Open Space

SAINT STEPHENS SOUNDWELL

KNOWING JESUS... MAKING JESUS KNOWN!

Staying calm in times of distress

SO MUCH good happens in the darkness, yet humans have always sought to keep it at bay for fear of what lies outside the little circle of light.

AND spiritually, as well as physically, darkness often confuses and unsettles us. Humans generally want clarity, vision and pathway so the idea that Jesus is a light in our darkness finds a strong residence within us.

And yet, if the path was always clear and well lit, would that be good for us?

WHEN the disciples ran into a violent storm on Lake Galilee, they realised Jesus was calmly sleeping in the corner of the boat. They woke him up demanding:

'Teacher, is it nothing to you that we are going down?' (MARK 4:35-41 The Message). Jesus calms the storm then asks disciples two challenging questions:

'Why are you such cowards?
Don't you have any faith at all?'

Whatever they should have done, it is clear that waking Jesus up from his nap, was not one of them. If they had had more faith, could the disciples have stilled the storm themselves, or given some of them were experienced sailors, could they have managed by themselves if they have been braver?

I am really not sure but it leads me to the question; *what if they'd just let the storm carry on without asking Jesus for help?* Would they have capsized?

Would they have died? What would Jesus have done?

What would God have revealed of himself? What would the disciples have learnt?

In apparently solving what seems like an emergency situation, the disciples never found out what could have happened if they'd been braver and had more faith.

So, it rather looks as if the storm incident was a lost opportunity as far as the disciples were concerned.

Sure, they witnessed a miracle, but what did they miss by sidestepping this ordeal?

Continued overleaf>

JULY 2026

Mission Partners with St Stephens:

- Beloved
- Bristol Churches City Fund
- Bristol City Centre Soup Run
- Bristol Schools Connection
- Christian Aid
- Community of the Sisters of the Church
- Emmaus
- Harvest for The Hungry
- One25 Project

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Staying calm in times of distress

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

AS the Church of England, we are living in times of turbulence and darkness.

Due to declining numbers, the way Churches are being led, has and will continue to change, with formal ministry being withdrawn or centralised—this has been a reality for years.

How we welcome our sisters and brothers that are LGBTQIA+ continues to divide us. As St Stephens Church in Soundwell we are going through a time of change and uncertainty. It may well feel as if we are in a storm from which we need rescuing from.

THERE'S NO going back to what the church was. Even if we manage some of the old 'normality'—the church has changed because we have changed and the church is never a building but the people.

With the best of intentions, there will be some folk who will try to erect lights to give clear direction/vision to make people feel more secure.

I am reminded of planting up chilli and tomato seeds.

After the planting is done, they rest on the window sill, buried deep in soil whilst their transformation into plants begins.

We walk away and leave them be for a while.

And similarly, sometimes providing and maintaining the right conditions for the work of God to develop is all we need to be doing.

Attempting to control the chaos and bringing artificial light to the scene, we are in serious danger of missing what could be happening but for our interference or, even worse, unintentionally hindering what God is doing where his work needs to remain hidden for a time.

Do we have enough face to acknowledge that Jesus might know what he's doing better than us when it comes to the church, even if the way is dark and the water is choppy? Are we brave enough to hang tight and stop worrying? I hope so.

I suspect those who can, might even enjoy what emerges from the darkness. They may even find joy in the midst of the storm.

Tuesday 9 to 11.30am
14th & 28th JULY

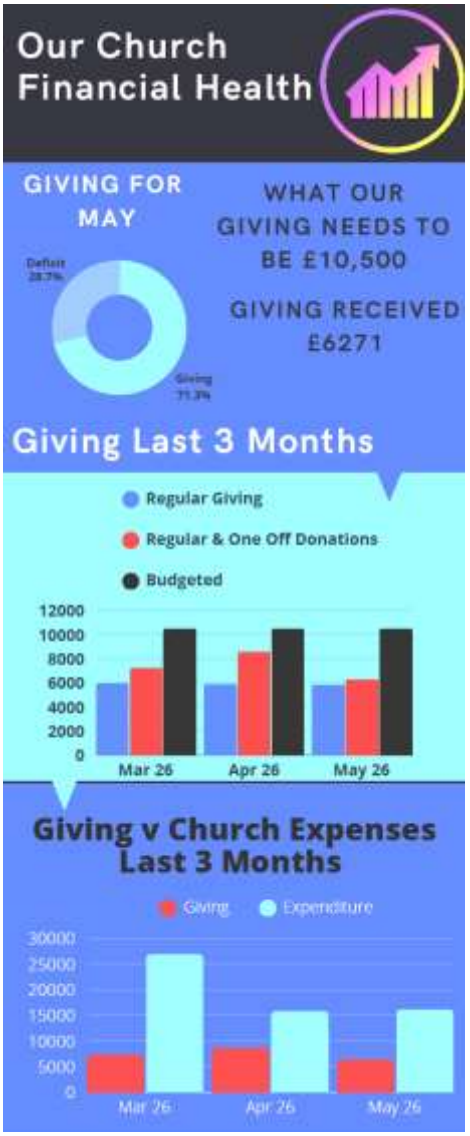
Please note that under 17s must be accompanied by an adult).
IN OUR CHURCH ROOM

BRING your Bible!

WEDNESDAY EVENINGS
7.15pm to 8.15pm

WE meet in the Church Room for anyone who wants to join in with simply reading the Bible! Though the scriptures in the Bible are thousands of years old, they still hold immense power, wisdom and guidance for us today!

There is no set structure or any course work to worry about and **everyone** is welcome!



Join us for
COFFEE/ CHAT & COMPANY

11AM WEDNESDAY 1st JULY
at the ***Turnpike*** *on Soundwell Road.*
A time to be, be known, and be together.

CHANGES during Vacancy

VACANCY is the period of time until the next Incumbent takes up the currently vacant post of Vicar, now that Lisa has retired.

We may, **or may not**, have a Curate-in-Charge to lead us during the Vacancy period.

Because of the shortage of priests, and therefore the difficulty in finding priests to lead our Eucharistic services, some of the services we were offering have been reduced:

- **8am BCP Holy Communion** *service will be paused completely* and;
- **10am Wednesday Parish Communion** will be held twice a month; *on the 1st & 3rd Wednesdays*.

VACANCY PRAYER

LOVING Lord God, you are our faithful friend, full of care and forgiveness.

During this time of vacancy we come to you with hearts full of faith and hope, trusting in your presence with us.

We ask for your guidance on the way ahead. Give us wisdom, patience and reassurance in an anxious time, as we prepare for the next chapter in the life of this church.

We pray and trust in your grace to help us work well together, provide mutual support for each other, and to keep us united in the bond of faith and peace.

Lord, we thank you that you hear our prayer. Answer us in your loving kindness. Bring to us a person that is right for our church family, and the community of Soundwell, that will build us up in faith, as...

'We follow Jesus.' *Amen*

St Stephens PCC

A letter from Peter

Dear friends at St Stephens,

IT was good to see so many of you at the APCM service held on 31st May.

What amazing work you are continuing to do in Soundwell!

It was so encouraging to hear about all the very many activities and events you are doing in church and in the community; both the many things that you have been doing for years as well as new initiatives and projects.

Of course, it will be sad to be losing Lisa on her retirement, but it was good to meet Elaine and hear about all the exciting things she and her teams are doing in church and in the schools.

There will be many changes in the parish in the coming months and years and of course I will be praying for all of you as you take forward the Lord's work in this place.

I can't say it better than St Paul did in Philippians 1:3–6:

I THANK GOD every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, because of your sharing in the Gospel from the first day until now.

I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ.

There have been, and will continue to be, many changes in my life also and I value your continuing prayers for me in my various endeavours.

Thank you so much for your kind words and messages of support, and for your generous gifts.

Be assured, I shall put them to good use in the work of the Lord in my own life.

God bless!

Peter Robbins

READINGS & COLLECTS

SUNDAY 05 JULY
5th Sunday after Trinity

Genesis 24:34–38, 42–49, 58–end; Psalm 45:10–end; Romans 7:15–25a; Matthew 11:16–19, 25–end

ALMIGHTY GOD, send down upon your Church the riches of your Spirit, and kindle in all who minister the gospel your countless gifts of grace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

SUNDAY 12 JULY

Dedication Sunday

Genesis 25:19–end; Psalm 119:105–112 Romans 8:1–11; Matthew 13:1–9, 18–23

CREATOR GOD, you made us all in your image: may we discern you in all that we see, and serve you in all that we do; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

SUNDAY 19 JULY
7th Sunday after Trinity

Genesis 28:10–19a; Psalm 139:1–11 & 23–24; Romans 8:12–25; Matthew 13:24–30 & 36–43

GENEROUS GOD, you give us gifts and make them grow: though our faith is small as mustard seed, make it grow to your glory and the flourishing of your kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

SUNDAY 26 JULY
8th Sunday after Trinity

Genesis 29:15–28; Psalm 105:1–11 Romans 8:26–end; Matthew 13:31–33, & 44–52

LORD GOD, your Son left the riches of heaven and became poor for our sake: when we prosper save us from pride, when we are needy save us from despair, that we may trust in you alone; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

FAYRE!

SATURDAY 2~4PM
11th JULY

STALLS of all kinds, bric-a-brac, food, drink, cakes, fun and games for young or old alike; raffles, something for all the family!

Or bring a friend and enjoy an afternoon together!

Volunteers are needed to assist with preparations on the Friday before the Fayre, and then in the afternoon to assist in putting stuff away afterwards, clearing up, putting the pews back together and the like.

If you can lend a hand for an hour or two then it would be much appreciated! Please see Sue Humphrey or email suehumphrey11@yahoo.co.uk to register your offer of help.

If you wish to have a stall then please book a space.

If you have items for raffle prizes and items for sales then bring them to church for storage till the day. *Thank you!*

DEDICATION SUNDAY

12th JULY 10.30AM

THANK YOU!!

AS SANDY said in his kind words during my leaving service, thanks doesn't quite say all that we want to convey sometimes. So I'll use it as a starting point…

Thank you to everyone who came to my leaving service, or the week before because you couldn't be there, or gave me cards or popped in to my home, or caught up with me at another time... again because you weren't able to share in that service on 14th June. I was truly and deeply blown away by your thoughtfulness and love.

Thank you to the hordes of you that gave me cards and/or wrote in the special book you gave me, your words have brought me smiles and tears... and I have a feeling I will return to them quite a bit over the weeks and months ahead for a reminder and the support and strength you give me through them.

Thank you for the abundance of flowers (and plants) which you showered me with. Not only do they smell of God's love and display His beauty... they also share yours in bucket loads!!

I was almost at the point of needing a bucket to care for them but between vases (mine & borrowed), pint glasses and large jars, we just had enough.

It takes me about 45 minutes each time I change the water to keep them at their best and I pray for the whole community of Soundwell each time I do!!

Thank you for the array of amazing and thoughtful gifts you chose for me! Some continue to make me smile and giggle, others evoke tears and yet more share something of God's love and deep peace... because you gave (and sometimes made) them with heart-felt love!!

Thank you also for the financial gift you gave me, I was blown away by your generosity and love. I plan to use some of it wisely and perhaps a teeny bit of it frivolously. But I will seek God's guidance on when and how, as He knows best for sure and remains my Saviour and Guide!

My first week as 'not being your Vicar' has felt rather weird and discombobulating... but God assures me that this too will pass, and all shall be well.

So I trust in Him!

During this leaving time and this first week since, I have felt overwhelmed and humbled by your love.

Thank you for that! Thank you for loving me, as I hope I have loved you.

As I said on Sunday 14th... thank you for letting me be the 18th camel (aka your Vicar) at St Stephens.

And I wonder if you would like to join me in declaring: For all that has been – thanks. For all that will be – yes.

And one last reminder (again from my leaving sermon); *What we do with God's help is wonderful, but who we are because of God is everything.*

Continue being you!! The people of God in Soundwell, as you *continue to* **FOLLOW JESUS**!!

And please always be assured of my unfailing love and prayers. **Lisa** xxx

(Photos of Lisa's Farewell Service appear on pages 6~7)

BUBBLE CHURCH

A wonderful start!

OUR very first Bubble Church service took place on Sunday 14th June at 9.15am, and what a wonderful morning it was!

We were delighted to greet seven families, including 14 childen.

With two regular St Stephens families, Bubble Church provided a wonderful opportunity to connect with other families across the wider community.

There was a lovely atmosphere throughout the morning.

Families were greeted by our bubble machine, which proved to be a huge hit with the children and created a fun and welcoming start to the service. It was puppet packed and action song filled. The children thoroughly enjoyed themselves, with several saying a heartfelt 'thank you' as they left.

One parent commented, 'This is just what was needed,' which was a great encouragement to the team.

We were also blessed to have a family come forward for prayer at the end of the service.

We thank God for this exciting beginning and are looking forward to seeing how He will grow this ministry.

A huge thank you to everyone who helped to make Bubble Church such a success and to all those who have supported it and prayed for it behind the scenes.

Our **NEXT** Bubble Church is on **Sunday 12th July**, and we can't wait to welcome more families as well as returning ones!

It's not too late to get involved!

If you would like to join the Bubble Church team as a welcomer, help on the kitchen rota, become a puppeteer, host or assist at the registration desk, please speak to Elaine or else email her at: elaineb.ststephens@gmail.com.

What a blessing our first Bubble Church has been – bring on July!

WEDNESDAY

Bible Chat

in the Church Room

2.30PM

(2PM for a cuppa)

JULY 8th & 22nd

17th JULY

6.30PM in Church

INFORMAL WORSHIP FOR ALL AGES

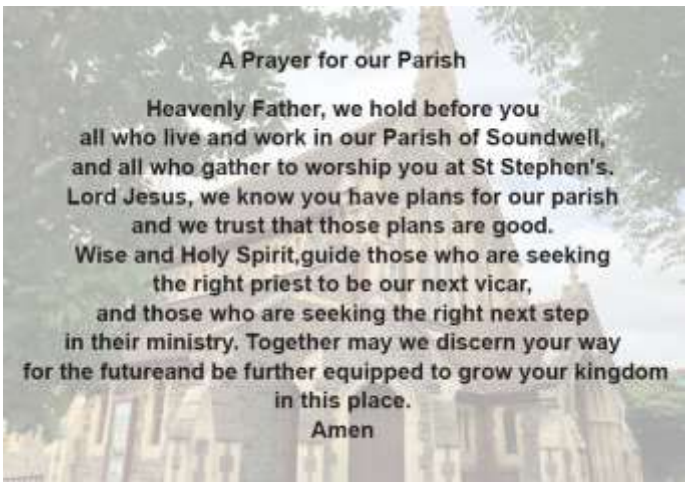
An hour of exploring what life with faith is all about in an hour of getting to know others, through informal song, prayer, discussions, followed by refreshments after wards in the Church Room.

Lisa's last Sunday!

IN REVIEW

THERE were certainly lots of tissues in use as we bade farewell to Lisa during her Farewell Service.

There were several lovely parting gifts and the ones that were presented at the end of the special service are shown below.



Above: A show of the many cards, flowers and other gifts that Lisa has displayed at home, received either at church or through the post over the week before the Farewell service.

Official attendance at the service was 151 adults and 11 children.

Photos are also available for viewing on the Church website for a short while and Facebook.

JULY CYCLE OF PRAYER *BEGINNING SUNDAY OF EACH WEEK*

05	Local industry in the parish	Margaret Archer, Cheryl Ashwin Carly, Savannah & Sienna Baldwin Emily Baldwin & Jason & Billy Amos	Lees Hill Leicester Square Middle Road
12	People who work in the parish	Nicola, Maddison, Phoebe & Darcey Bailey Hannah, Simon, Harrison & Oscar Bartlett Gwen Beek	Midland Road Morley Close Morley Place
19	Our former Vicar Lisa and her family	Annabelle, Shaun & Reuben Bignell Bill and Jenny Bishop, Edward Bishop William, Jess & Beatrice Bishop	Morley Road Mulberry Gardens Mulberry Grove
26	Associate Minister: Sandy Cooper	Grace Blackburn, Jackie Blackwell Geoff Blowfield, Rosemary Boulton June Brain, Karen Brasier	Narrow Lane Neville Road North View

SUNDAYS: 10.30am **Community Worship Service** weekly.
Youth Church in the Church Hall 10.30am weekly.

Bubble Church 2nd Sunday of the month, ie: 12th July.

Prayer Ministry is offered after the 10.30am Service on the 1st and 3rd Sundays *or at any other time by request, so do please ask as necessary.*

WEDNESDAYS: 10am **Service of Holy Communion** on the 1st and 3rd Wednesday of each month, ie: July 1st & 15th.

JULY DIARY

01 Wednesday	11am 7.15pm	**Coffee/Chat/Company** *at the Turnpike Pub* **BRING YOUR BIBLE** *in the Church Room*
02 Thursday	10am 2pm	**See & Know** *in the Church Hall* (term-time weekly) **Ladies Group** *in the Church Hall*
03 Friday	7pm	**Outburst** Youth Club *in the Church Hall*
07 Tuesday	1.30pm	**Knit & Natter** *in the Church Room (then weekly)*
08 Wednesday	2pm 7.15pm	**BIBLE CHAT** *in the Church Room* **BRING YOUR BIBLE** *in the Church Room*
09 Thursday	1.30pm	**Men's Group** *in the Church Room*
10 Friday	1.30pm	**Pensioner's Group** *in the Church Hall*
11 Saturday	2~4pm	**SUMMER FAYRE** *in and around Church & Hall*
12 Sunday	9.15am 10.30am	BUBBLE CHURCH *In the Church Hall* DEDICATION SERVICE *in Church*
13 Monday	10.15am	**Retreat Memory Café** *in the Church Hall* for Dementia sufferers and their carers
14 Tuesday	9~11.30am	**WELCOME SPACE** *in the Church Room*
15 Wednesday	7.15pm	**BRING YOUR BIBLE** *in the Church Room*
16 Thursday	2pm	**Ladies Group** *in the Church Hall*
17 Friday	6.30pm	**FRIDAY NIGHT LIVE** *in Church*
22 Wednesday	2pm 7.15pm	**BIBLE CHAT** *in the Church Room* **BRING YOUR BIBLE** *in the Church Room*
23 Thursday	9am	**Men's Group Outing**
24 Friday	1.30pm	**Pensioner's Group** *in the Church Hall*
27 Monday	10.15am	**Retreat Memory Café** *in the Church Hall* for Dementia sufferers and their carers
28 Tuesday	9~11.30am	**WELCOME SPACE** *in the Church Room*

AUGUST DIARY (beware of summer holiday shutdowns!)

04 Tuesday	1.30pm	**Knit & Natter** *in the Church Room (then weekly)*
05 Wednesday	11am	**Coffee/Chat/Company** *at the Turnpike Pub*
	7.15pm	**BRING YOUR BIBLE** *in the Church Room*
11 Tuesday	9~11.30am	**WELCOME SPACE** *in the Church Room*
	7.15pm	**BRING YOUR BIBLE** *in the Church Room*

Easygiving update:

Thank you to everyone supporting St Stephens on **easyfundraising**, it's been a great month! If you haven't already, sign up today and help raise free donations whenever you shop on-line from 8000 retailers. It won't cost you a penny extra!

DIAL-a-SERMON

Listen to this week's Sermon on your phone:

0117 456 2090

(Cost is the same as a local call)

OR

CLICK-a-SERMON

Visit our website and use the audio link to listen on-line

http://saintstephensoundwell.org

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