

**Parish of Cirencester with
Watermoor and Chesterton**

Parish Life Magazine



£1

December 2025/January 2026

Parish of Cirencester with Watermoor and St Lawrence (Chesterton)

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A Christmas Reflection for Our Parish



As Christmas approaches once again, we return to a story we know well, yet which never loses its wonder. In the quiet of a Bethlehem night, God came among us, not with splendour or spectacle, but in the fragile form of a newborn child. Jesus entered the world in a place far from perfect: a dim, drafty stable, chosen by God to reveal His nearness to all.

This beginning reminds us that God meets us where we truly are, not where we think we should be. The stable shows that no home, no heart, no situation is too humble or complicated for Christ's light to enter. He brings hope not to the polished and prepared, but to the weary and the waiting.

The angels' message to the shepherds - ordinary people at work in the night - shows that the good news of Jesus is for everyone. Their joyful rush to the manger invites us to approach Christmas with the same openness and wonder. For the birth of Christ is not just a lovely story; it is God's love breaking into our world.

Christmas also speaks gently to those for whom this season is difficult. Many feel the ache of loss or the weight of worry. The God who came as a child knows our fragility and understands our struggles. Emmanuel, *God with us*, is not a distant promise but a living truth: He walks with us, shares our burdens, and brings light to our shadows.

As a parish family, this season invites us to embody Christ's love through kindness, hospitality, and care for one another. Small acts shine brightly: a friendly conversation, a helping hand, a quiet prayer for someone in need. These simple gifts reflect the heart of Christmas more than any decoration or busy schedule.

May this holy season renew our hope, draw us closer together, and open our hearts to the One who comes so gently and faithfully.

May the peace of Christ fill your home and guide your steps in the year ahead.

AI generated

A Short Reflection On Advent & Psalm 43



Since taking on the role of Branch Contact for the MU in Cirencester, I now have the privilege of writing a small piece for our Parish Magazine. In this space I'd like to share with you a reflection as we journey through Advent. I am also Sacristan and a server, these roles are important to me, for so many reasons, a couple of which are I have a superb “ ring side seat “ and I am able to take an active part in the liturgy that takes place in our wonderful Parish Church.

Advent is at its core a Christian season of preparation and anticipation. We make ready and we wait, for the birth of Jesus on Christmas Day, but also His eventual second coming. Lasting 4 weeks, it marks the beginning of a new church year. Advent involves themes of hope and waiting with patient expectation. This 4 week period is a time to look forward to His birth, but also to reflect on His life and teachings. In preparation for Christmas, we pray, we reflect and if we choose, we have a period when we can challenge ourselves by examining our own beliefs and how we are living them each day.

When serving on a Sunday, 10 minutes or so before the start of the service we pray Psalm 43. We say this beautiful psalm in preparation, where we anticipate being in the presence of the Holy Spirit and the liturgy that is going to take place. This preparation before a service marries up unequivocally with Advent. The shared themes are ones of hope, peace, love and joy in the knowledge of God's presence. The psalmist pleads with God to send out His light and His truth, this echoes the Advent theme of Christ as the light of the world. God's faithfulness is abundant, we know this because of His past acts of salvation and deliverance. God's ultimate act of faithfulness is the redemptive work

of Jesus Christ. We remember the historical birth of Jesus in Bethlehem, but equally important is that Advent is a time to look forward to the promised future return of Jesus Christ in glory. Psalm 43 acknowledges, our struggles, it expresses the difficulties in our own lives and in the wider world, however it grounds our prayers in the knowledge that God is present and active even in suffering. The connected themes are ones of restoration, the struggle of waiting in the midst of suffering, but the ultimate hope and joy that is found in God's light and truth. We live in a broken world, both the psalm and Advent acknowledge this reality. The psalmist prays for deliverance from the deceitful and unjust, while Advent accedes to the pain of living in a reality that is not yet the new creation promised by God.

Pauline Skinner

MU dates for December :

Wednesday 3rd - 2.30pm

“Christmas Theme”

TEA & MINCE PIES

Friday 5th - 9am - 12noon

PARISH CHURCH - “CHRISTMAS CAKES STALL”

Thursday 12th - 10.30am: Corporate Communion





As we approach Advent, the opportunity to meet together to pray and study is once again being offered.

Advent Groups...

The opportunity to participate in discussion groups during this season of ADVENT.

- Luke is leading a video course at St Lawrence on **Fridays** at 9.30 starting on Friday 28th Nov. “Do Not be afraid”, exploring the Advent themes of waiting with Author Rachel Mann.
- The Pub group starts on **Monday** 24th Nov in the Forum on the subject of “We are the People of..”. 7.30p.m. for 4 weeks.
- The Group at Mary Chapman’s house will follow the same course as above but on **Wednesday** afternoons at 2.30 starting on Wednesday 26th Nov. A 4 week course ending before Christmas week.

If you are interested in joining one of the groups, let Rev Luke know if you’re joining his, and let Rev Paul know if you’re joining either of the others. The group at Mary’s house is limited so let him know early on.

Rev Luke 07356 031011

Rev Paul 07748 846164

SPECTACULAR WINTER CONCERT

IN AID OF LONGFIELD HOSPICE

THE BRILLIANT

WILLSHIRE PIANO DUO

FROM SOUTH WALES,

THE GWALIA SINGERS

WITH

CIRENCESTER MALE VOICE CHOIR

AND GUEST SOPRANO

HANNAH HUGHES

**CIRENCESTER PARISH CHURCH
SATURDAY, DECEMBER 6, AT 7PM
DOORS OPEN AT 6.30PM**

**TICKETS £12 - UNDER 16s FREE
AVAILABLE FROM BINGHAM HOUSE, 1 DYER STREET
ONLINE AT CIRENCESTERMVC.CO.UK
AND ON THE DOOR**

Christmas is a Challenge: A meditation

Lord, I do like a challenge. Or at least that's what I tell myself. The truth is that I like a challenge that's within my range, as long as it's within my capabilities and doesn't stretch me too much, just enough to give me a bit of excitement and a bit of satisfaction.

So what do I make of your challenge of Christmas? Well, I am full of admiration of the way in which Mary responded to the challenge to be the mother of your son, Jesus.

The way in which she showed that first step in meeting your challenge is by trust and obedience.

‘May it be as you have said,’ was her first response to your challenge, without any thought of the shame and scandal that would follow when people realised the pregnancy of an unmarried woman - or the punishment of being expelled from and disowned by her family and friends.

And what about poor Joseph to whom she was engaged and for whom she was ‘saving herself?’ When she responded to the challenge she must have been aware what hurt it would cause to others, but her priority was obedience to you.

Lord, how I envy Mary’s trust in you, and how I envy the certainty that she knew the call was from you, and how I envy the sheer willingness of the response.

Lord, I do admire Joseph and his maturity. What a challenge for him in obedience as he takes your word seriously to take the pregnant Mary to be his wife and to trust her story. The strength of his character shines through as he denies his own impulses and even his right to reject her and hears your need of him in caring for Mary and the unborn Jesus. The challenge of Joseph is to my courage to stand not for my rights but for what is right.



Lord, how I admire your trust in the lowly shepherds, who no one else seemed to trust because they were unable to conform to religious demands. You entrusted them with the privilege of being witnesses to the birth of the Saviour and they were obedient. The shepherds at the birth really does challenge my trust in those who are outside my little circle of existence.

And I am challenged by the wise men - the researchers, the scientists, who are willing to look at the evidence and come to find Jesus after a long and honest search, and offer their former lives and talents. I am challenged by the emphasis that it is not what I give to God which matters, so much as how much God has of the whole of me.

Lord I am even challenged by Herod on the way in which I am threatened and envy others and misuse my power which sometimes I pretend I do not have.

Lord I am challenged by the fact that you accepted 'poverty' and not 'possessions' as the context of the birth of Jesus. I now realise that you could only relate to everyone if you took a room at the bottom and not at the top.

I am challenged by the fact that Jesus was born on the move and not where the situation was secure and settled.

Lord continue to challenge me,
beyond my capabilities,
on the birth of a child,
on those beyond my ken,
in the families on the move,
and the places of power,
in the security of my family,
in the traumas of life,
and in the celebrations.

For you I'm here to be recognised as a challenge.
Born as my saviour, to be trusted, worshipped, and obeyed.

Rt Rev Frank P Sargeant : MU Central Chaplain

Christmas Tree Recycling



In Partnership with Just Helping

Collections 10th -13th January
Registration Closes 6th January



Take the hassle out of disposing of your Christmas tree and have Longfield collect it for a voluntary donation. *

You will not only be helping reduce your carbon footprint but also supporting your community hospice providing Hospice at Home care and Wellbeing, Counselling and Bereavement Support for individuals facing a life-limiting condition.



*After costs, over 80% of monies raised will go to Longfield Community Hospice with around 13% going to Just Helping charity and over 5% to other local charities.

just-helping.org.uk/register-tree

Registered Charity Number 298627





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In 2025...

with the help of our volunteers, we recycled 4,100 Christmas Trees - preventing approximately 66,384 kg of co2 from being released into the atmosphere, which is equivalent to...

66,384 kg co2
saved



1.3 Million
cups of tea with milk
being made



24 Homes
of average size
powered for a year



41 Flights
From London to
New York, return



255,000
Miles driven around
the UK

85%

of Longfield Hospice funding is made up from fundraising activity and donations. Without the support from individuals like YOU, we would be unable to deliver our FREE OF CHARGE Hospice care in Gloucestershire.

Consider supporting us this year with a voluntary donation.

Just Helping charity supports volunteers, businesses, and charities to contribute to their community and the environment. The national Christmas Tree collection raises essential funds for charities and communities.

Facing the future

Water is in the news. For some, the absence of clean water has been and remains a problem. Some years ago I visited an African village that proudly



showed off its new well. The excitement and shared gratitude were obvious. The women marvelled at the clean water that came up in the bucket. You could be forgiven for wondering what the fuss was about, unless like them you had previously walked miles each day to collect this essential commodity.

We take so much for granted in our everyday lives. This is especially true of our Christian heritage. We need to acknowledge that the roots of this country are deeply set in Christianity and Christian ideals. It is the bedrock of our culture. Our judiciary, parliamentary, educational and medical systems were all founded on Christian principles. But what of the future? Leaders of other world faiths are puzzled by our reluctance to stand up and be counted, especially in the matter of the Christian faith. So often our national leaders both secular and Christian hide behind political correctness. I have no time for that! Yes other faiths, especially Islam, have made great roads in this country both in terms of buildings and converts especially of the young. They have much to teach us about enthusiasm and commitment. Christians, both practising and nominal, need to consider seriously the place of their faith in the culture of this land. We are called to witness in an increasingly secular, hostile and indifferent society.

As a nation we have lived off the Christian capital of our forebears. The interest on our inheritance is running out. We urgently need new investment. It is up to us to have the faith and the courage to proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord. We have a Gospel to proclaim and it is wonderful good news. How shall people hear that good news? They will hear when we 'look them in the eye' and speak out with courage and confidence the good news of Jesus.

All culture is important. Hopefully we will not have to lose its distinctiveness to realise its value. Taking things for granted can be costly.

Pat Harris

CHRISTMAS



Oh Lord, it's Christmas time again. Give me the grace to keep my sense of humour when I can't find my Christmas card list, a parking place or the pastry cutter.

Keep me sweet when the tree lights tangle and when I lose the end of the Sellotape. Help me find the spirit of Christmas without making a fool of myself or becoming a menace on the road.

Seal my lips when the turkey spits at me from the oven; when I find crumbs under the armchair cushion; When the children and grandchildren begin to sound like a menagerie, and the cat knocks over the tree. Give me the energy to shovel snow, cook, clean, pickup, settle down and find endless 'treasures' momentarily lost!

Help me to give gladly receive graciously; to sing the ancient carols though I often sound like a frog with a sore throat; to take time to enjoy the wonderment in a child's eyes, grandmas gentle memories, snowflakes and copper kettles.

Preserve me from letting the season develop into a commercial carnival, a buying binge on the eating orgy, but let me remember throughout that I'm celebrating the birth of CHRIST, the PRINCE of PEACE, through whom is found the only just and lasting peace.

Pat Harris



CIRENCESTER BAND
PRESENTS

A
CHRISTMAS
CRACKER

PARISH CHURCH, MARKET
PLACE, CIRENCESTER

**FRIDAY 5TH DECEMBER
2025**

IN SUPPORT OF
CIRENCESTER OPPORTUNITY GROUP

- ❄️ FREE ADMISSION
- ❄️ DOORS OPEN: 7PM
- ❄️ CONCERT STARTS: 7:30PM
- ❄️ REFRESHMENTS
- ❄️ RAFFLE



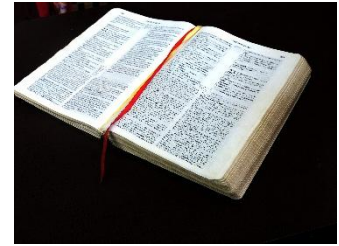
**Cirencester
Opportunity Group**



USE OF THE CHURCH BY THE KIND PERMISSION OF THE CHURCH WARDENS

Musings in Mark - Mark 8:34

Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.



This is the month we celebrate the birth of the Christ child, the month of oohs, and aaahs as we look upon a bonny baby in a rather filthy crib, yet sanitised for our feelings! We get lost in the wonder of it all, singing the carols and perhaps remembering the births of our own children.

Here, the Christ, now a man, asks us about our hearts' desire. What do we want in relationship to him. When we look at the crowds that surround him, we find various concentric circles, those on the edge fascinated by the spectacle, but not wanting to be involved, possibly not even close enough to be healed; then come in a bit and there are those who like to be entertained, perhaps watching the interaction of Jesus and the Sadducees and Pharisees as they try to trap him. Others listen to his teaching and find it thought provoking and fascinating, others want healing and prayers answered. Some watch the disciples as they stand with him, wondering what it's like to be that close, and others feel they are not good enough to walk with the teacher.

The question that Jesus ultimately challenges is with is whether we want to be a disciple, not an onlooker, not a religious follower, not a philosophical debater, but a disciple, defined as a follower or pupil of a teacher, wanting to learn to become like the teacher.

And it's the question he still asks, and it's down to us. Whoever wants..... Do I want to follow and learn of Jesus, becoming like him, or am I content to be a religious churchgoer, a debater of ethics and morals, someone who sits at the edge fascinated by the faith, or get right in there to follow, learn, to change and to be transformed. The way, Jesus says, is to take up our cross, that symbol of our own death, and follow, becoming more like him. As Paul says after many years of following Jesus:

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. Galatians 2:20

Rev Paul

Where is the Baby?

A meditation for Christmas by Janet Blakeman



There was consternation at the Pram service the week before Christmas. We had opened the church door with its impressively large key. We had rung the bell, each taking a turn, to the accompaniment of our little song. We processed up the aisle carrying the Bible, the candle, the cross, and the purple cloth for the table because it was Advent. At the crossing we paused and looked (with exhortations just to look, not touch) at the crib with its serene figures. Then, as we were settling on our chairs ready for the service one mother came up to me and said anxiously, ‘Where's the baby? It's not here! Where's the baby?’

It took me a second or two to realise she meant the baby in the crib. No, the baby was not yet in place, for it was still Advent, a time of waiting and getting ready for Christmas. ‘The Baby will be put there on Christmas Eve’, I assured her, and all was well.

But it was a good question. ‘Where is the baby at Christmas?’ We don’t forget the turkey or the tinsel, the stocking and the stuffing, the cards and the carols. But it is possible in all the fun and excitement and busyness and tiredness to forget the baby.

It is the tradition in our parish church on Christmas Eve to have a service of carols around the Christmas tree. Year by year, patiently prepared by the Sunday school teachers, we have a simple nativity play centred on the birth of Jesus. By 7:00 pm on Christmas Eve, several hundred people of all ages are leaving the church and making their way home, having been delighted to hear again the message of the angels, and in their hearts and minds to have gone even unto Bethlehem and seen this thing which came to pass, and the babe lying in the manger.

John Taylor, the former Bishop of Winchester, in his professional busyness at Christmas found a way of making his own meditation and worship of the Incarnation. He used to write something in verse. He

found it one sure means of recapturing for an incident a child's unique astonishment and an adult's appreciation in depth of:

*Our God contracted to a span
Incomprehensively made man*

The verses are terse, clean and uncluttered and are published in a small book entitled a *Christmas Sequence and Other Poems*. In a 'Christmas Venite' he writes

*I am the mystery, rising surfacing
out of the Seas into these infant eyes
that offer openness only and the un-focusing
search for the un-answering gaze.*

*O recognise
I am the undefeated heart of weakness
Kneel to adore, fall down to pour your praise:
you cannot lie so low as I have always been.*

But is this over all too quickly? There are, as the song goes, twelve days of Christmas, and if we have sung all the carols before the season we shall be asking again, where is the baby?

Perhaps with relief we dismantle the Christmas tree which has been shedding its needles or sometime before Twelfth Night. But I have many years retained a picture in my mind of a tree in a highly polished corridor in a convent in West London. It was past the 6th of January but the tree was still aglow with lights. I asked about it and the answer was: 'We always keep the lights on for the octave of the Epiphany.'

Where is the baby? Don't let's rush away too soon.

*'O may we keep and ponder in our mind
God's wondrous love in saving last mankind*

Each year we need time to hear again the story: preparing and getting ready for Advent, dwelling on the story at Christmas, and saving and extending our meditation during the season of Epiphany. But where is the baby? Some of a poem by David Adam in the his book *The Edge of Glory* will strike a chord in each one of us.

*You are the caller
You are the poor
You are the stranger at my door*

*You are the wanderer
The unfed
You are the homeless
With no bed.*

*You are the man
Driven insane
You are the child
Crying in pain*

*You are the other who comes to me
If I open to another you're born in me.*

Where is the baby? We know in our hearts who needs us and in finding them we shall find him.

*The Revd Janet Blakeman was a curate in the Diocese of Carlisle,
and also a MU member.*



Highlights from the Parochial Church Council (PCC)

The PCC last met on the 15th of October 2025, and the Standing Committee will meet again on the 19th of November 2025 (after submittal of this article) which will be our last meeting for 2025. Canon Graham has returned as Chair of the PCC as part of his phased return to work. Some of the highlights of projects and initiatives under the PCC include:

A Faculty for the restoration and extension of the Garden of Remembrance at Holy Trinity is awaiting our feedback on the suggestions from a Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC) representative. We also need to submit of a Statement of Needs. Once this is complete, the Faculty should go through the final stages of processing by the DAC.

After Cotswold District Council planning permission is obtained, the Notice Board at St John Baptist will be relocated to the external wall of the South Aisle of the church (below the south west window). To accommodate this, the existing bench located in that position will be modified by splitting it into two and refurbishing it to flank the relocated Notice Board. The DAC has already approved these plans as part of the Faculty process for the Churchyard Pathway Project.

We are pleased that the modified St John Baptist Project Faculty after a Public Notice period is awaiting final review and approval by our Diocesan Chancellor. As a reminder, this project is the installation of seven toilets, installation of a servery in the South Aisle, installation of castors on the Scott pews to make them movable more easily and installation of tall storage cupboards on the north and south walls below the tower. In the interim, the project team is working on finalising tender documents and specifications for the project.

New and improved donation card readers have been procured and set up at St John Baptist. As previously mentioned, two of the card readers are stationary (no internal battery), and a third mobile reader is for use during services collections, Tower visits, ticket sales and the like.

Planning for installation of solar panels at St John Baptist continues. This includes arranging for photographs to support our Faculty and planning applications to demonstrate the panels will not be visible from street level once installed.

At St John Baptist we anticipate that refurbishment of the North Clerestory Wall will be the next major project.

The PCC will continue to focus on tracking projects and any issues associated with the Fabric of our churches and efforts to improve our administration and governance, including reviews and updates to policies. Most recently the PCC approved a *Conflict of Interest Policy*, and Finance updated procedures on *Purchasing Limits and Authorisation Levels*. Under safeguarding, Reverend Luke and Aileen Anderson, Churchwarden and Safeguarding Officer, continued a review of our Safeguarding programme. Consequently, they will be updating Parish Safeguarding policies for PCC approval shortly.

On the personnel front, the Parish has advertised for a Children and Family Worker and it is hoped that the position will be filled soon.

We continue to look for an enthusiastic volunteer to take on the vacant role of EcoChurch Lead for our Parish. The role would involve championing and equipping our churches to care for God's creation and chairing a group of volunteers. Additional information on EcoChurch can be found on the Diocese of Gloucester website at <https://gloucester.anglican.org/living-faith/environment/eco-church-in-an-hour/>. You do not necessarily need to be a member of the PCC to take on this role. Please let the Vicar, Associate Vicar, or the Secretary know if you are interested in this role.

The PCC would like to take this opportunity to wish everyone a Happy Christmas, and best wishes and blessings for the New Year.

Mark Dennis, Secretary

Recycle your Christmas Tree

Now is the chance to sign up to dispose of your Christmas Tree in the most eco-friendly way possible and raise money for Longfield Community Hospice.

In return for a voluntary donation, Longfield Hospice's team of volunteers will collect your trees from your home at the end of the festive season and take them to be chipped for chippings to be reused locally, making this the most eco-friendly way to dispose of your tree.



Hoping to collect and recycle more trees than ever this year, Longfield in partnership with Just Helping, is aiming to raise more than £85,000, which could help fund over 1,000 hours of Hospice at Home care, or support free wellbeing, bereavement and counselling services for those in Gloucestershire.

This is a huge operation for Longfield and last year an army of 180 volunteers collected more than 4000 trees over four days from households throughout Gloucestershire.

The scheme is endorsed by Stroud District Council and Gloucester City Council (working with Ubico) is also supporting the scheme.

To arrange collection of your tree, simply visit www.just-helping.org.uk/register-tree and enter your postcode, where you can make a voluntary donation to your local community hospice. Bookings can be made from 14 November until 6th January 2025





STEPHANIE AND MARIANNA KAPSETAKIS

Four hands

Dvorak: Slavonic Dance op. 46 no.6 in D major

Stephanie

Scriabin: Preludes op.11 no. 1-14

Marianna

Schubert/Liszt: Gretchen am spinnrade

Grieg: Lyric Piece op.43 no.6-Spring

Schumann: Romance op.28 no.2 in F sharp major

Schubert/Liszt: Barcarolle "Auf dem Wasser zu singen"

Liszt: Hungarian Rhapsody no.6

Four hands

Dvorak - Slavonic Dance Op. 46 no.1 in C major

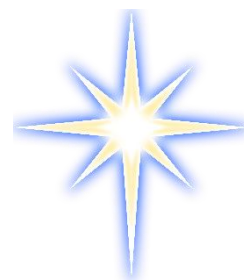
2pm on 2nd December

Retiring collection



Christmas Services

St John Baptist



30th November 6 p.m. Advent Sunday – Darkness to Light

13th December Christmas Tree dressing and dedication 2.30 p.m.

Come and help dress the big tree in church. Punch, mince Pies and Carols

20th December 3 p.m – Christmas Sing a Long – Vicar and Town Crier

21st December 6 p.m. – Nine Lessons and Carols.

Come and join us for our ‘traditional carol service’ partly by candlelight.

23rd December at 10.30 – Shoppers Carols led by Canon Graham

The opportunity to pause in the midst of this busy season and gather together to sing your favourite carols.

Christmas Eve

Midday Said Eucharist

4 p.m. at All Age Crib Service

11.30 p.m. Midnight Mass at PCH

Christmas Day

8 a.m. Book of Common Prayer Communion

10 a.m. All Age Eucharist with Carols

8am & 10am service



Holy Trinity

Dec 14th 6pm HTW Carol Service

Dec 20th 4:30pm Blue Christmas

Dec 21st 10am Nativity service.

Dec 24th 4pm Christingle 1 (esp for younger children)

– 6.00pm Christingle 2

– 23:30pm Midnight Mass

Dec 25 8am & 10am service.



St Lawrence

29th Nov 2-4pm Craft Afternoon

4th Dec 6pm Hope at Christmas Carol Service

14th Dec 10.30am Worship together

– the miracle of Christmas

20th Dec 6pm Service of 9 lessons and carols

25th Dec 10am Holy Communion





Give Food

We've found a new list of items requested by [Cirencester Foodbank](#).
They are...

Angel Delight
Brown Sauce
Cat Food
Chocolate
Coffee
Cold Tinned Meat
Cup-A-Soup
Deodorant
Hot Tinned Meat
Household Cleaner
Instant Coffee
Instant Mashed Potato
Long-Life Juice
Long-Life Milk
Mayonnaise
Men's Deodorant
Sanitary Towels
Snacks (E.G. Crisps, Cereal Bars, Etc)
Sponge Puddings
Tea Bags
Tinned Fruit
Tinned Rice Pudding
Tinned Tomatoes
Toilet Cleaner
Washing Powder
Washing Up Liquid
Women's Deodorant



And finally....

The wish list

Benn retired in the July and was looking forward immensely to pursuing his hobbies and enjoying some tempting walks in the countryside.

Unfortunately, his Scottish wife, Moira, had different ideas. When he shared his wish list for retirement she gave him a withering stare across the breakfast table.

‘You wish.....’ she said in a voice full of meaning. ‘What about me?’

‘You dear?’ Ben asked, feeling an uncomfortable knot begin to form in his stomach.

‘Yes, I have a long wish list,’ Moira went on, ‘and you can help me fulfil it.’ She paused expectantly and when Ben failed to respond, continued: ‘The first thing is that I wish to spend Christmas in Scotland. In Skye, where as you know, I was born. There's a hotel in Portree, the Skye Inn, which is renowned for its Christmases. We'll stay for Hogmanay and maybe even Burns Night.’

‘But that's a month,’ Ben protested. ‘You'll need a whole lot of baggage for all your clothes..... and things. I'll never managed to carry at all.’

‘They have porters at the hotel,’ Moira pointed out, laconically dismissing his justifiable concern. ‘Between then and now there are many things that need doing and you are going to organise it.’

Ben sighed. ‘Very well dear.’ When Moira was in full flow it was best to go with the tide.

‘First the tap drips in the bathroom. It's leaving a stain. You must call a plumber.’

Ben made a mental note.

‘Then there's my car. One of the wiper blades is loose. Contact the garage and ask someone to fix it. Better still you can buy one and change it yourself. And while we're on the subject of cars, I want you to have a word with our neighbour. He keeps blocking mine in and I can't reverse out properly.’

‘Get wiper blades and have words with neighbour.’ Ben murmured to himself.



‘And while you have your toolbox out you can nail down the floorboards on the landing. They creak every time you go to the loo in the night and it wakes me up.’

‘Very well dear.’

‘Now,’ and here Moira glanced around the room, ‘my mother is coming to stay next week and there are things we need to do before she comes. We need to repair those awful torn silk lampshades she gave us which I put out of the way in the spare bedroom. She's bound to notice them, Oh, and hide those five Dresden figurines I took from her flat.’

‘You stole her figurines?’ Ben echoed.

‘I didn't steal them. I liberated them.’ Moyer's eyes flashed dangerously. ‘Besides, I like them.’

‘She steals things,’ Ben whispered under his breath.

‘And you need to buy some of those cheeses she likes and for heaven's sake set them out properly. display them tastefully - not pile them up as you usually do.’

There was a pause. Moira seemed to have reached the end.

‘So what about *my* hobbies?’ Ben ventured.

‘*Your* hobbies?’ she repeated frostily. ‘You are going to take up swimming and lose some weight and then you're going to take me ballroom dancing. You know how much I love ‘Strictly’. And when it's dry outside you can sand and repair the ends of the patio bench.’

‘Patio bench ends. Anything else dear?’

‘Yes. You'll have to buy some new woollen gloves before we go to Portree. Your old ones are full of holes. We need to make a good impression. Dark purple would be a nice colour.’

Later on, Ben made a mental list of all the dozen or so things to do before Christmas. As he prioritised them in reverse number order he began to hum to himself.

‘Twelve, plumbers coming; Eleven, wipers wiping; Ten, boards a-creaking; Nine, ballroom dancing; Eight, shades re-silking, Seven, going to swimming; Six, cheese displaying; Five, stolen things; Four, having words; Three, bench ends; Two, purple gloves and some portorage up in Portree.’

HG



New Year Resolutions

Buoyed up on the prospect of a New Year, we may well have the urge to make a New Year resolution or two. So I ‘googled’ it.....

‘These have become a familiar ritual, offering people a symbolic fresh start as they step into a new calendar year. At their core, resolutions are a declaration of intent, an opportunity to reflect on the past, acknowledge what could be improved, and set meaningful goals for the future. While the tradition can sometimes feel cliché, it persists because it taps into something deeply human: the desire to grow, reset, and redefine oneself.

For many, resolutions focus on personal well-being: exercising more, eating healthier, or cultivating a better work–life balance. Others turn toward emotional and psychological goals, such as practising gratitude, reducing stress, or strengthening relationships. Whatever form they take, the most successful resolutions tend to be specific, realistic, and aligned with personal values rather than external expectations.

The appeal of New Year’s resolutions lies partly in the sense of collective momentum. Knowing that millions around the world are setting goals at the same time can be motivating. Yet, this tradition also comes with common pitfalls. Overly ambitious, vague, or perfection-based resolutions often lead to frustration by February. Understanding this, experts often recommend breaking goals into smaller steps, tracking progress, and treating setbacks as part of the process rather than failures.

Ultimately, New Year’s resolutions serve as a reminder that self-improvement is an ongoing journey. The New Year provides a natural pause - a moment to take stock of one’s life. Whether someone seeks dramatic transformation or small daily improvements, the true value lies in the act of reflection and the willingness to try again.’

What an aspiration! I know any resolution I make will last a day – maybe two at the most! But maybe I should keep trying.....

HG

DATES for DECEMBER 2025 and JANUARY 2026



Weekdays

9:15 – 9:45am	Morning Prayer	St John Baptist
12 – 1pm	Eucharist – Catherine Chapel	St John Baptist

Saturdays

10 – 10:30am	Said Eucharist – Catherine Chapel, Baptist	St John
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Monday, Wednesday & Friday

5 – 6pm	Evening Prayer	St John Baptist
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Weekdays

9am – 10am	Wednesdays Drop In at St Lawrence
10am – 12pm	The Parish Forum Open (except Wednesday)
10am – 12pm	Thursdays Drop In at The Parish Forum

Daily until 11 Dec	Christmas Tree Festival	St John Baptist
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1 Dec, Mon

9:45 – 11am	Little Angels	St John Baptist
5 – 5:30pm	Organ Vespers for Advent	St John Baptist
5:30 – 6:30pm	Vicars Open Office	Parish Forum

2 Dec, Tue

2 – 3pm	Piano Recital - Kapsetaki Twins	St John Baptist
6:30 – 9pm	Bell Ringing	St John Baptist

3 Dec, Wed

9 – 10am	Drop In	St Lawrence
10:30 – 11:30am	Eucharist	St Lawrence
1:10 – 1:50pm	Organ Recital	St John Baptist
7 – 8pm	Eucharist	Holy Trinity

5 Dec, Fri

9:30 – 11am	Advent Group	St Lawrence
3 – 5pm	Cirencester Food Pantry	Parish Hall
7:30 – 9pm	Cirencester Band Christmas Cracker	St John Baptist

6 Dec, Sat

9:30am – 12pm	Mothers' Union Cake Stall in Porch	St John Baptist
10 – 10:30am	Said Eucharist - Catherine Chapel	St John Baptist
7:30 – 9:30pm	Cirencester Male Voice Choir Christmas Concert	St John Baptist

7 Dec, Sun

8 – 9am	Eucharist	Holy Trinity
8 – 9am	Holy Communion BCP - Lady Chapel	St John Baptist
10 – 11:30am	Non-Eucharistic Family Service	Holy Trinity
10 – 11:30am	All Age St Nicholas Eucharist (Toy Service)	St John Baptist
10:30 – 11:30am	Eucharist	St Lawrence
4 – 5pm	Evening Prayer	St John Baptist
4 – 5pm	Restore@4	St Lawrence

8 Dec, Mon

9:45 – 11am	Little Angels	St John Baptist
7:30 – 9pm	Quarter Peal	St John Baptist

9 Dec, Tue

6:30 – 9pm	Bell Ringing	Holy Trinity
7:30 – 9:30pm	Cirencester Singers Christmas Concert	St John Baptist

10 Dec, Wed

9 – 10am	Drop In	St Lawrence
7 – 8pm	Eucharist	Holy Trinity

11 Dec, Thu

9:15 – 10:45am	Seedlings	St Lawrence
12 – 1pm	Mothers' Union Corporate Communion	St John Baptist

12 Dec, Fri

9:30 – 11am	Advent Group	St Lawrence
3 – 5pm	Cirencester Food Pantry	Parish Hall

13 Dec, Sat

10 – 10:30am	Said Eucharist - Catherine Chapel,	St John Baptist
12:30 – 1:30pm	Wedding	St John Baptist
2:30 – 4pm	Christmas Tree Dressing and Dedication	St John Baptist

14 Dec, Sun

8 – 9am	Eucharist	Holy Trinity
8 – 9am	Holy Communion BCP - Lady Chapel	St John Baptist
10 – 11:30am	Eucharist	Holy Trinity
10 – 11:30am	Eucharist	St John Baptist
10:30 – 11:30am	Worship together - The Miracle of Christmas	St Lawrence
6 – 7pm	Carol Service	Holy Trinity

15 Dec, Mon

9:45 – 11am	Little Angels	St John Baptist
5:30 – 6:30pm	Vicars Open Office	Parish Forum

16 Dec, Tue

6:30 – 9pm	Bell Ringing	Holy Trinity
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17 Dec, Wed

9 – 10am	Drop In	St Lawrence
7 – 8pm	Eucharist	Holy Trinity

19 Dec, Fri

9:30 – 11am	Advent Group	St Lawrence
3 – 5pm	Cirencester Food Pantry	Parish Hall

20 Dec, Sat

10 – 10:30am	Said Eucharist - Catherine Chapel,	St John Baptist
3 – 4pm	Christmas Singalong with Vicar and Town Crier	St John Baptist
4 – 5pm	Blue Christmas	Holy Trinity
6 – 7pm	Carol Service	St Lawrence

21 Dec, Sun

8 – 9am	Holy Communion BCP - Lady Chapel	St John Baptist
8 – 9am	Eucharist	Holy Trinity
10 – 11:30am	Nativity Service	Holy Trinity
10 – 11:30am	Eucharist	St John Baptist
10:30 – 11:30am	Eucharist	St Lawrence
4 – 5pm	Restore @4	St Lawrence
6 – 7:15pm	9 Lessons and Carols	St John Baptist

22 Dec, Mon

9:45 – 11am	Little Angels	St John Baptist
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23 Dec, Tue

10:30 – 11:30am Shoppers Carol Service
 6:30 – 9pm Bell Ringing

St John Baptist
 Holy Trinity

24 Dec, Wed

9 – 10am Drop In
 4 – 5pm All Age Crib Service
 4.30 – 5.30pm Christingle Service
 6 – 7pm Christingle Service
 11:30pm – 12:30am Midnight Mass
 11:30pm – 12:30am Midnight Mass

St Lawrence
 St John Baptist
 Holy Trinity
 Holy Trinity
 St John Baptist
 Holy Trinity

25 Dec, Thu

8 – 9am BCP Communion Service
 8 – 9am Eucharist
 10 – 11:30am Family Eucharist with Carols
 10 – 11:30am Christmas Day Service
 10 – 11am Christmas Day Service
 11:30am – 7pm St John Baptist closed

St John Baptist
 Holy Trinity
 St John Baptist
 Holy Trinity
 St Lawrence

26 Dec, Fri

10 – 11am Said Eucharist
 11am – 7pm St John Baptist closed
 3 – 5pm Cirencester Food Pantry

St John Baptist
 Parish Hall

27 Dec, Sat

10 – 10:30am Said Eucharist - Catherine Chapel,
 11am – 7pm St John Baptist closed

St John Baptist

28 Dec, Sun

10:30 – 11:30am Eucharist for whole Parish
 1 – 4pm St John Baptist open 1-4pm

St Lawrence

31 Dec, Wed

9 – 10am Drop In
 7 – 8pm Eucharist
 11:45pm – 12:45am New Year's Eve Service

St Lawrence
 Holy Trinity
 Market Place

1 Jan, Thu

12:45 – 6:45pm St John Baptist closed

**2 Jan, Fri**

3 – 5pm Cirencester Food Pantry

Parish Hall

3 Jan, Sat

10 – 10:30am	Said Eucharist - Catherine Chapel,	St John Baptist
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4 Jan, Sun

8 – 9am	Eucharist	Holy Trinity
8 – 9am	Holy Communion BCP - Lady Chapel	St John Baptist
10 – 11:30am	Non-Eucharistic Family Service	Holy Trinity
10 – 11:30am	All Age Eucharist	St John Baptist
10:30 – 11:30am	Eucharist	St Lawrence
4 – 5pm	Evening Prayer	St John Baptist
4 – 5pm	Restore@4	St Lawrence

5 Jan, Mon

9:45 – 11am	Little Angels	St John Baptist
5 – 5:30pm	Organ Vespers	St John Baptist

6 Jan, Tue

6:30 – 9pm	Bell Ringing	St John Baptist
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7 Jan, Wed

9 – 10am	Drop In	St Lawrence
10:30 – 11:30am	Eucharist	St Lawrence
1:10 – 1:50pm	Organ Recital	St John Baptist
7 – 8pm	Eucharist	Holy Trinity

8 Jan, Thu

9:15 – 10:45am	Seedlings	St Lawrence
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9 Jan, Fri

3 – 5pm	Cirencester Food Pantry	Parish Hall
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10 Jan, Sat

10 – 10:30am	Said Eucharist - Catherine Chapel,	St John Baptist
12 – 1pm	Baptism	Holy Trinity

11 Jan, Sun

Daily until 20 Jan	Organ Exhibition	St John Baptist
8 – 9am	Eucharist	Holy Trinity
8 – 9am	Holy Communion BCP - Lady Chapel	St John Baptist
10 – 11:30am	Eucharis	Holy Trinity
10 – 11:30am	Eucharist	St John Baptist
10:30 – 11:30am	Service of the Word	St Lawrence
3 – 4pm	James Thomas - Nativity Organ Music	St John Baptist
4 – 5pm	Evening Prayer	St John Baptist

12 Jan, Mon		
9:45 – 11am	Little Angels	St John Baptist
5:30 – 6:30pm	Vicars Open Office	Parish Forum
13 Jan, Tue		
6:30 – 9pm	Bell Ringing	Holy Trinity
14 Jan, Wed		
9 – 10am	Drop In	St Lawrence
7 – 8pm	Eucharist	Holy Trinity
15 Jan, Thu		
All day	Organ Exhibition	St John Baptist
16 Jan, Fri		
3 – 5pm	Cirencester Food Pantry	Parish Hall
17 Jan, Sat		
10 – 10:30am	Said Eucharist - Catherine Chapel,	St John Baptist
5 – 6pm	Vivaldi and Mozart Candlelight Experience	St John Baptist
7 – 8pm	Vivaldi and Mozart Candlelight Experience	St John Baptist
18 Jan, Sun		
8 – 9am	Eucharist	Holy Trinity
8 – 9am	Holy Communion BCP - Lady Chapel	St John Baptist
10 – 11:30am	Eucharist	Holy Trinity
10 – 11:30am	Eucharist	St John Baptist
10:30 – 11:30am	Eucharist	St Lawrence
4 – 5pm	Choral Evensong	St John Baptist
4 – 5pm	Restore @4	St Lawrence
19 Jan, Mon		
9:45 – 11am	Little Angels	St John Baptist
5:30 – 6:30pm	Vicars Open Office	Parish Forum
7:30 – 9pm	Quarter Peal	
20 Jan, Tue		
6:30 – 9pm	Bell Ringing	Holy Trinity
21 Jan, Wed		
9 – 10am	Drop In	St Lawrence
7 – 9pm	Full PCC	St Lawrence
7 – 8pm	Eucharist	Holy Trinity

22 Jan, Thu

9:15 – 10:45am	Seedlings	St Lawrence
10:30 – 11:30am	Mothers' Union Corporate Communion	St John Baptist

23 Jan, Fri

3 – 5pm	Cirencester Food Pantry	Parish Hall
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24 Jan, Sat

10 – 10:30am	Said Eucharist - Catherine Chapel,	St John Baptist
12:15 – 1:15pm	Mark Sandon-Williams (Piano) and Sarah Wilby (Flute) Recital	St John Baptist

25 Jan, Sun

8 – 9am	Eucharist	Holy Trinity
8 – 9am	Holy Communion BCP - Lady Chapel	St John Baptist
10 – 11:30am	Eucharist	Holy Trinity
10 – 11:30am	Eucharist	St John Baptist
10 – 11:30am	Eucharist	St John Baptist
10:30 – 11:30am	Eucharist	St Lawrence
4 – 5pm	Evening Worship	

26 Jan, Mon

9:45 – 11am	Little Angels	St John Baptist
5:30 – 6:30pm	Vicars Open Office	Parish Forum

27 Jan, Tue

6:30 – 9pm	Bell Ringing	Holy Trinity
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28 Jan, Wed

9 – 10am	Drop In	St Lawrence
7 – 8pm	Eucharist	Holy Trinity

30 Jan, Fri

3 – 5pm	Cirencester Food Pantry	Parish Hall
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31 Jan, Sat

10 – 10:30am	Said Eucharist - Catherine Chapel,	St John Baptist
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Extracted from Parish Calendar 16/11/2025

Organ Recitals At St John Baptist

Wednesdays at 1.10pm 2025 - 26



Wednesday 1st October
David Price (Portsmouth Cathedral)

Wednesday 5th November
Andrew Parnell (Ely Cathedral)

Wednesday 3rd December
John Wright (Cheltenham)

Wednesday 7th January
James Henderson (Sherborne Abbey)

Wednesday 4th February
Timothy Selman (Lincoln Cathedral)

Wednesday 4th March
Stephen King (Brentwood Cathedral)

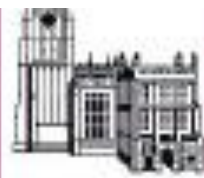
Wednesday 1st April
Pavlos Triantaris (Letchworth)

Wednesday 6th May
Johannes Opfermann (Freiburg)

Wednesday 3rd June
Barney Silverstone (London)

Wednesday 1st July
Mark Brafield (Guildford)

Wednesday 5th August
Charles Wooler (Concert Organist)



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