

January 2026

PARISH MAGAZINE



Epiphany

St. Oswald, King & Martyr, Oswestry
and Christchurch, Rhydygroesau **50p**



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Farewell.....

I always find it a rather odd to be writing an article for the new year before we have reached the end of the current one, but then much of the life of a vicar is about planning for the future and then wondering why time seems to pass so quickly. Along with the usual new starts that a new year always promises, this particular 'new-end' of the year has a particular poignancy for Liz and myself as we prepare to move to pastures new with my move to the 6 Parishes in Edgmond and Shifnal deanery.

As you might imagine, I've spent quite a bit of time recently pondering over my time here, what have I done, what do I wish I hadn't done? What has been achieved and how do I know? It really doesn't feel like eight years since we moved into Oswestry. So, how do you measure ministry? Is it the number of Sunday services, not forgetting the mid-weeks and additional Christmas and Easters? How about baptisms, weddings, and funerals, school assemblies, end of term services and governor meetings? And whilst we're talking about meetings there was and always will be too many PCC, sub-committee, deanery chapter and deanery synod meetings.

Despite what the national church says, I really don't think that numbers are what it's all about. Now growth requires change and I've seen many and varied changes during my time here among you...which leads me to what I do believe is the only true measure of ministry, people. Specifically, people travelling together and as a worshipping and inclusive community serving their neighbours as Christ did and growing into his likeness.

Working with the people of Oswestry and Rhydygroesau has been a huge privilege. There have been sad and difficult moments of course, but also times of great joy and happiness. So, I want to spend some time thanking everyone for their involvement in and support of the life, mission and ministry of St. Oswalds and Christchurch over the last eight years. We are all an integral part of the parishes, and I am very grateful for the various ways that we use our varied resources of time, finance, talents, 'brain' and 'brawn' to support and enhance God's presence and work among us and in our communities.

Partings are difficult, saying goodbye is rarely easy, but endings are good because they bring with them the possibility of new beginnings. Both you and I are about to begin something new, Liz and I in rural south Shropshire, you in Oswestry and Rhydygroesau with whoever has the privilege of being your next vicar and rector; both are new beginnings on our individual and corporate lifelong journey with Christ.

The journey of faith is always like that, with new ways to learn, new skills to develop, new experiences to go through, each encounter with Christ leading to a renewed relationship with God. Though our journeys are all different and they will not always take us through pleasant or easy country, each journey has the same goal, the realisation of the 'Kingdom of God'. Ahead of us are the footsteps of Christ, and around us is the community of God's people. A community of pilgrim people, of disciples journeying together with God towards God, serving both Him and each other.

Before the parting of ways however, our shared journey takes us to Bethlehem for another celebration of Christmas, another opportunity to celebrate the greatest gift of all, the incarnation of God. It too was a new beginning, a new chapter in the story of God and God's people. A story which has shaped the centuries behind us, and which will inform those to come. A story of Mary and Joseph, normal people asked to do extraordinary things, a story of shabby shepherds and wonderous magi; a story above all that reminds us that God is with us; 'Emmanuel.'

A reminder that when the going gets tough and we wonder whether there is any way forward, let alone how we might get there, that we can draw strength and encouragement from those words of Gabriel to Mary; 'the Holy Spirit will come upon you'. Always remember that 'God is with us', and that God's Holy Spirit will guide and direct us.

As we reflect on another celebration of the coming of Jesus Christ, of his birth and ministry among us, may we be open to the possibility of being agents of the peace and goodwill of Christmastide. And... as we prepare to begin a new year, some of us in new places, let us again accept Jesus Christ as God's special gift to us and allow God to refill our hearts with peace, love, gentleness and kindness. Let us willingly be channels of his affection, compassion, and benevolence to others.

So, as we all travel into 2026 with whatever amount of faith we have, I hope you will enjoy a merry and peaceful Christmas and I wish everyone a happy, and healthy New Year.

May God bless us all each, and every step of our journey. Amen

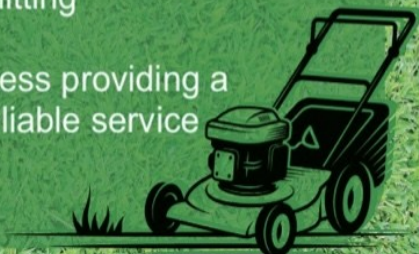
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ST. OSWALD'S LADIES GROUP



On December 1st St. Oswald's Ladies Group visited All Saints Church Baschurch Christmas Tree Festival. We were warmly welcomed by the Rev. Linda Cox into a warm and beautifully lit church. What a surprise as we entered the Church to see the decorated Christmas trees that members of the Community including the schools and organisations in Baschurch and surrounding area had so tastefully decorated. We were given a talk on the history of the church by a retired architect with tea and cake as we listened.

On the 8th December twenty four members attended our Christmas Dinner at the Orangery Derwen College. We are always made so welcome by the staff and enjoyed a lovely meal.



Our next meeting will be on Monday 5th January when we welcome David Preston as our speaker.

Happy New Year from the Ladies Group to you all. We are always pleased to meet new members at our meetings which are held in the Parish Centre on the first Monday in the month at 2.30 p.m.

Ann Sagar
Hon. Secretary



DORIS & DAVE THE RAVERS

by Neon Tony

A VIBRANT PAIRING OF CONTEMPORARY NEON ARTISTRY, THESE TWO ILLUMINATED PORTRAITS BY **NEON TONY** SHOWCASE THE PRECISION AND IMAGINATION BEHIND HIS SIGNATURE STYLE. "DORIS THE RAVE GIRL," WITH HER DAISY-TOPPED HAT AND SOFT TWO-TONE GLOW, BRINGS A SENSE OF CHARM AND REFINED WHIMSY, WHILE "DAVE THE RAVE BOY" TRANSFORMS THE CLASSIC BOWLER-HATTED FIGURE INTO A BOLD, MODERN ICON THROUGH THE INTERPLAY OF THREE RADIANT NEON COLOURS. EACH PIECE IS METICULOUSLY HANDCRAFTED, WITH EVERY BEND OF THE NEON GLASS SHAPED BY TONY'S EXPERT TOUCH. THE CAREFULLY COMPOSED FRAMES ELEVATE THE ARTWORKS FURTHER, ALLOWING THE NEON TO SIT AS BOTH SCULPTURE AND LIGHT SOURCE.

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DAVE THE RAVE BOY (FRAMED): H75 CM × W62 CM

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A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE – 270

LOOKING FURTHER AFIELD FOR OUR LOCAL NEWS

In recent months I have used as my source material for these articles reports from the *Oswestry Herald* and the *Oswestry Advertizer*, available to me at home via the online British Newspaper Archive. The *Herald* was short-lived, from March 1820 to December 1822; the *Advertizer* was first published in January 1849. Prior to that date, readers seeking news about Oswestry and district had to rely on the *Shrewsbury Chronicle*, first published in 1772, the *Chester Chronicle* (from 1775), or the *Chester Courant* (from 1730). Copies of the *Shrewsbury Chronicle* and the *Chester Chronicle* can be found on the British Newspaper Archive, with a few gaps; the *Chester Courant* likewise is available via this online resource, patchily until 1766¹, but complete from 1766 into the 1870s except for three years².

In Wales, the first newspaper, *The Cambrian*, appeared in 1804, in Swansea, followed by the *North Wales Gazette*, from Bangor, in 1808. Others followed including the *Carmarthen Journal* in 1810 and the *Carnarvon and Denbigh Herald* in 1836. The first Welsh language newspaper was *Seren Gomer*, established in 1814. The number of newspapers, and their frequency, increased significantly from the 1850s, with the abolition of punitive stamp duties previously imposed on newspapers and advertising.

The people of Oswestry - those who could read and afford the cost of a newspaper - would have looked, very largely, to the Chester and Shrewsbury newspapers.

Oswestry news could occasionally crop up in other newspapers, from all parts of the country, with news first published in Chester, Shrewsbury, or sometimes London, being recycled in other papers. However, until recent days, when I was temporarily forced to stay indoors, due to a persistent cold, and had time to look further into the Newspaper Archive, I had not realised the number of items about Oswestry to be found in *Aris's Birmingham Gazette*, founded in 1741, "widely regarded as one of the most important provincial eighteenth-century papers"³. For the time being, I focussed on the early years of the *Aris's Birmingham Gazette*, from its origins in 1741 through to 1772 when the *Shrewsbury Chronicle* was first

¹Before 1769, the Newspaper Archive currently has only 1747, 1755, 1757-58, 1760-61 and 1763

²Currently missing 1807, 1808 and 1830

³Birmingham City University, Centre for Printing History & Culture: cphc.org.uk

published. I was not overwhelmed by the number of Oswestry-related items, nevertheless these years provided several valuable notices, shedding light on various town centre properties.

For example, a notice in the issue for December 16th 1745 advertised the sale of “a large commodious Dwelling-house, with Malt-houses, Brew-house, Barns, Stables, Dove Houses, Gardens, orchards, and other out-buildings, fitting for a Gentleman’s family, situate in Willow Street in Oswestry ... now in the possession of Mrs Huxley and Mr Robert Lloyd Attorney at Law”, and, also in Willow Street, “opposite the Cross, a row of buildings consisting of four dwelling houses ... now in the several holdings of Mr John Basnett grocer, Mr Thomas Burgan inn-keeper, William Pierce taylor, and Josiah Thomas soap boiler and tallow chandler”. Also for sale was “another row of buildings, consisting of three dwelling-houses with the out-houses and gardens thereto belonging, situate in Cross Street ... one of them called and known by the Raven Inn” and “another large dwelling-house ... opposite the Cross ... now in the holding of Mr William Basnett, periwig maker”. And, of particular interest to us, readers were advised of the sale of “a piece of ground whereon a large dwelling-house lately stood, opposite the Cross ... *with a good seat in the church*, and a garden thereto belonging”⁴.

Another example of a house for sale linked to a specific pew in the parish church can be found in the issue for August 4th 1755, which advertised the sale of a “dwelling-house and out-houses and gardens thereto belonging, situate near the Cross, being the estate of John Jones deceased, and also a seat in Oswestry Church, being the property of the said John Jones”. Also, on September 12th 1763, the *Gazette* advertised the sale of “a modern-built house in Willow Street ... consisting of 5 rooms on a floor, the hall and 3 parlous wainscoted, with a good pew in the Church”.

Finally for now, it is interesting to read contemporary descriptions of the townscape around the parish church. For instance, on March 12th 1759, a notice for the sale at the Bowling Green (today’s Wynnstay Arms) writes of “two dwelling houses, with a coach-house, stables, and other out-buildings, and a field adjoining, pleasantly situated opposite to the Church in the Church-street”, adding that one of the houses was then inhabited by David Yale esquire⁵. And on May 21st 1759 appeared a notice for the sale, or lease, of “the house of the late Mrs Simpson situate near the

⁴It is possible that the plot was vacant because the house was a casualty of the great fire, which raged in the town for 3 nights, in 1742

⁵David Yale (d. 1764) and his wife Margaret (d. 1754) are remembered on a small plaque to be seen behind the figures of Hugh and Dorothy Yale in the monument in the north aisle

Church in the Town of Oswestry, built in a genteel modern Taste, with good vaults, a stable, and handsome garden belonging to it, so contrived as to be easily divided into two commodious Apartments, and at present neatly furnished, and to be lett either with or without the furniture”.

John Pryce-Jones

A CONTRIBUTION FROM HAYDN JONES

Jesus

‘But the Angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David, a Saviour has been born to you - he is Christ the Lord’.

Luke 2, verses 10-11.

- Jesus was fully human, was tempted by Satan in the wilderness, wept and was hungry.
- Jesus cared for the sick and the poor and he teaches us to do the same.
- He healed a cripple and a blind man.
- He walked on water and calmed a storm.
- He fed the 5,000 and raised Lazarus and Jairus’ daughter from the dead.
- He turned water into wine.
- Jesus said ‘I am the way, the truth and the life. No-one comes to the Father except through me’.
- ‘I am the good shepherd’.
- ‘I am the true vine’.
- ‘I am the light of the world’.
- ‘I am the resurrection and the life’.
- He came to serve - he washed the disciples’ feet, he was rejected, mocked, spat at and beaten.
- He knew he was going to die and he prayed for those persecuting him.
- He died a horrific death on the cross for the sins of the whole world - he died for you and for me.
- On the third day, the tomb was empty and Jesus appeared to Mary and his disciples.
- Jesus has gone to heaven to prepare places for those who love him. Jesus holds the keys of heaven - he said to the thief on the cross - today you will be with me in paradise’. *Luke 23, verses 39-43.*
- He is waiting for you now to ask him for forgiveness of your sins and for him to enter your life by the Holy Spirit.

- 'So be earnest, and repent. Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.' *Revelation 3 verses 19-20.*

There are over 300 references to the second coming of Jesus - 23 of the 27 New Testament books speak of it.

'They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory'. *Matthew 24 verse 30.*

'When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.' *Matthew 25 verses 31 and 32.*

His return is certain and to those who believe - his promise - 'And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.' *Matthew 28 verse 20.*

Haydn Jones

MOTHERS' UNION FELLOWSHIP GROUP

Our next meeting will be held on Tuesday 8th January at 2.15pm in the Parish Centre when we will celebrate our informal Eucharist for the coming year led by Father Phil Hughes.

Until that time I wish you every blessing for The New Year.

Pam Musson

PARISH NEWS

A reminder that subscriptions for the forthcoming year are due by the end of January - £5 for the twelve months or 50p each month. This means there is no increase on last year's price.

Subscriptions can be placed in the wall safe at the back of the church, either in cash (please note that the opening to the wall safe won't be wide enough to accept 5 x £1 coins) or by cheque made payable to St Oswald's Parish Church. Please include your name and mark your payment 'magazine'.

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New Year is a good time to be looking back and forward. As Dag Hammarskjöld, the UN's second Secretary General prayed: "For all that has been, thank you. For all that is to come, yes!"

God is faithful in his provision for us and for his church (often coming through us). Recently published insights into 2024 Church of England finances show many signs of continuing financial health in Lichfield Diocese's churches, which is vital to a confident, thriving body of Christ, growing in love and service. So we can give thanks while remaining prayerful about our future needs and our part in providing them.

Thinking and praying is all the more relevant after the recent round of consultations with parishes this autumn which resoundingly backed using the diocese's increased income over coming years from the Church's national historic investments to invest in parishes rather than merely balancing the books.

The challenge is for parishes to achieve and maintain financial sustainability rather than spending all-too-exhaustible reserves. We will need to make the right spending choices to take us there. 2024's on-the-ground analysis of parishes shows us some encouraging signs as well as pointers to things that need attention.

One stand-out is that parishes are taking the responsibility of caring for their buildings as seriously as ever. They have found more money for their buildings in recent years with capital expenditure on buildings rising back to the pre-pandemic peak of £5 million a year, although this is not exactly comparable because of inflation. Even better news is that the amount of grant income has risen to closely track and almost equal the level of capital expenditure 2022-2024. This is a sea-change on a decade ago, so join me in giving thanks for the sources of grants for buildings, mostly trusts, and for all the skilled people, especially those in St Mary's House, who know where to apply and how to write the applications. In future, grant funding should be even easier to access through technological marvels like the Cornerstone¹ platform which the national church is rolling out across dioceses.

Looking at our churches income and expenditure can also inform our future choices and the recently published data is uniquely about money flowing into and out of parishes. Total income rose slightly from 2022-2024² in monetary terms, again after a pandemic drop. A rise in income is always a cause of gratitude, but it is still lower than pre-pandemic.

Expenditure on parish share (common fund, which pays for parishes to have serving, trained, housed and pensioned clergy and more besides) is broadly flat. It is the minor sources of income that have increased: interest, property income (church halls, parish houses), dividends and anything else. This is great, but the major part of parishes' income comes from giving and gift-aid. Notably, that is coming from fewer people giving more. Our aim and our call is for more people giving more!

So amongst the gratitude to God for giving, for givers and for Gift aid, here is a prayer: "All things come from you and of your own do we give you. Help us to put our whole selves into Seeking your Kingdom. Help us to offer our time, our talents and our treasure to this task so that we may overflow with thanks and be found talking, not about finding resources, but about using what we have to grow your church. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord."

Over coming months, we will be providing resources and encouragement with giving and sharing further insights from this data and the Church of England's Generous Giving programme.

The Ven Liz Jackson, Archdeacon of Walsall



1) You can read more about the Cornerstone platform that helps parishes identify and track grant providers at

[lichfield.anglican.org/cornerstone](https://www.lichfield.anglican.org/cornerstone)

2) Finance summary dashboard for the parishes of the Diocese of Lichfield is at <https://www.lichfield.anglican.org/finance-reports/>



PRAYING FOR OUR WORLD

The Mission and Ministry Team ask you to join them in prayer in the Church Reading Area at 7 p.m. on the first Wednesday of each month, the next meeting is **January 7**. You won't need to speak if you don't want to, but your silent prayer and thoughts directed to God will add so much to each meeting. So please join us and let's make this a "holy habit".

For people who wish to come in and pray during the day, prayer resources can be found in St. George's Chapel.

A MESSAGE FROM THE NEW DIRECTOR OF MUSIC

Dear all,

As I begin my new role as Director of Music here at St Oswald's Parish Church, Oswestry, I want to express both my excitement and, admittedly, a little of the natural anxiety that comes with any new chapter. Above all, I want to thank you for placing your trust in me. It is a privilege to serve this wonderful community, and I look forward to bringing my own flair to our worship in music—with your support, because I cannot do it alone. I hope I do you proud. I would also like to thank the panel who interviewed me and for your time in making sure I was the right person for the job - you were all wonderful and made me feel at ease, yet a little nervous (again, normal!). I shall look forward to working alongside Jo, as well as Margaret, alongside the choir to bring collectively such wonderful music to the church.

For those of you who don't know me, my name is Samantha (Sam) and I grew up in the church - I was Christened and Confirmed here, and recently married! I always have had an interest music and joined the choir when I was 7 and went through all the stages up until head chorister and assistant choir trainer. I then went off to study Veterinary Science (whilst still in choir) and then later left to complete a Master's degree in music at The Royal Birmingham Conservatoire. Since then, I have done many additional courses such as my APD and have been pursuing a career as a professional opera, oratorio and recital singer, as well as teacher, which I will be continuing alongside this post; I believe having an insight into the industry right now, will give me all of the modern tools in which I can share in my leadership and to teach to the highest degree.

I would also like to pay special tribute to *Mike Donkin*, who has led the choir with such dedication for so many years. I was fortunate enough to sing under his baton throughout my youth, and as I write this, I am looking forward to doing so once more at the Nine Lessons and Carols Service. I owe a lot to Mike, and to the late Veronica, for their guidance and discipline in this very church and choir as I was growing up. Without that foundation, I simply wouldn't be where I am today.

With change comes responsibility. Change can feel unsettling, but it is essential for growth—both individually and as a community. As your new Director of Music, I naturally bring my own ideas and style, but I intend to introduce any changes *gradually* and with great care. It would be foolish not to listen to the people who make this church what it is. I would truly

value your input: what you enjoy in our musical worship, what you miss, what you do not like and what you might like to see in the future. To help with this, throughout January I will be placing a suggestion box at the back of the church for anyone who wishes to share their thoughts.

For any new music that involves the congregation—such as new settings during morning services—I will hold workshops so that everyone feels confident and included; hopefully this will help ensure more accessibility is available, especially to non-professional musicians or enthusiasts. My responsibility is not only to the choir but to the whole church family, to help us all worship through the joy and beauty of music. I hope I can count on your support as we take these steps together.

On a celebratory note, I am delighted to share that Demi Moreton has achieved a Distinction in her Trinity Grade 3 Singing exam. Huge congratulations to you, Demi—what an achievement! I know you will all join me in wishing her every success as she continues her musical journey. Her contribution to the choir is deeply appreciated.

I am also pleased to share that my official first Sunday conducting the choir will be Sunday 11th January—The Baptism of Christ. Later that day, we will celebrate the much-loved Epiphany Carol Service, and it would be wonderful to see you there. Your presence and support as we begin this new chapter together would mean a great deal.

Finally, I warmly invite you to an Epiphany Recital at All Saints, Gobowen on 10th January at 7pm that Beth Haughan and myself are organising (it was booked before the DOM job!). The programme will feature a mixture of music, including elements presented in British Sign Language. There will also be refreshments and mince pies. I hope to see many of you there.

Thank you once again for the kindness and welcome you have already shown me. I look forward to all that lies ahead as we continue to worship, grow, and make music together.

With warmest wishes,

Samantha Lewis-Widnall
Director of Music
St Oswald's Parish Church, Oswestry

Services at S. Oswald's

January 4	10:30	Parish Eucharist with sung setting
<i>Christmas 2</i>	18:00	Evening Prayer
<i>Epiphany</i>		

January 11	10:30	Parish Eucharist with sung setting
<i>Epiphany 1</i>	18:00	Epiphany Carols
<i>Baptism of Christ</i>		

January 18	08:00	Holy Communion
<i>Epiphany 2</i>	10:30	Parish Eucharist with sung setting
<i>Week of Prayer</i>	18:00	Evensong
<i>for Christian Unity</i>		

January 25	10:30	Parish Eucharist with sung setting
<i>Epiphany 3</i>		
<i>Conversion of Paul</i>		

Every Thursday 10.30 Holy Communion (BCP)

MORNING PRAYER is streamed online through the church Facebook page at 9 o'clock on Wednesday and Friday. Sunday worship is on the YouTube page.

Enquires for Baptisms, Marriages etc should be made to the Parish Office. Please email the Parish Administrator (stoswald.office@gmail.com) for an appointment.

Services at Rhydygroesau

<i>First Sunday</i>	09:30	All Age Service
January 4		

<i>Baptism of Christ</i>	09:30	Holy Communion
January 11		



Parish Church of St. Oswald, King & Martyr

MUSIC LIST - JANUARY 2026

Sunday 4th January

Epiphany

10.30 Parish Eucharist

(*St. Oswalds Singers*)

Setting: Shephard - Addington Service

Anthem: Bread of the World - Bourgeois (arr: Vaughan Williams)

Sunday 11th January

The Baptism of Christ

10.30 Parish Eucharist

Setting: Archer - St. Albans Service

Anthem: Tomorrow shall be my dancing day - Trad.

6.00 Epiphany Carol Service

Sunday 18th January

Epiphany 2

10.30 Parish Eucharist

Setting: Mathias – Common Service in C

Anthem: The Lamb - Tavener

Sunday 25th January

Conversion of St. Paul

10.30 Parish Eucharist

Setting: Thorne - Mass of St. Thomas

Anthem: Be thou my vision - Chilcott

COFFEE ROTA FOR JANUARY 2026

4	Ann Sagar	Dilys Lloyd	Olwen Phillips
11	Mary Jones	Natasha Bell	Sally Wright
18	Jane Mayne	Chris Abram	Jean Lawrence
25	Jane Wilkinson	Val Hamer	Carol Burke

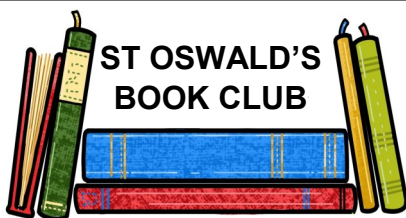


CALENDAR FOR JANUARY

2026



Monday 5	1000	Clergy Eucharist and Meeting
	1430	Ladies Group—Parish Centre
Tuesday 6	0915—	1045 Oswestry School Assembly
	1030—	1230 Place of Welcome - Parish Centre
	1800—	2000 drop in to the vicarage for a drink and a mince pie.
Wednesday 7	1000	Under 5's Playgroup—Parish Centre
	1900	<i>Praying for Our World</i> —Reading Area
Thursday 8	1415	Mothers' Union Fellowship Group
Tuesday 13	1030—	1230 Place of Welcome - Parish Centre
Wednesday 14	0830—	0940 Oswestry School Assembly
	1000	Under 5's Playgroup—Parish Centre
Tuesday 20	1030—	1230 Place of Welcome - Parish Centre
Wednesday 21	0830—	0940 Oswestry School Assembly
	1000	Under 5's Playgroup—Parish Centre
Saturday 24	1000—	1230 Shropshire Bells Association
Tuesday 27	1030—	1230 Place of Welcome - Parish Centre
Wednesday 28	0830—	0940 Oswestry School Assembly
	1000	Under 5's Playgroup—Parish Centre



St Oswald's Book Club continues to meet fortnightly on a Wednesday at 7.30pm in the Parish Centre. Please check St Oswald's website and weekly pew sheet for information on dates and books. All are welcome to join us for coffee and cake and lively discussion! We look forward to seeing you there.

THE MOMENT THE WORLD TURNS

Join us for an enchanting evening as the world turns- the music invites us into an epiphany of light, unfolding and awakening wonder through discovery and deepening love toward a future not yet known.



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JANUARY 2026

7pm


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ELIZABETH
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THINKING ABOUT CARBON

It seems fitting, as we start a new year to focus on larger issues, trying to make positive changes to tackle the global crises of climate change and biodiversity loss. For those of you who care for our churchyards, chapel yards and cemeteries there is much you can do for wildlife and hopefully these monthly articles have inspired you to take some steps already. But how climate change and carbon? Is there anything we can do about that on a local level?

Well, yes there is, for those of us who manage a piece of land, whether it's our own garden or the local burial ground there is a great deal that we can do.

Firstly, care for your trees. Trees and shrubs store carbon in wood, be it the trunk, branches or roots. Trees store more carbon than other plants owing to their size and long lifespan. Hedges too can store carbon for a long time. Many churchyards and cemeteries contain ancient trees as well as trees planted in Victorian times, often conifers with a shorter lifespan as well as the longer-lived native broadleaves. These conifers may be coming toward the end of their life so keep an eye on them, carry out an annual inspection using The Caring for God's Acre sheet on inspecting trees as well as having professional surveys by a skilled arborist. The life of a tree can be prolonged by care and prompt action as problems arise, (which can save money too). Perhaps you can think about planting young trees to replace those nearing the end of their lives. Is there room for a sapling now? Young trees grow quickly, laying down carbon-based wood as they do so.

Secondly, think about your grassland. Rather surprisingly grassland is actually great at storing carbon with most of it out of sight. Whilst carbon is stored in the visible, above ground plants it is within the soil that most is held in fact it is estimated that up to 30% of the earth's carbon is stored in grassland soil.

Soil carbon comes from decomposing plants, animals and fungi. When things die, they are broken down and used as food by insects, worms and other invertebrates, fungi, bacteria and other microbes. Whilst some carbon dioxide is released most carbon is incorporated into the soil. The more mature the soil, the better for carbon storage. A mature, complex, undisturbed soil has a wide range of life within its soil, all of which contain carbon. Churchyard, chapel yard and cemetery grassland are usually mature and full of different grasses, flowering plants, fungi and lichens.

This richness above ground leads to a corresponding richness below the surface.

What about the length of the grass, does that have an effect? Yes it does, taller grassland rather than short lawn has a deeper zone of active soil due to deeper plant roots. This active soil is full of carbon-based life.

So look at your local churchyard with new eyes, seeing it as a carbon store and seeing if you can improve this. Care for your trees, plant replacements and when trees need to be felled try to leave some deadwood on site or maybe keep the carbon locked away by using the wood for timber or wood-turning. Is there scope to increase the grass length in some areas to increase the depth of active, carbon-rich soil? Finally, can you reduce the use of petrol machines such as lawn mowers and strimmers replacing with electric ones or maybe using them less often.

All of these actions will benefit wildlife too so it really is doubly worthwhile.

All the best,

Harriet Carty

Diocesan Churchyard Environmental Advisor. harriet@cfga.org.uk,
www.caringforgodsacre.org.uk - individuals and groups in the diocese receive 20% members discount on all CfGA materials.
Use the discount code diomem22

BONUS BALL

Congratulations to the November winners of the weekly Lotto Bonus Ball draw who will each receive £29. The winners were:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Ball Number</u>	<u>Winner</u>
1 Nov	29	Maureen Crosby RIP
8 Nov	44	John Abram
15 Nov	25	Annette Jones
22 Nov	35	Rebekah Lee
29 Nov	46	Rachel Lee

I have a number which will become available at the beginning of March when the new Bonus Ball year starts. The cost of joining is £13/quarter which is collected either annually, half yearly or quarterly.

If you would like to join the St Oswald Bonus Ball, please let me know.

Paul Crosby
658606

Christmas is nearly upon us, which means that the work of the project this month is focused on sharing the importance of Jesus's birth within our schools.

December was a busy month. My first two prayer spaces of the year were a success with 280 pupils plus staff being able to take part in prayer activities focusing on themselves, others and our world. There was a fantastic atmosphere within both schools, with pupils thoughtfully engaging in each activity.

Advent in a box workshops have also had a positive start. Pupils have enjoyed learning the story of Jesus' birth through the Advent themes of love, joy, peace, and hope. They have particularly enjoyed the take-home box filled with activities from the workshop. We wish to thank everyone who has donated to this important project. If you would still like to donate please see the details below.

You can give to this event by:

Bank transfer

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Account number 00018365

Account name Schools Christian Worker Project.

Ref Advent in a Box

Or cheques can be made payable to Schools
Christian Worker Project and sent to - Treasurer,
SCWP, C/O Quinta Christian Centre, Quinta Hall,
Weston Rhyn, Oswestry, SY10 7LR

Books for Schools

We have received a generous donation from the Welsh Frankton Mother's Union to enable us to gift some Christian books to some of our local schools. This will enable pupils in the schools to access Christian literature through their school library.

New Trustees

The SCWP are looking for new trustees. The trustees meet 6 times a year to pray for and manage the project. If you would be interested in finding out more; have a heart for passing on the Good News of Jesus to the next

generation and have 6 free evenings over the course of a year, we would be delighted to hear from you. Please contact Andy Cranston at adcranston1@gmail.com for more information.

What's Happening in December

- Assemblies this month will focus on Christmas and the importance of Jesus.
- CU sessions are exploring the letters of the New Testament and how we can apply their teachings to our lives today.
- Our new Advent in a Box workshops will continue this month. This interactive workshop explores the story of Jesus' birth through the Advent themes of love, joy, peace, and hope. Through storytelling and reflection, children will meet key characters of the Nativity and discover the heart of why Jesus came to earth. At the end of the session, each child will receive a special *take-home box* filled with activities to help them remember the message of Christmas.

Thank you for your continued support of the project.

Blessings

Jane Webber

Things to Pray For

Families during the Christmas break The Christmas holidays can be a difficult time for many young people.

It was.....

200 years ago, on 30th Jan 1826 that the Menai Suspension Bridge was first opened. It links the island of Anglesey to mainland Wales, and was the world's first major suspension bridge.

100 years ago, on 13th Jan 1926 that Michael Bond, children's writer, was born. He created the characters Paddington Bear and Monsieur Pamplemousse.

Also 100 years ago, on 26th Jan 1926 that Scottish engineer and inventor John Logie Baird gave the first demonstration of his TV system to members of the Royal Institution.

80 years ago, on 8th Jan 1946 that Elvis Presley received his first guitar on his 11th birthday. (Apparently, he would have preferred a bicycle.)



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Wordsearch Epiphany

6th January brings Epiphany - the visit of the Wise Men to the baby Jesus. Matthew calls them 'Magi', the name of an ancient priestly caste from Persia. Early church tradition says there were three: Balthasar, Caspar and Melchior. As for their gifts? Gold is a symbol of wisdom and wealth, incense is a symbol of worship and sacrifice, and myrrh is a symbol of healing - and even embalming. Jesus challenged and set aright the way in which the world handled all three of these things.

Epiphany	I E T N E I C N A O M M B	Incense
Visit	N N T R R L O B M Y S O A	Worship
Wise	I I C H A L L E N G E D E	sacrifice
Men	L R I S S D L O G P P S I	Myrrh
Magi	C G Y T A C I N T E I I I	Symbol
Priestly	I A N L H C I T R W P W W	Healing
Persia	N H S I T M R S I E H E O	Embalming
Balthasar	C R O P L S I I W O A M R	Ancient
Caspar	E R T A A A E S F L N D L	Gifts
Melchior	N Y B E B R E I T I Y H D	Tradition
Gold	S M V I S I T H R F C C G	Challenged
Wealth	E E A W O R S H I P I E M	world
wisdom	E N S P I I A E C M A G I	

Answers on Page 35

Observations on daily life for 2026

It takes a great person to give sound advice tactfully, but a greater to accept it graciously. - *J C MacAulay*

A reunion is when you meet people your own age who all look a lot older than you. - *Anon*

Traffic light: a green light that changes to red as your car approaches. - *Anon*

Winter: the time of year when it gets later earlier. - *Anon*

Across

8 How the Abyss (NIV) is described in the Authorized Version (Revelation 9:1) (10,3)

9 Frozen water (Ezekiel 1:22) (3)

10 The Ten Commandments (9)

11 In Roman Catholic theology, neither heaven nor hell (5)

13 Des cons (anag.) (7)

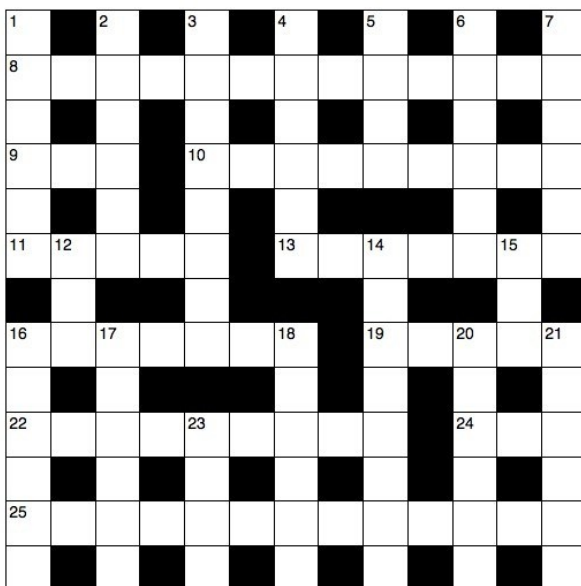
16 'Though [your sins] are red as — , they shall be like wool' Isaiah 1:18) (7)

19 Keen (Romans 1:15) (5)

22 Repugnant, loathsome (Jeremiah 24:9) (9)

24 Drink like an animal (Judges 7:5) (3)

25 First and last (Revelation 22:13) (5,3,5)



Down

1 Father of Ahi, a Gadite (1 Chronicles 5:15) (6)

2 Where David found the stone with which he killed Goliath (1 Samuel 17:40) (6)

3 'Hour by hour fresh lips are making thy — doings heard on high' (8)

4 'And there were shepherds living out in the fields near by, keeping watch over their — at night' (Luke 2:8) (6)

5 United Society for Christian Literature (1,1,1,1)

6 'If he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would — or a tax collector' (Matthew 18:17) (1,5)

7 Where Paul was taken when things became difficult for him in Berea (Acts 17:15) (6)

12 Istituto per le Opere di Religione (Vatican Bank) (1,1,1)

14 'Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new — ; the old has gone, the new has come!' (2 Corinthians 5:17) (8)

15 Used to colour ram skins red for use in the tabernacle (Exodus 25:5) (3)

16 Vat car (anag.) (6)

17 'Be joyful — — , patient in affliction, faithful in prayer' (Romans 12:12) (6)

- 18 'The parts that are unrepresentable are treated with special modesty, while our representable parts — — special treatment' (1 Corinthians 12:23) (4,2)
 20 Ancient rowing boat (Isaiah 33:21) (6)
 21 Say again (2 Corinthians 11:16) (6)
 23 What Jesus did in the synagogue in Nazareth after he stood up (Luke 4:16) (4)

Sudoku

Easy

3		9		8			2	
	2	6		7	4		9	
7			6				8	
			7	2		5		
	8			3			4	
		7		1	5			
	3				7			1
	7		1	4		8	6	
	1			5		4		9

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PUZ?LES

**Solutions
on page 35**

Medium

		6					9	
1	5		9	8				
4			6	5				8
6	4	3				9		
		7				8	3	1
5				3	2			9
				4	9		5	6
	2					3		

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PUBLICATION DETAILS FOR NEXT MONTH

Material required in the Office
SUNDAY, 11 JANUARY

Make-up day for working party,
and publication:
Tuesday, 20 January

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This month we celebrate Epiphany, the occasion on which we remember the Magi from the East following a star to find the baby Jesus: *'Where is the One who has been born king of the Jews?'* (Matthew 2:1). At the start of a New Year, in an uncertain world, we can be asking the same question. The gifts the Magi offered point us to how Jesus can answer our concerns and worries: *'they bowed down and worshipped Him...and presented Him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.'* (2:11).

The *gift of gold* reflects that the Magi saw in the baby a king, destined to rule over us all. In this coming year we need to remember that Jesus is on the throne, the seat of power and authority in the whole universe. Will we crown Him king of our lives and dedicate all that we are and do to Him?

The *gift of frankincense* reflects that the visitors saw not just an earthly king, but God in human flesh. Incense symbolises the prayers of God's people and so this gift reminds us that God is worthy of our worship and prayer. Will we offer our praise and prayer, as we seek God to guide us through the uncertainties of this coming year?

The *gift of myrrh* reflects that these astrologers saw beyond the baby's birth and life, to His death which would secure life for all. Jesus was offered myrrh on the cross and was a spice used in His tomb. As we face challenges in the future, we can be confident that Jesus knows and understands our experience. Are we ready to trust Him in everything?

'Glorious now behold Him arise, King and God and Sacrifice! Heav'n sings Hallelujah: Hallelujah the earth replies.' ('We Three Kings').

(Parish Pump—January 2026)

SAMARITANS

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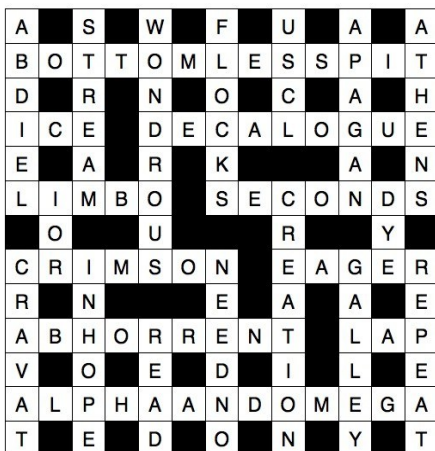
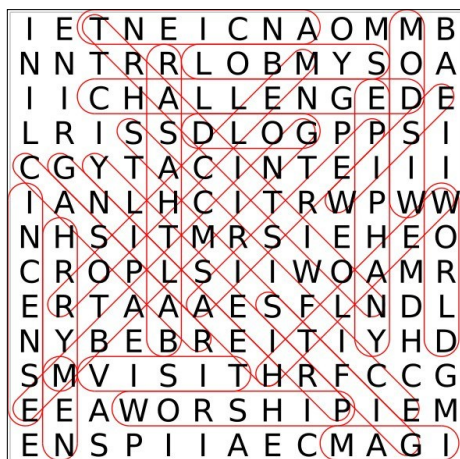
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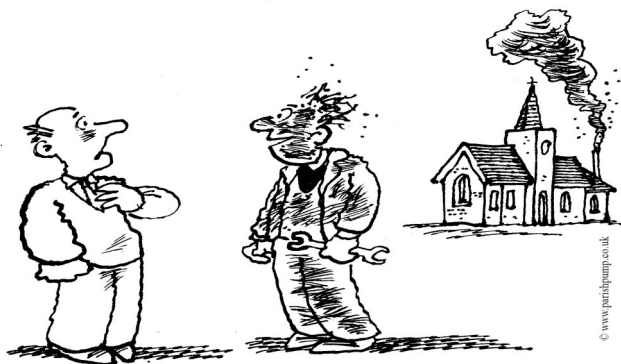


Easy

3	4	9	5	8	1	6	2	7
8	2	6	3	7	4	1	9	5
7	5	1	6	9	2	3	8	4
4	9	3	7	2	8	5	1	6
1	8	5	9	3	6	7	4	2
2	6	7	4	1	5	9	3	8
9	3	4	8	6	7	2	5	1
5	7	2	1	4	9	8	6	3
6	1	8	2	5	3	4	7	9

Medium

3	8	6	2	7	1	5	9	4
1	5	2	9	8	4	7	6	3
4	7	9	6	5	3	1	2	8
6	4	3	1	2	8	9	7	5
8	1	5	3	9	7	6	4	2
2	9	7	4	6	5	8	3	1
5	6	8	7	3	2	4	1	9
7	3	1	8	4	9	2	5	6
9	2	4	5	1	6	3	8	7



...the good news is - I've found a way of heating the church on unwanted chip-fat!...

REGISTERS



As God has lent them to us, so we say farewell and give back in HOLY DYING:

S Oswald's
2025

December 19 Daphne Alexandra Frances Madden, aged 100



We are a group of volunteers running advice sessions in Oswestry Library, to assist the general public with Family & Local History. Our sessions are free and include access to Ancestry.com, Parish Records, Local Maps, Photographs and copies of the Advertiser 1849 to date. Family & Local Historians available:

Monday 10:00-12:00

Friday 13:30-16:00

No appointments necessary

Oswestry Parish Church exists to propagate and nurture the love of God through the teachings of Jesus Christ thereby serving the needs of the whole community and enriching everybody's lives, through worship and prayer.

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