

The Mustard Seed

The Parish magazine of the church of St James, Brownhills

A Family Following Jesus

www.stjameschurchbrownhills.co.uk



November 2025

*Called by name & empowered by the Holy Spirit to share
God's love with words and actions*



Overwintering reptiles and amphibians

Churchyards, chapel yards and cemeteries are great places to find both amphibians and reptiles. These two groups include frogs, toads, newts, lizards and snakes. The first three can come as a surprise as burial grounds rarely have ponds in them but actually, frogs, toads and newts all spend much of their time on land and really use ponds mainly for breeding and laying spawn. Amphibians (frogs, toads and newts) and reptiles (lizards and snakes) all hibernate, except for some individuals in particularly mild winters, and whilst some amphibians may overwinter within ponds, most find a suitable spot on land.

Both amphibians and reptiles need to overwinter in places that are frost-free and unlikely to flood. They need to be protected from predators and from disturbance. This might be within the soil, perhaps using a crack caused by grave subsidence or beneath tree roots, under stones and grave kerbs, inside a chest tomb with a suitable hole or wide crack to clamber in, between the stones of a wall, under a pile of leaves or in a pile of deadwood. Woodland soil, with shade and leaves can be particularly good.

One of the differences between amphibians and reptiles is in their skin. Amphibians have smooth skin which can look velvety or have a bumpy, warty texture. Their skin is permeable which means they can dry out. When on land, they need to keep moist, so will overwinter in a damp and shady spot, often under leaves or deadwood. Reptiles have scales and impermeable skin so don't need a damp spot and may use compost heaps as well as cracks in walls and monuments. Amphibian skin can also pick up chemicals easily, herbicides, pesticides and fertilizers can be fatal, again making burial grounds, with their lack of chemicals, particularly suitable. N.B. you may see coloured frogs that have picked up the colour of the soil where they overwinter, these can be quite brightly coloured red, orange or yellow.

Try to imagine that you are an amphibian or reptile and take a good look around your local churchyard or cemetery and you'll probably see that its full of good spots to hibernate. You can increase these however. How about making a dead hedge or pile of deadwood in a shady spot? Do you have a compost heap? Try not to empty it after the end of October in case its in use for overwintering. Tussocks of coarse grass and grassland plants like hogweed, particularly when next to a wall are favoured by slow worms, probably the most common reptile found in burial grounds. Shrubs and scrub often offer suitable nooks and crannies at their base.

By November its likely that amphibians and reptiles will be tucked safely away, although the timing does depend on the temperature in a particular year, but it's nice to know that they might be there awaiting the warmer weather of spring.

Harriet Carty, *Diocesan Churchyard Environmental Advisor*, harriet@cfga.org.uk,

New Clothes



Apart from my day off and some days on annual leave, I tend to wear very similar clothes every day. I can't claim to have much fashion or 'dress sense'. Yet, believe it or not, years ago I was even worse. I hate getting rid of things – especially clothes to which I am attached. They feel like old friends. That's why I don't have too many clothes and tend to have things which have a timeless/classic feel about them. For a party, for example, I don't mind wearing a dress I've worn many times in the past.

As well as the outer clothing, our hearts and minds have an inner clothing. When you come into a relationship with God through Jesus, the old clothes have to go and you need a new set of clothes for your heart and mind.

In Proverbs 24:15–22 we find some really sound advice about our inner clothing. We are taught there that we're to control our heart and mind about how we view other people. Have you been wronged or hurt in some way by someone and then found out that they got into trouble? This passage warns us against thinking that they are getting what they deserve and rejoicing over their problems: 'Do not gloat when your enemies fall; when they stumble, do not let your heart rejoice, or the LORD will see and disapprove' (vv.17–18a).

It is so easy to gloat when those who have been causing us problems and opposing us mess up and fall. It is rather tempting to enjoy the moment. But this is the wrong response. Watch your heart and resist these thoughts.

As Joyce Meyer writes, 'It takes a lot of "heart work" for us not to be at least a little bit glad to see that person get what is coming to [them]... We should always remember that "hurting people hurt people". Those who hurt us are usually hurting within themselves, and their pain may be so strong that they are not even aware they are hurting us.'

Whenever we experience thoughts of gloating, we can pray: Lord, forgive us for the times when we have gloated, and help us to resist the temptation to do so. Help me to control my heart and my mind with the help of your Holy Spirit'.

I'd also like to highlight one more passage on this theme of 'new clothes', which we find in the New Testament – Colossians 3:1–4:1. This is all about us 'Living as Those Made Alive in Christ'.

Verses 12-17 say: 'Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him'.

What truly beautiful words that speak of truly beautiful 'clothing'. But how can we clothe our heart and mind with love? Well as a Christian, you are 'in Christ'. You are united with him in his death and resurrection. Therefore, Paul can write that 'you died' (3:3). And he can also write, 'you have been raised with Christ... your life is now hidden with Christ in God' (vv.1,3). In the future, 'When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory' (v.4). Because of all that Jesus has done for you and made possible, you need to re-clothe your heart and mind.

Right action begins with right thinking. You can now live this resurrection life, made possible by Jesus, Paul writes: 'Set your hearts on things above... Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things' (vv.1-2).

This is not easy because you are surrounded by 'earthly things' (v.2) and temptations. Take radical action. Paul writes, 'That means killing off everything connected with that way of death: sexual promiscuity, impurity, lust, doing whatever you feel like whenever you feel like it, and grabbing whatever attracts your fancy' (v.5, MSG). This is what we used to do before we were Christians.

'Strip off' the old clothes (v.9, AMP). You must 'rid yourselves' (v.8) of the bad stuff: 'anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on ['clothed yourselves with', AMP] the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator' (vv.8-10).

Put on the new clothes. You are one of God's chosen people and therefore, you are called to live as such. This means a radical change of your position in the world. Don't be passive; be active. Instead of the bad stuff, you are called to clothe yourself with 'compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience' (v.12).

In addition, we need to change our reaction to others (vv.13-15). Jesus lives in every Christian, regardless of background. In Christ there is no racial barrier ('no Greek or Jew'), no religious barrier ('circumcised or uncircumcised'), no national barrier ('barbarian, Scythian') and no class barrier ('slave or free') but 'Christ is all, and in all' (v.11).

Paul goes on, 'bear with each other' (v.13). In the world, if someone lets you down, that is often the end of the relationship. But you are to 'forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you' (v.13).

This kind of forgiveness is a uniquely Christian virtue. Others may forgive, but only Christians have such a solid basis for forgiveness. As C.S. Lewis says, 'To be a Christian means to forgive the inexcusable because God has forgiven the inexcusable in you.'

One word sums up your new set of clothes: 'love'. Paul writes, 'And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity' (v.14). Love is not just an emotion; it is an action. It is something you 'put on'. As you put on your physical clothes, so you are to put on love.

This is the beauty of the Christian community – Christ brings about a radical change in your relationships. The way Christians relate is very different from the world and should be so attractive. How is it possible? You must set your heart and mind in the right place and, as Paul goes on to write, 'Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace' (v.15).

God's peace acts like a referee in your heart – telling you what is in and what is out. One of the questions you should ask about any decision is: 'Do I sense God's peace about what I am about to do?'

Be constantly guided by 'the word of Christ' (v.16). Paul says, 'Let the word of Christ – the message – have the run of the house. Give it plenty of room in your lives. Instruct and direct one another using good common sense. And sing, sing your hearts out to God!' (v.16, MSG).

This kind of community will be centred on the worship of God and listening to the word of Christ in the Scriptures. It will be a community of love, 'sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord' (v.22). It will also be one of hard work. Whether you are an employer or an employee, a student or a volunteer, you are serving Christ. Do your job well and with a good attitude in your heart and mind: 'Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord... It is the Lord Christ you are serving' (vv.23–24).

At St James', I pray we'll each be fully aware each week of our lives that we have access to these wonderful clothes because of Jesus: compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. And may we rely on His Holy Spirit to enable us to live a life filled with these qualities.

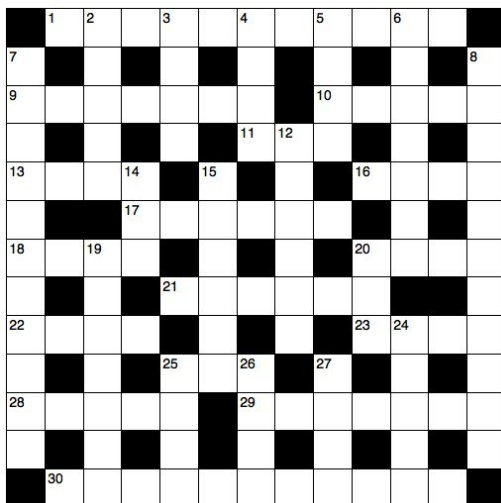
With this calling in mind, you may find the following prayer really helpful to use:

God be in my head, and in my understanding;
God be in my eyes, and in my looking;
God be in my mouth, and in my speaking;
God be in my heart, and in my thinking;
God be at my end, and at my departing (*Sarum Missal*).

With love and many prayers,

Rev'd Gayle

November



Crossword

Across

- 1 The sixth disciple (Matthew 10:3) (11)
- 9 'And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the — — ' (Matthew 6:13) (4,3)
- 10 Love intensely (Song of Songs 1:4) (5)
- 11 From Mt Carmel to Jezreel, Elijah — all the way (1 Kings 18:46) (3)
- 13 One of the Midianite leaders who was captured and killed after Gideon's victory in the valley near Moreh (Judges 7:25) (4)
- 16 Metallic element (4)
- 17 At line (anag.) (6)
- 18 'Cursed is everyone who is — on a tree' (Galatians 3:13) (4)
- 20 Where Samson killed a thousand Philistines with a donkey's jawbone (Judges 15:14) (4)
- 21 He succeeded Moses (Deuteronomy 34:9) (6)
- 22 'When he saw him, he took — on him' (Luke 10:33) (4)
- 23 'For — is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction' (Matthew 7:13) (4)
- 25 'The god of this — has blinded the minds of unbelievers' (2 Corinthians 4:4) (3)
- 28 Fear or terror (Psalm 31:22) (5)
- 29 'We, who are many, are one body, for we all — of the one loaf' (1 Corinthians 10:17) (7)
- 30 Assyrian ruler assassinated by his sons while worshipping his god Nisroch (2 Kings 19:37) (11)

Down

- 2 'For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made — ' (1 Corinthians 15:22) (5)
- 3 'After supper he — the cup' (1 Corinthians 11:25) (4)
- 4 The request of a man of Macedonia in Paul's vision: 'Come — to Macedonia and help us' (Acts 16:9) (4)
- 5 He disobeyed his father Judah by refusing to impregnate his dead brother's wife (Genesis 38:9) (4)
- 6 I veto me (anag.) (7)
- 7 Fourth king of Judah (1 Kings 15:24) (11)
- 8 Priest of God Most High, who blessed Abram (Genesis 14:18) (11)
- 12 'I have made you — — for the Gentiles' (Acts 13:47) (1,5)
- 14 Implore (1 Samuel 15:25) (3)
- 15 'Out of the eater, something to eat; out of the — , something sweet' (Judges 14:14) (6)
- 19 'I am the most ignorant of men; I do — — a man's understanding' (Proverbs 30:2) (3,4)
- 20 'Sin shall not be your master, because you are not under — , but under grace' (Romans 6:14) (3)
- 24 Native of, say, Baghdad (5)
- 25 The last word in the Bible (Revelation 22:21) (4)
- 26 Heroic tale (4)
- 27 'Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you — ' (John 8:32) (4)

Keen to be Green?

Parish Buying's new energy procurement product, 'Parish Energy' is welcoming new church customers.

Parish Buying (the Church of England's Procurement Team) developed the new, improved energy product after an extensive tender process.

Local churches are being encouraged to look at what the scheme can offer, compared to their current energy contracts, and consider a switch.

'Parish Energy' is available to churches wishing to switch to greener energy and/or who are out of contract with their current energy supplier and want an easier contract arrangement.

Parish Buying says that the benefits of using Parish Energy include saving time and money, as well as supporting renewable energy. Ecotricity offers 100% pure green from UK-based renewable sources, and green gas is also available from Corona (at a premium).

More information at: <https://parishbuying.org.uk/products-services/energy/parish-energy/>

God wants spiritual fruit, not religious nuts. - Anon

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

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So Doku

Nobody's said they don't like it, so here's another.

Enjoy.

Solution elsewhere!

On what it takes to be an ordinand

The Rectory
St James the Least

My dear Nephew Darren

I was intrigued that you have been nurturing someone called Dave who is considering ordination. Since Dave had never travelled outside the city, your decision to send him to me was understandable. Sadly, I don't think he is cut out for the ministry.

We did our best. In a fit of hospitality, the Colonel invited this Dave to stay at the Lodge, and to join his Saturday pheasant shoot as a beater. But Dave said firmly that he was against beating any kind of bird and abhors all kinds of murder. It seems young Dave is a vegetarian! You might have warned us. The Colonel is now concerned that Dave is connected in some way with the Green Party. You cannot be too careful these days.

Then Miss Saxby and Miss Tarby stepped in. They enjoy mushrooming, and kindly took young Dave off to the woods. It is not their fault that they are a bit deaf and so did not hear his cries of distress when he lost them among all the trees. They just assumed he had gone back to the Colonel's, and so of course they did not organise a search party until much later. Fortunately, the church warden's spaniel has a keen nose and found Dave before midnight. During all that time, Dave seemed to have had nothing better to do than slide about on

fallen leaves and trip over hidden logs in the dark. He was even babbling about having heard a crying ghost. We feared he might be delirious but then realised he meant the local owl. He also seemed surprised by the darkness and asked how we manage without any streetlights at all in the parish. We explained the obvious - we simply follow the example of the well-refreshed when leaving the pub, and feel our way along the walls.

On Sunday morning Dave rushed into the church to warn me that there were several loose sheep in the churchyard. I decided then that he should return to the safety of the city. There was no point in letting him near most of our church ladies, who would have savaged him on sight.

The visit only proves the obvious: potential ordinands should be carnivorous, cricketing fly-fishers, most at home in well-worn tweeds and preferably accompanied by a muddy dog. How else will they get along with normal folk?

Your loving uncle,

Eustace

So Doku solution

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



Christmas With St James' Church, Brownhills



Sunday 7th Dec at 10 am – All-Age Communion, followed by the Church Family Christmas Meal*

Wednesday 10th Dec at 7.00 pm – Beer & Carols Evening* at the Jack Jigger Taylor Pub on Brownhills High Street

Saturday 13th Dec – 12 noon – 4 pm – ‘Meet Mary & Joseph’s Donkey’ Event* for all local Children. Come along to see a real donkey, hear the story of Christmas, make crafts and enjoy Chicken Nuggets & Chips.



Sunday 14th Dec at 6.15 pm – Carols by Candlelight.

Thursday 18th Dec at 7.30 pm – Blue Christmas – a reflective service for you if you’re grieving or sad for whatever reason.

Sunday 21st Dec at 4.15 pm – The Christingle Service, for all local children. Come along for an interactive, child-friendly service.



Christmas Eve at 4.15 pm – The Nativity Service, for all local children. Another interactive, child-friendly service, with the Christmas Story brought to New Life!

**Christmas Eve at 11.15 pm – Midnight Holy Communion
10 am Christmas Day – All-Age Holy Communion*, with a toy for each child attending.**



New Year’s Eve Party* – 7 pm – Midnight!

***All marked with an Asterisk Star symbol requires sign-up at St James’ Church on a Sunday during October & November 😊 You can also sign-up to reserve a place at any of these events by calling or texting Rev’d Gayle on 07545 657 636. We would love to see you.**



When there is no peace

They dress the wound of My people as though it were not serious. "Peace, peace," they say, when there is no peace. (Jeremiah 6:14)

I wonder what peace felt like in 1945, after 9th May or 16th August? These, of course, were the days after Victory in Europe Day and then Victory in Japan Day. Once the parties and hangovers were cleared up, life would go on as before, for many months to come: with shortages, rationing, men overseas, houses bombed and people on the move. On the continent and in the Far East it was much worse.

What does it feel like now? Yes, we have had 'peace' of sorts in most of Europe between the major continental powers for decades, which is an achievement, but there is no peace in Ukraine, the Middle East or Sudan. If anything, the world is now looking to be a more dangerous place.

This verse from the prophet Jeremiah was the theme of a sermon recently. The preacher talked about peace making, peace keeping and a lasting peace, which are not the same and require different skills. In and after the Second World War *peace making* meant winning the war and defeating evil. *Peace keeping* was occupying the defeated lands until they could establish communities built on democracy and justice. (The preacher was born exactly nine months after either VE or VJ Day, so he was a 'child of peace'!)

What about a *lasting peace*? Many world leaders say, "Peace, Peace" but they mean only *peace on their terms* and do not care about anything else.

As Christians we should:

Pray for the *peace makers*: the women and men in the forces

Pray for *peace keepers*: the experts helping to build new societies

Pray for *lasting peace*: the willingness of world leaders and politicians to act for the greater good.

Praying with the prayers of the Bible

2 Cor. 12:8; 'Three times I asked the Lord about this ...but...'

Paul is talking about one of the most mysterious and one of the most baffling aspects of prayer – when God does not say yes.

On the face of it, Paul's prayer was very modest. For some time he had been troubled by 'a thorn in the flesh.' He doesn't tell us what the 'thorn' was and down the centuries theologians and commentators have made suggestions. Most of them have thought that the affliction was physical because Paul says it was 'in the flesh.' Some have suggested that he suffered from epileptic fits which caused him to fall down, while others have suggested that he was laid low by constant fevers or that he had very poor eyesight, the last based on his remarks in Galatians 6:11. But in spite of this great servant of the Lord praying earnestly three times that the thorn would be removed, God did not answer as Paul expected. A number of things in this passage (verses 7-10) are very helpful to all of us in the matter of prayer.

First, although God's answer was not what Paul asked for, God did answer him. God is never indifferent to the prayers we utter from the depth of our heart. Unlike the idol Baal in the Old Testament story about Elijah, (1 Kings 18) the God and Father of our Lord Jesus is not on a journey, nor is he busy elsewhere, nor is he sleeping. He hears our prayers and our cries when we come to Him in our need and pain and distress.

Second, although Paul did not get the answer he wanted, God made him a wonderful promise. He said, 'My grace is sufficient for you' (v.9). This was not what Paul asked for, yet what a promise it was! God said in effect. 'I will not take the thorn away – but my daily grace is all-sufficient.' In spite of the thorn, Paul will triumph. When God gives us all-sufficient grace, it will take care of everything in our lives.

Thirdly, Paul learnt that God's wonderful grace meant that in his weakness 'the power of Christ' (v.9) would be with him, the power that would make him effective and fruitful in his ministry.

Fourthly, this experience taught Paul that he could be 'content with weaknesses and insults' (v.10) because it was for Christ's sake, and when he is weak in himself, he is strong in Christ (v.10).

So what about unanswered prayer? Unless our prayer was selfish and not for our good in the first place, God does answer our cry. When the answer is not what we expected, then it means that our loving Father has something for us even better and more important than what we asked for.

Events Diary

Saturday 22nd November—Christmas Coffee Morning, 10-12 noon.

Sunday 30th November—Café Church at 10am.

Sunday 7th December—Church Family Christmas Meal after morning service.

Wednesday 10th December—Beer & Carols at Jack ‘Jigger’ Taylor pub on the High Street at 7pm.

Saturday 13th December—Meet Mary & Joseph’s Donkey (it’s a real one!).

Sunday 14th December—Carols by Candlelight at 6.15pm.

Thursday 18th December—Blue Christmas service at 7.30pm.

Sunday 21st December—Christingle Service at 4.15pm.

Wednesday 24th December—Christmas Eve Nativity service at 4.15pm.

Wednesday 31st December—New Year’s Eve Party from 7pm.

Christmas Services at St James

Christmas Eve Midnight Holy Communion at 11.15pm.

Christmas Day—Holy Communion at 8am

Christmas Day—All-Age Holy Communion at 10am.

Readings for November

Sunday 2nd November

10am	Glorify the Lord	Revelation 7 v 9-13	
6.15pm	He will watch over you	Psalm 121	Matthew 5 v 3-12

Sunday 9th November

9.30am		Psalm 91	John 15 v 9-17
6.15pm	God provides	1 Kings 17 v 8-16	Romans 8 v 31-end

Sunday 16th November

10am	Greater things	Psalm 103	John 1 v 35-51
6.15pm	Sinners called	Psalm 34	Matthew 9 v 9-13

Sunday 23rd November

10am	Kingdom values	Isaiah 61 v 1-6	Matthew 5 v 1-12
6.15pm	God—consuming fire	Isaiah 33 v 14-16	Hebrews 12 v 18-29

Sunday 30th November

10am	Be ready!!!	Isaiah 2 v 1-5	Matthew 24 v 36-44
6.15pm	Wake up!	Isaiah 11 v 1-10	Romans 13 v 1-14

Christmas Coffee Morning

Saturday 22nd November

Come along to our Christmas Coffee morning which starts at 10am and finishes at 12 noon.

Fun for all the family with games and face-painting for the children and coffee/tea and mince pies and stalls for the adults. All are welcome.

Prayer for November 2025

Heavenly Father,

Here we are in November – the month of short, dark days. A dreary, difficult month, unless you have a birthday! Lord, it seems as if the world is permanently in November at the moment. So much is so difficult for so many people, through no fault of their own. And it seems to go on and on.

Lord, would You bring your healing light into the world's darkness. Bring transformation, compassion and a softening into the hearts of those with responsibility for the conflict and the suffering, that they might work for peace for all people. We know that nothing is impossible for you, Lord, so we pray in faith – and in the name of Jesus.

Amen.

By Daphne Kitching



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THE PARISH OF BROWNHILLS WITH OGLEY HAY

Called by name & empowered by the Holy Spirit to share
God's love with words and actions

Vicar:

Revd Gayle Greenway	07545 657636
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Lay Ministers:

Pete Biggs

Liz Corbett	01543 370162
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Graham Sutherland (Reader with Permission to Officiate)	01543 671020
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OFFICERS

Wardens:

Margaret Powell	01543 371396
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Roger Corbett	01543 370162
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Lay Chair:

Liz Corbett	01543 370162
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Secretary:

Brenda Stanford	07736 769659
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Treasurer:

Alan Wiley	07823 884061
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Deanery Synod Representative:

Roger Corbett	01543 370162
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Organist and Worship Leader:

Pete Biggs, BEd(Hons), AMusCAM

Safeguarding Co-ordinator:

Roger Corbett	01543 370162
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