



What's up Doc?

Your occasional bulletin from St Mary's Salford

No. 4 - March 2026

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Serving Jesus in our community with faith, hope and love

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

In this six-page edition we look ahead to the summer fete, we have reports from Lent courses, statistics, homegroups, Justine and more. Please do consider contributing to the next edition!

Holy Week is upon us. There are many special services, listed here for convenience:

Palm Sunday 29 March	10:30am	Benefice Holy Communion at All Saints Corston
Monday 30 March	7:30pm	Compline at St Mary's Salford
Maundy Thursday 2 April	7:00pm	Communion Last Supper at St Mary's Salford
Good Friday 3 April	10:00am	An hour at the cross at St Mary's Salford
Easter Sunday 5 April	6:00am	Sunrise Communion at The Shallows, Salford
	10:30am	Benefice Holy Communion at St Mary's Salford

From the churchwarden



I have been blessed in recent weeks by attending not one, but two Lent courses – one in Keynsham and one in Salford – and we have reports from both, later in this edition of WUD. Both have now finished, but if any readers considered attending but didn't, please be encouraged to take any future opportunities that arise. It's not just a question of study and learning, but at least

as much benefit arises from meeting fellow Christians, learning about their experiences, and encouraging each other in our diverse endeavours.

Similarly, Angela and I are much blessed by our homegroup, run by Carol and Christopher Pilkington. Again, there is an item on this from another member, below.

I was also encouraged by a meeting in January of PCC members from across the benefice, which identified some desire to work more closely together. There is a report and reflection on this, later in this issue.

Finally for now, the run-up to the APCM is a busy time of year for churchwardens, and this year is the first time I have done this alone. I am very grateful for the support I receive from various assistants, whom I won't attempt to list for fear of omitting someone! Please pray for me, that I will manage to line up the ducks properly and in good time.

Onwards and upwards! God bless you all.

Ian Troughton

St.Mary's Village Fete

Saturday 13th June – 2pm till 5pm

St.Mary's Church, Queen Square, BS31 3EL



Can you help?

Contact: Christopher Pilkington
cmpilkington@btinternet.com

On Saturday the 13th June, between 2 and 5pm, we are happy to offer our village the St Mary's Summer Fete for all the family!

With live music, (including the school choir), barbecue, games, craft activity stalls, quiz, "horrible" history of the church, flower festival, toddler crafts, a bring-a-book-to-swap-a-book, plant stall, live performances, and refreshments, and lots more, there are many ways to get involved!

It's a chance to invite our neighbours to see where we are, why we are, who we are and what we're about as we share Jesus's love to all. Plus ... there will be no charges made on the day. It will be a gift to Salford.

With activities in the church, on the green in front of the church, and in the Hall, it's going to be a lovely fun afternoon.

Just one thing missing ... that's YOU! We'll need a large team to make this happen.

It will be so lovely for all of us to work together, and commit to this venture, as part of the Salford Festival.

To find out more, please contact cmpilkington@btinternet.com or the St Mary's office.

What my homegroup means to me

I joined a new home group that was set up last year by Christopher and Carol Pilkington and to me it is a blessing in more ways than one. As well as being a friendly, caring and mutually supportive group of people, it is proving to me to be very revealing in how we all interpret or receive different messages from the same familiar Bible passages. To read a short Bible passage and then discuss the similar or varying interpretations from others, whose life experiences have been so different from my own, is such a refreshing way of looking at what the Bible can reveal to us.

No-one claims to know all the answers, but by sharing thoughts in an open and friendly discussion without fear of being dismissed as wrong, whilst accepting that Jesus values our uniqueness and reveals himself in different ways and times on our life journey, is incredibly helpful. Belonging to such a supportive home group is a form of therapy in itself that, I dare to suggest, we all need in our busy lives but sometimes we don't accept that need ourselves.

Phil Harding

SCN benefice Lent Course 2026

Journeys and resting places

"You search out my journeys and my resting places, and are acquainted with all my ways" Psalm 139v3.

For years, for many reasons, I have not attended the Lent sessions in Keynsham Baptist Church, so it was ideal for me to have a session this year in St Mary's Church Hall.

It began well as we met members from our three churches, to know their names and to realize that we are part of the same church.

Each session was a journey taken by Bible characters well known to us: Abraham and Sarah, Joseph, Moses and finally Jesus Christ. They all responded to God's call and it ended by Israel becoming the nation it is now.

I wonder whether I would have willingly responded to such a call from God.

Nigel as chairman made it easy for us to respond to the three questions we were asked each week, and to know that our answers were respected and confidential.

I would really like it if we could have similar meetings during the year to meet members from the other two churches, and to share thoughts and to go deeper into the Bible.

Margaret Evans

Keynsham Lent Course 2026

Love your neighbour

"Churches together in Keynsham and Saltford (CTKS) is a collaborative network of local churches focused on community outreach, joint worship and social action". It was the 'community' part that always drew me, I love meeting and chatting to new people hence I was keen to join the Lent courses that I enjoy each year meeting new and old friends from different denominations hearing their views and opinions. I started my faith journey in the Church of Scotland, then United Reform, Methodist and now Church of England- so I love to hear different opinions and angles of faith as I am full of questions.

These meetings are held in the Baptist Church every Tuesday evening and the Theme this year was 'Love your neighbour'.

At the first meeting Rev Kevin Durrant gave a Biblical introduction, through the story of the Good Samaritan. I did think this would be a tad boring - seen it, heard it, got the T shirt! - but it was actually quite fascinating- he is an excellent speaker and I really learnt a lot re the layout of the land at the time - how narrow minded, faith wise, some of the people can be, both then and now, and what a big deal the story was then. In groups we were asked to suggest our own modern day story of the Good Samaritan- some fascinating takes on it!

The following week we listened to Rev John White - from the Hazelnut Project - talk of loving our neighbours and creation care.

Churches outside in gardens? No boundaries re. faith - loving our neighbours - just inclusive through working and chatting in a garden or outside space Very challenging and different. I enjoyed this and am curious to see where it goes and if it - like the garden - does grow!

Then we had Rev Luke Walton from the Bible Society - 'loving your neighbour and the media'- I do love the cinema and have been accused (by my grandchildren!) of spending too much time on my phone looking at YouTube videos - so this was just up my street!. Wow- was it powerful. He told us his background - which is worth looking up - ultimately film production and being ordained. He then showed us his short film - entitled 'The Widow's Last' an award-winning film set in the great hunger in Ireland. An extremely powerful and moving short film that had lots of us asking questions and feeling very different emotions Personally I really enjoyed it and felt that its lack of referral to the Bible and its ending made us ask questions of what and why. Surely it is a good thing to make us talk and question.

We met the new rector of St John's - Rev Aiden Watson- telling us about youth renewal in churches and to think of focusing on the young as the core of new church growth and how we could do this.

Finally Caroline Saad from St Dunstan's gave us an inspiring and heart felt talk about 'The Cross and the

Shape of Love' A fitting end to this Lent course and as she summed up: "Love is the final word. Love wins"

This course has shown us that our neighbours are all around and how we can learn to LOVE them and incorporate them into our own lives as well as the life of our church starting of course by embracing our Christian neighbours in Churches Together.

Karen Harvie

Benefice PCCs meeting

On 31 January this year, the three PCCs of our benefice met together at St John's Church, Keynsham. The purpose of the meeting was to pray and share around the topic of the future of the benefice.

In the first session we were invited to disperse around the building, to pray as individuals, and to consider three questions:

What is the best thing about our benefice?

Why do you come to our benefice?

What would you change if you could?

Answers were written on whiteboards, and recorded for future consideration.

In the second session, David Parfrey, of Corston, introduced us to the concept of "imagineering". The idea of this is to imagine a possible future (in this case our benefice in 2035), and dwell on what it would feel like to be there, without worrying for now about the practical steps that would be needed to get there. The theory is that without a vision of where we are aiming for, we won't even know the steps required to get there, let alone take them.

The following paragraphs are some of my personal reflections on the morning:

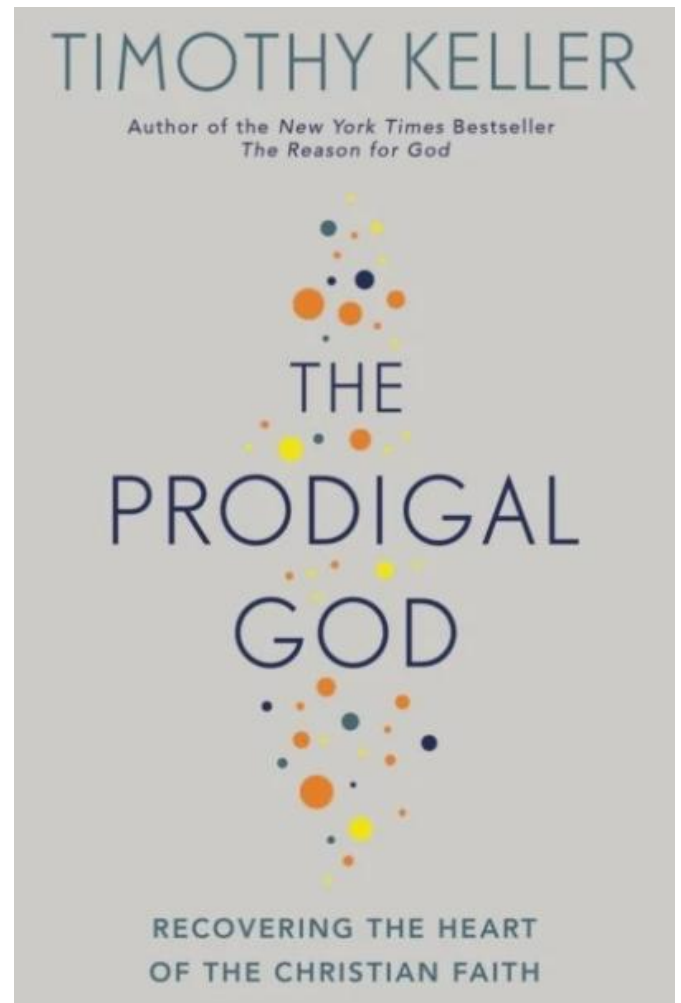
I had a wonderful morning, and emerged enthusiastic. At that stage I had not read the answers on the whiteboards, but only photographed them. I felt there was a positive spirit of co-operation and optimism. Perhaps that was because some of the more negative feelings expressed on the whiteboards were not expressed orally.

The session began with an invitation to go away and pray, opening our minds to God's direction. I sometimes don't do well in such circumstances, and was nervous. However 25 minutes later I was very happy to share that I had been reflecting on our diverse opinions. It struck me that we all have skills and experience which are the result of our individual life's journeys, along which we believe, by faith, that God has walked with us. It is therefore important to use our skills and experience as we contribute to the life of the church. However that experience has naturally produced our individual opinions, which may differ from those of other people, which have equally been formed by their life's journeys. Thus we must also take care to respect the opinions of others, and there is a balance to be found, for which we seek God's wisdom.

The imagineering session in the second half produced several imagined outcomes, and much co-operative discussion, but perhaps not so much distillation of key outcomes. Refining the vision and determining the next steps will be a task for another day. However a desire for more cross-benefice co-operation is expressed elsewhere also in this WUD, so perhaps there is a theme developing.

Ian Troughton

Book review



The cover notes on the back of this book say

"Keller argues that the parable of the prodigal son, while Jesus's best-known parable, is also his least understood. He introduces his readers to all the characters in this timeless story, showing that it concerns not just a wayward son, but also a judgmental older brother and, most importantly, a loving father. In this challenging and inspiring book, Timothy Keller invites both faithful believers and curious outsiders to come to a new and totally life-changing understanding of the central message of the Christian faith."

Like many of us, I have been familiar with the parable of the prodigal son since childhood – the story of the younger son who takes his share of the family inheritance and spends it all on wild living, finally ending up in a desperate mess before swallowing his pride and throwing himself on his father's mercy. The final part of

the story – the father running to meet him and welcome him home again – always felt rather cosy and comfortable. And then I read this book.

It's not so much that I had misunderstood the meaning of the parable, but rather that I had missed far too much of its drama, power and scope. Timothy Keller carefully invites us into a Jewish understanding of family relationships – the respect due to the father, the desperate pain inflicted on the father when the younger son chooses to go his own way, the self-centred response of the older brother. Having delved into the parable he then expands things and starts to explore how it helps us to understand the Bible as a whole, and finally how the parable speaks to us as we live our Christian lives today.

I found the book startling, thought-provoking, wise, profound, challenging and inspiring. At only 130 pages the book isn't too daunting. The chapters aren't too long, and are divided into shorter sections, which I found very helpful. It gave me space to read and then stop to think.

I thoroughly recommend this book. It's a really interesting read, but be prepared to be challenged and inspired!

Angela Troughton

*** 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, and send it to WUD. ***

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.

Justine Buxton



How long have you been a Christian?

I would say all my life as my mum used to bring me to the Sunday school with Mrs Guthery, but I think I really fell in love with God in my early 30s.

How did you become a Christian?

I was in crisis and I spoke to my mum (it was a Saturday) she said why don't you come to church with me tomorrow, it will give you time to reflect and be in the quiet – (my house wasn't quiet at the time with a very young child). At that service I really felt God speaking to me and that was it – I never looked back.

Describe yourself in three words

Loyal, giving, patient.

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

Victoria Wood – She worked incredibly hard to be recognised in a difficult industry and became one of the funniest and most insightful comedians of her time. I admire her wit and honesty, and it would be wonderful to hear more about her journey. She was taken far too soon.

Morgan Freeman – I've always admired the films he's been part of, but more than that, I think he would be fascinating to talk to. He has such a calm, thoughtful presence, and I imagine conversation with him would be both wise and inspiring.

Diana Princess of Wales – She showed such compassion and genuine care for those in need, and made a lasting difference in so many lives. I would love to talk with her about her experiences and what inspired her heart for others. Another remarkable woman gone too soon.

Tell us one thing about you that might surprise us

I have started training to become a bereavement counsellor.

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

To help us be more relevant so we can engage with more families.

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

That I wouldn't feel the cold so much.

What would you most like to achieve for Jesus?

To bring his word to more people.

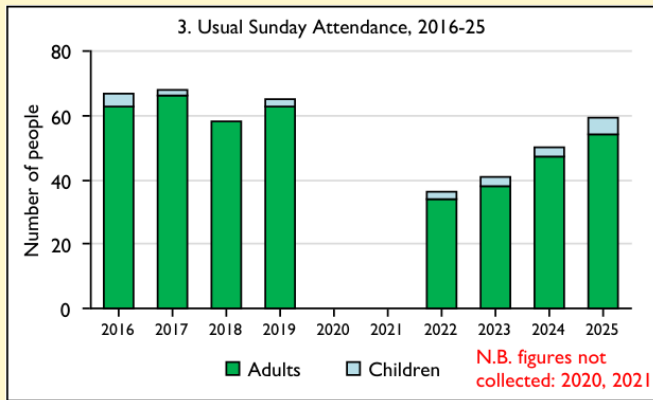
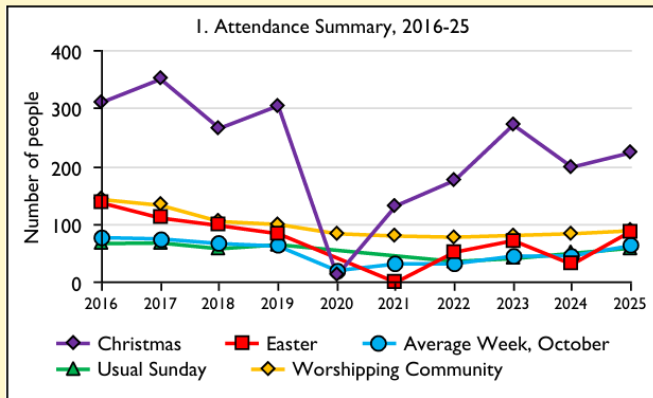
Which is your favourite Bible verse?

There are so many – but I like this one:

Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. John 15:4.

Statistics

As many people know, we collect attendance totals for services at the church. In January, after the end of the calendar year, these are reported to the Diocese, whereupon the numbers are crunched, and reported back to us in graphical form. I thought readers might be interested to see two of these:



Ian Troughton.

Treasurer's Report

A full Treasurer's report for 2025 will be available in the Annual Report due to be published later in April, but below you will find a brief summary of last year together with a picture of where we are now, three months into 2026.

In order to manage the church finances, the PCC is greatly helped by being able to depend upon regular planned giving, which is our main source of income, and Gift Aid associated with donations received. End of year figures for 2025 showed that planned giving was approximately £12,000 less than had been anticipated when the budget was drawn up at the end of 2024. Despite this, we were able to meet the cost of redecorating the church through the generous donations of church members in response to a 'Special Appeal' which was launched. Special Appeals, in addition to grants, may be one way the PCC might consider in future to fund further one-off projects.

It's interesting to see that donations through the various digital platforms have increased over the year, as paying by card increasingly becomes the preferred way many people make payments day by day.

2026 has begun steadily from a financial point of view; at the end of February receipts totalled £13,865 and payments totalled £12,131. The only item of note in the first quarter was some urgent repair and resurfacing of the hall car park in March. Further repair and maintenance work is required on the hall and the PCC have budgeted to make a start on them in order of priority. Grants will be sought.

As we look ahead to the summer, we anticipate the first St Mary's Village Fete and the opportunity this affords for serving and engaging with our community. This event is a part of the planned mission of the church during 2025, and as such the PCC and organising committee hope that many will want to give financial as well as practical support to help it be the success we pray it will be.

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 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 children live in a house with a cemetery at the bottom of the garden. From time to time they have peered through a gap in the fence to see what goes on at a burial. One day they are playing in the garden, and Action Man has died, so they decide to give him a proper send-off. They dig a hole, and lay the Action Man doll in a shoe box. As they gather at the graveside in deep solemnity, the first child intones "Now to the Father...", the second says "...and to the Son...", and the third child adds "...into the hole he goes."