



March Newsletter 2024

Message from our Ministers...

Welcome to our March Newsletter which also happens to be our Easter Issue!

I used to live near the North York Moors. If any of you are familiar with the area, you'll know that it can get extremely foggy there! I distinctly remember travelling back home from visiting my brother and his family in Scarborough, late in the evening and we found ourselves driving in thick fog.

It struck me how things can look so different when the situation around isn't as it might normally be. What is often familiar to us, the twists and turns on the road, the bridges to cross, the areas surrounded by trees and those of moors, all looked so different when we were engulfed by fog and only able to see a couple of metres ahead. We were so grateful to get home in one piece, safe and sound!

There are times when the path ahead becomes obscured for us in life too. We find situations around us are not what we expect and suddenly that which has once been known to us is unfamiliar and we sometimes feel the anxiety and uncertainty this brings.

Jesus found himself in unfamiliar territory too. The Easter account reminds us of Jesus' journey towards Jerusalem; the acclamation and welcome of the crowds, on what we know as Palm Sunday, leads to rejection as Jesus is arrested, tried and ultimately crucified. This was a path Jesus had never walked before, the journey to the cross was unknown territory and we know Jesus struggled as he wept in the Garden and fell with the weight of the cross.



Of course, the amazing Good News of Easter is that this does not end with the darkness of Good Friday. We eventually find ourselves at Easter resurrection morning, when the darkness of death is defeated by the light of new life.

I take huge comfort in this! It reminds me that whatever struggles we face, even those times when the path is totally unknown to us, when we're in unfamiliar territory or we're not sure which direction to take and not sure how we're going to put one foot in front of the other, God IS alive and IS at work!

One of the songs (from Waymaker) we sometimes sing reflects this truth of God at work even in the hard times - *"Even when I don't see it, You're working. Even when I can't feel it, You're working. You never stop, you never stop working"*. The Good News of the love of God is not that God stops us going through times of trouble (though occasionally he does) but that God understands, is active and remains with us throughout.

Christ will continue to travel with us....maybe a good challenge is this:- will we continue to travel with him?

With love

Kathryn



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MARK'S GOSPEL

LENT READING PLAN

WEEK 1

Prayer Focus : Ourselves

14th February - Day of Fasting
and Prayer
15th February - Mark 1 : 1 - 28
16th February - Mark 1 : 29 - 45
17th February - Rest
18th February - Sunday Worship
19th February - Mark 2 : 1 - 17
20th February - Mark 2 : 18 - 28

WEEK 2

Prayer Focus : The World in conflict

21st February - Prayer & Bible
Study together at SwanBank
22nd February - Mark 3
23rd February - Mark 4
24th February - Rest
25th February - Sunday Worship
26th February - Mark 5 : 1 - 20
27th February - Mark 5 : 21 - 43

WEEK 3

Prayer Focus : Those in need

28th February - Prayer & Bible
Study together at SwanBank
29th February - Mark 6 : 1 - 29
1st March - Mark 6 : 30 - 56
2nd March - Rest
3rd March - Sunday Worship
4th March - Mark 7 : 1 - 23
5th March - Mark 7 : 24 - 37

WEEK 4

Prayer Focus : The Church

6th March - Prayer & Bible
Study together at SwanBank
7th March - Mark 8
8th March - Mark 9
9th March - Rest
10th March - Sunday Worship
11th March - Mark 10 : 1 - 16
12th March - Mark 10 : 17 - 31

WEEK 5

Prayer Focus : Those who suffer

13th March - Prayer & Bible
Study together at SwanBank
14th March - Mark 12
15th March - Mark 13
16th March - Rest
17th March - Sunday Worship
18th March - Mark 10 : 32 - 45
19th March - Mark 10 : 46 - 52

WEEK 6

Prayer Focus : Creation

20th March - Prayer & Bible
Study together at SwanBank
21st March - Mark 11 : 1 - 11
22nd March - Mark 11 : 12 - 33
23rd March - Rest
24th March - Sunday Worship
25th March - Mark 14 : 1 - 25
26th March - Mark 14 : 26 - 52

WEEK 7

*Prayer Focus :
God's Kingdom Come*

27th March - Day of Fasting
and Prayer
28th March - Mark 14 : 53 - 72
29th March - Mark 15
30th March - Rest
31st March - Mark 16 and
Easter Sunday Worship

Bible Study:

Other than the first week, each week begins with a Wednesday Bible Study at 7pm for a 7:30pm start at SwanBank which you are warmly encouraged to join.












Fasting:

If the suggested Fast days don't work for you please feel free to adapt them or omit them and just join us in praying for the focus each week.

If you were planning to go to the Lent Bible study on the 27th March as shown on some of the leaflets handed out at church, then you may be disappointed as this was a typographical error! The 5th and last Wednesday Bible study date is the 20th March.



March Circuit Preaching Plan

Venue	Time	3 rd March	10 th March Mothers' Day	17 th March	24 th March Palm Sunday	31 st March Easter Sunday
Swan Bank	9.00am 10.30am 6.15pm	Stephens Stephens United Celebration	Brooks Stephens/Jeffries Jeffries	Taylor Taylor Cooke	Jeffries Jeffries  Stephens	Stephens  Stephens/Hearson Jeffries 
Potter's Church	9.30am 11.15am	Stanyer Stanyer	Eyre Eyre	Price Price	Hancock Hancock	Price Price
Oasis Church	10.45am 6.00pm	C Machin	Price	Stephens	Community Sunday	Brabbs
Wesley Hall	10.45am	Wakelin 	Andrews	Chapman	Nixon	Tattersall
The Gateway	10.45am	Harrison	Leese	Tretheway	Tattersall	Wakelin 
Mount Pleasant	10.45am	Tindale	Own Arrangement	Wilshaw	Tindale	Dutton
Packmoor	11.00am	Tideswell	Tindale	Boateng	Stephens 	Harrison
Village Church	11.00am	Jeffries 	Mason	Jeffries	Law	Jeffries 
Whitehill	10.30am 6.00pm	Cooke Cooper	Cooper  Wakelin	Cooper Q & A	Brooks Cooper 	Shaw  Mason

Easter Week additional Services

28 th March	Maundy Thursday Community Meal 5:30 -7:30pm. Booking is required so please contact the office. All ages are welcome.
29 th March	Good Friday Service 10:30am
31 st March	Easter Sunday 6:00am sunrise service at the top of Sneyd Hill

Spotlight on Community Information and Support Event

The Burslem Community Grocery and Swan Bank Church are partnering to facilitate a community event on Thursday 14th March. The event is at Swan Bank and runs from 10am to 2pm. We have at least 18 agencies attending the event, including:-

GREEN DOCTOR – advice to help you take control of bills.

APPROACH – offer support groups to provide social activities for people and their families living with dementia.

FAMILY HUBS – support for families and children (0-19yrs).

LITERACY TRUST – free books for adults and children.

SEVERN TRENT WATER – financial support.

J.E.T. – advice and guidance on jobs and enterprise.

COMMUNITY GROCERY – saving money on your weekly shop.

For more information, please contact **Nannette** on 07507 382148 or see the leaflet in the Dates for the Diary section.



Tea Dance with Carelink at Swan Bank Update

Tea dancing enthusiasts thoroughly enjoyed their afternoon at Carelink's tea dance event on the 25th January. With plenty of fun, food and foot tapping, a great time was had by all!

Rita Taylor



Spotlight on Ministry

Janet is one of Swan Bank's growing team of volunteers who regularly joins in with Swan Bank's Care Home ministry. Yet like many people, Janet has felt called to extend her ministry into other parts of her local community.

'I have been enjoying volunteering for CareLink (a part of the local Saltbox charity) for 4 years now. I make phone calls to lonely, isolated older people for 2-3 hours a week. I work from home but could go into the Saltbox office in Hanley if I preferred. Usually, I call the same 5 people each week, and it's been

wonderful to get to know them through our chats. I enjoy our conversations as much as they do. It's been a pleasure to visit two of the ladies I talk to, accompanied by Chris or Nikki from the Saltbox office.

As a volunteer with CareLink, there are regular get-togethers for the volunteers, and we feel so much appreciated by Saltbox. It's been a satisfying and fulfilling opportunity to serve others and to feel useful'.

Janet Plant



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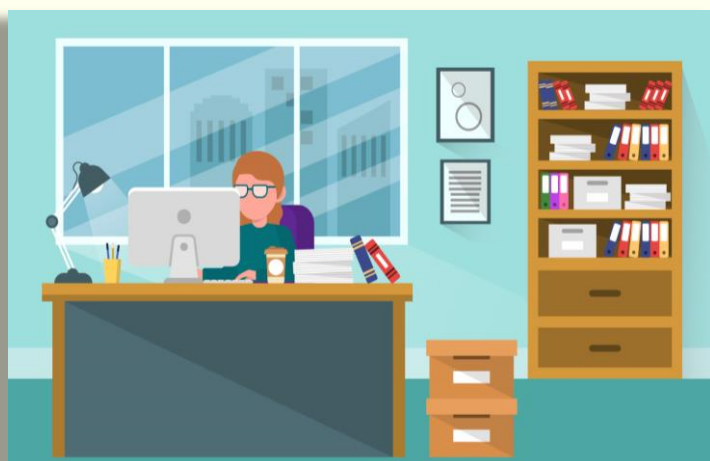
A 'quiet' day in the office...

During Sunday Services I used to think being a minister at Swan bank meant writing a good sermon! But what else do Kathryn and Ruth do during an average week? I volunteer in Swan Bank office every Thursday, the 'quiet' day of the week. Over the last few months, it's really opened my eyes about the work of Swan Bank.

We are blessed to be involved in special events like the Christingle, the Easter week programme and the Remembrance Sunday parade. I've seen our ministers' personal input into these events with their sparks of inspiration to planning sessions with our fantastic teams. They joined in with practical tasks like crafting items for the Christmas gifts, creating station signs for our Polar Express and making sure our knitted angels had that marvellous impact on people at the 'Burslem Lights' switch on. Many of the posters and flyers we see include design ideas by the ministers.

Alongside the pastoral team both Kathryn and Ruth take time to visit our members in hospital providing a friendly face, a lively chat, and a listening ear for those who need it. They also offer outreach by making visits to local care homes. I understand a warm welcome always awaits them with refreshments and a chance to engage with the residents' activities.

Caring for bereaved people is an important part of our ministers' role: visiting bereaved families to reassure them that Swan Bank is there for them; helping to plan the funeral service to reflect the personality of their loved one. Then they deliver a message in the service that makes even a stranger seem like someone who shared many Sundays with us.



Within the town itself we are really in the heart of things. Kathryn and Ruth regularly meet with the PCSOs, Port Vale, the local councillors, and the other churches in the area to help ensure our efforts are coordinated and we give support to other groups' initiatives.

Lastly the item that has opened my eyes the most is the time and effort given to people who find themselves on the streets of Burslem. From making a warm drink and something to eat to the willingness to spend time with the individual to listen to them, always with a warm friendly smile. Sometimes it's restoring their dignity by offering a shower and some clean clothes. For others it can become a weekly chat and support, signposting them to other agencies who can offer help.

With all of this happening on Thursdays, the 'quiet' day in the office, I realised that we are truly blessed with Kathryn and Ruth who always have a smile for us, show a real can-do attitude and yet still have time to write a sermon for Sunday.

Suzanne Foster



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'Forever Angels' visit in Tanzania

My life changed in the summer of 2017, when I visited Forever Angels, a baby home in Mwanza Tanzania for orphaned and abandoned babies and young children. The staff are amazing and so welcoming and really do appreciate volunteers. I have rocked babies to sleep, run a pre-school, taken children swimming, read stories, bathed over 20 children in one night, helped with feeding times and supported the children with special educational needs. Children with SEN don't have it easy in Tanzania as there is still some belief in them being cursed which is why most are abandoned. One such beautiful boy,



captured my heart on my first visit. He had been left in a ditch near to the baby home. They called him Morris and was around 2 years old at the time, non-verbal and autistic. He was very scared. My

daughter and I spent so much time with him and helped him to settle and even had some smiles. I did try to adopt Morris, but international adoption is not allowed in Tanzania.

Since that summer, I have visited several times, supporting them financially and doing fundraising. In one event I raised £2000 when I shaved my head. I am flying back out for the first time since Covid hit, in July of this year, for a month.



It costs a great deal to run the baby home, for example, £30,000 a year in formula milk alone. They also have a programme called Maisha Matters- Maisha is Swahili for 'life'. This provides



help and support to try and keep babies and children in their own families. I have also gained a very special friend who works at the baby home as an 'Escari' or groundsman. Emmanuel, or Emmy who is also a pastor in his village. We communicate weekly and pray

for each other.

Forever Angels baby home would really benefit from our support. There are two ways you can help:

- I will provide Swan Bank with a full list of required items before I next travel to Tanzania. It would be great if you could donate anything on the list which I would carry as part of my luggage allowance. For example, bubbles, crayons, underwear, medicine syringes.
- 'Hold the date' for a pamper day, Sunday 7th April at my friend's home in Norton Heights. There will be a variety of treatments available; cakes to buy; craft stalls and if weather's good there will be a hot tub too! To book a time slot for treatment, call Deb on 07970 539399 or see Zoe at Swan Bank. If you can't attend the pamper day, why not purchase a treatment as a gift for Mother's Day, or a birthday / Easter Gift?

Zoe Durber-Worrall



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18-30's Weekend Away Update

Earlier in February many of Swan Bank's 18-30(ish) year olds spent a weekend together at Cloverly Hall. We spent time in reflection, prayer and study. We also spent precious time worshipping God together.

The sessions were led by Tom, Sam, Lauren, Joe, Kathryn and Ruth. Through these sessions, we

focused on several biblical characters and how they found their calling. These included Paul, Esther, Moses, Jeremiah, Samuel, Elijah and Jonah. In our final session, we shared in communion with some sour faces for the Ocean Spray cranberry juice.



With Saturday's free time, some braved the elements for a very soggy walk, those more sensible stayed and bonded over board games. We spent a wild evening together organised by the Coopers, passing

batons to complete some interesting and often absurd challenges.

'Calling' is something that has been playing on my mind now for quite some time. I frequently find myself asking if I am I doing what I've been called to do.

Kathryn encouraged us to identify any potential

blockages that are preventing us from our callings, and then think how we might overcome these. With the biblical characters we studied, the most common blockage was doubt. Both with yourself and with God.

I realised that I almost entirely associated my calling with my career choice. I think that people my age are often so focused on finding the perfect job and gaining some stability and independence that they forget the bigger picture.

One quote that I really took from the weekend is: "The practicalities aren't the priority." God will always provide what we need to keep going, He is always with us, and He will always be there to catch us if we fall.

I definitely came away from the weekend feeling like I could be more open to hearing God's calling in my life. I have confidence that when God calls, he also equips.

Everyone would like to say a huge thanks to Tom and Sam for organising the weekend so well, our worship leaders, Sam, Ruth and Paul Critchley, Cloverly Hall for having us stay and taking such good care of us, and of course our wonderful ministers who always show us love and inspire us to deepen our relationships with God.



Sophie Hearson



Foodbank Update



A big thank you to everyone who has donated items to support your local foodbanks. The YouTube link below

gives an idea of the work of the foodbank, including an Easter message from Ruth.

<https://youtu.be/YHF0GJOTrCO>

The foodbank distribution point at Swan Bank also provides additional fresh items kindly donated by Tesco. This helps to reduce food waste and also provides our clients with bread, fresh fruit and vegetables. We really need extra people who would be willing to be added to a rota to collect the donations and drop them off at Swan Bank. If this is something you'd be interested in discussing, then please speak to **Sue Woodward** who can give you an idea of what it entails.

Women's Walking Group

This is a new group where women can form and build friendships, support one another, chat and worship in the fresh air. The first monthly walk will be starting the 3rd Saturday in March. We're meeting at Swan Bank at 11am to car share and travel to Rudyard Lake.

People with disabilities and children are certainly welcome but will need to be accompanied by a carer / guardian / parent. People can walk as much or as little as they are able. Some of the paths are suitable for wheelchair users. Refreshments can be obtained from the lakeside café.

Liz Thompson

Word For Today Magazine



'Word for Today' is a daily Bible devotional magazine produced by United Christian Broadcasters (UCB)

based in Stoke. Each day has bible readings and a devotional item that will lead you through various biblical themes. Each edition covers three months, the current one being from February to April.

Each quarter there will be some magazines available in church for collection. Alternatively, you can sign up to receive the booklets directly to your door. We hope this is a useful resource to aid your Bible reading and exploring God's Word.

Amy Rome

The devotionals are free of charge, but if you wish you can make a donation to UCB towards the costs of publication. Donations can be made via the form on the back of the magazine or by calling Supporter Care on 01782 911000.

For more information then please follow the link below.

www.ucb.co.uk/read

Future Articles

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

officeassistance@swanbank.org.uk.



Dates for the Diary

Stoke-on-Trent United Celebration
6:15pm Sunday 3rd March

Community Information Event
10am-2pm Thursday 14th March

Stoke-on-Trent UNITED CELEBRATION

Sunday 3 March - 6.15pm

Swan Bank Church, Swan Square, Burslem,
Stoke-on-Trent, ST6 2AA



Join with Christians from across North Staffordshire
for an evening of worship, prayer and fellowship



Host
Ruth Jeffries
- Swan Bank



Worship Leader
Paul Critchley
- Presence Worship



Guest Preacher
Sam Taylor
- Saltbox

For more information contact email@saltbox.org.uk

**CITY VISION
MINISTRIES**



SALTBOX
Strengthening Our Communities

Community Information Event



Offers FREE
advice to help
you take control
of your bills.



FREE
Tea and
Coffee



Saving money on
your weekly shop,
providing access
to support and
working to reduce
food waste.



Helping
people to live
independent
and fulfilled
lives.

Providing FREE
reading books to
empower
children and
adults to read
and gain life
skills.



Supporting
families and
children from Birth
- 19 years old,
providing
parenting advice
and support.

Also confirmed to be attending

Community Lounges - support with
food, financial, housing and social
isolation.

North Staffs Sight Loss

J.E.T - Jobs, enterprise and training
advice and support

Seven Trent Water

Care link

North Staffs Carers

Approach - Dementia support

Adult Learning

Plus many more

Come and join us for FREE

Date - Thursday 14th March

Time - 10am - 2pm

Location - SwanBank Church, Lower Hall

For more information contact Nannette on
07507382148

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Safeguard Training

Monday 18th March (online)

It's still possible to do your online safeguarding training on Monday 18th March. The session runs from 7-9pm. Booking is required so either contact the office on 01782 575129 or use the link below.

<https://swanbank.churchsuite.com/events/gqjrdwv6>

Hold the Date - Church Social

Saturday 18th May

A heads up that there'll be a church social event on Saturday 18th May with a 7.00 pm start. There will be a supper and a quiz organised by Kathryn and Ruth. Details to follow in the April Newsletter.



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Regular Weekly Events at Swan Bank

Sunday

Sunday Night Young Adults —, 7:30-9:00pm

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-noon

Foodbank — Coffee Lounge, 2-4pm

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-noon (1st Saturday of each month)

What's on Further afield...

Adrian Plass

Saturday 16th March



DINE IN WITH

ADRIAN AND BRIDGET PLASS

CHRISTIAN WRITERS AND SPEAKERS

You'll go home full of laughter, love, hope and a good meal!



Saturday 16th March 2024

6.30pm for 7.00pm

The Lighthouse at

St. Mary's Church, Weaverham CW8 3NN

Tickets £20.00. [including dinner - Soft drinks provided but please bring your own wine etc.]

For tickets call: 01606 851880 or

Email: weaverham.church.office@gmail.com

Also on Eventbrite

For more details see website:

www.stmarysweaverham.org

Christian Aid Walk

Saturday 16th March


A reminder that the annual Christian Aid walk at Tittesworth Reservoir is on Saturday 16th March. Please contact **Fiona Willis** for further details.

(fionawillis@live.co.uk)

Swan Bank Church, Burslem, ST6 2AA

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

 01782 575129  admin@swanbank.org.uk

 www.swanbank.org.uk

Sunday 10:30am Service, live stream links:

 www.youtube.com/@SwanBank/streams

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