



# What's up Doc?

*Your occasional bulletin from St Mary's Salford*

**No. 3 - December 2025**

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*Serving Jesus in our community with faith, hope and love*

Welcome to the third edition of an occasional newsletter for members of St Mary's church, Salford.

**Advent is upon us**, and Nigel hopes we are all enjoying the Jesse tree outside the Rectory on Beech Road. There are many special services and events during December, and they are listed on the Parish Christmas card, and reproduced here for convenience:

## December Services

**Wednesday 3rd December**  
7.30pm Compline

**Sunday 7th December**  
9.30am Christingle  
4pm Telephone Service

**Sunday 14th December**  
8.45am Parish Breakfast  
10am All Age Family Nativity Service  
4pm Telephone Service

**Sunday 21st December**  
9.30am Holy Communion  
4pm Telephone Service  
6pm Carols at Christmas

**Christmas Eve**  
5pm Crib Service  
11.15pm Benefice Midnight Communion

**Christmas Day**  
9.30am Family Celebration with Communion

**Sunday 28th December**  
9.30am Holy Communion  
4pm Telephone Service

## From the rector



Advent invites us to pause in a world that rarely slows down. A time of year where I spend time trying to find Advent music rather than Christmas music (do ask me what my favourite album is for this year). As the days grow shorter and the year draws to a close, we light candles that speak of a much greater light Christ, who steps into our darkness with hope, peace, joy, and love. Each flame reminds us that God often arrives quietly: in waiting, in longing, and in the gentle work of preparation.

This season encourages us not to rush to Christmas, but to notice God's presence in the in-between moments those places where we hope for healing, for reconciliation, for renewal. Advent assures us that our waiting is not empty; God is already at work, shaping us to receive the gift we celebrate on Christmas Day.

So may this Advent season be a time of watchful hope, tender expectation, and growing light.

**Nigel Williams**

## Parish Breakfasts at St Mary's

In early 2022, we had just emerged from the limitations of the Covid pandemic and fewer people than previously were staying for coffee after the morning service at St Mary's. Sharing breakfast together before the service seemed a good way to bring people back together and enjoy fellowship as well as an opportunity to raise donations to various charities that the church had supported previously or that were very much in the news. As one of the prime reasons for holding the breakfast was to bring people together, the PCC was happy to fund the breakfast itself so that all donations went directly to the charity supported. They generally take place on the second Sunday of the month, which is the Sunday when there is the more informal Connect service in the church hall.

At the first breakfast in April 2022, we raised £270 for the DEC's Ukraine Humanitarian Appeal. Since then, we have supported local charities, like Ripple Effect

(formerly Send a Cow), Grow for Life and Life Project and national charities such as Christian Aid and Open Doors amongst numerous others. The list is not rigid and next year, we'll support two new charities to St Mary's; Freewheelers EVS, which provides a free out-of-hours motorcycle courier service to hospitals in the South West of England and Children's Hospice South West. Perhaps one of these events will be the ideal opportunity to invite a lonely friend or neighbour to share breakfast and consider staying for the informal Connect service which follows in the Church Hall?

Quite a team of people have helped prepare and serve breakfast over the last three and a half years and I want to say a big 'thank-you' to everyone who has been involved. Sometimes, it gets busy but we always have a good time and do get to enjoy a fresh cup of coffee, some fresh fruit salad and warm pastry, too! If you want to come along and give a hand, please do speak to me. It doesn't need to be a monthly commitment.

Dates coming up are 14th December, which starts at 9am and precedes the Nativity Service and will support the Children's Society, and 11th January 2026. Keep your eyes on the regular Benefice Newsletter for further information. I hope to see you there!

**Julia Norris (07977 956969)**

## Children and families

It's been an exciting year at St Mary's Church, with the relaunch of our toddler group - St Mary's Toddlers, which started up again in January 2025, it has been fantastic to meet so many lovely families, walking alongside them with faith at the centre and getting to know our community here in Saltford more. However as we approach the end of our first year of running St Mary's Toddlers, it feels right to reflect on the wonderful joys God has brought through our work with young children and their families.

With support from the most brilliant and welcoming team of volunteers, St Mary's Toddlers runs from 9:30am until 11:30am every Thursday morning during the school term. A place for parents and carers with babies and toddlers up to four years old. Each week we explore a different theme and reflect together on a different Bible story each month. We do this through craft, sensory play, songs and interactive story telling.

With the success of our Toddler group and looking forward to the future, I am looking to start a new group Little Blessings, running on Tuesday mornings from 11:15am until 12:15pm, this will be solely for parents and carers with babies aged under the age of one years old, starting in the new year of 2026. I hope this group will provide a calm, engaging and enjoyable space for parents and carers to find a bit of peace and support on this journey through the crazy first chapter of a child's first year, a great place to have a chat and maybe a coffee and pastry or two! Running alongside our Toddler group, Little Blessings will also be very supportive of a child's holistic development, exploring sensory play, interactive stories and songs and will be a place to bond with your baby.

As previously mentioned, our children work is run by the most amazing team of volunteers who bring so much joy and heart to our community. If you feel you would like to be part of this wonderful outreach to families, you would be most welcome! Please talk to Reverend Nigel or me if you feel this may be something for you.

It has been such a pleasure to lead this exciting new venture in our children's and families' ministry. Please join me in prayer, that 2026 is another year of blessings for the families in the village and wider community, and that as a Church we can continue to step forward in faith and grow alongside those we meet.

**Emily Williams**

## What it takes to be ...

In this column the idea is to "meet" a member of our church by asking them a fixed set of questions.

## Norman Osborne



### How long have you been a Christian?

About 65 years.

### How did you become a Christian?

Initially I attended my parents' C of E church in Southampton. Whilst I was a teenager I went to a Crusaders boys Bible Class (now rebranded Urban Saints) and to various free churches. I became a Christian during that time. After the sixth form I left home to go to Imperial College, London University where at the University Christian Union I met my future wife Christine.

### Describe yourself in three words

Compassionate, Trustworthy, Truthful.

### Which three people (alive, dead or fictional) would you invite to a dinner party?

**Dr. Lockhart** a senior GP who ran the Crusaders boys Bible Class in Southampton, introduced me to lively choruses and non-liturgical worship, and over time led me to Jesus.

**Revd George Hoffman** a young C of E Curate near my first university lodging who showed me how alive a C of E church can be. He later became the Main Founder of the Charity Tear Fund. Sadly he was killed in a car accident in 1992.

**George Osborne**, my grandfather, who I never met because he died before I was born. He served in the Suffolk Regiment of the Army in the UK, India and Aden. After leaving the Army he married and had a family, including my Dad. Subsequently George rejoined the Suffolk Regiment to serve in the Great War in France and Belgium and was wounded twice in action.

### Tell us one thing about you that might surprise us

Ladders - I have climbed up and down numerous ladders inside large oil tanker ships holds in the tropics in the Far East, and a rope ladder on the outside of a large tanker in the Arabian Sea off India.

### What prayer would you most like Jesus to answer for St Mary's?

For more younger people to come to the Church and thereafter to volunteer to do things at the church to follow on from those who have done church activities/roles for many years. There is a wealth of experience within the church that they can draw upon to guide them.

### If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?

My impatience and frustration in certain situations.

### What would you most like to achieve for Jesus?

To continue in a quiet humble way to help, serve and support others when needed.

### Which is your favourite Bible verse?

1 Peter 5 v7. 'Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you'.

I have found this helpful, for example, when close family members have been very ill, and when I have been in situations outside my comfort zone. One has to trust in God.

## Book review

### A Town Like Alice by Nevil Shute

A Town like Alice is one of Nevil Shute's most well-known novels, a tale of love and war which follows its enterprising heroine from the Malayan jungle during World War II to the rugged Australian outback.

The book is written as described by a Scottish solicitor employed to administer the estate of an elderly client, as he meets and gets to know the sole beneficiary, our heroine, Jean Paget.

Jean Paget, a young Englishwoman living in Malaya, is captured by the invading Japanese and forced on a brutal seven-month death march with dozens of other women and children. The second half of the story unfolds when a few years after the war, Jean is back in England. Her unexpected inheritance inspires her to return to Malaya to give something back to the villagers who saved her life. Jean's travels lead her to a desolate Australian outpost called Willstown, where she finds a challenge that will draw on all the resourcefulness and spirit that carried her through her war-time ordeals.

A Town Like Alice is based on a true story, though the novel blends fictional elements with reality. The first part of the story is inspired by the experiences of a Dutch woman named Carry Geysel in Sumatra, Dutch East Indies, and not British women in Malaya as depicted in the book. The character Joe Harman is also based on a real person, Jim Edwards, who was a prisoner of war in Malaya and whom Nevil Shute met in Australia. The second half of the book, about building a new town in Australia, while it draws inspiration from the challenges of life in remote Australia at the time, is fictional.

If you are coming to A Town Like Alice for the first time, it is going to make you very uncomfortable in parts. The attitudes to gender, colour and a lot more besides are going to be jarring when you look at them with a twenty-first century eye. This is a book of its time; it reflects society as it was in the early 1950s and needs to be read with that firmly in mind. If nothing else, it gives a clear picture of how far attitudes have moved on since then, even if we have a long way still to go. But setting these acknowledged issues with the novel aside, this is a really good read; an uplifting and tender love story of triumphs in the face of adversity, powerful love overcoming severe obstacles and how suffering and loss can be redeemed through love.

**Pam Faulkner**

## **Treasurer's Report**

As we approach the end of the year, our projected year-end figures show an estimated surplus of £10,000 from total receipts of approximately £92,500 and expenditure of approximately £82,500.

Receipts through planned giving have fallen, but this has been mitigated by income from hall hire being above budget, and savings over the year which have been achieved through reduced running costs and costs of repairs and maintenance in both the church & hall. The church redecoration was more than covered by the generous donations of church members and by a Diocesan grant.

Of our 2025 Parish Share request of £55,500 we will have paid the Diocese £33,300 by the end of the year. At the time of writing, we have not yet received the

Parish Share request for 2026 but it is likely to be higher than this year.

Robin Dixon has administered The Bookstall account for many years, but with his and Sue's future move to Keynsham it has now been closed and the closing balance transferred to St Marys HSBC Charity account. The PCC are grateful to him for the support he has given so many in providing access to Bible reading resources.

**Pam Faulkner**

## **What's up Doc?**

As always, my thanks are due to all the contributors to this edition.

To sign up to receive this and future editions by email, send an email to the address at the top of the first page. Email recipients enjoy two benefits: 1. Colour photographs, and 2. The knowledge that you are saving paper.

Responses and feedback are very much requested. Please send your comments to the email address at the top of the first page, or speak to Ian Troughton in the first instance. "Letters to the editor" (for publication) will be welcomed, as will any other material for publication, including photos. The editors don't want to have to write everything themselves!

For example in this issue we have a book review. If you have read a book you have loved (or regretted reading?), please consider writing a paragraph or two explaining what you thought and why. Or you may have heard an interesting talk you'd like to share, or been to an inspiring concert, or been moved by a movie, or seen God at work in answer to prayer. Jesus said, "Blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear". Matt 13:16. We walk with our Lord. Let's share our experiences of that walk.

Who would you like to see profiled in the "What it takes to be" column? You can suggest someone else, or volunteer yourself!

**Ian Troughton**

## **And finally**

Three men die on Christmas Eve, and are greeted at the Pearly Gates by St. Peter. St. Peter says "In honour of the season, you must each present something that represents Christmas before I will let you in." The first man produces a lighter, lights it and says, "This represents a candle". St. Peter says, "That's fine", and lets him pass. The second man produces a bunch of keys and shakes them, saying "They represent bells". St. Peter says "Ok", and lets him pass. The third man meanwhile has been desperately rummaging in his pockets. Finally he pulls out a pair of ladies' knickers. St. Peter raises one eyebrow and asks, "Just what do they have to do with Christmas, then?" The man replies, "They're Carol's."