

Open Space

SAINT STEPHENS SOUNDWELL

FEBRUARY 2023

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Mission Partners with St Stephens:

Beloved
Bristol City Centre
Soup Run
Bristol Schools
Connection
Bristol/Uganda Link
Christian Aid
Community of
the Sisters of
the Church
Emmaus
Fair Trade
One25 Project
The Bristol Noise

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CHARITY NUMBER
1131503



A letter from God

*to those
who
observe Lent*

THE SEASON OF LENT lasts for forty days (not including Sundays). It is a time when we reflect and prepare for the celebrations of Easter.

SOME people fast, eat frugally or give up treats following the example of Jesus, who fasted for forty days in the wilderness.

People also give to charity, set aside time to study the Bible and meet with other Christians to reflect on Jesus' life and prepare for the events of Holy Week and Easter. We are planning to hold a 'Lent Course', so that we can do just that.

Ash Wednesday is the first day of Lent. Ashes made from palm crosses are blessed and are used to make crosses on people's foreheads. The custom dates back to the middle ages.

Ash Wednesday services (10am and 7.30pm on 22nd February) set the tone for Lent, with sombre readings and hymns and a focus on penitence = saying sorry for and turning away from sin.

Well, all this got me thinking about what I might want to hear from God as I prepare for the season of Lent.

So, I thought I'd try to encapsulate my thoughts and longings in a letter.

A letter from God... to me, and to you.

Dear Daughter or Son,
ON Ash Wednesday, if you're in church, the minister will invite you to the observance of a 'Holy Lent' and mark your forehead with the ashes of repentance.

Let me be very clear about this at the outset: I love you so much. I delight in you. I cherish you. For ever.

Here are a few more things I want you to comprehend:

Despite what you've been taught, 'holy' does not mean pure and unearthly. 'Sin' does not mean breaking my rules and making me mad. 'Penitence' does not mean listing and wallowing in all the ways you're wrong and bad. 'Repentance' does not mean promising to do better, to stay out of trouble.

Please think about these words a new way, on Ash Wednesday and every other day going forward.

What if you only sin when you refuse healing and cling to brokenness? When you use those sharp broken edges to hurt yourself and others?

What if holiness is when you choose to be whole, even though you're terrified?

Continued on page 2 >

Readings & Collects

FOR FEBRUARY 2023

FOR THOSE OF US who are not able to attend services or who wish to use the Sunday readings and Collect Prayer to worship at home, here they are:

SUNDAY 05 FEBRUARY 3rd Sunday before Lent

Isaiah 58:1-12; Psalm 112:1-9
1 Corinthians 2:1-end;
Matthew 5:13-20

ETERNAL GOD, whose Son went among the crowds and brought healing with his touch: help us to show his love, in your Church as we gather together, and by our lives as they are transformed into the image of Christ our Lord. Amen.

SUNDAY 12 FEBRUARY 2nd Sunday before Lent

Genesis 1:1-23; Psalm 136
Romans 8:18-25; Matthew 6:25-end

ALMIGHTY GOD, give us reverence for all creation and respect for every person, that we may mirror your likeness in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

SUNDAY 19 FEBRUARY Sunday before Lent

Exodus 24:12-end; Psalm 2 or 99
2 Peter 1:1-end; Matthew 17:1-9

HOLY GOD, you know the disorder of our sinful lives: set straight our crooked hearts, and bend our wills to love your goodness and your glory in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

SUNDAY 26 FEBRUARY 1st Sunday of Lent

Genesis 2:15-17, 3:1-7; Psalm 32
Romans 5:12-19; Matthew 4:1-11

HEAVENLY FATHER, your Son battled with the powers of darkness, and grew closer to you in the desert: help us to use these days to grow in wisdom and prayer that we may witness to your saving love in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

A letter from God... *(Continued from page 1)*

When you embrace and enfold those pieces of yourself that you've lopped off to fit into the moulds of others?

What if 'penitence' is when you see yourself clearly, and know, speak, and live from your heart?

What if 'repentance' is remembering your true self in all your messy glory?

What if, this Lent, instead of focusing on the ways you're not good enough and the ways you fall short, you commit to your own healing?

I was there at the Big Bang, enlivening every particle, atom and molecule. You are made of me, and through me you are connected to everything and everyone.

I am everywhere, my glorious child. You swim in me and I in you.

This means, my dearest daughter, my dearest son, when you let yourself be healed, your healing heals the world. And when you cling to your brokenness, the world stays a little more broken than it needs to be. Your healing is important and necessary. You think your healing is selfish. That's incorrect. Your healing is crucial. I'm using that word deliberately, dearheart.

Your healing IS the crux – where you and I come together.

This Lent, the only fasts I want from you are these:

- Fast from distractions that allow you to stay wounded and broken.
- Fast from believing you're not good enough.
- Fast from making yourself small, and nice, and silent.
- Fast from all judgment, especially of yourself.

This Lent, make space for me to flow into you and through you.

Befriend your fear, your anger, and your sadness.

They are a deep source of nourishment and strength.

Let your love go free.

Let your joy be unconfined.

Oh, my hearts delight, my child, healing isn't complicated, and it's always available.

All you have to do is tap into it, and I will make my life-giving water of healing and wholeness flow.

You know this.

But it's so easy to forget, isn't it? All you have to do is let me clear out the dams and the rubbish, the resentments and identities and old, too-small skins, that keep you stuck and stagnant.

Relax your heart armour just a little. And then allow yourself to flow, child. That's all you have to do. *I'll do the rest.*

This Ash Wednesday, let those ashes symbolize our unending connection, a connection so easy to forget and so simple to strengthen.

When the priest wipes those gritty ashes on your forehead and says, '*Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return,*' celebrate your elemental oneness with this dear, dirty earth and with me. I am in those ashes, in the dust, in the stars, and in you.



My daughter, my son, I need you! You're the only you I created. So, please, let yourself be the creation I made you to be.

You don't need someone outside yourself telling you how to live.

Trust yourself. Trust your heart. Trust me. I've got you.

All my Love, God

Prayer Shoes

FOLLOWING on from the letter from God, and continuing to ponder the season of Lent, which is approaching, I spent some time with our Lord thinking about prayer and my need of it. This poem was the result.

I ASKED an old lady, how do you pray?

She answered, 'I put on the prayer shoes.'

This piqued my interest, I followed her way.

She walked in her house, to give more clues.

SHE explained, 'these are shoes that are special indeed,

for they help me to pray, and then God meets my needs.

God comes close when I wear them, His presence divine

I love these dear shoes and I'm glad that they're mine.'

I LOOKED at her face, all wrinkled and bright,

I questioned her more, as try as I might,

I couldn't imagine these shoes of prayer.

How did she get them? And most of all where?

SHE smiled as she spoke, and beckoned me look

at a drawer in the dresser, she bent and she took

the holy pair of shoes. She then put them on,

she smiled as she stood, the stooping had gone.

'THEY help me to pray, I have words to say

I speak of my worries, I tell God of my day.'

She wriggled in the shoes, I could barely look down.

I want prayer shoes too, my life's upside down!

I STARTED to cry, my heart was breaking.

I longed to know God, to fill this aching.

I looked down, as I knew I needed this pair.

I knew what was missing in my life was prayer.

BUT there on her feet, revealed by the light

was an old pair of shoes, shabby, worn out.

I couldn't believe they were the prayer shoes,

I looked in her eyes, searching and confused.

'YOU SEE,' she explained, 'these are my prayer shoes,

the ones I wear when it's prayer that I choose.'

These are my decision, my promise to my God,

that prayer will be happening when I put them on'.

I WEPT as I stood, for the words echoed true.

So prayer's a decision, for me and for you.

Life can be covered with prayer if we choose...

if we all decide, that day, to wear our prayer shoes.



Rev Lisa Wigmore



BRISTOL NOISE is all about mobilising churches and Christians to show God's love in practical ways within Bristol

St Stephens Church, is intending to join in with the Bristol Noise again this year; where we go out together for the day, showing God's love in whatever practical ways are assigned to us.

In the past we have painted things, done gardening, cleared 'fly-tipping', and enabled free community events to take place – all to serve others and to spread the love of God.

So, if this is for you, then please keep **Saturday 29th April** free.

Each of us wishing to attend need to register in early March, so more details will be available next month – so please watch this space, or contact me.

Rev Regan Meares Curate

37th KINGSWOOD SCOUT GROUP
presents

Gang Show 2023

At St Stephens Church Hall

**Tuesday 14th February to
Saturday 18th February**

SHOW TIMES:

**Tuesday–Friday 7.30pm
Saturday 7pm**

Tickets £8 are available now!

Contact Kristine Lockwood at
kristine.lockwood@blueyonder.co.uk
stating which night and
how many tickets you require.
Alternatively contact Kristine
on 0117 9096400
(please ring after 6pm).

If she is not there please leave a
brief message on her ansaphone
with a land line number and she
will get back to you.

Christmas Cards

IN THE December issue of 'Open Space' it was suggested that we might choose to write just ONE card to our 'Church family' which would then be displayed in church.

Here is the list of people who did just that, to wish us all happiness at Christmas!

Margaret Archer
Gwen and Derek Beek
Rosemary Boulton
Jan and Bill Brookshaw
Lin and Sandy Cooper
Sue Clements, Margaret Dodge
Pat Garner, Joyce and Geoff Harris
Carolyn Hawkins
Sue and Martin Humphrey
Jan Johns, Linda Krause
Julia Merrifield
Carol and Clive Millard
David Packe, Jan and Dave Parker
Tim, Olivia and Sophie Parker
Trish Phipps and Keith Winter
Sandra Rosser
Louise, David, Owen and Rhys Stanton
Sheila Stone
Gill and Ken Tizzard
Lisa, Paul and Tom Wigmore.



Join us for some
**COFFEE/
CHAT &
COMPANY**

**Every first Wednesday
of the month at 11 AM
in the Turnpike
on Soundwell Road.**

A time to be, be known,
and be together!

Warm AND Welcome SPACE!



AS we enter the winter season, temperatures drop, so until the weather improves, any and everyone* who wants a warm space to get out of the cold, have a hot drink and some friendly chat will be welcome to meet in the Church Room on St Stephens Road (*between the main Church and Soundwell Academy car park*). We look forward to seeing you!

Tuesdays from 10th January 9am~12noon

*UNDER 17s MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BY AN ADULT

CAR PARKING DISCLAIMER

WE are very grateful to Soundwell Academy for the occasional use of their car park outside of their usual hours.

Soundwell Academy and St Stephen's Church remind car park users that they will not accept any responsibility for accidents, damage or losses.

Please do be **extra careful** over the winter, during icy periods, as the car park will not always be treated with grit or salt.

Thank you!



**INTERNET ACCESS
is available at St Stephens:**

Locate the hotspot menu on your device and choose:

STStephenGuest

PASSWORD:
stchurch



NEW COMMUNITY LUNCH CLUB

(FOR OVER 55'S)

LUNCH INCLUDED!

BY RIGHT AT HOME

OPENING FRIDAY 6TH JANUARY

Fridays 11am-2pm
Holy Trinity Church Hall,
Kingswood,
BS15 4AD

Come along, have fun,
meet new people and
try some new activities!

For more information and to book
please call us on 0117 3701710
or email us on
communitybristol@rightathome.co.uk

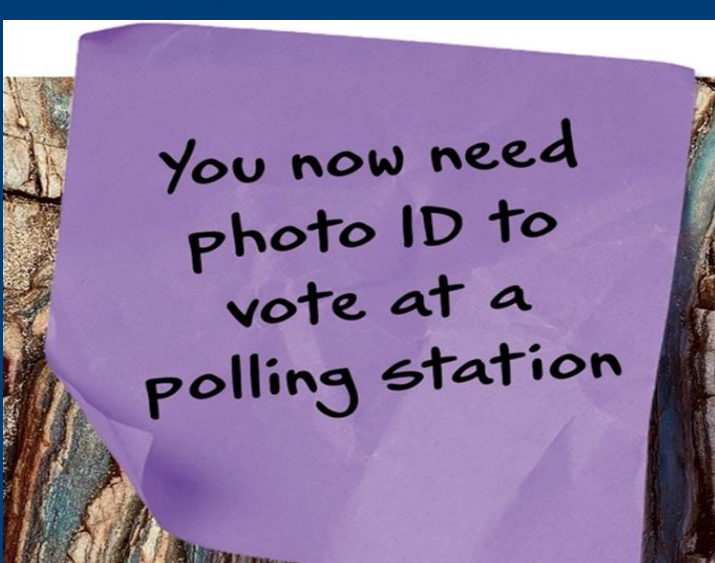


Right at Home
Quality Care in Your Home



New voter ID requirement

If you are voting at a polling station on 4 May, you will now need to bring **voter ID as well as your polling card**. All South Gloucestershire councillors and Town and Parish councillor positions are up for election. Make sure you don't miss out on your chance to vote. If you have turned 18, moved house or changed your name, you can **register and update your details online**. You can also **apply for a postal vote**.



You now need photo ID to vote at a polling station

NB: Bus passes count as photo ID but if you don't have any photo ID you can apply online, for a free voter ID document known as a Voter Authority Certificate, from late January from [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk).

You can also get a paper application by post, from the council or call the helpline 0800 328 0280.

The deadline to get the paper application to be able to vote in the May elections (should we need to) is 25 April. These rules will apply to UK general elections from October as well.

If you need more information, this website might be of help:
www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/voter/voter-id



Flower arranging at St Stephens



A SMALL group of ladies arrange the flowers weekly for our church and we would like to invite recruits to assist in our cause!

We meet up on Friday mornings at 9.30am for about 2 hours, in a rota of 3 persons per week, thus taking it in turns.

If you would like to join us then please contact Ruth, Jan Brookshaw or Joyce for more details! *Thank you!*

FEBRUARY CYCLE OF PRAYER BEGINNING SUNDAY OF EACH WEEK

05 Sisters of the Church	Shirley Potts, Christine Priddis Malcolm & Pat Pullin, Dot Randall Nicola, Andy, Amelia & Erin Read	Canon's Walk Champion Road Chedworth
12 Bristol Soup Run	Ruth Redler Sarah, Mark, Layla & Lauren Reid Colin and Tessa Rice, Peter Robbins	Chestnut Road Chestnut Way Chiphouse Road
19 125 Project	Monica Robinson, Carole Rockliffe Sandra Rosser Kerrie, Kevin, Kaiden & Kolby Rowland	Church Road Cogan Road Colston Close
26 Beloved	Lorraine and Paul Sanderson Marianne Saunders, Anne Scott Jayne, Chris & Phoebe Selway	Colston Street Cotswold View Cranham Close

SUNDAY Community Worship Service at 10am

Sunday 8am BCP Holy Communion on 1st and 3rd Sundays.

WEDNESDAY Service of Holy Communion at 10am.

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>

FEBRUARY DIARY

01 Wednesday 11am	Coffee/Chat/Company Turnpike Pub
02 Thursday(s) 10-11.45am 2-4pm	See & Know weekly in Church Hall Men's Group in Church Room then fortnightly
03 Friday 2pm 7-9pm	Pensioner's Group in Church Hall Outburst Youth Church in Church Hall (Monthly first Friday of the month)
07 Tuesday 9am-12 noon 1.30-3.30pm	WARM SPACE in Church Room then weekly Knit & Natter weekly in the Church Room
09 Thursday(s) 2-4pm	Ladies Group in Church Hall then fortnightly
22 Wednesday 10am & 7.30pm	ASH Wednesday Services LENT Course starts this week, with dates, times and content to be advised soon. The course will be based on a well known film!
24 Friday 6.30pm	FRIDAY NIGHT LIVE in Church

MARCH DIARY

04 Saturday 12 noon	Becky & Joe's Wedding in Church
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PALM CROSSES

IF YOU have Palm Crosses at home that you are happy to return to Church, then please do so by 19th February.

These will then be turned into ash for 'The Imposition of Ashes' which is the sign of the cross in ash on our foreheads – at both of the Ash Wednesday Services.

Thank you!



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
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FROM THE REGISTERS

SINCE DECEMBER 2022

Funerals:

● JANUARY 10: **John Sheppard (90).** The celebration of John's life was held at St Stephens Church, Soundwell, followed by the cremation at Westerleigh.

Please hold John's wife, Olive, their children Colin, Martin, Tina, David and their families, the wider family and all John's many friends in your prayers.

● JANUARY 12: **Marjorie Church (98).** The celebration of Marjorie's life was held at Westerleigh Crematorium.

Please hold Marjorie's daughters, Mary and Geraldine, their families, and the wider family and all her friends in your prayers.

● JANUARY 17: **Maria Botta (85).** The celebration of Maria's life was held at St Stephens Church, Soundwell, followed by the burial at Avon View Cemetery.

Please hold Maria's children, Raf and Gino, their families, the wider family and all their friends in your prayers.

● JANUARY 20: **Dave Masey (80).** The celebration of Dave's life was held at Westerleigh Crematorium.
Please hold his children, Mark and Miranda, their families, the wider family, and all his friends in your prayers.

SAINT STEPHENS SOUNDWELL



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● **Gill Mayo**
Church Warden
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