



Open Space

SAINT STEPHENS SOUNDWELL

DECEMBER 2023

Open Space
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Mission Partners with St Stephens:

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CHARITY NUMBER
1131503



St Stephens
SOUNDWELL

Jesus is... 'Joy to the World'

WE'VE marked the beginning of a new Church year by starting again in Advent, the first season of the liturgical calendar.

LIKE a hapless Black Friday shopper thrown to the ground by the crazed masses surging around them, Advent usually gets trampled in our culture's mad rush towards Christmas, and Christians are by no means immune to this trend.

Advent is one of the richest times of the church year, and we miss out on that richness when we barrel straight for Christmas as soon as the Advent Calendars are up. Advent is all the more needful in our time when Christmas is awash with cultural significance that has little to do with the baby in the manger; it helps us to see through all the clutter and noise that has accumulated at this time of the year to the true hope and joy of Christmas.

I discovered recently that one of our beloved Christmas carols is in fact not a Christmas carol at all.

The song is so familiar to us, and its words are so well known that we probably haven't noticed that the song does not include a single detail from the story of Jesus' birth: no stable, no shepherds, no wise men; no Mary or Joseph; no little town of Bethlehem or choirs of angels or silent nights. It's *'Joy to the World'*, which you'll notice, if you run through the words in your head, does not include a single specific reference to the birth of Christ. The more I've pondered its words, the more I believe it would make a better Advent hymn than a Christmas carol, because it's more about Christ's second coming than about his first.

When Isaac Watts wrote *'Joy to the World'*, he wasn't thinking about Christmas; nor was he thinking about Advent.

Instead he was reflecting on Psalm 98

as part of his hymn series *The Psalms of David Imitated*. Watts wrote this series for his congregational church in London, which sang only the text of the Psalms in their worship services. Watts' passionate belief that the church should sing songs explicitly about Jesus led him to write a series of over 300 hymns, loosely paraphrasing the Psalms and recasting them in the light of Christ.

Isaac Watts was one of the great hymn writers in church history, and I guess nothing shows that better than the fact that he wrote one of his most famous hymns by accident.

When he arrived at the second half of Psalm 98, he read the following words:

Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all the earth: make a loud noise, and rejoice, and sing praise...

With trumpets and sound of cornet make a joyful noise before the Lord, the King.

Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.

Let the floods clap their hands: let the hills be joyful together

Before the Lord; for he cometh to judge the earth: with righteousness shall he judge the world, and the people with equity.

After absorbing this image of the whole earth bursting into song because the Lord comes to judge the earth, Watts wrote the four verses of *'Joy to the World'*, riffing off of Psalm 98 with his own words:

*Joy to the world! The Lord is come;
let earth receive her King;*

*let every heart prepare him room,
and heaven and nature sing...*

*While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and
plains repeat the sounding joy...*

*He rules the world with truth and grace,
and makes the nations prove
the glories of his righteousness,
and wonders of his love.*

Continued on page 2>

Readings & Collects

SUNDAY 03 DECEMBER

1st Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 64:1-9; Psalm 80:1-8

1 Corinthians 13:9; Mark 13:24-end

ALMIGHTY GOD, as your kingdom dawns, turn us from the darkness of sin to the light of holiness, that we may be ready to meet you in our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen.

SUNDAY 10 DECEMBER

2nd Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 40:1-11; Psalm 85:8-end

2 Peter 3:8-15a; Mark 1:1-8

ALMIGHTY GOD, purify our hearts and minds, that when your Son Jesus Christ comes again as judge and saviour we may be ready to receive him, who is our Lord and our God. Amen.

SUNDAY 17 DECEMBER

3rd Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 61:1-4; 8-end; Psalm 126

1 Thessalonians 5:16-24;

John 1:6-8, 19-28

HEAVENLY LORD, God for whom we watch and wait, you sent John the Baptist to prepare the way of your Son: give us courage to speak the truth, to hunger for justice, and to suffer for the cause of right, with Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

SUNDAY 24 DECEMBER

4th Sunday of Advent

2 Samuel 7:1-11, &16; Psalm 89:1-8

Romans 16:25-end; Luke 1:26-38

ALMIGHTY GOD, as we prepare with joy to celebrate the gift of the Christ-child, embrace the earth with your glory and be for us a living hope in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

SUNDAY 31 DECEMBER

1st Sunday of Christmas

Isaiah 61:10-62:3; Psalm 148

Galations 4:4-7; Luke 2:15-21

GOD IN TRINITY eternal unity of perfect love: gather the nations to be one family, and draw us into your holy life through the birth of Emmanuel, our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Joy to the World

< Continued from page 1

The words are not simply focused on the joy we experience as we look back and celebrate the incarnation, they also encourage us to look forward, to discover the joy we can find by reflecting on our future hope, the second coming of Christ.

Throughout both the Old and New Testament it is Christ who is the cause of celebration, the one who elicits all the earth to 'shout for joy.'

Entering the season of Advent is not an abstract spiritual exercise divorced from our daily lives.

The Church's seasons invite us to connect the reality of our lives and our world with their truths.

During Advent we confess that we live in a world in need of a king, of justice, and of joy.

We only have to watch the news for about 30 seconds to know that our world, in its struggles, its sorrows, and its sin, is longing and crying out for a Saviour to come.

And more personally, during Advent we admit our own need for our king, for his justice and his joy to invade our lives.

We all long for sickness to be healed, for estrangement to end, for justice to finally arrive. The word of hope during Advent is that we know the end of the story; our King will bring a final and lasting justice and joy to our world.

I have released this song from its seasonal chains and it plays loud and proud each time my mobile phone or my home phone rings! I need the **JOY** of Jesus to resound in my home, my life, my head, my heart, all year round!

So why not join me in singing 'Joy to the World' as often as you dare. Let's be people who love and sing and wonder with this kind of unshakable joy every day!

Sing 'Joy to the World' with every part of your body and every fibre of your being... and may its words remind you that one day Jesus will rule the world with truth and grace and make known the wonders of his great love for us.

Wow!!! What JOY!!

May you have a blessed and joy-of-the-Lord-filled Advent! **Lisa x**



Sponsored by Mario's Fish Bar & Grant's Barber Shop

JOIN US!
Christmas Lights Trail

FRIENDSOFLEESHILL@GMAIL.COM

WALK THE TRAIL WITH US
MEET AT ST STEPHEN'S CHURCH HALL
10TH DEC / 4:30 PM

Please vote for your favourite house!
Prizes for the winners!
Get in contact if you want to take part

Join us back at the church hall for mince pies, tea & coffee



St. Michael the Archangel
Two mile hill, Kingswood, Bristol

Why not get Christmas off to a great start by visiting John and Jackie Elliott's personal collection of nativities in the church.

3 Weekends of December
2/3rd - 9/10th - 16/17th
Saturday 10am-5pm, Sunday 10.30-5pm

450+ Nativities on display!

FINAL YEAR - Many Nativities available to purchase

All donations to GOSH (Bristol)
Cancer Support Group for Oesophageal and Stomach Cancer

OUR Church is being used as a meeting up and start point for the above event, and although not organised by us we are nonetheless invited to participate in walking around the parish to view the various Christmas light shows that folk create and put on display to brighten up the locale.

The start time is 4.30pm and you can come then or else join in afterwards with us in our Church Hall at 6pm, to sing some popular Carols with our Choir and others. Please do feel free to support this novel collaborative community project!

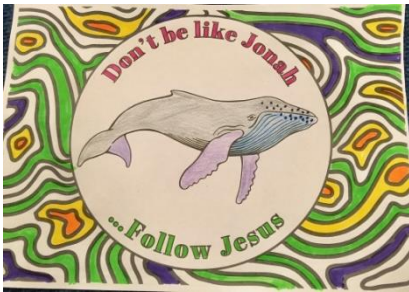
FRIDAY NIGHT LIVE: OCTOBER REVIEW

Don't be a Jonah...

THE story of Jonah can be of much interest, considered either as fact or as an allegory. He was a prophet of the Old Testament who was asked to visit Nineveh and preach repentance to a people whom God considered to be sinful.

Jonah was fearful of the task, as Ninevah was seen as a foreboding place to visit, the capital city of literally Israel's ancient enemy, so he decided to take flight or 'run away' from the challenge and took passage on a boat in totally the complete opposite direction.

A storm arose, which was totally unexpected, for the time of year and the boat crew queried it, and to his credit Jonah fessed up and so the crew cast him overboard to escape divine wrath.



You may already know what happened next but if not you can read more of his story in [Jonah 14:25](#) or [Matthew 12:39-41](#) and [16:4](#).

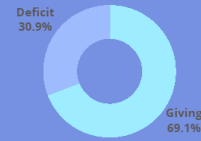
As for us, some of the group opted to debate the matter further and some decided on a less fierce some act of colouring whale illustrations.

After the conclusion of our evening, we partook of much looked forward to refreshments, and the by now much appreciated choice of several cheeses and biscuits!



OUR CHURCH FINANCE UPDATE

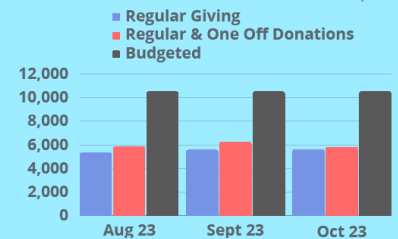
GIVING FOR OCTOBER



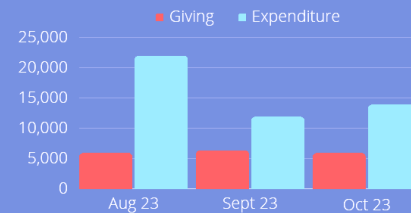
WHAT OUR GIVING NEEDS TO BE £10,500

GIVING RECEIVED £5814

Giving Last 3 Months



Giving v Church Expenses Last 3 Months



Confirmations

THREE members of St Stephens congregation, Lyn, Lauren & Bradley were Confirmed at All Saints Church, Fishponds, Wednesday 8 November.

It was a delight and joy that these three affirmed their lives to following Jesus, but also that so many from St Stephens attended to support them *What joy!!*

Some photos were taken on the night and are shown here.



MAY JESUS BE YOUR JOY

this Christmas and always!

Celebrate the birth of Jesus, at St Stephens:

- **Saturday 2nd December**
2-4pm Christmas Fayre in the Church & Church Hall
- **Sunday 17th December**
6.30pm Carols by Candlelight in Church
- **Sunday 24th Christmas Eve**
Family Fun in Church
2.30pm Christmas Christingle Service 1
4pm Christmas Christingle Service 2
11pm Midnight Communion in Church
- **Monday 25th Christmas Day**
10am Family Communion Service in Church
- **Wednesday 27th**
St Stephen's Day Service
10am Parish Communion in Church

Adopt one of our new stars!

YOU might have seen or eventually will, the **new stars**, suspended from the rails above our heads in Church, for use as decoration during Advent and Christmas events.

Why not think about sponsoring one or more of the new stars!!!!

There are likely to be around **120** sparkling stars on display in church to 'make it shine' for Jesus.

You can sponsor one or more of the stars as desired! A suggested **£2** per star donation should cover the costs of all the materials required!

You can choose 'your star' and then tell your family and friends it sparkle's Jesus' love for them. Or, use it as a way of remembering a loved one, and by sponsoring a chosen star a way to remember and celebrate Jesus' eternal love for them. *Thank you!* **Lisa**

Be part of the team!

A fantastic group of people lead some of the first part of the main Sunday service alongside one of our priests. Mostly it is 'scripted' in that it is part of the liturgy.

The only preparation involves introducing 2 hymns, and one of those can be with some 'standard' wording if you prefer to use it.

Might you be part of this team?

Full training will be given so that you will feel confident in leading, and you won't be on your own, this team are always there to help.

To find out some more, without committing yourself, then please do be in touch with me.

Thank you! **Lisa**

Welcome Space!



Every 2nd & 4th Tuesday of the month

New time: 9 to 11am

Meeting in the Church room for company and refreshments

How to read the Bible

READING the Bible is so much easier if you just follow some simple steps and get prepared.

AND, as you delve into it, you will find that you are more familiar with the Bible than you expected:

extracts crop up in everything from Shakespeare to Hollywood movies; and it has inspired musicians, historical figures and campaigners.

The Bible is complex.

It's not one book but a collection of 66 books, split into two sections: the Old Testament and the New Testament.

All of the books are divided into chapters and verses. People often find it easier to begin at the opening of the New Testament, which starts about three-quarters of the way through.

The New Testament starts with four accounts of the life of Jesus Christ, known as the Gospels (which means 'good news').

They include eye-witness reports of what happened. Matthew and John were among Jesus' 12 closest followers. Here you can read about what Jesus did and said – his profound teaching, how he healed people of sickness and how he challenged the authorities.

The Gospels also tell us about Jesus' birth, his death by crucifixion and how he came back to life and then returned to heaven.

So, starting with a Gospel introduces you to the person of Jesus and the basics of Christian belief.

If anyone asks me where to start, I always suggest what was suggested to me; the Gospel of Luke, then go onto the Book of Acts (both in the New Testament). Being written by the same author, they flow well together, and are the story of Jesus followed by the start of the early church – in other words, what happened next.

A good next step is to read some of the teaching given to the early Christian Church. Much of the New Testament is a series of letters written by early Christian leaders such as Paul.

He travelled around the lands of the eastern Mediterranean, telling

people about Jesus. He then wrote to newly-established churches and individuals to encourage them in their beliefs. Letters such as Philippians or Colossians are short, bite-sized items full of advice about how to live a Christian life.

Getting to grips with the whole Bible takes some time, but it will be worth the effort!!

Start with a plan

Pick a time: a time of day you would like to spend time reading the Bible. Then try to stick to it.

It's much easier to commit to regularly reading your Bible if you get into a good habit – and finding the right time of day sure helps!

Pick a place: Many people find it helpful to find a quiet and comfortable place to sit and read the Bible.

Pray first: Ask God to be with you! And He will open your mind to what He wants to teach you – honest! This will help you understand what you are reading and its relevance to you.

Pick some tools: Set up your chosen place so you have everything you may want at hand: a pen, highlighters, your journal (a book to record your thoughts - see next paragraph for more details), and your tea or coffee (of course).

But remember: you do not need anything but an open Bible!

Start slow

Start by reading small portions of the Bible at first; a long passage or one chapter a day. Read for about 10–15 minutes.

Don't overwhelm yourself by reading an entire book in one sitting. Savour each word, each phrase. Take time to think about what you read. Meditate on it.

Pray about it.

Even write about it – journaling is a wonderful way to express your thoughts, feelings, prayers and praises.

It is not necessary to be a scholar to enjoy and understand the Bible.

Read and re-read it and find life-changing and inspirational ideas. I have read some passages hundreds of times, and still I find I learn something new.

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There are small Bible Reading notes in booklet form, such as UCB Word for Today, which will provide you with someone else's insight into a verse for each day. Some people find this helpful, and can be used in addition to reading your Bible.

If you might find this helpful, do ask Lin or Sandy Cooper and they can supply you with them.

The Bible is more than just a good book, it is the Book of Life, which leads to life in Jesus Christ. It enables us to know God in all his majesty and glory. The Bible has insights into how to live, how to cope with difficulties and how to forgive. It explains who Jesus Christ is and shows us what God is like. Our Lord will speak to you personally through what you read.

Don't pick up your phone or the newspaper first thing in the morning... pick up your Bible instead!

It's guaranteed to change your day for the better!

Alternatives

There are other ways of course to read the Bible and to study it, for example you could join one of our Discipleship Groups: *Getting to know Jesus more.*

Ask Regan about this to find out when and where to join in.

Lauren, who confirmed her life to following Jesus in November, has found a way to read and study the Bible that suits her. So, I've asked her to share her way with us as well.

Because, we are all delightfully different, with our alternative likes and ways of doing things, have a read of the item below. **Lisa xx**

Girl Gone Verse Mapping

by Lauren Joyce

How did I get into verse mapping? Being a newly practicing Christian, I found myself uneducated, of not knowing what the bible entailed.

Of course, God communicates his will, his laws, his nature, and we have his teachings and parables and his saving purpose to humanity.

The bible teaches us about a lot of things and there is much I still need to understand and learn!

I never really knew where to start in the bible and it was a bit daunting at first, but I realised that it wasn't as bad as I thought!

So how did I start verse mapping? Well, in simple terms, I just opened the bible... it was that easy!

What is verse mapping?

For those who haven't heard the term 'Verse Mapping' it's a tool that I personally find very useful when wanting to dig deeper into a piece of scripture. You can do this by yourself or simply in a small group.

How can I verse Map?

1. First and foremost, quieten your heart and **PRAY!** I say this because when it comes to studying it's knowing who your teacher is, The Holy Spirit will guide you and be with you when you study; no matter where you begin or how much you know already, the Holy Spirit will teach you something! As it says in **PROVERBS 3:5** 'trust the lord with all your heart, do not lean on your own understanding'.

2. Pick the verse you'd like to study, this can be a piece of scripture that stands out to you, you could be drawn to this piece of scripture, or you just want to know what this scripture means!

3. Look at different versions of the verse you picked out (ESV, NIV, KJV) then write both versions down (there is an app you can use called 'Bible Hub' this will give you different bible versions).

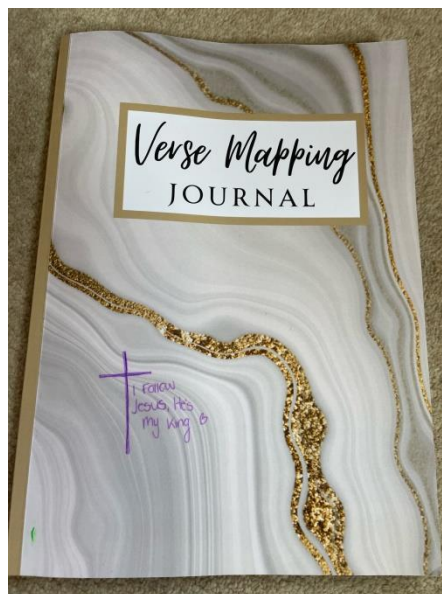
4. When you have written down both versions, look for any words that are repeated or stand out to you.

You can also highlight them as well as writing them down.

5. Then look up the definitions of the words that stood out for you; including the Greek and Hebrew translations.

6. Find other related verses in the bible (optional).

7. If you come across a verse and you find you have questions, then pop down any questions you have.



This may give you a **prompt to investigate deeper!**

8. After you have done all the above, think about what you can **start doing and stop doing as a response.** (*There is no right or wrong answer, this is personal to you and what you feel this verse is teaching you*)

9. Think about things you can do to **praise God for.**

10. What is your **prayer response** to what you have just learnt?

SOMETIMES verse mapping isn't just about writing things down, you can be creative if you prefer, you may find yourself seeing an image when going over the verse, so why don't you try something different and create what you see on paper?

You never know it could help in your mapping! There really is no wrong or right way of doing this.

What difference has it made?

Overall, verse mapping has become my friend, it has taught me so much and still teaches me every day, I have taken a lot of things away from the bible and looked at myself and how I act, the bible has helped me unmask my own demons and helped me become a better person through knowing the word.

I get a closeness of God's presence because I find the time to just sit with him, to let him guide me to messages and teachings he wants me to learn.

I hope you all find this useful and get an urge to start verse mapping!

Lauren xx

Here's an Amazon link to the verse mapping book I use: [Verse Mapping Journal: Bible Study](#)

OR search Amazon UK for: **Verse Mapping Journal: Bible Study Paperback** – 8 May 2023 by Mrs Julia Pike (Author).

There are of course, other verse mapping books too, if you choose to look.



DECEMBER CYCLE OF PRAYER BEGINNING SUNDAY OF EACH

03	Baptism Preparation	See & Know children: <i>Ashton Fowler, Ellis Gervais, Jude Gervais, Beatrix Greene</i>	Colston Street Cotswold View Cranham Close
10	Marriage Preparation	<i>Sapphire Hawkes, Rory Hawkins Charlie James, Eziah Lawrence Jesse McSorely</i>	Crispin Way Crossfield Road Crown Road
17	Bereavement visitors	<i>Summer May, Luna Morris, Adeara Odutola, Adeiyin Odutola Ivie Olubajo</i>	Crownleaze Deerhurst Deerswood
24	Home groups	<i>Esme Tapsell, Sophie Tarbuck Poppy Williams, Teddy Williams</i>	Eastleigh Close Eastleigh Road Elmore
31	Church Musicians	Our congregation: <i>Teddy Alexander Margaret Archer, Cheryl Ashwin Hannah, Simon, Harrison & Oscar Bartlett</i>	Fairford Close Fairlyn Drive Florence Road

SUNDAYS: 8am BCP Holy Communion on 1st and 3rd Sundays.
10am Community Worship Service

Prayer Ministry is offered after the 10am 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

DECEMBER DIARY

01 Friday	7-9pm	Outburst Youth Club in Church Hall
02 Saturday	2-4pm	CHRISTMAS FAYRE in Church & Church Hall
03 Sunday	10am	GIFT SERVICE - collecting gifts for the Sisters of the Church for their Christmas Gifting
04 Monday	9.30am	Retreat Memory Café in Church Hall for Dementia sufferers and their carers (fortnightly)
05 Tuesday(s)	1.30-3.30pm	Knit & Natter weekly in the Church Room
06 Wednesday	12noon	Coffee/Chat/Company <i>Turnpike Pub</i>
10 Sunday	4.30pm	Light Trail, followed by Carols in the Church Hall with refreshments at 6pm. Come to both or either
12 Tuesday	9-11am	WELCOME SPACE in the Church Room
14 Thursday	2pm	Ladies & Pensioners & Men's Group Carol Service in Church
16 Saturday	4-6.30pm	FAMILY FILM everyone welcome in Church Hall
17 Sunday	6.30pm	Carols by Candlelight in Church
24 Sunday	2.30pm 4pm 11pm	Family Fun Christingle Service 1 in Church Family Fun Christingle Service 2 in Church Midnight Communion in Church
25 Monday	10am	Christmas Day Family Communion in Church
27 Wednesday	10am	St Stephens Day Communion Service

ST. STEPHENS CHURCH, SOUNDWELL

CHRISTMAS MOVIE CLUB

JOIN US IN THE CHURCH HALL FOR THE MOVIE 'ARTHUR CHRISTMAS', FOOD AND SWEET TREATS!

SATURDAY 16TH ● 4PM START

WE WILL HAVE A HOT CHOCOLATE STAND AND WILL BE SERVING HOT DOGS. PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS IS A FREE EVENT.

CHURCH ROAD, SOUNDWELL, BRISTOL, BS16 4RF
WWW.SAINTSTEPHENSOUNDWELL.ORG
CHARITY NUMBER 183503

Christmas Gift Service

Sunday 3rd December is when we collect financial donations for the Sisters of the Church in Bristol, and their work of giving food and some Christmas cheer to some of the poorest families in our city.

They give £15 of Argos Vouchers to children in need, and toiletry sets, or gloves, warm scarves, hats and socks to the adults.

Please give generously if you can to The Sisters appeal.

Special envelopes are available in church for you to use specifically for this appeal. *Thank you!*

FROM THE REGISTERS

SINCE OCTOBER 2023

Funerals:

- **NOVEMBER 15:** **Reginald Ivor Martin Brown** (88). The celebration of Reg's life was held at St Stephens Church Soundwell. Please hold Gary, Lee, Claire and Kim, their families, the wider family and all of Reg's friends in your prayers.
- **NOVEMBER 17:** **Marion Irene Shipton** (88). The celebration of Marion's life was held at St Stephen's Church, Soundwell, followed by committal at Westerleigh Crematorium. Please hold her sons, Andrew and Paul, along with all of Marion's family and friends in your prayers.

CHRISTMAS FAYRE

ST STEPHENS CHURCH
SATURDAY
2nd December 2-4PM

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 to listen on-line
<http://saintstephensoundwell.org>

SAINT STEPHENS SOUNDWELL



● **Revd Lisa Wigmore**
Vicar, 52 Gladstone Street
Soundwell, Bristol BS16 4RF
Telephone 0117 957 4297



● **Revd Sandy Cooper**
Associate Minister, 1 Deerhurst
Soundwell, Bristol BS15 1XH
Telephone 0117 967 2621



● **Revd Regan Meares**
Priest
Telephone 07769 704270



● **Peter Robbins**
Lay Minister, 13 Wood Road
Kingswood, Bristol BS15 8DT
Telephone 0117 967 9576



● **Gill Mayo**
Church Warden
Telephone 0117 956 9796

