

# Open Space

SAINT STEPHENS SOUNDWELL

JANUARY 2023

## The light *continues to shine in* the darkness

THE fantasy author Terry Pratchett once commented, 'People think that stories are shaped by people. In fact, it's the other way around.'

While Pratchett's statement is debatable, he is not fully wrong. As humans, we are creatures who are captivated by stories.

The best stories are the ones where we lose ourselves in the world they have created. They make us feel like we are part of a bigger and more meaningful narrative.

Whether we realise it or not, worship is a story. Or rather, worship *does* a story.

Specifically, worship does the story of God, and through worship we are invited to participate in his story.

When we come to worship, the liturgical words and acts unfold the story of God's redeeming love through Jesus Christ, and they help us experience his love. We hear, proclaim, and join God's narrative through scripture reading, through prayer, in song, through the sermon, and in the sharing and receiving of Holy Communion.

Additionally, we participate in God's story through the way we order time. In particular, the church proclaims, enacts, and delights in God's story by walking together through the liturgical year.

The liturgical church year provides a narrative structure for worship that follows the life of Christ and the story of the church. It sets forth a yearly pattern of spiritual life that commemorates and re-experiences the mighty acts of God's salvation through Jesus Christ. In each season of the liturgical year, the church celebrates God's past actions, anticipates his desired future, and is formed in a distinct way of living in the present.

As 21st-century Christians, most of us likely find ourselves in ecclesial settings where Christmas and Easter are observed as the two highest holy days of the liturgical year. Even in churches that largely dismiss the liturgical calendar, these two days are considered imperative celebrations.

Jesus' birth and resurrection are miraculous events in the narrative of God's mighty acts, and they are essential to our faith and salvation; therefore, they should be commemorated with grand exaltation! Of course, the story of Jesus Christ encompasses more than these two events, and there are other ways for the church to commemorate Christ's work for us and for our salvation.

### THE FESTIVAL OF EPIPHANY

One commemoration that historically has been observed as a major holy day in the life of the church is the festival of Epiphany. *Continued on page 2 >*

Open Space

JANUARY 2023



#### 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

#### St Stephens

Church Road  
Soundwell  
Bristol BS16 4RH  
0117 956 6257

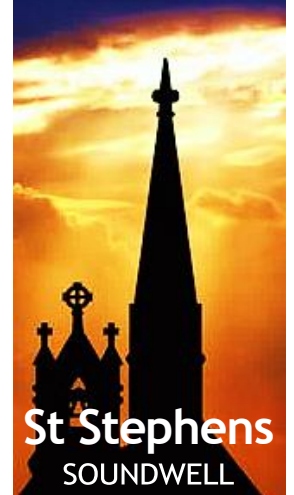
visionatststephens@  
gmail.com

www.saintstephen  
soundwell.org

f saintstephen  
soundwell

@SoundwellChurch

CHARITY NUMBER  
1131503



# Readings & Collects

FOR JANUARY 2023

## SUNDAY 01 JANUARY 2nd Sunday of Christmas

Numbers 6:22–end; Psalm 8  
Galatians 4:4–7; Luke 2:15–21

GOD OUR FATHER, in love you sent your Son that the world may have life: lead us to seek him among the outcast and to find him in those in need, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

## SUNDAY 08 JANUARY Epiphany

Isaiah 60:1–6; Psalm 72:1–15  
Ephesians 3:1–12; Matthew 2:1–12  
CREATOR of the heavens, who led the Magi by a star to worship the Christ-child: guide and sustain us, that we may find our journey's end in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## SUNDAY 15 JANUARY 2nd Sunday of Epiphany

Isaiah 49:1–7; Psalm 40:1–12  
1 Corinthians 1:1–9; John 1:29–42  
HEAVENLY FATHER, at the Jordan you revealed Jesus as your Son: may we recognize him as our Lord and know ourselves to be your beloved children; through Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen.

## SUNDAY 22 JANUARY Service of the Word

Matthew 4:12–23  
ETERNAL LORD, our beginning and our end: bring us with the whole creation to your glory, hidden through past ages and made known in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## SUNDAY 29 JANUARY Candlemas

Malachi 3:1–5; Psalm 24:[1–6] 7–end  
Hebrews 2:14–end; Luke 2:22–end  
LORD JESUS CHRIST, light of the nations and glory of Israel: make your home among us, and present us pure and holy to your heavenly Father, your God, and our God. Amen.

## The Light continues... *(Continued from page 1)*

Beginning in the 4th century and lasting until the mid-19th century, Epiphany was in fact considered to be a feast more important than Christmas Day. Surely there is nothing wrong with Christmas and Easter now holding prominent places in the church calendar; but perhaps we should take care not to overlook the festival of Epiphany and its implications for Christian faith and life.

The Day of Epiphany officially falls on January 6, the day following the 12 days of Christmas, and it begins the season of '*Epiphanytide*' or '*The Season after Epiphany*.'

Depending on who you ask, the season of Epiphany lasts either until the feast of the Presentation of Our Lord Jesus Christ (*aka Candlemas*) on February 2, or until Ash Wednesday, which begins the season of Lent. The season serves as a bridge that connects Christmas to Jesus's passion. It teaches us to see that Jesus' glory and his suffering are always intertwined.

The name of the festival of Epiphany is based on the same English word, which comes from the Greek *epiphaneia*, meaning 'manifestation' or 'appearance.'

In the context of the church year, Epiphany refers to the manifestation of Jesus as the saviour of the world, of both Jews and Gentiles.

For this reason, on Epiphany the church has long drawn a connection between the story of the Magi adoring the Christ child to the prophecy declared in Isaiah 60:1–3:

*Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.*

*For darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the Lord will arise upon you, and his glory will appear over you.*

*Nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.*

Its placement in the calendar positions Epiphany as the fulfilment of Advent and the climax of Christmas. While in Advent the church awaits the coming of the Messiah, at Christmas the church beholds the incarnation of God in flesh, and on Epiphany the church celebrates that

God has come to make his glory known to the world in and through Jesus Christ. During Advent, the church seeks God's intervention for humanity. At Christmas the church declares that God has assumed our humanity. On Epiphany the church asserts that God has made himself known to all humanity.

Moreover, the movement from Advent to Epiphany marks a progression from darkness to light, which is why Epiphany sometimes is called the 'Feast of Lights'. Advent anticipates God's promised light that will come to dispel the darkness.

Christmas praises God for his light that has been born into the darkness. Epiphany rejoices that God's light has come to the world and has manifest itself to those living in darkness. And so, with Isaiah, on Epiphany the church proclaims:

**Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.**

### IMAGES OF LIGHT

The image of light is often used in the Bible to symbolise Christ and the manifestation of his glory on earth. One way to consider our participation in this light in regard to the coming of Christ is as a sudden burst of light, like a light switch being flipped on in a dark room. At first, the light is so bright that you can't help but squint and shield your eyes from it as your vision readjusts. It is staggering, but once your eyes grow accustomed to the light, you are good to go.

This idea of Epiphany reminds me of the Christian artist Thomas Kinkade. For much of his career, Kinkade was referred to as 'the Painter of Light.' People said his paintings had a particular 'glow' about them.

If you look up one of his works, you will see how light floods the canvas.

Every possible light source in the painting shines forth, whether a street lamp, a window, or a car headlight. This luminous style was Kinkade's trademark.

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He believed the abundance of light put the viewer in a state of peace and tranquillity, feeling good about herself/himself, about God, and about the world.

Kinkade wanted his paintings to illustrate idyllic environments and inspirational scenes that whisper to the viewer, 'See how wonderful life is when it is full of light?'



Kinkade's approach to Epiphany is nice and simple, and it speaks to a longing in our hearts for peace and goodness to fill the earth.

The problem, however, is that Kinkade does not offer an accurate description of reality, nor a proper representation of the story of Epiphany.

Yes, Christ has come and has manifest his light among us, but the darkness is still present. The world is still filled with troubles. Sin and injustice still plague the earth.

In contrast to a 'Kinkade' view of Epiphany, the artist Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn offers an alternative way to see Jesus as light in the darkness.

Similar to Kinkade, Rembrandt has been called a 'painter of light'; but, his artistic depiction of light is quite different.

Take a moment to look at this painting by Rembrandt entitled, 'The Adoration of the Shepherds'. Notice how Rembrandt's use of light is distinct from Kinkade's.

In this painting, Rembrandt applies an artistic technique known as *chiaroscuro*, a technique that makes a strong contrast between shadow and light. Unlike Kinkade, whose paintings are saturated with light, in Rembrandt's painting the light comes from a single source. The light doesn't overwhelm the painting, but rather illuminates the darkness in a dramatic fashion.



Rembrandt's use of light is a fitting image for Epiphany because he demonstrates how light stands in contrast to darkness.

When Christ came to this world, he came as light in the midst of darkness. He came to draw our attention, to fix our gaze unto himself, to show us a way of life and love that contrasts the darkness. Thus, rather than viewing Epiphany as a blaze of light that suddenly overwhelms a dark room, perhaps a better analogy is to see Epiphany as light that comes to a people trapped deep inside a cave. They are helpless in the darkness, unable to see, and incapable of saving themselves, but then, suddenly, someone from the surface appears in their midst. The person speaks words of comfort and turns on a lantern, bearing a light that pierces the darkness. He assures them that he knows the way out of the darkness, and he promises to lead them to rescue so long as they keep their eyes focused on his light.

### **ARISE AND SHINE**

Here is the story that Epiphany proclaims: Christ has come to show us light in the midst of darkness.

He has come into the darkness for us and for our salvation. We are constantly surrounded by reminders of human brokenness, that we are people who walk in darkness and need rescuing.

Between the economic struggles, political hostility, inequality &

injustice, wars around the world, social anxiety, and our own personal concerns, the troubles of this world weigh heavy. They distract us and vie for our attention, often making us feel the need to stand up, face the darkness, and fight against it.

Epiphany, however, reminds us that as Christians, even in the midst of darkness, we orient to the light of Christ.

Look at the Rembrandt painting once more.

Notice how all the characters in the painting are gathered around Jesus, the source of light.

As they gaze upon him, his light shines on them. Their faces reflect his glory.

Epiphany calls us to be like the shepherds who adore Christ in Rembrandt's painting. We behold the light of Christ, and we become reflective manifestations of his glory.

We celebrate the gift of God's grace made known to the world in Jesus, and we live in the light of that grace so that it shines upon all people.

We worship and adore Christ, and we are shaped by his life and love.

*In celebration of the festival of Epiphany and in the year ahead, fix your gaze on Christ.*

Behold his glory. Ponder anew his mighty works of salvation, and let his light dawn upon you as an Epiphany of God's love.

**LISA x**

# Warm Space initiative

FROM stories in the news, we will all be very aware that many people are having difficulty making ends meet.

MANY are having to make the unimaginable choice between eating and heating.

These are hard times, and as the cold weather approaches, many will be struggling.

*There appears to be a growing movement for those who can, to offer a 'warm space'.*

These are places to hang out for a while, receive a friendly welcome and have a hot drink or two.

At a meeting of our PCC on the 8th November, we all agreed that we at St Stephens could offer such a space for our own community.

So, we are proposing opening up the Church Room each Tuesday morning, starting on 10th January 2023 from 9am until noon, for the first few months of the new year.

To do this we will need to build a small team of people who will be around for the morning to set up, do the refreshments and generally make people welcome.

Hopefully there will be enough of us to be able to sort out some form of rota so that any commitment is not too onerous.

*Would you be able or like to be part of this initiative and help to make a difference in our community?*

If so, please do telephone Sandy on 0117 967 2621 for a chat about how you might be involved.

Your help would be very much appreciated. Thank you.

**Sandy Cooper**

## Prayer Ministry in Church

SADLY, Covid pressed the pause button on gathering together with others to pray for particular needs during our services but we hope to begin this again in the New Year.

BUT what is at the heart of prayer ministry? *What is it all about?*

Prayer ministry is an opportunity to encounter the power, truth and love of God as someone prays with you, discerning and passing on what they sense God has for you. This could be healing, forgiveness, blessing, encouragement, freedom or any number of other things.

What you pray with the 'prayer ministers' will always be held in confidence, and is therefore kept just between those praying at that time and God.

There will be no 'checking up' on you afterwards, unless you specifically request it. The purpose of the prayer ministry team is to actively encourage and promote prayer within the life of the church.

By being open and responsive to the working of the Holy Spirit, we pray that God's love, guidance and healing power would be released for the benefit of His people and to Jesus' glory.

If you would like to be part of the prayer ministry team, then please do speak with me, Lisa, at any time. If you'd like to be involved as we start afresh in 2023, please do have that chat before Christmas.

Thank you & bless you as you ponder if this is right for you.

**LISA x**



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!**

## THE WORK OF CHRISTMAS

WHEN the song of the angels is stilled, when the star in the sky is gone, when the kings and princes are home, when the shepherds are back with the flocks, then the work of Christmas begins:

To find the lost, to heal those broken in spirit, to feed the hungry, to release the oppressed, to rebuild the nations, to bring peace among all peoples, to make a little music with the heart. And to radiate the Light of Christ, every day, in every way, in all that we do and in all that we say. Then the work of Christmas begins!

**Howard Thurman**

## 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!



# Different Lights



Spotlights and headlights,  
and floodlights too,  
torches and bonfires,  
and fireworks—woohoo!



Phones and streetlamps,  
and candles galore,  
tealights and cats eyes,  
and more more more.

Not to mention the sun,  
and the twinkling stars,  
lights on our bikes,  
and lights on our cars.  
So many lights, showing us the way,  
the moon at night,  
and the sun in the day.



We're like that, all different lights,  
helping others, in doing what's right.  
Every single day  
we can shine our light,  
in the way we're made,  
in the day and the night.  
Our lights are the things  
that we do when we care,  
helpful and friendly,  
and just being there.

# Ladies Group Poem

GILL MAYO writes a poem for the Ladies Group Carol Service, and has done for quite a few years now.

As usual, it is so very good, that I've asked her if I can share it with you. Be prepared for this to touch your heart, as it did mine. Thank you, Gill.

Lisa xx

## LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

THE clouds were getting darker as they raced across the sky, young Myky sat shivering as he watched the feet go by.

Each person in such a hurry barely knowing he was there,

Or maybe, it was simply that they really couldn't care.

They didn't see the poor lad with clothes all thin and old. Holding out his begging bowl, his fingers white with cold.

They didn't see those bright blue eyes, now hidden by his tears,

Or sense the spirit that was lost through tragedy and fears.

They ask, doesn't he have siblings and a loving mother's arm.

A father to protect him, to keep him safe from harm?

No, they were cruelly taken from his once so happy life, Leaving so much loss and fear in times of war and strife.

The bombs had hit the Churches, the schools and many a home,

It had killed all those he loved so dear and left him all alone.

Many promises of help were there, but so little to be found,

So he treads the streets, begs for food and sleeps upon cold ground.

The Country was now in darkness, the sounds of war were always there,

Its people are all tired and hungry and the shops were all but bare.

The nights were so much colder now, and Christmas Eve was here,

But there were no signs of celebration or feelings of good cheer.

Myky had entered a bombed out Church seeking shelter from icy rain

When he noticed an old man hunched over a flickering flame.

And there steaming on the embers was a large and blackened pot,

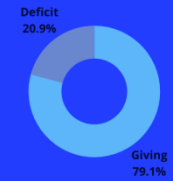
Oh how Myky's stomach cried for something tasty and hot.

As he drew closer the old man turned, surprised to see his guest

## Our Church Financial Health



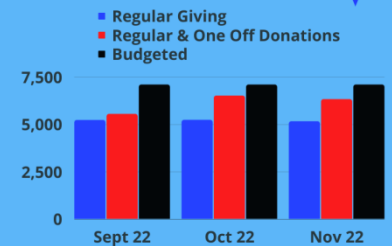
### GIVING FOR NOVEMBER



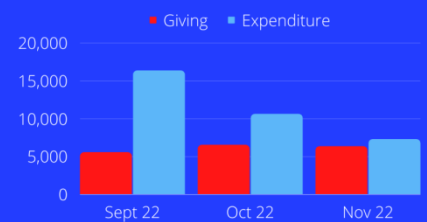
WHAT OUR GIVING NEEDS TO BE £7095

GIVING RECEIVED £5152

### Giving Last 3 Months



### Giving v Church Expenses Last 3 Months



He said do come and join me and share in my Christmas Fest.

The Borscht brought back happy memories of warmth and a family meal,

For a moment he could be happy, forgetting the Countries ordeal.

In the light of the glowing fire they spoke of Christmases past,

Then remembered exactly one year ago this Church was razed in a blast,

Most of the walls had fallen but somehow the altar still stood,

Its vestments shredded and hanging with a little cross made of wood.

Suddenly they were overcome with the urge to rest their heads,

Knowing they would sleep this night, though the ground would be their bed.

It seems that some time must have passed when Myky woke with a start,

All around was quiet and calm, but he felt excitement in his heart.

His eyes soon became adjusted to the darkness all around, They were drawn toward the altar from whence he'd heard a sound. *Continued on page 6>*

01 Church Musicians	Anita Leakey Kristine, Ian, Emily & Jack Lockwood Mike Long, Gerald Marshall, Gill Mayo	Acacia Avenue Acacia Close Acacia Road
08 Young people's uniformed organisations	Julia Merrifield, Clive Milkins Carol Millard, Holly Miriam Andrea Monks, Margaret Moore	Alexandra Close Alexandra Gardens Alexandra Place
15 Trinity Theological College	Josie, Tanya & Bradley Morris Carol Murphy, Dave Newton Katy, Tom, George & Theo North	Anchor Road Baglyn Avenue Barrington Close
22 Children's Society	Gill Ogborne, David Packe Jan and Dave Parker Suzanne Parker	Barrington Court Beazer Close Birch Road
29 Emmaus Bristol	Tim, Olivia & Sophie Parker Wayne, Rosie, Annie-Mae & Joseph Pearce Trish Phipps, Ollie, Jaime & Rupert Phipps	Blackthorn Walk Bridge Road Caddick 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>

## JANUARY DIARY

03 Tuesday(s)	1.30-3.30pm	Knit & Natter weekly in the Church Room
04 Wednesday	11am	Coffee/Chat/Company Turnpike Pub
05 Thursday(s)	10-11.45am 2-4pm	See & Know weekly in Church Hall Men's Group in Church Room then fortnightly
06 Friday	2pm 7-9pm	Pensioner's Group in Church Hall Outburst Youth Church in Church Hall (Monthly first Friday of the month)
07 Saturday	9.30am	Baptism Preparation in Church
10 Tuesday	9am-12 noon 12.30pm 7.30pm	New: <b>WARM SPACE</b> in Church Room then weekly John Sheppard, RIP, funeral in Church PCC in Church Room
12 Thursday(s)	2-4pm	Ladies Group in Church Hall then fortnightly
17 Tuesday	12noon	Maria Botta, RIP, funeral in Church
20 Friday	6.30pm	FRIDAY NIGHT LIVE in Church

## THANKS

I WOULD like to thank everyone for their prayers and support following the premature birth of my great grandson Enzo.

A special thanks to Lisa for her help and support to Jasmine and Scott when Enzo passed away after seventeen days.

*The kindness of everyone was very much appreciated.*

Since Enzo's death, Jasmine and Scott have raised almost **£1300** for the **Cots for Tots** charity.

**Stella**



## 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>

## FROM THE REGISTERS

SINCE NOVEMBER 2022

## Baptism:

DECEMBER 11: **Logan Tommy Herbert.**  
*Please hold Logan's parents, Terri and Ryan, brother Riley, his Godparents and all his family and friends in your prayers.*

## Ladies Group Poem

< Continued from page 5

All at once the altar was bathed in such a beautiful light.

Within he saw the image of Christ all draped in gleaming white

He rubbed his eyes and gazed in awe at this amazing apparition,

Why would he be a chosen one to see this holy vision?

Not knowing what was happening, at first he felt just fear,

But then he heard the voice of Jesus speaking gently and clear.

*Jesus said:*

"Your country has sunk into darkness, and all are suffering pain,

Your people are crying out for peace and calling for God by name,

Sadly this world is full of evil and everywhere is sin,

So people must open up their hearts and welcome God's love in.

Tell your Country all will be well,

And gone, the evil in which they dwell:

As I have come to offer you gladness, I bring you...

**LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS"**

## SAINT STEPHENS SOUNDWELL



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### • Revd Sandy Cooper

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### • Revd Regan Meares

Curate  
Telephone 07769 704270



### • Peter Robbins

Lay Minister, 13 Wood Road  
Kingswood, Bristol BS15 8DT  
Telephone 0117 967 9576



### • Gill Mayo

Church Warden  
Telephone  
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