Open Space

SAINT STEPHENS SOUNDWELL

KNOWING JESUS... MAKING JESUS KNOWN!

SEPTEMBER 2026

A MESSAGE FROM Our Community Chaplain!

I CAN HARDLY believe that it has been almost a year since I joined St Stephens Church as Community Chaplain – and what an incredible year it has been!

Firstly, I want to say a huge thank you to everyone who has welcomed, supported, encouraged, and volunteered alongside me. None of what has been achieved this year would have been possible without the generosity and commitment of so many people.

It has been wonderful to see God at work in and through St Stephens as we continue to grow our connections with children, young people, and families across our community.

Family Fun Events

ONE of the highlights of the year has been the launch of our Family Fun Events.

These themed mornings have provided opportunities for families to enjoy crafts, games, food, Bible stories, and time together in a welcoming environment.

It has been a joy to see so many new families coming through our doors.

Here are just a few of the comments we received:

"We had a lovely time at the family fun morning. There were lots of different crafts to do and the children loved creating with junk modelling. We even had pancakes cooked for us.

Thank you to everyone at St Stephens for putting this fun morning on for us."

"Thank you for a lovely morning! What a perfect way to start half term for families – we all had such a lovely time. It was so nice to see so many school families together."

"We had great fun at the pancake event which started with a warm, friendly welcome. There was an excellent variety of activities covering different ages and abilities.Thank you for all your hard work – we look forward to attending future events."

Youth Church

OUR Youth Church has continued to grow throughout the year. We began a new format by starting each session in the church hall with games and Bible races before exploring Scripture together.

We also enjoyed putting on our own Youth Church Nativity and even experimented with using puppets to help tell the Christmas story. It has been wonderful to see friendships deepen and young people grow in confidence and faith.

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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

St Stephens

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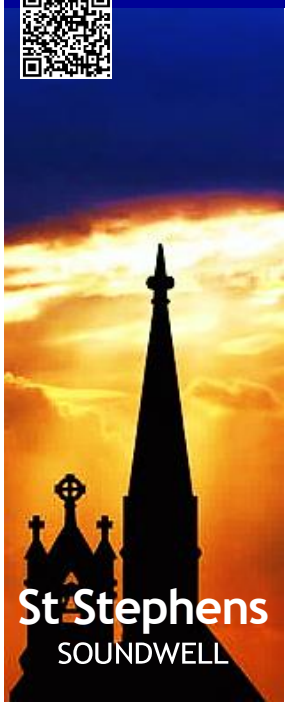

Our Community Chaplain

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Bubble Church

THIS year also saw the exciting launch of Bubble Church, which is a lively 30-minute service designed especially for young families, and includes action songs, puppets, a Bible story, prayer, and a simple hands-on activity, with breakfast shared together before the service. The repeated format helps children feel secure, confident, and fully involved.

Our very first Bubble Church welcomed 7 families and 14 children, many of whom had little or no previous connection with church.

It has been such an encouragement to see new families exploring faith together, and I am excited to see this ministry continue to grow.

Working with our Schools

BUILDING relationships with our local schools has been one of the greatest privileges of my role.

St Stephen's Junior School

This year we have been able to offer a wide range of activities and support, including:

- A crochet after-school club, attended by around 22 children each week, with a waiting list for places.
- Weekly collective worship every Wednesday, exploring Bible stories and key figures from Scripture.
- Friday lunchtime Bible Club, where children enjoy their lunch while listening to a Bible story and completing a related craft.
- Term 6, Prayers on the Playground, where children were invited to take part in creative prayer activities during Wednesday lunchtimes.
- Interactive Easter and Christmas workshops using our 'In the Box' resources.
- RE workshop exploring core Christian beliefs.
- Hosting Harvest, Christmas, Easter and Year 6 Leavers Services in the church.

St Stephen's Infant School

We enjoyed welcoming every year group into church for workshops where children could explore the building, hear the organ being played, ask questions, and learn more about the Christian faith.

We also supported the school in celebrating Harvest and Christmas. A massive thank you to Tim Parker for support with this; you are fab!

King's Forest Primary School

We were delighted to welcome Year 4 pupils into church for a workshop, giving them the opportunity to explore the church building and ask questions about Christianity.

All Age Services

IT HAS also been a real joy to work alongside our wonderful All Age Service Team to plan and lead engaging services for families in our community.

Together we have explored creative ways of sharing God's love through interactive worship, drama, storytelling, and activities that people of all ages can enjoy together.

It has been encouraging to see families worship side by side, and I am so grateful for the enthusiasm, creativity, and dedication of everyone who gives their time to make these services so welcoming and meaningful.

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Our Community Chaplain

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See and Know

OUR wonderful toddler group, *See and Know*, continues to flourish under the fantastic leadership of Sue Humphries.

It has been a real privilege to work alongside Sue in supporting families with young children and creating a welcoming space where friendships can grow and parents and carers feel supported.

Little Church

LITTLE CHURCH is a monthly service created especially for neuro-diverse families

Using a visual timetable, activity stations, games, colouring, worship, prayer, and a short Bible talk, we aim to create a calm, welcoming environment where families can experience church at their own pace.

Five families currently attend and it is wonderful to provide a space where SEND families can encounter God, build friendships, and know that they are welcomed and valued.

Looking Ahead

As I look towards another year, I am excited about all that God has in store for St Stephens.

There are so many opportunities to continue building relationships, sharing God's love, and supporting families in our community.

If any of these ministries sound like something you would enjoy being part of, I would love to hear from you. We are particularly looking for new volunteers to support:

- **Youth Church** *(both our teen group and our primary age).*
- **See and Know** (set up, kitchen, running sessions)
- **Bible Club**
- **Bubble Church**

If you would like to find out more, please speak to me after a service or email me at elaineb.ststephens@gmail.com

Thank you once again for your continued encouragement, prayers, and support for our children, young people, and families.

Please continue to pray for these ministries as we step into this next season together. I cannot wait to see what God has in store.

Elaine Brewster

Tuesday 9 to 11.30am

8 & 22 September

Please note that under 17s must be accompanied by an adult).

IN OUR CHURCH ROOM

Foundation Governor

FOUNDATION GOVERNORS have a particular responsibility within Church Schools to preserve and develop the Christian character and ethos of the school.

OUR Church School, St Stephen's Junior School, is in need of another Foundation Governor.

Without Foundation Governors, we, as St Stephens Church, are not supporting our Church School in its Christian character and ethos. Foundation Governors are normally practising Christians, but as a school governor, a Foundation Governor is more than just a Church representative. They are a full governor, with an equal say and input into the life of the school in all areas. Being a school governor is a way to serve in our Church community.

I am already a Governor at St Stephen's Junior School, but we really need a second person to fulfil our commitment as a Church.

Not only that, but I would also be glad of some support!

If you are interested or would like further information please do come and speak to me. I am usually in Church on a Sunday, and I often attend Bible Chat and Friday Night Live. Or you can give me a call on 07 376 185 876. **Linda Krause**

READINGS & COLLECTS

SUNDAY 06 SEPTEMBER
14th Sunday after Trinity

Exodus 12:1–14; Psalm 149;
Romans 13:8–end; Matthew 18:15–20

MERCIFUL GOD, your Son came to save us and bore our sins on the cross: may we trust in your mercy and know your love, rejoicing in the righteousness that is ours through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

SUNDAY 13 SEPTEMBER
15th Sunday after Trinity

Exodus 14:19–end; Psalm 114
Romans 14:1–12; Matthew 18:21–35

LORD GOD, defend your Church from all false teaching and give to your people knowledge of your truth, that we may enjoy eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

SUNDAY 20 SEPTEMBER
16th Sunday after Trinity

Exodus 16:2–15; Psalm 105:1–6, 37–end
Philippians 1:21–end; Matthew 20:1–16

LORD of creation, whose glory is around and within us: open our eyes to your wonders, that we may serve you with reverence and know your peace at our lives' end, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

SUNDAY 27 SEPTEMBER
Harvest All-age Service

Exodus 17:1–7; Psalm 78:1–4, 12–16
Philippians 2:1–13; Matthew 21:23–32

GRACIOUS GOD, you call us to fullness of life: deliver us from unbelief and banish our anxieties with the liberating love of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Children's Society Collection Boxes

PLEASE could these come back to Church during September for the usual processing.

I am happy to collect them if necessary – just let me know.

Thank you! **Stella**

‘Safari’ Family Fun morning

A ROARING START to our Family Fun Summer Events!

Wow! What an amazing start to our Family Fun Summer Events!

We were delighted to welcome 17 children and their families for a morning of safari-themed fun filled creativity and community.

From the moment they arrived, families were warmly greeted by our wonderful team of volunteers and invited to take part in a Safari Treasure Hunt.

As they explored the church hall, children searched for hidden pictures and ticked them off as they went, working together to uncover a secret phrase – ANIMAL!

Each picture also introduced a different Bible character connected to an animal. For example, the lion picture uncovered the biblical character Daniel, helping them to explore the Bible in a fun and interactive way.

After completing the treasure hunt, families gathered together to enjoy some delicious party food and refreshments.

There was also plenty of time to explore the wide range of activity stations around the hall.

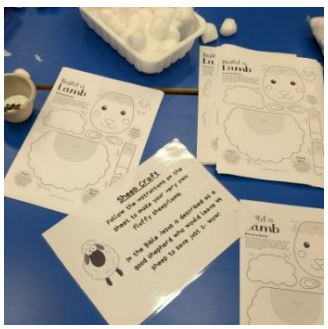
From junk modelling to colourful crafts, including making fluffy lambs from cotton wool and creating animal bookmarks, there was something for everyone to enjoy!

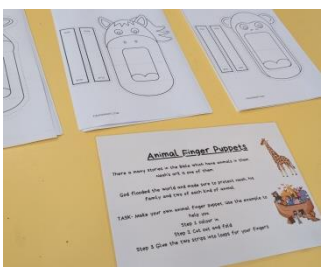
I am so grateful to everyone who came along and, of course, to our amazing volunteers who helped make the morning such a success.

It was wonderful to see families enjoying time together and being part of our community.

We also had two other exciting Family Fun Events during August and look ahead with anticipation to future endeavours to see what other adventures they will bring!

Elaine





· St Stephens Church Soundwell ·

ALL AGE HARVEST SERVICE

10.30AM SUNDAY 27 SEPTEMBER

DONATIONS are welcomed!

Food: Anything in tins or ambient packaging;
Toiletries: nappies *(all sizes)*, all toiletry items, eg: shower gel, shampoo, toothpaste, toothbrushes, sanitary pads, hand wash, bubble bath, *etc!*

ALL IN USE BY DATE PLEASE

Financial gifts are also welcomed and these will be given to Christian charities who feed the hungry, and envelopes for such donations will be available in church.

VACANCY UPDATE

AS I write this, in early August, it has now been 8 weeks since Lisa retired.

SADLY, as you know, the Diocese were unable to provide us with the Curate-in-Charge that we were hoping for, but rest assured that the Ministry Team, Churchwardens, the PCC and many others are working hard to ensure that life at St Stephens carries on and that we remain focused on following Jesus.

It is going to be some time before we can appoint a new Priest-in-Charge, and the process is not quick, and it is not simple.

There is a small team of PCC members whose priority is, at the moment, to write a new Parish Profile, which has to happen before we can even begin to think about advertising the post for a new priest.

Please know that work on this important document is proceeding.

So what is the Parish Profile I hear you ask?

In a nutshell it is this:

A Church of England parish profile is an informational document created by a local church community when its vicar/priest role becomes vacant. It describes the local area, church traditions, congregation activities, and the qualities needed in a new priest to attract applicants.

Contents will include:

• **Church Life**: Details about regular services, tradition, leadership, ministry, staffing, average attendance, community groups, worship style, finances, buildings, discipleship and more...

• **Our vision, mission and aims**. Also an assessment of how the church is at present, its strengths and weaknesses.

• **The Local Community**: Information on local demographics, housing, schools, & local amenities.

• **The Role and Person Specification**: A description of the duties required, their experience and the personal traits hoped for in the new priest. *Who is God calling to St Stephens?*

Thank you to everyone that filled in one of the questionnaires that were given out recently.

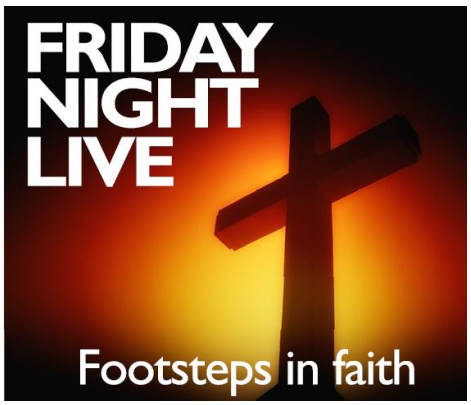
The responses have been collated into one document and are helping to form an important part of the Parish Profile.

Photographs of the church, its people and church life also need to be documented in the profile.

If anyone has any photographs of church events that have taken place over the last year or so please be in touch with me or anyone else on the PCC, thank you.

If anyone has any questions about the Parish Profile or the vacancy please speak to any member of the Ministry Team or one of the Church-Wardens.

Julia Merrifield on behalf of *St Stephens PCC and Ministry Team*



21 SEPTEMBER
6.30PM in Church
Informal service for all ages
followed by cheese & biscuits!

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

WEDNESDAY
Bible Chat
in the Church Room
2.30PM
(2PM for a cuppa)
SEPTEMBER
9th & **23**rd
OCTOBER
14th & **28**th
NOVEMBER
11th & **25**th

BRING your Bible!
WEDNESDAY EVENINGS
7.15pm to **8.15**pm

SEPTEMBER CYCLE OF PRAYER *BEGINNING SUNDAY OF EACH WEEK*

06	'Greeters' to Church	Steve and Sarah Fry Julie, Shaun, Josh & Hollie Fudge Matt, Jenny & Lauren Gait	Rose Oak Gardens Rudge Close Seymour Road
13	All who read or lead prayers in our services	Sheila Galsworthy, Pat Garner Alfie Gillett, Julie, Simon & Ruby Goss Brian Grant & Christine	Sherbourne Close Soundwell Road Spring Hill
20	Sacristan and Servers	Jess, Henry & Cooper Griffey Jan Halton, Janice Harland Geoff and Joyce Harris, Ivor Harris	St Clements Court St Martins Court St Stephens Close
27	Deanery Synod Representatives	Carolyn Hawkins, Stella Hoare Mike and Jayne Hudd Cherilyn Hughes, Jean Hulbert	St Stephens Road Stanley Park Road Stanton Close

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

Bubble Church 9.15am *2nd Sunday of the month*, ie: 13th September

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: September 3rd &17th.

SEPTEMBER DIARY (Groups & Clubs resume this month)

02 Wednesday	11am 7.15pm	**Coffee/Chat/Company** *at the Turnpike Pub* **BRING YOUR BIBLE** *in the Church Room*
03 Thursday	1.30pm	**LADIES GROUP** *in the Church Hall* (then fortnightly)
08 Tuesday	9~11.30am 1.30pm 7.30pm	**WELCOME SPACE** *in the Church Room* **Knit & Natter** *in the Church Room (then weekly)* **PCC** *in the Church Room*
09 Wednesday	2pm	**BIBLE CHAT** *in the Church Room* (then fortnightly)
10 Thursday	10am 1.30pm	**See & Know Toddler's Group** *in the Church Hall (then weekly)* **Men's Group** *in the Church Room* (then fortnightly)
11 Friday	1.45pm	**Pensioner's Group** *in the Church Hall*
13 Sunday	9.15am	**Bubble Church** *in the Church Hall*
14 Monday	10.15am	**Retreat Memory Café** *in the Church Hall* for Dementia sufferers and their carers
16 Wednesday	7.15pm	**BRING YOUR BIBLE** *in the Church Room*
17 Thursday	1.30pm	**Ladies Group** *in the Church Hall* (then fortnightly)
18 Friday	6.30pm	**FRIDAY NIGHT LIVE** *in Church*
22 Tuesday	9~11.30am	**WELCOME SPACE** *in the Church Room*
23 Wednesday	2pm 7.15pm	**BIBLE CHAT** *in the Church Room* **BRING YOUR BIBLE** *in the Church Room*
24 Thursday	1.30pm	**Men's Group** *in the Church Room*
25 Friday	1.45pm	**Pensioner's Group** *in the Church Hall*
27 SUNDAY	10.30am	**HARVEST FESTIVAL** All-age Service *in Church*
28 Monday	10.15am	**Retreat Memory Café** *in the Church Hall* for Dementia sufferers and their carers
30 Wednesday	7.15pm	**BRING YOUR BIBLE** *in the Church Room*

OCTOBER DIARY

01 Thursday	10am 1pm	**See & Know Toddler's Group** *in the Church Hall (then weekly)* **Ladies Group** (Harvest Lunch) *in the Church Hall* (then fortnightly @ 1.30pm)
07 Wednesday	11am 7.15pm	**Coffee/Chat/Company** *at the Turnpike Pub* **BRING YOUR BIBLE** *in the Church Room*

FROM THE REGISTERS

Wedding:

• August 1st: **Emma Timbury** and **Brent Webber** were married at St Stephens Church, Soundwell.
Please hold them, together with their families and friends and all those who love and support them, in your prayers.

Baptism:

• August 16th: **Reggie Henry O'Regan.**
Please hold Reggie's parents, Jordan and Samantha: his Godparents George, Emily, Brad; and all the family and their friends in your prayers.

UPDATE FROM easyfundraising

St Stephen's Church, Soundwell, Bristol
has raised
£137.41
on easyfundraising!

SAINT STEPHENS SOUNDWELL

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• **Julia Merrifield**
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• **Lorraine Sanderson** *Treasurer*
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• **Lin Cooper** *Director of Music*
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