May those who suffer know that they are heard, held and indispensable. Amen.

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## Hebrew Word of the Month

There is something about facing a difficult situation alone that makes it feel even heavier. The problem may still be the same, but when someone you trust is standing beside you, it changes the way you face it. You know that whatever happens, you do not have to carry it by yourself.

This week's Hebrew phrase is **Ani Imcha** (אני עִמָּךְ, pronounced: ah-NEE eem-KHA), meaning *"I am with you."* We find these words many times in the Bible, especially when God's people are afraid or do not know what will happen next. I find it interesting that God does not always explain everything to them. He does not always tell them how the problem will be solved. Many times, He simply reminds them: I am with you.

We see this in the life of Isaac. In Genesis 26, Isaac was going through a difficult and uncertain time. There was famine in the land, and he also faced conflict over the wells his servants had dug. Every time they found water, someone seemed to come and argue with them about it. Isaac had to move from one place to another, not really knowing where he would finally be able to settle.

Then one night the Lord appeared to him.

*"I am the God of your father Abraham; do not fear, for I am with you. I will bless you and multiply your descendants for My servant Abraham's sake." — Genesis 26:24*

Right there in the middle of Isaac's uncertainty, God said, **Ani Imcha**—I am with you. God did not tell Isaac that there would never be another problem. He reminded him that the God who had been faithful to his father Abraham was also with him. Isaac could continue moving forward because he was not walking alone.

Many years later, God spoke very similar words to Israel through the prophet Isaiah. The people were facing powerful enemies and an uncertain future. There were many reasons for them to be afraid. Yet the Lord told them:

*“Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.” — Isaiah 41:10*

I love the reason God gives them not to fear. He does not simply say, *“Don't be afraid.”* He says, *“Do not fear, for I am with you.”* This is something we also need to remember. When we are going through a difficult time, usually our first prayer is for God to change the situation.

We ask Him to open a door, solve the problem, provide what we need, heal someone we love, or show us what is going to happen next. Of course, we should bring these things to God. He wants us to pray and trust Him with our needs. But sometimes we become so focused on waiting for God to change the situation that we forget He is already with us in it.

This is where **Ani Imcha** becomes more than just a Hebrew phrase. It becomes something we can hold on to. I may not know what will happen tomorrow, but God is with me today. I may not understand why something has happened, but I am not facing it alone. I may still be waiting for an answer, but God has not left me while I wait.

Then we come to Jesus..

At the end of Matthew, Jesus gives His disciples a huge responsibility. He tells them to go into the nations, make disciples, baptize them, and teach them to follow everything He had commanded. Just imagine what these men must have thought.

They did not have all the answers. They did not know where this calling would take them or what they would face along the way. And they would face many difficult things. There would be opposition, rejection, persecution, and times when they would have to depend completely upon God.

But Jesus finished His words to them with a promise:

*“And behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”*

— *Matthew 28:20*

**Ani Imcha. I am with you.**

They could go because Jesus was going with them. They did not have to know everything that was waiting for them. They simply needed to trust the One who had called them. The same is true for us.

Following Jesus does not mean that every road will be easy. There will be things we do not understand. There will be prayers that seem to take a long time to answer and moments when we are not sure what our next step should be. But through all of these things, His promise remains.

His presence does not mean we will never walk through difficult places. It means we will never walk through them alone.

Maybe you are walking through something today that you would never have chosen for yourself. Maybe you have been asking God for an answer and you are still waiting. Perhaps you are worried about your family, your future, your work, or something you simply cannot control.

You may not know yet how God will answer. You may not be able to see what is around the next corner. But you can know this: Ani Imcha. I am with you.

Whatever road is ahead of you, you do not have to walk it alone.

## Prayer:

“Lord, thank You that You are with me. When I am afraid or uncertain about what is ahead, help me remember Your promise: **Ani Imcha—I am with you**. Sometimes I become so focused on asking You to change my circumstances that I forget You are already beside me. Help me to trust You while I wait, to receive Your strength when I am weak, and to follow You even when I cannot see the whole road ahead. Thank You, Jesus, that wherever You lead me, I never have to walk alone. Amen.”

**Blessings from Israel,**  
**Pastor Israel**

## Letter from the Editor

I find the two articles above deeply moving and complimentary. One, with deep compassion, points out that there are no easy answers to terminal illness, especially when accompanied by pain. The other reminds us that however bad our situation becomes, **Ami Imcha**, Jesus is always with us. They reminded me of the four months I spent on the Durlstan Haematology Ward in Poole Hospital, with stage four cancer. The rooms only had two beds in them, so I had the opportunity to get to know well several other men who were suffering from various stages of cancer. The last person I was with had an advanced stage of cancer, and was paralysed from the waist down, and often in pain. We grew very close, and I was able to share with him my faith in the One who is always close to us. One night I was really touched when he called out, “Good night Anthony, I’m praying for you.” We were discharged on the same day, and sadly he died two weeks after going home. Why he died and I was healed I shall never know. All I can do in all humility is say the last verse of the hymn on the back page, “*In Thee , O Lord, I put my trust.*”

Be still and know that I am God.  
Be still and know that I am God.  
Be still and know that I am God.

I am the Lord that healeth thee.  
I am the Lord that healeth thee.  
I am the Lord that healeth thee.

In thee, O Lord, I put my trust.  
In thee, O Lord, I put my trust.  
In thee, O Lord, I put my trust.

Beautiful hymn that we sang during Compline at All  
Saints at the end of the 36 Hours of prayer.  
Available on YouTube