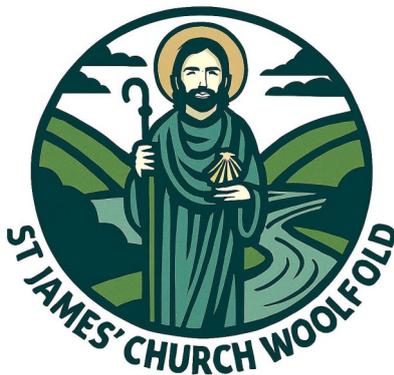
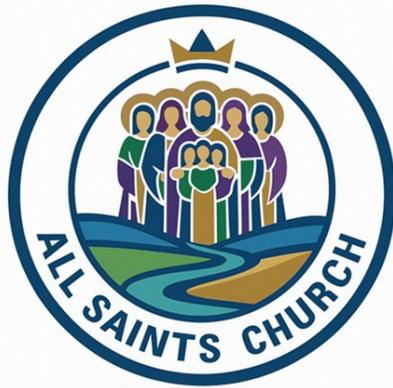


# Kirklees Valley and St Stephens Parish Magazine December 2025



We are the Anglican Parishes of St Stephen's Elton and Kirklees Valley, which is comprised of All Saints Brandlesholme and St James Woolfold. We exist to worship God in the Anglican tradition, to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and to serve our neighbour in thought, word, and deed. We are warm, welcoming, and friendly communities in the Liberal Catholic to central tradition of the Church of England. We are proud to be the spiritual home of people of a variety of backgrounds and ages, and we love to welcome newcomers to our services and community events. We also host a variety of non Church-based activities in our buildings, and are always keen to support and welcome new community initiatives and activities.

Our **Sunday Services:**

**All Saints 11am**

**St James 11am**

**St Stephens 9am**

We share a single Vicar, Rev. Sam Eccleston, who can be contacted on [brseclestonop@gmail.com](mailto:brseclestonop@gmail.com). We are also served by a team of very generous and able Clergy, Readers, and ALMs, to whom we are greatly indebted.

**Suggested**

**Donation: 50p**

[www.allsaintsandstjames.com](http://www.allsaintsandstjames.com)

[www.ststephenelton.com](http://www.ststephenelton.com)

# Vicar's Letter

In this month's magazine you will find; my monthly ramblings, two seasonal articles from the Christmas curate (!) updates on a new group at All Saints, the church shop, and the Christmas card competition, notice of forthcoming Christmas events and ongoing community groups in our parishes. As always, thanks to all who have contributed articles, pictures, posters, flyers, and information. Every month there are thanks due to those who work so hard to contribute to the life of our churches. Of particular note are Carol for her work on faculties, Lynne for her work on service sheets, ditto Jane, everyone who worked so hard on the Christmas tree festival, which was both a massive task and a massive success, Tony for his work on the accounts, Steve for running our first aid course, the folks at St James' for their very successful coffee morning, Josie for starting a new book club, Barry for another fantastic concert and the children of St Stephen's for their work on the Christmas card.



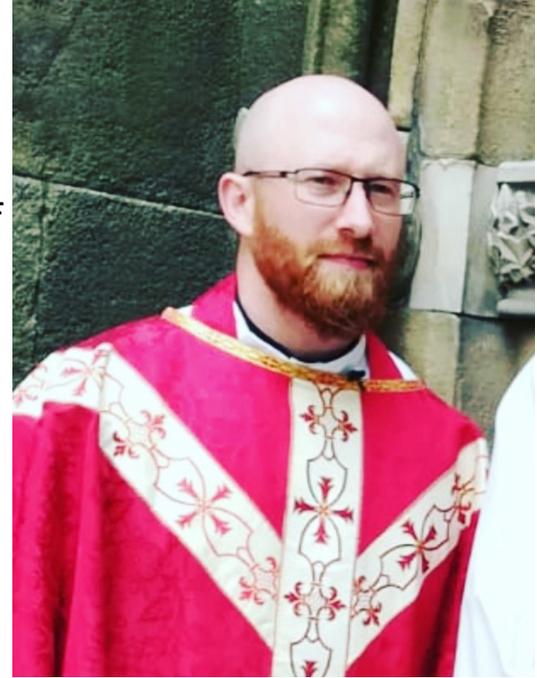
## Starting With the End in Mind

As many of you know, I used to be a Strength and Conditioning Coach. I loved coaching people, partly because of how rewarding it is to see people make progress, physically and mentally, at their sport. There is very little like seeing the elation of someone who suddenly finds their bodies are capable of things they couldn't have imagined in the past. Another part of the enjoyment of coaching is the intellectual challenge; asking yourself 'what do I need these people do be able to do? Why can't they do it now? What do we do to fix that?'. The answers to these questions are not just physical; they don't just involve strengthening muscles and improving reflexes and drilling movement patterns; they are also psychological— 'What motivates this person? How do they learn? How do we deal with lapses in confidence?'

I still find all of this fascinating, and participate vicariously in it through Netflix sports documentaries. Typically, they focus on the coach of an American sports team, and they engage with all of the various aspects of coaching— recruitment, physical development, motivation etc. One of the most fascinating things to observe is the development of team culture; how do you create a culture which is at once positive and confident, and on the other hand able to face problems honestly, accept criticism, and make adjustments, not just between games or seasons but within games, even sometimes within a single play. All of this is made even more complex by the fact that typically these coaches are having to deal with the way the players are distracted by outside influences— whether the temptations available to professional athletes or the worries of broke 'prospects' or 'journeymen' taking their last stab at sporting success. In order for success to be achieved, means constantly have to be calibrated with ends — the coach constantly has to think 'Why are we doing this? What is it for?'

# Vicar's Letter

Is it working? Is the effort proportional to the outcome? Is there a more efficient way of achieving the same thing? If any of the answers to these questions mandate change, then the coach's job is to drive change, even if this is uncomfortable for the players, which it usually is. One way that this is phrased is 'beginning with the end in mind'- when you begin something, don't get sidetracked or distracted, focus on what you are trying to achieve and keep that in mind at all times. I often wonder whether the Church of England could learn something from good sports coaches. On a number of different levels, it is not clear to me that we are beginning with the end in mind.



In the past, it was clear what the job of a clergyperson was (they largely led services— there was a constant stream of baptisms, weddings, funerals, the churching of women, morning and evening prayer, eucharists etc). The training of clergy reflected this— it focused on Theology and on becoming an expert in the Book of Common Prayer. Nowadays, the role of clergy is very different. In an era of multi-church benefices/plural incumbencies as the norm, the role has shifted to a largely managerial/administrative one, but clergy receive almost no training in these things, and are usually poorly equipped to do them in terms of office tech and software. This change has happened gradually, and perhaps because of this it hasn't been communicated to parishes, but this in turn means that clergy are often very conscious of not meeting traditional expectations of what the role involves. The porous boundaries around the role also make work-life balance very hard to negotiate, and responsibility very hard to allocate. If x failed, and wasted time and money, but it is hard to say who was realistically capable of or responsible for x, what lesson is there to learn other than that we need different structures and practices, many of which need to be defined at a higher level than the parish. All of this makes it more or less impossible for the clergy or indeed anyone else to measure whether they are working effectively or not.

We know that there has been a fall in clergy numbers, but the real extent of this is rarely appreciated. In the past, clergy spouses (who at the time were female) usually took up unpaid roles within parish; they ran the MU, the flower team, the Sunday School, and were PCC Secretary or Treasurer. In an era of two-income households and joint parental responsibility, this is very unlikely to happen. This means that not only is a lone incumbent often responsible for multiple churches, but that in fact they have also lost an unacknowledged source of labour. At the same time, safeguarding and health and safety rules are now far more onerous and complex, buildings are reaching their use-by dates, and falling attendance and the change to common-worship is necessitating far greater focus on the content and form of services themselves— all of which was not much of a concern to the clergy of yesteryear. In other organisations, when you ask people to do more, it is understood that you need to allow

# Vicar's Letter

them to do less in other areas— this simply isn't happening in the Church; we are trying to do way *more* with *less* resource and are then surprised when this doesn't produce results. It also applies at the level of the parish itself— traditionally, parishes were self-contained entities, legally, liturgically, socially etc. Now, in the 'new normal' they need to work together in a variety of evolving patterns, but there are no established structures or practices that really foster this co-operation, and no real way of making sure that co-operation does not simply further benefit the stronger church or parish. Similarly, when it comes to fundraising, volunteering, building conservation/repairs we expect laypeople to show steadfast loyalty to their Church and particularly to its building, but then to be able to be flexible about this loyalty when it comes to sharing clergy with other parishes, attending services elsewhere, helping to offer fresh expressions or children's work as a joint effort etc. It is not clear that this is a coherent expectation, or what goal it tends toward.



At a Diocesan level, we expect Bishops to show leadership and solve problems, without acknowledging that they both lack the power to do so, and that when decisions are made opposition is swift to follow, often phrased in immoderate and unfair language, and the discussion then often pivots to the demand for more democratic decision making models.

At most levels of church life, it feels as if there is an increasing number of meetings, but a decreasing amount of applicable content in those meetings— it sometimes feels as if the content has been inserted in order to give the meeting a purpose rather than the other way round. This saps morale and wastes time.

Coincidentally, while I was writing this article, someone shared this graphic on social media. Not all of it is relevant, but what is interesting is how many of those that *are* relevant *are not* characteristic of church culture as it stands.

All of this suggests several things to me. Firstly, that unlike a sports team or a lot of business organisations, we lack a clear goal around which to orient ourselves. We have structures and practices we have inherited,

## 10 Ways Great Leaders Protect Their Teams

### 1. Stop Meeting Madness

No real work happens when a calendar shows 30 hours of meetings in a week.

### 2. Filter Every 'ASAP'

Question urgent requests and protect your team from fake emergencies.

### 3. Prevent Burnout

Spot exhaustion signals early and address the causes of chronic stress.

### 4. Shield from Office Politics

Absorb organizational drama so your team can focus on real work.



### 5. Push Back on Deadlines

Negotiate realistic timelines upfront. Refuse deadlines that demand constant overtime.

### 6. Require Priority Trade-offs

Make stakeholders choose what stops when they add new work.

### 7. Eliminate Useless Work

Cut low-value tasks such as creating reports that nobody reads.

### 8. Protect Deep Work

Create distraction-free times and keep "quick requests" from destroying focus time.

### 9. Cut Through Bureaucracy

Push back on unnecessary approvals, processes, and checkpoints that slow down your team.

### 10. Amplify Their Wins

CC their achievements to skip-level managers. Make their success impossible to ignore.

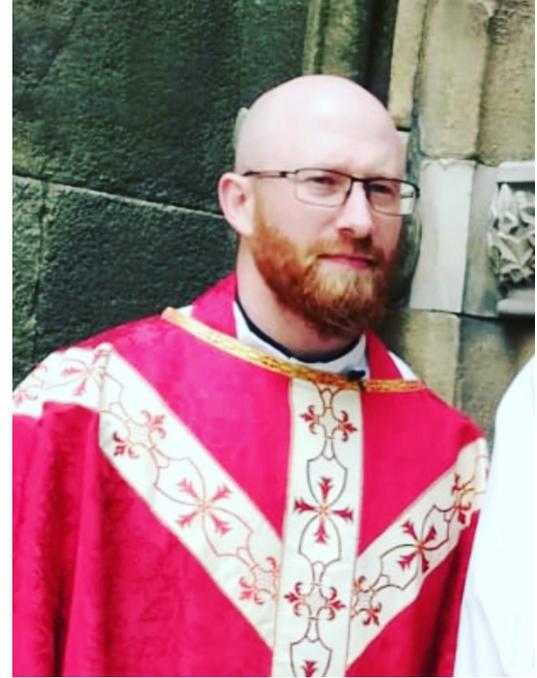
# Vicar's Letter

but we can't refine and reform them because we don't have this clear goal to define what counts as a good use of time. Secondly, we are not being realistic about changes of capacity and demand, so we are trying to do everything. Thirdly, we are suffering from a form of structural paralysis in which power is defused across the organisation in such a way that it makes decisive action very difficult to achieve.

Obviously, there isn't much we can do about this at the parish level. However, as Churches we can do the following:

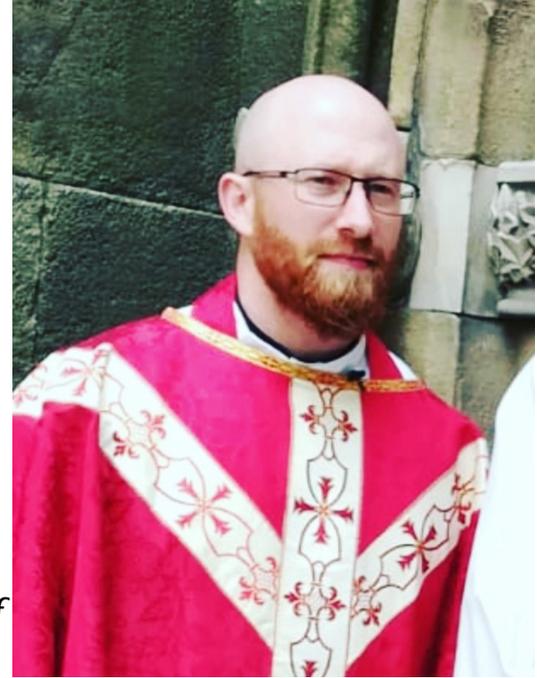
- Ask ourselves why we are doing what we are doing in very specific terms: is it to grow our network, develop new relationships, deepen existing relationships, nurture discipleship, increase income etc. Follow that up by asking whether what we are doing has met its goal— we may have got people through the door, but who were they and what was the nature of our interaction with them? Why did they come? How did they find out about the event? Are they new people, returners, or old-timers?
- Push at open doors: work is more likely to be efficacious if it is meeting a need, filling a gap, and welcomed by those on the receiving end. It is far more effective to do a small number of high-yield activities than a large number of low-yield activities.
- Be prepared to do less but better. What is important is not volume but effectiveness. In a gym context, a useful concept is 'junk volume' if you are doing exercises, sets, or reps which have no clear function, you are just using energy and delaying recovery for no benefit. In order to implement this concept, we need to be prepared to be realistic about how many things we can do well concurrently. The answer is likely to be less than we might want to imagine.

There might be some who would suspect this approach of being the thin end of a thick managerialist/corporate wedge, which will turn the church from a truly religious organisation into a slick and soulless 'GodCorp'— indeed, there are many who fear this has already happened. However, the problem with this is twofold. Firstly, the increased managerialism of the church is, at a parish level, a symptom of there being fewer vocations and less money for stipends, rather than the other way round. Secondly, maintaining a hard distinction between religious and secular forms of organisation is difficult to justify beyond a certain point. Irrespective of the purpose of your organisation, there has to be some relevant criterion of efficacy against which its activity is measured, or else what is it for? No organisation, no matter how high-minded its ideals or abstract its intellectual currency, can afford to entirely eschew pragmatism. Indeed, if we look at the early Church as depicted in the Book of Acts, the Apostles themselves are concerned with precisely this issue. At one point, they become so concerned about how they have become diverted from their core evangelistic task by the burgeoning



## Vicar's Letter

social responsibilities of the early church that they institute an entirely new order of ministry– the diaconate– in order that they can get back to what they are supposed to be doing: preaching and teaching. Acts 6 tells us: *'Now during those days, when the disciples were increasing in number, the Hellenists complained against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of food. And the twelve called together the whole community of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should neglect the word of God in order to wait on tables. Therefore, brothers and sisters, select from among yourselves seven men of good standing, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint to this task, while we, for our part, will devote ourselves to prayer and to serving the word.'* What they said pleased the whole community, and they chose Stephen'.



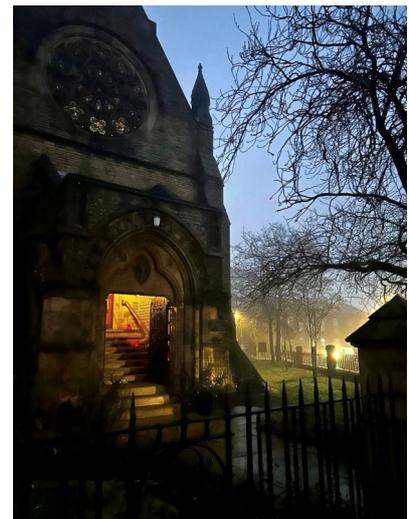
I think it unlikely that anyone would see this as managerialism, and yet the same concerns are being raised– efficacy, efficiency, outcomes, purpose, relevance. The question for this generation of the church is how we re-organise ourselves around the new normal; what stays and what goes, what is our purpose and how do we fulfil it? Currently, we are trying to pull a past that has already vanished into a future which is already here, and one must say, it isn't working.

You may be wondering what any of this has to do with Advent or, indeed, Christmas. Well, quite a lot actually. Both seasons are focused around the same thing– one in anticipation, one in celebration. That thing is the presence of Christ among his people. And ultimately, that is what effective mission is also about, -it is really what the church is about; in Church, it is, in a sense, always Christmas. Christmas nowadays is irrevocably associated with gift giving, but this gift giving was always supposed to be in imitation of the master gift, as it were, of Christ himself. What better gift can we give to the world than Christ? What better gift could we give to ourselves than a functioning, effective, successful church?

## Evensong at St Edmund's Fallinge

I recently had the honour of being invited to preach at a special evensong service for the patronal festival of St Edmund's church in Fallinge, Rochdale, a church which is now in the care of the Churches Conservation Trust. The service was attended by the mayor of Rochdale Cllr Janet Elmsley, and the

president was the Area Dean of Rochdale Rev. Anne Gilbert. St Edmunds is an extremely unusual and atmospheric church, as you can see (right) and provided a great setting for a lovely 'come and sing' choral event'.

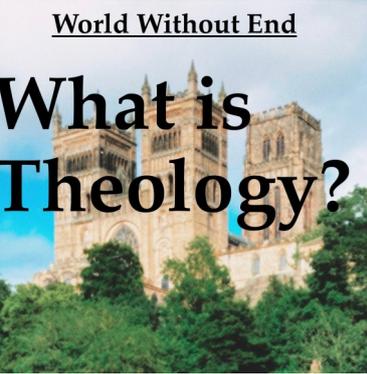


# Faith Online

There is a lot of fantastic Christian content online; it comes from Christians of different denominations, traditions, and languages, and encompasses everything from Bible Study and Theology to Christian music, architecture, and art. Every month I will aim to share some of it with you.

World Without End

## What is Theology?



**Dylan Brooks**, who attends Bury Parish Church, publishes an online blog entitled ‘**What Is Theology?**’ in which he interviews people about theology. Access his paper on Dietrich Bonhoeffer here:

[worldwithoutenddb.substack.com/p/how-dietrich-bonhoeffer-became-a](http://worldwithoutenddb.substack.com/p/how-dietrich-bonhoeffer-became-a)

**The Trio Mandili** sing the 50th Psalm in Aramaic here:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=BcbKoY7XpJE&list=RDBcbKoY7XpJE&start\\_radio=1](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BcbKoY7XpJE&list=RDBcbKoY7XpJE&start_radio=1)

**Sceptic Alex O’Connor** discusses his changing views on Christianity here: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=CmQvoPQALd4&t=155s](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CmQvoPQALd4&t=155s)

Following our discussion of the **sling** as an ancient weapon in Bible study, here is a demonstration of some ancient styles of slinging:

[www.youtube.com/shorts/LYcB0I0qzT4](http://www.youtube.com/shorts/LYcB0I0qzT4)



**Heavyweight Champion of the World**

**Oleksandr Usyk** talks about his faith here:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=v2Tf0AXHWK0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v2Tf0AXHWK0)

**Olympic Gold Medal –Winning Wrestler**

**Kurt Angle** gives his Bible verse of the day here: [www.youtube.com/shorts/LH5slkeTbks](http://www.youtube.com/shorts/LH5slkeTbks)

[www.youtube.com/shorts/LH5slkeTbks](http://www.youtube.com/shorts/LH5slkeTbks)

The **National Churches Trust** have produced some research on the contribution of Churches to their local communities and the challenges they face. Access the report here:

[www.nationalchurchestrust.org/sites/default/](http://www.nationalchurchestrust.org/sites/default/files/2025-11/FULL_NationalChurchesTrust_SurveyReport_AW_281025.pdf)

[files/2025-11/FULL\\_NationalChurchesTrust\\_SurveyReport\\_AW\\_281025.pdf](http://www.nationalchurchestrust.org/sites/default/files/2025-11/FULL_NationalChurchesTrust_SurveyReport_AW_281025.pdf)

For those who can’t make Bible Study, the **Bible**

**Project** run online Bible classes here: [https://](https://bibleproject.com/classroom/)

[bibleproject.com/classroom/](https://bibleproject.com/classroom/)

**Bible Study/Study Group** is typically recorded in an audio file as are sermons from the 10am service at

**St Stephens**– if you have missed a session/service and wish to listen please contact the Vicar.



# CHRISTMAS DINNER - Saturday 6th December

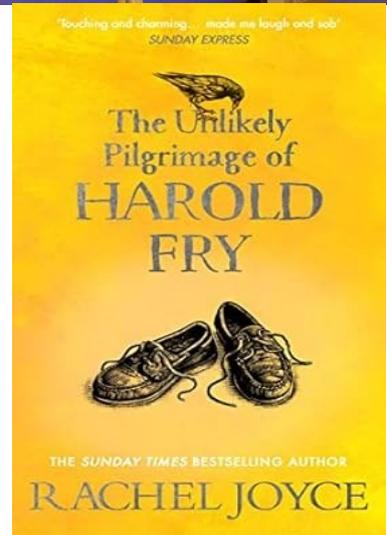
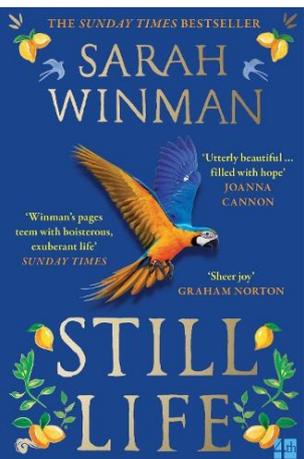
Once again the dinner will be held at Brightmet Golf Club. The cost will remain as last year, at £30. This will include a three course meal with three choices for each of the courses, plus tea or coffee. Please sign the list in the Centenary Room if you wish to come asap. You do not need to pay at this stage, but the final payment should be made by Sunday 26th November. Speak to Church wardens for further details.

## News from All Saints Groups

**Ladies Club:** 20 of our members enjoyed a wonderful lunch at Owens in Ramsbottom on 10th November. Our December meeting will be on Monday 8th December when we have our annual Christmas get together with games, quizzes, our Secret Santa present exchange and of course mince

pies. We will also be adding the decorations to the church Christmas tree.

**All Saints Book Club:** The inaugural meeting of the All Saints Book Club organised by Josie took place on Thursday 21st November when we chose our first two books for the group. Our first reading will be 'Still Life' by Sarah Winman which we will review at our next meeting in December; our second book will be 'The Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Fry' by Rachel Joyce.



## First Aid Course

Steve, Ellise's husband, has recently very helpfully offered to run first aid courses for Church members. The first of these was on 22nd of Nov, and I think it is safe to say it was very much enjoyed by those in attendance (picture below)! The next course will be in the new year at All Saints, please speak to the Curate to sign up.



# ST STEPHEN'S CHRISTMAS TREE FESTIVAL

On the weekend of the 29th and 30th of Nov St Stephen's held our much anticipated Christmas Tree Festival. Members of the congregation had been preparing for the event for weeks: ordering trees, arranging sponsors, creating a programme, making crafts, organising food and refreshments, decorating the church, designing promotional materials, completing risk assessments...the list goes on and on! On the weekend itself, the church looked wonderful— filled with brightly decorated Christmas trees, crafts for sale, seasonal displays, and smiling faces (3 of which pictured above right!).

The hard work very much paid off, as the festival attracted very good attendance numbers on both days; all day we found ourselves hosting visitors browsing for seasonal purchases, staying for a chat and some food in the café, or taking excited children to see the trees. It was wonderful to see so many



current and former members of the congregations of St Stephen's, All Saints, and St James', to catch up with our neighbours and meet people new to the area. In all, we estimate we had around 150 (not counting children!) visitors over the two days, who between them contributed in excess of £2500 to church funds, which included a very welcome direct donation from the retail branch of the Co-Op.

Despite the hard work it is fair to say a good time was had by all who volunteered. A particular highlight for me was the uncanny experience of knowing the precise location of Dave McKenna at all times, on account of the festive bells that adorn his elf costume. I leave it to readers to speculate as to whose

idea this costume was originally...

The trees were also a feature of our Sunday service (pictured below right), which meant that we felt a bit like we were embarking on a new 'Forest Church' venture— at one point during the notices I couldn't find Barbara, concealed as she was behind a Christmas tree! Well done to everyone who worked so hard— it was very much evident and appreciated!



# The Origin of Santa!!

Many Santa followers myself included, love the iconic jolly fat man in a red suit but he didn't always have a red suit, here I will explain how Santa came to be and why we love this jolly man who visits 385 million homes in just one night!

Let's travel back well over two thousand years to what is now known as Turkey, a bishop by the name of Saint Nicholas back in the 4<sup>th</sup> century was becoming well known for his glorious generosity he came from a very wealthy Greek background. His love for children was so prominent he would care for all children who were sick and poor, he also cared for many poor families who would have struggled or died. The most famous secret act of kindness was when he saved 3 sisters from being sold into slavery, the father had no dowry and back then this was everything when trying to get your children married, but he had none and was being forced into selling his daughters into a cruel ending, when Saint Nicholas heard of this he crept into the fathers home and left 3 bags of money a perfectly great sum for each lady to have a dowry and be saved from slavery. The father couldn't help but want to thank the person who had saved his daughters in person so he followed Saint Nick and thanked him face to face, when he knew of the man's identity, he spoke of the good will gesture to anyone who would listen.

Interestingly it was the people of the Netherlands who celebrated Santa first but then he was known as Sinterklaas, this is translated to Santa Claus in today's English. It is said that he arrived on a steam boat with a big red book on December 6<sup>th</sup> to write down the names of the children who had been good, this actually came from the trade system and the steam boat would bring all the supplies needed for the people of the Netherlands to help them survive the winter and they relied heavily on this shipment, they said it had been a gift to receive life giving foods and so Santa was created.

Why the red suit? Well Saint Nicholas preferred to wear a lot of red although he did sometimes wear green his colour of choice was red so when the Americans adopted him as Santa Clause was portrayed in a red suit, the fact that Coca-Cola chose this to be a representation of the Santa we see on the bottles and adverts is purely a continuation of the colour of Saint Nicholas, however the jolly fat Santa was certainly drawn up for marketing purposes.



Christmastide the Christian liturgical year is what really brought Father Christmas to England this was separate from the worlds Santa Claus, it was brought in around the Middle Ages, bringing merry songs and drinking to the people. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century Puritans wanted to rid England of Father Christmas and for 15 years from 1644 they had succeeded it was banned and forbidden to celebrate Christmas in any way. In 1647 even more festivals were banned such as Easter and Pentecost! After the English civil war he returns fully ready and stocked to bring back joy! It wasn't until the Victorian times that his physical being was brought forward a lovely man in a red cloak and a white beard who was never seen in person just a spiritual figure who had a crown of Holly, who delivered plum rum cake on the twelfth night, i do love me some good cake the Victorians knew how to celebrate, i could certainly get behind some rum cake on the twelfth day of Christmas. In 1890 the American idea of Santa collided with Father Christmas after a good shove by the Dickens Novel, this brought the gift giving Santa with the clothing tradition of Father Christmas, what a collaboration the Holly crown was changing to a hood but it is here that the full tradition of Santa took shape.

## Why do I love Christmas?

I've just been speaking about why Father Christmas is who he is, and I love this time of year, if it was up to me i would have it all year round because of the joy and light that comes from celebrating this season.

Yes, it's about the birth of Christ and I love a good nativity, I have seen so many negative views on Christmas and that's ok but for me and my family it has a massive history and hence we have 8 Christmas trees! Yes 8! Each one tells a story that I will share with you now.

My own tree, my large 7ft 4 tree, sits in my living room I haven't finished this one yet but when I do I will gladly share the picture it stands with the angel Gabriel a key factor of the nativity an angel with a huge message of the birth of Christ the colours vary and this year its silver and green I have chosen green for the Saint Nicholas as he did sometimes wear green along with his red clothing, but green also happens to be my favourite colour so this year I've decided to embrace some traditional colouring this is tree number 1.

Tree 2 belongs to my eldest Kenzie. She chose a candy cane theme previously it was grinch themed but as she comes into a new era of her own take on Christmas, she loves all the sweets that she is given and wanted to embrace the sweetness that comes from sharing. The white tree and the red stripes of sweets bring her joy, and she loves to share all these sweet trees so I present tree 2 a candy cane land full of sweetness and sharing!

Tree 3 belongs to Dakota and Baylee, as they share a room they have had to compromise this tree, Dakota loves black, so they have a black tree and Baylee is very girly and loves pink, so they have pink decorations, they have used beads instead of tinsel, they have shared both interests and so I bring you a gothic and girly tree !



Tree 4 belongs to Diesel this is his first tree so it's all brand new, he chose a white tree for snow, and multi-coloured lights, he has chosen green and grey tinsel with green and silver baubles, they reflect a love of his favourite colour but also keeps the tones low he doesn't like bright colours so they are quite earthy, the tree is finished with a star because he loves how everyone followed star to get to Jesus. He has always played a Shephard in nativity plays and he just enjoys this role because of the importance of these witnesses to the birth of Jesus. So, I present

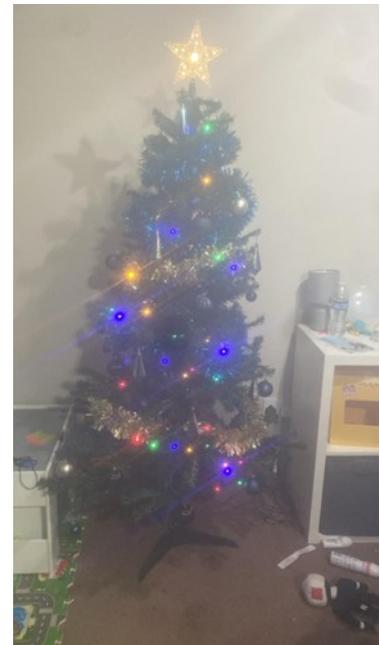
tree 4!

Tree 5 belongs to Willow, she is very traditional, green tree with multi lights and precise positioning of her decorations. White and gold tinsel topped with yet again another star, a running factor for all my children is the importance of the star that guided everyone to Jesus, they have all been a part in a nativity in some shape or form, many being shepherds or angels but no matter what role they have played they all seem drawn to the importance of the glowing star that led the way! It took her 5 tries before she was happy with her tree the fussy so and so but i must agree it is rather pretty! So here I present a traditional tree done by Willow tree 5!

Tree 6 has a brilliant story behind it, tree 6 belongs to Jenson now from an early age he has been obsessed with the country of Ukraine, he has supported

the football team over our own has pinned the national flag of this Country and has just loved everything about them. We had planned to take a trip there before the devastating destruction and we plan to visit as soon as it's safe to do so but in is loving nature for this country he has decorated his tree to be their colours. He has blue and yellow tinsel and baubles; he has the guiding star that leads the way to hope. He prays with is tree for peace in this country and always has hope that peace comes quickly so we can go see a great place! He has blue lights and places his little prayers on the tree and always hopes that the guidance of this glowing star spreads to every person in every nation for the grace and mercy of God. I bring to you a glowing hope in tree 6!

Tree 7 (we are almost there!) is again not quite ready it's the tree in my hallway, it's a traditional tree with many colours each of the children bring their colour to the tree it has again a star for hope and peace it has every colour you can think of and represents the diversity of my family bringing all our quirks and hopes together. It's a sign of unity that many personalities can work together.



Tree 8 belongs to my office space a smaller tree than the rest and it's just to bring a little bit of light to anyone who may visit, in pastoral needs and guidance, the tree gets payers placed on it by anyone who visits at the end of the season i take all these prayers and give them to God, no burden is left to the person who wrote it, God takes all these burdens and relieves us of our aches. I can't share a pic of this tree as it's a private moment from those in need to be in a safe space with God. But it's a truly beautiful thing because it is raw in emotion and true in authenticity.

Along with the 8 trees, we also have a tree arch that stands central as we enter the house; it arches over the stairway and is a wonder of light and colour, I do not usually like the colour red but this year as the new house has an incredible red hallway I've embraced the change and fully involved the colour as you can see in the picture it's been a success with a beauty of lights and bows it's an archway into a true Christmas experience!

As I began by saying many people dislike Christmas, but we as a family love it, we can embrace traditions of old times and bring in newness and light. To spread the joy of the birth of the saviour and offer prayers and hope to more than just our household. Growing up I didn't have a good Christmas at all and with no tree some years and only an orange as a gift, I've promised myself that my children will only experience good, I have let them be expressive in their trees, staying true to their personalities, and allowing them to experience Jesus in their own ways it has been a real joy to see them all flourish in Christmas kindness and prayers, with receiving only 1 gift from Santa means that they can appreciate the Christmas experience. Staying humble at this time of year is key to helping the wider community, many families will go without this Christmas so when you send your children or grandchildren into the world with many gifts from Santa remember that some children will only receive 1 gift, I get mine many gifts but only 1 special one comes from Santa so when they go back to school they can share with humility that Santa brought a special gift instead of 30, meaning that those children who also got 1 from Santa feel blessed and cherished. Merry Christmas church family from all of mine, blessings and prayers will be said for each of you xx—Ellise



## St James' Coffee Morning

Thanks to all who volunteered at and attended our recent coffee morning (pictured), together, we managed to raise over £400 for church funds— a fantastic result, well done everyone!



**St Stephen's**  
CE Primary School

John 13:34 'Love one another, as I have loved you'



# 3 SUNFLOWERS *for Mrs Smith*



*One looks to the past* 

We honour and cherish the memories, love, and legacy of Mrs Smith, acknowledging the beauty of her life and the immense impact she had on each and every one of us here at St Stephen's.

*One looks to the present* 

We acknowledge the pain of loss at this time and that our pain and tears reflect how deeply Mrs Smith was loved by us all.

*One looks to the future* 

We are reminded of hope and the promise of rediscovering joy and purpose, as we take steps to move forward together as a St Stephen's family.

On behalf of our whole school family, I want to express our heartfelt thanks for the incredible outpouring of love and support this week. Your kindness, messages, and gestures have meant so much to each one of us during this difficult time. Please be assured that every email, card, and message will be carefully gathered and shared with Mrs Smith's husband and daughters when the time is right. Your compassion is a reflection of the care within our school family. Thank you for standing together with us.

*Mrs Denney and the team at St Stephen's*

*Heavenly Father,*

We pray for Mr Smith, Ella and Millie, and for all who loved and cherished Mrs Smith. Lord, wrap them in Your comfort and give them strength for each day ahead. May peace that surpasses understanding fill their hearts. Help them to feel surrounded by love and supported by our prayers. We give thanks for the joy and light Mrs Smith brought into our lives, may her memory inspire kindness, care and hope always.

*Amen*

We will find a special way to honour Mrs Smith's memory as a school community in the future, but for now we want to give her family the time and space they need and allow the funeral to take place. *Thank you*

# Yoga Timetable - St James Church Centre, Walshaw

## MONDAY

**PREGNANCY YOGA: 18:15 -  
19:45**

**YOGA FOR BEGINNERS: 20:00 -  
21:00**

## SATURDAY

**TRADITIONAL YOGA FLOW: 07:00  
CORE STRENGTH FLOW: 08:10 - 09:10**

## TUESDAY

**BEGINNER'S ADVANCED: 18:45 -  
19:45**

**CORE STRENGTH FLOW: 20:00 -  
21:00**

## SUNDAY

**MONTHLY YIN AND  
RESTORATIVE CLASSES**



St. Stephen's Church, Elton  
Stephen St/ Bolton Rd  
BLS 2PU

# Christmas Tree Festival

Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> November 11am-3pm  
Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> November 11am-3pm

Admission £2 (children free)  
(price includes programme)

- ★ Christmas Cafe ★
- ★ Various Stalls ★ Raffle ★
- ★ Christmas Crafts ★

and a fabulous display of real  
Christmas Trees

**YCW**  
*Young Christian Workers*

# Christmas Dinner

WEDNESDAY 24<sup>th</sup> Dec -  
Christmas meal delivery service only

THURSDAY 25<sup>th</sup> Dec -  
Delivery service or Take-away/sit-down meal  
From 1:00pm - 3:00pm at Bury Parish Church Hall,  
The Rock

If you or someone you know would like to  
order a meal, please contact  
**07855 306 074**

LAST ORDER DATE FOR MEAL DELIVERIES - 19<sup>th</sup> DEC  
There is NO CHARGE for this meal

## Church Shop

Chris McKenna reports that she has made £50 so far from donated items given for All Saints— this is a fantastic start, and shows how much can be achieved through teamwork. Thanks to Chris for her hard work and for all who have donated. If you have any quality second-hand items that could be sold to support the work of the church, please do bring them in. Packaging is also needed, so if anyone who places a lot of orders online could donate their packaging it would be very gratefully received!

## Ramsbottom Concert Orchestra

On the 13th of November All Saints played host once again to the Ramsbottom Concert Orchestra and the Andantino Singers, who treated the audience to a musical world tour, taking in pieces written from a wide variety of diverse countries. As you can see from the picture (right) the event was well attended and very much enjoyed by all. We hope to welcome the orchestra and singers back soon. Thanks to Barry and all involved for organising another enjoyable evening.



**COMMUNITY  
DAILY  
MARKETPLACE**



STUDY GROUP

## The Gospel According to Mark

An Overview

Mondays 7pm St  
Stephen's Church

## Service Sheets

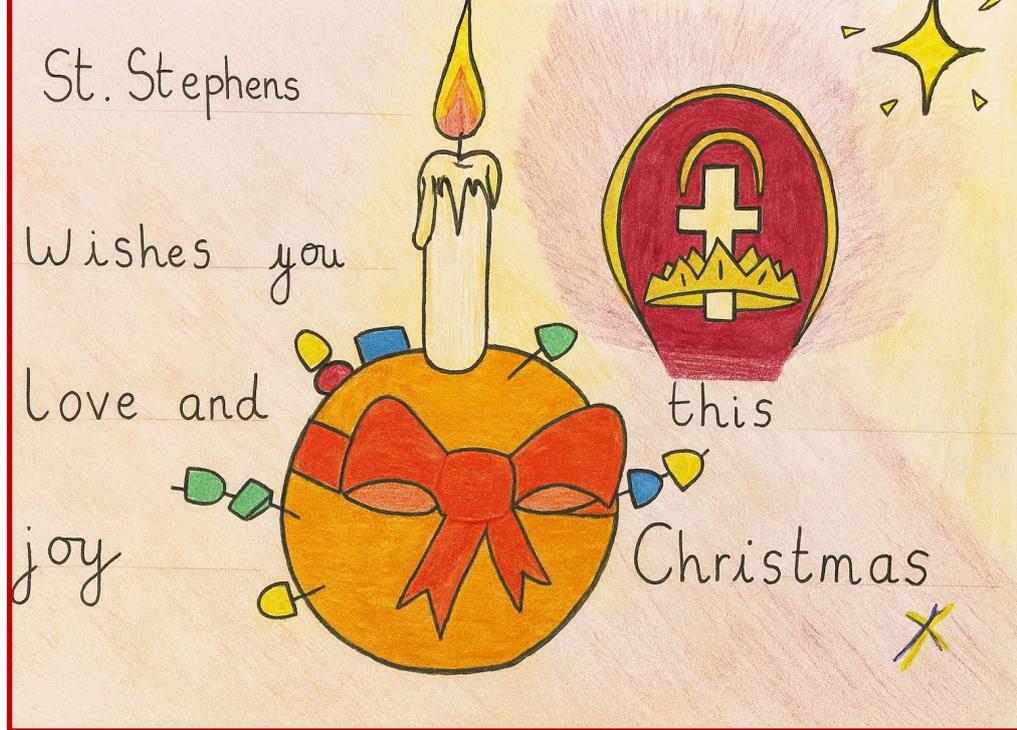
We are gradually printing new service sheets for all three churches featuring updated liturgy, new church logos, QR codes, websites, and other necessary updates. Thanks to all who have worked so hard on getting this done, particularly Jane, Lynne and Ellise— it has been quite a job!

## New Church Logos

As you may have noticed, our new church logos are displayed on the front cover of the magazine. These logos will be used on the new service sheets, on the website, and on social media. Thanks to all those who have given feedback during the design process.

# Christmas Card Competition

Well done to all the children of St Stephen's School who entered our annual Christmas Card competition which is organised in partnership with Bolton Road Methodist Church. We hand deliver Christmas cards to the streets of the parish, to wish local people merry Christmas and advertise our Christmas services and events. Every year, the children of St Stephen's provide our cover image. All of the entries were wonderful, and it was very hard to choose our winner, right, by Noah, and our two runners up, below, by Ariana and Fatima. Rev. Ellise attended St Stephen's recently to make sure prizes found their way to the worthy winners. Well done to all the children who participated.



**MERRY**  
*Christmas*

**& HAPPY NEW YEAR**

**JOIN US FOR A FREE EVENT**



## Christmas Cracker Event

Join us for a festive celebration at the **Bradlesholme Methodist Church**, in collaboration with **All Saints CofE Church**. This joyful Christmas event promises to deliver fun and excitement for the entire family!

### Event Details

- **Date:** December 20th
- **Time:** 3:00 PM to 5:00 PM
- **Location:** Bradlesholme Methodist Church

### What to Expect

- **Free Food:** Delight in a variety of delicious festive treats available for all attendees.
- **Games:** Engage in fun-filled games that promise laughter and enjoyment for all ages.
- **Music:** Enjoy lively music that will keep the festive spirit alive and fill the air with joy.
- **Craft:** create a Christingle and your very own party hat.
- **Santa's Visit:** Don't miss the chance to meet Santa, who will be spreading Christmas cheer and listening to Christmas wishes!

### Family Fun for Everyone

This event is designed to bring people together and celebrate the joy of the season. Whether you're bringing friends, family, or coming alone, there's something for everyone to enjoy.

We hope to see you there for an afternoon of wonderful holiday fun and community spirit!

**Also on Eventbrite:** Check out our event listing on Eventbrite for more details and to RSVP!

FAITH, FRIENDS, FUN



# St Stephen's Sunday School

## All Welcome

Weekly during the main service

Speak to Leanne or the Vicar

FAMILY FRIENDLY



# CHRISTINGLE 2025 CHURCH SERVICE

We have two Christingle services this year, **St Stephen's** is on **Wednesday 17th December** at **6pm**, and **All Saints** is on **Christmas Eve** at **4pm**. The All Saints Christingle has a web page here: <https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/christingle/all-saints-cofe-church-parish-kirklees-valley-0>

STUDY GROUP

# The Book of Samuel

POWER,  
AUTHORITY, AND  
LEADERSHIP IN  
THE HEBREW  
BIBLE

Weds 1.30pm All  
Saints

## WOOLFOLD MORRIS TROUPE

Now recruiting for  
2026  
3 years and above  
Full Training Given



Family Troupe



PEPS



Practice Thursday  
St James Church, Bury  
6.30pm-9pm  
contact Sarah Greenlees  
07772956681 or Facebook



# Stuart's Recipe Corner

## Classic Christmas Pudding

### Ingredients

50g blanched almonds, 2 large Bramley cooking apples, 200g box candied peel, 1 whole nutmeg, 1kg raisins, 140g plain flour, 100g soft fresh white breadcrumbs, 100g light muscovado sugar, 3 large eggs, 2 TBSP Brandy/Cognac 250g pack butter straight from the fridge. **For the brandy and ginger butter:** 175g unsalted softened butter, grated zest of half an orange, 5 TBSP icing sugar, 4 TBSP Brandy/Cognac 2 pieces finely chopped stem ginger

### Method

1. Prepare ingredients for the pudding: chop almonds coarsely; peel, core, and chop cooking apples; chop candied peel; grate 3/4 of the nutmeg.
2. Mix almonds, apples, candied peel, nutmeg, raisins, flour, breadcrumbs, muscovado sugar, eggs, and 2TBSP Brandy/Cognac in a large bowl.
3. Grate 1/4 of the butter into the bowl, stir together. Repeat until all butter is grated and stirred in (takes 3-4 mins).
4. Generously butter two 1.2L bowls and put circle of baking parchment in the bottom of each. Pack in the pudding mixture. Cover with a double layer of baking parchment (allowing for expansion), then tie with string. Trim off excess paper.
5. Stand each bowl on a sheet of foil and fold edges upward. Put another sheet of foil over the top and fold the edges downward to make a double layered package. Tie with more string.
6. Boil or steam puddings for 8 hours, topping off with water as necessary. Remove from pans and leave to cool overnight. Discard wrappings and wrap in fresh baking parchment, foil, and string. Store in cool, dry place until Christmas.
7. Grate the butter with orange zest and icing sugar. Gradually beat in brandy/cognac and chopped stem ginger. Put in small bowl and leave in fridge to set.
8. On Christmas day boil/steam the pudding for 1hr. To flame, warm 3-4 TBSP of brandy butter in a pan, pour on the pudding, and set alight.



John 13:34 'Love one another, as I have loved you'

**St Stephen's**  
CE Primary School

**funtime** TUMBLE TIME  
Activities for kids

Come and join the fun at St. Stephen's with Funtime

**Who?** Children aged 3 - 4 years  
**Where?** St. Stephen's CE Primary School, Colville Drive, Bury. BL8 2DX.  
**When?** Friday 5th December 9:00am - 9:45am  
Friday 12th December 9:00am - 9:45am

To book into these **Free** sessions, please contact school on 0161 764 1132.  
We can't wait to see you!

## Parish Information

### Pastoral Teams

Visiting those who are infirm and providing home communion. If you would like to receive home communion, or join the team please contact the Vicar or:

#### **All Saints**

Mark Cresswell

Lynne Williamson

#### **St James**

Ann Redding

#### **St Stephens**

Celia Dutton

### Study Group



### Regular Events/Groups

**Mon: Community Café** Brandlesholme Community Ctr. 11am-1pm, **Ladies Club** 2nd Mon of Month 2.00pm St Francis House

**Tues:** First of month **Christian Meditation** St Stephen's Church 2-3:15pm

**Wed:** St Stephen's (Centenary Room) **Midweekers** 1.30pm weekly, **Mothers' Union** 1st Weds of the Month 7.00pm, **Games evening** 7.30 pm 2nd Weds of the month, **Prayer meeting** 7pm 4th Weds of the month.

**Thurs: Prayer Group** 4th Thurs of month All Saints Church 10am **Arts and Crafts** Group weekly 2pm St Francis House

### Children's Activities and Uniformed Organisations

**Messy Church:** 1st Sunday of the month 10am St Francis House **Junior Church:** Third Sunday of the month St Stephen's Church 10am

**Beavers:** Mon 5.45 **Cubs/Scouts:** Mon 6:45 St Stephen's School **Rainbows:** Wednesdays 5.45pm St Stephen's School

Thursdays 4.30 St James' Centre **Brownies:** Wednesdays 6.45pm St Stephen's School

**Drama Group:** Thursdays 7pm at St Stephen's School



# Dec Rota

			Pres S. Ec-	Preach E.	Deacon			
7.12.25	AS	11	cleston	O'Hara		Colour Purple	Read-ings	Isaiah 11:1-10
	SS	9	S. Eccleston		E. O'Hara			Matt 3:1-12
	SJ	11	S. Stonestreet					
14.12.2	AS	11	J Partridge			Colour Purple	Read-ings	Isaiah 35:1-10
	SS	9	S. Ec- cleston	E. O'Hara				Matt 11:2-11
	SJ	11	S. Eccleston		E. O'Hara			Carol service
17.12.2	SS	6	O'Hara					Christingle
21.12.2	AS	11	D. Ak- ker			Colour Purple	Read-ings	Isaiah 7:10-16
	SS	9	S. Eccleston		E. O'Hara			Matt 1:18-25
	SJ	11	S. Eccleston		E. O'Hara			
24.12.2	AS	16	S. Eccleston		E. O'Hara	Colour Gold or white (for midnight mass)	Read-ings	Isaiah 52:7-10
	SS	16	P. Sanderson					John 1:1-14
	SJ	23.3	S. Eccleston		E. O'Hara			Midnight mass
			N/A					
25.12.2	AS	11	S. Eccleston		E. O'Hara	Colour Gold or white	Read-ings	Isaiah 9:2-7
	SS	9	S. Ec- cleston	E. O'Hara				Luke 2:1-20
	SJ		N/A					
28.12.2	AS	11	G. Joyce			Colour White	Read-ings	Isaiah 63:7-9
	SS	9	S. Ec- cleston	E. O'Hara				Matt 2:13-23
	SJ	11	S. Eccleston		E. O'Hara			

# January Rota

04.01.26		Pres	Preach	Deacon	Colour	Gold/White
	AS	11 S. Eccleston			Readings	Isaiah 60:1-6 Matthew 2:1-12
	SS	9 S. Eccleston		E. O'Hara		
	SJ	11 E. O'Hara				
11.01.26	AS	11 J. Partridge			Colour	Gold/White
	SS	9 S. Eccleston E. O'Hara 6 C. Dutton			Readings	Isaiah 42:1-9 Matthew 3:13-end Evensong
	SJ	11 S. Eccleston		E. O'Hara		
18.01.26	AS	11 D. Akker			Colour	White
	SS	9 S. Eccleston		E. O'Hara	Readings	Isaiah 49:1-7 John 1:29-42
	SJ	11 S. Eccleston F. Nuttall		E. O'Hara		
25.01.26	AS	11 S. Eccleston E. O'Hara			Colour	White
	SS	9 S. Eccleston		E. O'Hara	Readings	Acts 9:1-22 Matthew 19:27-end
	SJ	11 S. Stonestreet				

## **Contact Details**

**Vicar: Fr. S. Eccleston O.P. brseclestonop@gmail.com 07851121800**

### **All Saints' Contacts:**

Warden: Sue Stonestreet 07763 147598

Art and Craft Group: Joyce Abraham 0161 764 2247

Bible Study: The Vicar

Pastoral Visiting: Mark Cresswell 07521087791 Lynne Williamson 07722 624847

Choir: Stuart McArthur 07821 287018

Messy Church: Deirdre Watson 07733 008078

Prayer Group: Joyce Abraham 0161 764 2247 Lynne Williamson 07722 624847

St Francis' Ladies Club: Lynne Williamson 07722 624847

Room Hire at All Saints/St Francis: [allsaints.kirkleesvalley@gmail.com](mailto:allsaints.kirkleesvalley@gmail.com) 07368 460378

Website: [www.achurchnearyou.com/church/16034/](http://www.achurchnearyou.com/church/16034/)

[www.allsaintsandstjames.com](http://www.allsaintsandstjames.com)

<https://www.facebook.com/allsaintsbury>

### **St James' Contacts:**

Mothers' Union Ann Redding 0781 112 9355

Room hire at St James' Centre Ann Redding 0781 112 9355

Website: [www.achurchnearyou.com/church/16046/](http://www.achurchnearyou.com/church/16046/)

[www.allsaintsandstjames.com](http://www.allsaintsandstjames.com)

### **St Stephen's Contacts:**

Warden: Carol Heyes 07354902873

Email: [ststephenelton@gmail.com](mailto:ststephenelton@gmail.com)

News sheet/rotas: Tony Parsons [tony.parsons67@gmail.com](mailto:tony.parsons67@gmail.com)

Christian Meditation: David McKenna 07442 534860

Reader Emeritus: Celia Dutton 0161 764 0583

Room Hire: Keith Hughes [hughes\\_k4@sky.com](mailto:hughes_k4@sky.com)

Website [www.ststephenelton.com](http://www.ststephenelton.com)

<https://www.facebook.com/people/St-Stephens-Church-Elton/61575109828589/>