



January Newsletter 2024

Christmas Message from our Ministers...

Welcome to 2024!

As we enter a new year it is a time to prepare for what might lie ahead. We recognise that we will most probably encounter the expected things and also the unexpected and so even though we may prepare ourselves, there is always a degree of uncertainty. The beautiful truth is that amidst the uncertainties, we can be utterly certain that God sees us, knows us, loves us, is our constant companion and, if we are open to this, our firm foundation. This can bring such comfort for it reminds us that whatever 2024 brings, God holds us!

This edition of our Newsletter is focussing on the December events at SwanBank. We've had a number of opportunities to share the love of Jesus with people in our community and our



'online community' this Christmas and it has been a full and worthwhile time. A highlight were the Christingle Services which were fun, engaging, evangelistic and well attended! For your encouragement, we have seen people find faith and reconnect with God through our Christmas mission and ministry and it doesn't get better than that!!

Many people have worked SO hard to facilitate our outreach and we are grateful to each and every one who has worked to make this happen.

As you look through the photographs and stories in our Swan Bank Christmas Diary, join with us as we give thanks to God for beautiful moments and lives transformed by the Good News of Jesus.

With love

Kathryn and Ruth





Tuesday 28th November

In the run up to Christmas the church was beautifully decorated by a team of volunteers. We were fortunate to have the Christmas tree donated by Tudor-Davies Funeral services.

In the evening, a group of crafters led by Lauren, made fabric hearts to be included in the pastoral team's gifts for the Swan Bank at-home community.

Friday 1st December

Members and friends of Swan Bank and our very own choir supported the local community for the Burslem lights switch on celebration.

Saturday 2nd December

A great time was had by all at the Messy Church Christmas party. Lots of Messy crafts to do (everyone even planted a Christmas tree to take home); Santa arrived at Christmas story time and families had a wonderful meal to finish.



Sunday 3rd December

Preparations were started by Rachel's merry band of volunteers for the Christmas day meal. Many meals and gifts will be sent to people who are alone at Christmas.



Tuesday 5th December

Carol singing at Scotia Heights care home by our community choir.

Wednesday 6th December

We started 3 weeks of evening Advent Bible studies. Tonight's study about Mary was led by Cameron.

Tuesday 12th December

A busy day today! Santa turned up for Little Treasures at their Swan Bank Christmas party. A great time was had by all!



The drop in communion provided a time and space to meet God in stillness and peace.

Everyone enjoyed the Tuesday Club Carol service which featured Dave Howe and his puppets!



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Bonus

Wednesday 13th December

The second of our advent bible studies was led by Kathryn where she talked about Joseph.

Friday 15th December

Thanks to Rachel and the team at The Crown in Burslem for hosting carol singing in the pub.

Sunday 17th December

Our day began with a traditional carol service. at 10:30am.

Preparations then started for our annual Christingle services.

Phil ready to play keys and Matt making sure the Swan Bank Express was safe and sound.

Great jumpers by the way!



'All aboard!'



The conductor (aka Gerard) making sure the story tellers are all in uniform for our Christingle's extraordinary

story of the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem.

Singing beautifully and supporting the congregational singing, it's the Swan Bank Community choir at our Christingle services.



After both services hot chocolate drinks and other refreshments were served to everyone.



Tuesday 19th December

Our Care Home Ministry (and Santa!) visited Camoys Court care home in Cobridge .

Wednesday 20th December

Our final advent bible study was looking at Jesus, led by Joe Hearson.

Friday 22nd December

The church was converted into a family friendly cinema for a Christmas family film night, featuring the ever popular Polar Express. Refreshments included hotdogs and popcorn! Many people attended, including families from the local community which was great.

Saturday 23rd December

Our Care Home Ministry team were out again visiting, this time Goldendale care home in Tunstall. Thanks to Shirley for organising this.



Christmas Eve

The day began with a 9am service led by our very own Arthur Wakelin. Then followed the nativity where we celebrated Jesus' birth.

Everyone turned up dressed as their favourite character with lots of Marys, Josephs, angels, stars of Bethlehem, sheep and wise men with their gifts. There was a tall donkey, a short one and Dave Howe brought one as big as his hand. Oh, and Kathryn rode a camel, and you don't see that very often!



We lost Ruth for a while until she came late dressed as a shark, singing, 'Shark the Herald Angels Sing'. Baby Jesus came along in time for the finale. Even Sam Taylor stepped into a box at the last minute to transform into a cattle shed. It certainly was an extraordinary Christmas nativity!

At 11pm Kathryn led the reflective Midnight communion service to lead us gently into Christmas day.

Christmas Day

Christmas Day saw our final family worship celebration.

Many thanks to the Christmas planning team and the 100 volunteers who ensured a good number of guests all thoroughly enjoyed the church service and Christmas meal.



Some say one of the highlights of the day was Andy doing the bingo. Always a crowd pleaser!

Ruth was busy checking the list of over 250 meals that were taken out to folks at home.



What an amazing month we've had. Time for everyone involved to have a well-deserved rest!

SWANBANK



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United Celebration

6:15pm, Sunday 7th January

Join us for a city-wide celebration to welcome in the New Year, taking place at Swan Bank

2024 New Year
UNITED CELEBRATION
Sunday 7th January - 6.15pm
Swan Bank Church, Swan Square, Burslem,
Stoke-on-Trent, ST6 2AA

Join us for a city-wide celebration to welcome in the New Year

Host: Rev Kathryn Stephens
Worship Leader: Paul Critchley
Guest Speaker: Robert Mountford

For more information contact
email@saltbox.org.uk

CITY VISION MINISTRIES
BEACON HOUSE OF PRAYER
SALTBOX
Strengthening Our Communities

Regular Weekly Events at Swan Bank

Sunday

Sunday Night Young Adults – Fellowship Room, 7:30-9pm

Monday

Prayer Time – Meeting Room 1, 9-9:30am
Bible Study – Meeting Room 1, 10-11:30am
Gospel Choir – Main Church, 7:30-9pm 2nd & 4th Mondays of each month

Tuesday

Little Treasures (0-4 years old) – Lower Hall, 9:30-11am (*term time only*)
Chatty Café – Coffee Lounge, 10am-12noon
Tuesday Club – Coffee Lounge, 1:30-3:30pm
Tuesday Night Youth (11-16 years old) – Youth Room, 7-8:30pm (*term time only*)

Wednesday

Knit & Natter – Coffee Lounge, 10am-12noon
Foodbank – Coffee Lounge, 2-4pm (*E-voucher will be required from a referral agency*)

Thursday

Younger Youth (School years 3-6) – Upper Hall, 5:45-7:15pm (*term time only*)
Youth Club (11-16 years old) – Upper Hall, 7:30-9pm (*term time only*)

Saturday

Messy Church (Primary aged children) – Lower Hall, 10am-12noon (*first Saturday of each month*)



SWANBANK

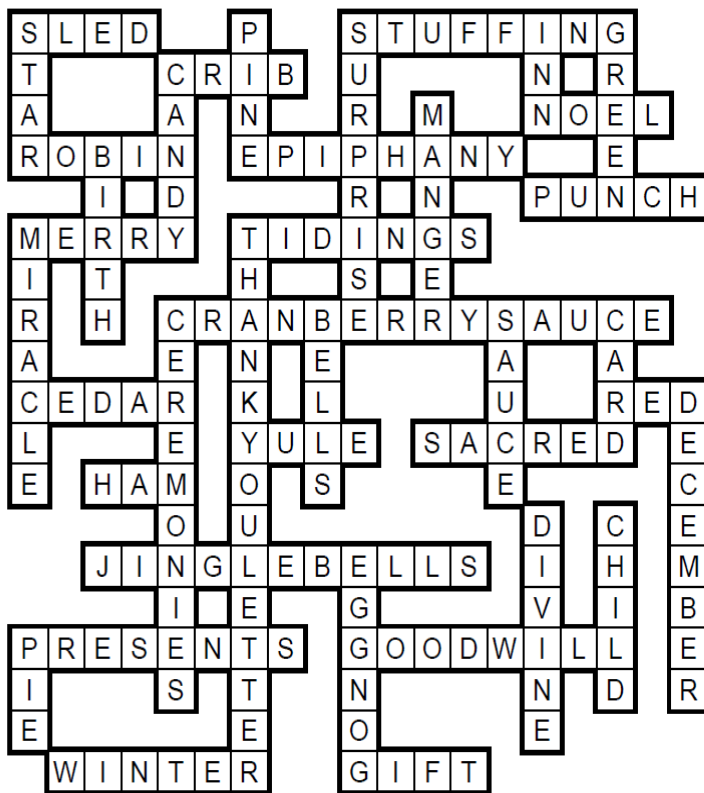


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Answers to the Christmas Crossword!

Sadly, no prizes, but well done to all those that managed to complete the Christmas crossword!

CHRISTMAS CROSSWORD - SOLUTION



Across: 1 Sled, 3 Stuffing, 6 Crib, 8 Noel, 9 Robin, 11 Epiphany, 12 Punch, 13 Merry, 14 Tidings, 15 Cranberry sauce, 19 Cedar, 20 Red, 22 Yule, 23 Sacred, 24 Ham, 27 Jingle Bells, 29 Presents, 30 Goodwill, 31 Winter, 32 Gift.

Down: 1 Star, 2 Pine, 3 Surprise, 4 Inn, 5 Green, 6 Candy, 7 Manger, 10 Birth, 13 Miracle, 14 Thank you letter, 15 Ceremonies, 16 Bells, 17 Sauce, 18 Card, 21 December, 25 Divine, 26 Child, 28 Egnog, 29 Pie.

Bible Crossword by BiblePuzzles.org.uk

SwanBank Church, Swan Square, Burslem, ST6 2AA

Office hours:- 10am - 4pm, Tuesday – Thursday



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www.swanbank.org.uk

Sunday 10:30am Service, live stream links:



www.youtube.com/@SwanBank/streams



www.facebook.com/swanbank/?locale=en_GB

Future Articles

If anyone has any stories or articles to be considered for inclusion in future newsletters, please contact Shirley Brooks or Nigel Johnson directly or email :-

officeassistance@swanbank.org.uk.