



## April Magazine 2025

### Message from our Ministers...

Dear friends,

I squirm at the majority of portrayals of Christian faith and especially clergy which we encounter on TV, but then I rejoice at the moments when a writer captures something of truth and even more occasionally something of faith in their characters. From the joy and comedy of rural life in *The Vicar of Dibley*, to the comic profundity and honesty of *Rev.* played by the brilliant Tom Hollander and my all-time favourite, *Call the Midwife*, where life & faith are so intimately entwined.

But I believe one of the most powerful pieces of television that I have witnessed is Jimmy McGovern's *Broken* starring Sean Bean as a Catholic priest in a northern English city, who despite suffering from his own troubles stemming from a traumatic childhood, tries to guide several of his most vulnerable parishioners through the trials and tribulations of everyday life.

The 6-part series, faces us with some of the most shattering truths and deepest struggles of our privileged society; poverty, mental health, suicide, family challenges, abuse – to name but



a few. It certainly is not viewing for the faint-hearted; it is rated at 15 for good reason. In the series the priest seeks to fulfil his calling to be the hands, the feet, the face and the voice of Jesus, yet we also see the deep vulnerability of his humanity in the midst of this. In his own brokenness, he feels he has failed many, but the reality is ultimately different, and he is himself blessed by those that he has blessed.

Our Lenten preaching theme of 'Broken' reminds us that we live in a world that is incredibly fragile, and we are a fragile and broken people. But this TV series reminds us of a truth that I was reminded of this Ash Wednesday – what God can do with not just our brokenness, and not just the brokenness of this world, but the brokenness of a death on a cross.


*"Going through the motions doesn't please you, a flawless performance is nothing to you. I learned God-worship when my pride was shattered. Heart-shattered lives ready for love don't for a moment escape God's notice."*

(Psalm 51:16-17 – The Message)

*Ruth*




Our Network of Care Stories (...to be continued next month!)



**Rita and Alan**

Hi, Alan and Rita Taylor here. We are still living in Chell Heath, have just celebrated our Golden wedding anniversary, and are enjoying each other's company. We have been retired for 10 and 20 years respectively and love coming to SwanBank to meet and worship with our friends.

"Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other."  
Romans 12:10



**Dilys Johnson**

Hello, I'm Dilys Johnson. I live in Hempstalls Hall Care Home in Newcastle. I keep in touch with SwanBank through my pastoral visitor Nigel, whom I think of as my special friend. He always brings me a copy of the newsletter, where I enjoy reading all about the things going on at church. I've also recently had an extra special visit from some of the Pastoral Team at SwanBank who came for afternoon tea and an old-fashioned singsong! I was so happy, and I felt very special. Sometimes I go to SwanBank for the 9 o'clock service which I really enjoy, but if I can't get there, I will watch the service online which is the next best thing!

"And the angel said to them, 'Fear not, for behold, I come with good tidings of great joy.'  
Luke 2:10

**The Work of Fairtrade**



God has given me a deep sense of compassion for the plight of those living in desperate poverty in the developing world - Asia, Africa and South America. So how have I put this passion into practice?

From 1997-2019 I was a voluntary Fair Trader, buying and selling Fairtrade foods and Fairly Traded craft items from organisations which specialised in acquiring them e.g. Traidcraft, Tearfund, Toybox, Fairtrade Foundation, Namaste, Divine Chocolate Company and a few others.

So how does Fairtrade make a difference? What is Fairtrade?

The answer is two-fold.

1. It is a **FAIR PRICE** for the farmers who grow crops like tea, coffee, cocoa, rice, cotton, dried fruits etc.
2. It has a **SOCIAL PREMIUM** added to the price. This helps the farmers' community to improve local schools, clinics, sanitation, roads etc.

The same two principles apply to the many **CRAFT WORKERS** who exercise skills with wool, cotton, leather, stone, jute and plants (for handmade paper).

In 2010 Roger and I went to India and visited cotton and rice farmers, embroiderers, stone carvers and batik workers. We saw the benefits of Fairtrade in action. Fairtrade is **NOT** charity. You can buy some things in ALDI, Sainsburys, Lidl and Co-op supermarkets.

And also look out for me at the Easter Fayre at Swan Bank on Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> April from 11am to 2pm. Happy shopping!

**Ann Worthington**



## Hope & Hospitality - Soup Kitchen Update



As many of you know, since last November, Swan Bank has been running a soup kitchen as part of our 'Church at the Margins' Hope & Hospitality strategy.

It became very clear last year that a soup kitchen was needed as there was a growing number of folks ringing the church doorbell asking for drinks and food. At that time, we could only provide a hot drink and a pot noodle.

Following a meeting called by Kathryn and Ruth last October, Swan Bank decided to introduce a weekly soup kitchen which opened on Thursday the 14th November in the coffee lounge, from 12pm – 2pm running through to the end of March 2025. The soup kitchen serves hot food to rough sleepers and anyone else who comes to us in need of support. Funding was provided by S-o-T City Council with volunteers mainly coming from Swan Bank.

Since opening, we have served around 350 guests, averaging 25 people per session. This equates to over 1,000 meals, as in addition to being served drinks and a hot meal (often consuming several bowls of lobby or sausage casserole followed by cake and custard), each guest can take a packed lunch and a portion of the day's meal in a sealed plastic container with them when they leave. By the end of March, I expect the total cost for food for 5 months will be in the region of £1,200.



As well as food, we also provide the opportunity for a hot shower, and many guests also leave with clean clothes (donated by members of Swan Bank).

Our guests frequently tell us, that it is the warm welcome and atmosphere that has had the biggest impact on them. To feel cared for, treated with respect and not judged is, for many, a new experience.

With such positive feedback about the care we give, we were starting to feel that there was a need to continue beyond the end of March, partly due to feedback from our guests, but also from the team, as we all gain so much from being a part of the soup kitchen experience.

Having met recently with Kathryn and Ruth, I am happy to report that the soup kitchen will now continue from April onwards with a slightly different format that we feel will suit our guests better and will enable this vital work to continue.

We will now open every Monday from 10am -12pm, and every Thursday from 10am-1pm, serving breakfast/brunch. We will also continue to offer a packed lunch, a shower and change of clothing if needed.

We hope to secure further funding from S-o-T City Council to support our ongoing work, and volunteers have already signed

up for the new rota. On behalf of our Ministers and myself, I would like to express our sincere thanks to all who have given their time to make our soup kitchen work so effectively.

Finally, I have two requests -

1. I am looking for 6 members of the congregation to bake on a rota, either; flapjacks, fruitcake or cookies to go into the lunch bags
2. If you feel that you would like to join the soup kitchen hospitality team (subject to the Methodist safer recruitment process) then please have a chat with me or speak to **Liz Thompson** in the office. You only need to commit to as much as suits you.

**Keith Stubbs**



### Letters to the 'At Home Group'

Thank you very much for the kind donations of notelet cards and beautiful notepaper for me to write the monthly letters to our 'At Home' members. It is much appreciated.

The 'At Home Group' are members of the Swan Bank Church family who, for various reasons, are now unable to attend church in person. We at Swan Bank keep in touch with them throughout the year with regular pastoral visits and seasonal gifts. We want them to know that they remain in our thoughts and prayers.

God was at work when I offered my skills and talents to Janet Bagnall and the Pastoral Team because coincidentally, they were wanting to create a further link with the 'At Home Group'. It has now been over a year since I started to

handwrite letters to accompany the monthly Swan Bank Magazine being sent to our 'At Home Group'!

I have always been someone who writes letters and sends cards to family and friends, being influenced by my mum, who was a prolific letter writer. My handwriting is very neat and easy to read (useful to me having been a teacher) and is regularly complimented.

One humorous comment being, "You'll never make a doctor with that writing!" I am thankful for my talents and pleased they can be used for others.



Jane Barnes

### Vacancy Corner



St Andrew's Methodist Church Cheddleton  
and  
The Gathering Church  
Church and Community Engagement Leader

We are seeking to appoint an enthusiastic and dedicated Church and Community Engagement Leader to join our team and help us to make a meaningful impact in our church and community.

**Key responsibilities:**

- Build strong relationships with church members and wider community
- Plan and lead worship on Sunday afternoons
- Plan and lead community outreach programmes and events
- Work alongside Church Minister, Volunteers and Church Leadership to carry out the mission of the Churches
- Recognise opportunities to inspire and lead people in their faith journey

**What we offer:**

- An enthusiastic team to work with
- 37 hours/week post worked flexibly including Sunday afternoons
- Salary £29,072pa
- Length of contract - 4 years fixed term
- Ongoing training and support, locally and across the Chester and Stoke-on-Trent District
- 6% employer's pension
- 31 days leave inc. bank holidays + weekdays between Christmas Day and New Year's Day

For a job information pack, please contact: [admin@staffmoorlandsmethodists.org.uk](mailto:admin@staffmoorlandsmethodists.org.uk)

Please email completed application form to [admin@staffmoorlandsmethodists.org.uk](mailto:admin@staffmoorlandsmethodists.org.uk)

Applications by closing date 28<sup>th</sup> April 2025 at 9am

Interviews – 14th May 2025. Post expected to begin - 1<sup>st</sup> July 2025

If you would like an informal chat about this post, please email our Senior Circuit Steward [phillip.mann@psmann.plus.com](mailto:phillip.mann@psmann.plus.com) to arrange a time for a conversation.



### United Celebration - 6<sup>th</sup> April

## Stoke-on-Trent UNITED CELEBRATION

Sunday 6 April - 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



Worship Leader  
Paul Critchley  
Presence Worship



Guest Speaker  
Ali Summers  
Senior Minister  
Rising Brook  
Community Church,  
Stafford



**ANTIDOTE**

Music from  
Antidote

For more information contact [email@saltbox.org.uk](mailto:email@saltbox.org.uk)



## The Amazing Work of our Tech and Worship Teams



My name is Immie; commonly seen at the back of the church with a headset on, ensuring that our Sunday services can reach you at home. I first joined the tech team back in April 2020 to help support with streaming our Lockdown Sunday services. I had very little experience

initially, however, five years later, I now pride myself in my ability to camera operate, vision mix and direct our live streams and ‘special occasion’ services. But what do these fancy words mean?

If I’m operating a camera, then typically I’m trying to make sure that the service is as visible as possible to our online audience. We have seven cameras in use per service (I know!), however only two of them require an operator since the others remain static.



My primary role is vision mixing; therefore, it is my decision as to what content to broadcast. I use three different computer screens; two of them show me visuals from all the cameras and one shows my feed from the YouTube and Facebook livestreams. I will tell the camera operators what shots I want and when (for example, I might ask one of them for a shot of the worship leader whilst the other gets me a

shot of the drummer). I will use a small control panel to ‘mix’ (select) the shots which will broadcast to the stream in real time – which leaves no room for error on my part or on the camera operators!











Occasionally, I will direct our services which essentially means overseeing the running order. It requires me to have good knowledge of what is happening at each point of the service, who needs to be on the platform and when, and any extra technical additions. I will also lead the pre-service meeting to ensure that all members of the tech and worship team understand the running order.

I really love being apart of the tech team at Swanbank because it makes our services accessible to people at home. I work with an incredibly talented and dedicated group of people who willingly give up their time on a Sunday to ensure the gospel can be heard by as many people as possible. I am looking forward to the next five years of streaming our services!



April 2025 - Circuit Preaching Plan

Venue	Time	6 <sup>th</sup> April	13 <sup>th</sup> April Palm Sunday	20 <sup>th</sup> April Easter Sunday 	27 <sup>th</sup> April
Swan Bank	9.00am 10.30am 6.15pm	Worthington A Johnson <b>City Celebration</b>	Kirk Kirk Taylor	Jeffries  Stephens/Jeffries Stephens 	Stephens Stephens Brabbs
Potter's Church	9.30am 11.15am	Price/Hancock Price/Hancock	Price Price	Hancock/Price Hancock Price	Jolley Jolley
Oasis Church	10.45am 6.00pm	Stephens	Owens	Own Arrangement	Own Arrangement
Wesley Hall	10.45am	Own Arrangement	Tattersall	Wakelin 	Own Arrangement
The Gateway	10.45am	Brooks	Jeffries 	Tattersall	Mason
Mt Pleasant	10.45am	<b>TBC</b>	Tindale	Leese	Nixon
Packmoor	11.00am	Tindale ( <b>Baptism</b> )	Cooke	Tindale	Andrews
Village Church	11.00am	Jeffries 	Law	Cooke	B Barber
Whitehill	10.30am 6.00pm	C Leese Harrison	Batho Cooper	Dutton  Wakelin Q & A	Shaw Cooper 

What is 3Generate?

3Generate is the annual children’s and youth assembly (ages 4-18) of the Methodist Church in the UK. 3Generate aims to be a place:

- of celebration, inspiration and empowerment for all children and young people associated with the life of the Methodist Church in Britain
- where children and young people enjoy dialogue with their peers and speak out and into the Methodist Church, enabling dialogue and action across generations
- to support the Christian discipleship of children and young people in the Methodist tradition
- to support networking and the inspiring of those with a ministry among children, young people and their households
- where vocational experiences and opportunities are presented for all attendees
- that is inspiring and encourages children and young people to get involved in their local church and community, creating positive change in the world as agents of change, motivated by their faith and a Methodist Way of Life.

The next event is between 3<sup>rd</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> October 2025 at the NEC in Birmingham.



Event dates & times

- Friday 3 October: 7:30pm-11pm
- Saturday 4 October: 9am-11pm
- Sunday 5 October: 9am-12.30pm
- 4-7s area: Saturday 4 October ONLY 10am-4pm/9am-6pm (depending on ticket type)
- Ticket prices - weekend- £120.00 / day £60 / Mini Gen- (4-7's) £60

For more information, please follow the links below. There are also lots of opportunities to volunteer at the event as well.

[www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/ministries/children-youth-family-ministry/3generate/](http://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/ministries/children-youth-family-ministry/3generate/)



If you need help in planning your group visit, contact us at: [methodist.org.uk/Attending3Gen](http://methodist.org.uk/Attending3Gen)

**Easter Upcoming Events**

**EASTER  
AT SWANBANK**



**5th March**  
Ash Wednesday  
Day of prayer and fasting  
7am - 7pm

**8th April**  
Unhurried Discipleship  
(Lent course)  
7pm - 9pm

**11th March**  
Unhurried Discipleship  
(Lent course)  
7pm - 9pm

**12th April**  
Easter Extravaganza  
Event  
11am - 2pm

**18th March**  
Unhurried Discipleship  
(Lent course)  
7pm - 9pm

**17th April**  
Maundy Thursday  
Soup Kitchen and  
Foot washing  
12pm - 2pm

**25th March**  
Unhurried Discipleship  
(Lent course)  
7pm - 9pm

**17th April**  
Maundy Thursday  
Community Meal  
5:30pm - 7:30pm

**1st April**  
Unhurried Discipleship  
(Lent course)  
7pm - 9pm

**18th April**  
Good Friday  
Service of Reflection  
10:30 am

**5th April**  
Easter Messy Church  
10am - 12pm

**20th April**  
Easter Sunday  
6am - Sneyd hill for Communion  
9am - Traditional Easter Service  
10:30 - Invitational All Together  
Celebration and Baptism Service  
6:15pm Easter Celebration Service

**Regular Activities at Swan Bank**

Sunday

Sunday Services at 9am, 10:30am and 6:15pm.  
Sunday Night Young Adults – Fellowship Room,  
7:30-9pm.

Monday

Bible Study – Coffee bar, 10-11:30am.  
Hope & Hospitality, Soup Kitchen – Coffee Lounge,  
10am-12noon.  
Dementia Activity Group – Coffee Lounge, 1-3pm  
Gospel Choir – Fellowship Room, 7:30-9pm  
*2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> 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.

Wednesday

Knit & Natter – Meeting Room 1, 10am-12noon.  
Changes – Coffee Lounge, 10am-1pm.  
Community Lounge/Foodbank – Lower Hall,  
2-4pm (*To receive a food parcel an E-voucher will  
be required from a referral agency*).

Thursday

Prayer Time – Prayer Chapel, 9-9:30am.  
Hope & Hospitality, Soup Kitchen – Coffee Lounge,  
10am-1pm.  
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 school aged children) –  
Lower Hall, 10am-12noon (*first Saturday of each  
month*) Breakfast included and only £1 per child!  
Women’s Walking Group – (*3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday of each  
month*). See Liz Thompson for details.

**Contact the office on 01782 575129 for  
further details of all our regular activities**

WE ARE LOOKING FOR  
STALL HOLDERS  
FOR

**SWANBANK'S  
EASTER  
EXTRAVAGANZA**

SwanBank Church  
Swan Square, Burslem, ST6 2AA

**Saturday 12th April  
11am-2pm**

Set up from 9.30am

Cost of stall is £10

Send a message or e-mail  
georgina.boden@hotmail.com  
to get in touch

SWAN BANK NOTICEBOARD

**Whitehill Methodist  
Community Church  
Mid-Week Services**

Whitehill Road, Kidsgrove, ST7 4DS  
Every Wednesday commencing at 10.15am

- |                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> April  | Doreen Leese                             |
| 9 <sup>th</sup> April  | Alison Price                             |
| 16 <sup>th</sup> April | Rev Arthur Wakelin<br>(Easter Communion) |
| 23 <sup>rd</sup> April | TBA                                      |
| 30 <sup>th</sup> April | Rev Kathryn Stephens                     |

**Maundy Thursday  
Meal**

On 17<sup>th</sup> April between 5:30-7:30pm we will be having our Community Meal at church. Booking will be required, so you can either contact the office or use the weblinks below.

<https://swanbank.churchsuite.com/events/56wsf23r>



**Soup Kitchen - Clothing Appeal**

As you'll have read in the Soup Kitchen article, we give out clothing to those in need. To help provide clothing to our guests we specifically need the following items.

**MENS**

- Jogging bottoms or jeans, 30-34 waist
- Hoodies, small and medium
- Gloves

**WOMENS**

- Jogging bottoms, small and medium
- Hoodies, small and medium
- Trainers, sizes 5 and 6.

If you have any spare of these items that you could donate, then please drop them off at the office. Many thanks, Soup Kitchen team.

**Pastoral Network**

Do you have a couple of hours a month to spare? You could make all the difference by visiting someone from our Church Family who is in hospital. Days can seem very long and lonely if you're sitting with no one to talk to. If you are interested then please contact **Janet Bagnall** via the church office, to discuss further. All new visitors will need to complete the Methodist safer recruitment process which Shirley Brooks will guide you through.

**Church Events**

If there are any church groups or events (at Swan Bank or even wider afield) that you would like advertising on the noticeboard, then please get in touch with either **Shirley or Nigel**

**Car Parking on a Sunday**

Can we give a gentle reminder that the church car park on a Sunday is **only** for use for those with impaired mobility. Some of our congregation have been finding it difficult to obtain a space on a Sunday which has on occasion resulted in a long uncomfortable walk for some of them.







# RESURRECTION EASTER

*Easter is a celebration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ after his death on the cross, providing salvation to any who will trust in Him. (Read John 19 and 20.)*

- APOSTLES
- CALVARY
- CELEBRATION
- CHRIST
- CROSS
- CROWN OF THORNS
- CRUCIFIXION
- FAITH
- GETHSEMANE
- GOOD FRIDAY
- HOLY WEEK
- HOPE
- JESUS
- LAMB
- LOVE
- MESSIAH
- MIRACLE
- PASSOVER
- PONTIUS PILATE
- PRAYER
- REDEMPTION
- RESURRECTION
- RISEN



- SACRIFICE
- SAVIOR
- SOLDIERS
- THIEVES



Besides the three wooden crosses at the top of this page there are nine more **small** crosses hidden in this Magazine. See if you can find them all!

## Agape, God's special gift of love

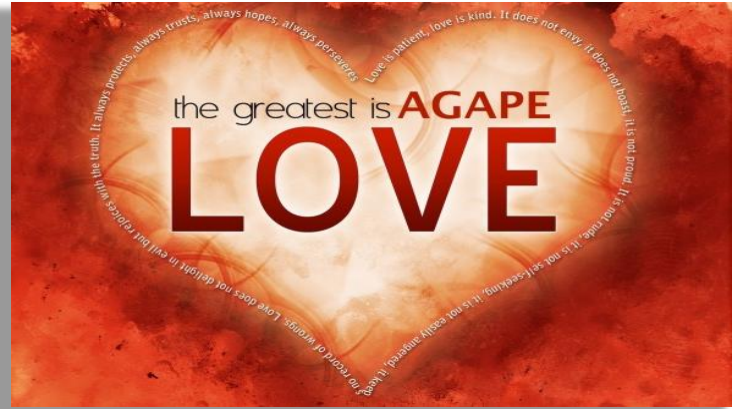
Agape is almost always used to describe the love that is of and from God, whose very nature is love itself: “*God is love*” (1 John 4:8). God does not merely love; He is love. Everything God does flows from His love. Agape is also used to describe our love for God (Luke 10:27), a servant’s faithful respect to his master (Matthew 6:24), and a man’s attachment to things (John 3:19).

The type of love that characterizes God is not a sappy, sentimental feeling such as we often hear portrayed. God loves because that is His nature and the expression of His being. He loves the unlovable and the unlovely, not because we deserve to be loved or because of any excellence we possess, but because it is His nature to love.

Agape love is always shown by what it does. God’s love is displayed most clearly at the cross. “*God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved*” (Ephesians 2:4–5).

We did not deserve such a sacrifice, “*but God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us*” (Romans 5:8).

God’s agape love is unmerited, gracious, and constantly seeking the benefit of the ones He loves. The Bible says we are the undeserving recipients of His lavish agape love (1 John 3:1). God’s demonstration of agape love led to the sacrifice of the Son of God for those He loves.



Agape love does not come naturally to us. Because of our fallen nature, we are incapable of producing such a love. If we are to love as God loves, that love—that agape—can only come from its source. This is the love that has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us when we became His children.

This is how we know what love is. Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. Because of God’s love toward us, we are able to love one another.

### Prayer

*Thanks be to God for his free gift of love.*

*We are forever grateful for the act of extreme love shown to us through our Lord's Death and Resurrection. We are thankful that nothing can separate us from the Love of God.*

*We are thankful that we have Hope for our future no matter what struggles we may face. Help us Lord to draw ever closer to your heart and trust in your promises.*

*In Jesus precious name, Amen*

**Sarah Dobson**

Swan Bank Church, Swan Square, Burslem, ST6 2AA

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



01782 575129



[admin@swanbank.org.uk](mailto:admin@swanbank.org.uk)



[www.swanbank.org.uk](http://www.swanbank.org.uk)

Sunday 10:30am Service, live stream links:



[www.youtube.com/@SwanBank/streams](https://www.youtube.com/@SwanBank/streams)



[www.facebook.com/swanbank/?locale=en\\_GB](https://www.facebook.com/swanbank/?locale=en_GB)

### Future Articles

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

[officeassistance@swanbank.org.uk](mailto:officeassistance@swanbank.org.uk).