



SWANBANK

March Magazine 2026

Monthly Message

It is a result of the beautiful mathematics of the moon and earth (and to some of us therefore an absolute mystery!) that our date for Easter changes quite dramatically each year. Whilst there have been conversations in the higher levels of the worldwide Christian church about changing it, for now we find ourselves no sooner having breathed a sigh of relief after Christmas than we're launched into Lent. Lent and Holy Week are not exactly found in the Bible, but rather are gifts to us from the heritage and tradition of the church; they are times of preparation, focus, reflection and seeking. Throughout Lent we are reminded of the time that Jesus set himself apart, to be alone in the desert, as he prepared himself for his years of leading, teaching and healing. The best-known Lenten tradition is that we give something up; a means of drawing closer to God by shifting our focus from the common things of this world towards God and our relationship with him. During Holy Week, this time of preparation is intensified as we remember the days leading up to Jesus' crucifixion.

It may seem impossible with busy lives, to imagine that we might stop and take time out. Equally uncomfortably, Lent asks us to do more 'navel-gazing' than we may be okay with or used to. However, taking stock



of our own lives, our fears and failures and seeking ways in which we may be 'better' people, and doing so by stopping and taking time out, are entirely in-keeping with the counter-cultural message of the gospel and give us a great excuse to take time for ourselves.

Whilst Lent began in February this year, it is not too late to join our Lent Bible Studies each Wednesday evening throughout this month. This might just be one Lent practice that you could take time to do, especially if you are not usually a part of a small group, you might find you even enjoy it!!

May you find blessing in your journey through Lent and Holy Week, through the recognition that Christ died to forgive us our sins on Good Friday and then the celebration of Christ's victorious resurrection on Easter Sunday: the pinnacle of Christian faith.

Ruth

Christian Aid Sponsored Walk



christian aid
We believe in life before death

NORTH STAFFS CHRISTIAN AID SPONSORED WALK

To be held at
TITTESWORTH WATER
(Three miles north of Leek, just off the A53)

SATURDAY 21st MARCH 2026
REGISTRATION FROM 9.15am

WALK STARTS AT 10.00am
The walk will be launched by
The Bishop of Stafford
and the
Lord Mayor of Stoke-on-Trent

Please see **Fiona Willis** (fionawillis@live.co.uk) for further details if you are interested in doing the walk or sponsoring someone who is.

District Youth Weekend Away



JOIN US AT

THE SUMMIT

DISTRICT YOUTH WEEKEND AWAY
17 - 19 APRIL 2026
WHITEMOOR LAKES, LICHFIELD

Open to those in school years 7-11. Tickets only £20 per person.
Please keep an eye out for further details including how to book.
Any questions? Email: nick@swanbank.org.uk

Regular Activities at SwanBank

Sunday

Sunday Services at 9am, 10:30am and 6:15pm.
Sunday Night Young Adults – Fellowship Rm, 8-9pm.

Monday

Bible Study – Coffee Bar, 10-11:30am.
Hope & Hospitality, Soup Kitchen – Coffee Lounge, 10am -12noon.
Dementia Activity Group – Coffee Lounge, 1-3pm.
SwanBank Community Choir – Fellowship Room, 7:30-9pm 2nd & 4th Mondays of each month

Tuesday

Little Treasures (0-4 year olds) – Lower Hall, 9:30 -11am (*term time only*).
Chatty Café – Coffee Lounge, 10am -12noon.
Tuesday Club – Coffee Lounge, 1:30 -3:30pm.

Wednesday

Friends in Fellowship – Meeting Room 1, 10 -12pm
Community Lounge/Foodbank – Lower Hall, 2-4pm
The Edge (School years 7-11) – 7 -8:30pm (*term time only*). See Nick Jeffries for details

Thursday

Prayer Time – Prayer Chapel, 9 -9:30am.
Hope & Hospitality, Soup Kitchen – Coffee Lounge, 10am -12noon.
Younger Youth 'NOISE' (School years 3-6) – Upper Hall, 5:45 -7:15pm (*term time only*). See Nick
Youth Club 'PULSE' (School years 7-11) – Upper Hall, 7:30-9pm (*term time only*). See Nick for details

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 – (*3rd Saturday of each month*). See Liz Thompson for details.

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

Invitation from Keele University Chaplain

Dear friends,

I'm delighted to invite you to the inaugural conference organised by Keele Chapel and The Potteries Theological Society.

'I was a stranger': Theological Perspectives on Migration at Keele Chapel, Keele University on Saturday 18th April, 10:00am - 15:00pm.

According to the Refugee Council there were 89,509 asylum applications in the UK in the year to September 2025. In that same period 559 small boats were detected arriving in the UK carrying 45,183 people.

Ten years after the Brexit vote, migration still makes headline news across the UK, often dividing opinion; but what might a faithful Christian response be to asylum seekers and refugees? What does the Christian tradition have to say about people movements and exile? How can we shape a theological response to the questions of immigration?

Join us for this **free**, in-person, day conference bringing into dialogue some of the key areas of research and innovation from Keele University with theologians and the Christian tradition. The day will include presentations, conversations and the opportunity to ask questions. Refreshments will be provided but please bring your own lunch. This year we will be joined by:

Revd Dr Jasmine Devadason - A Biblical scholar and Anglican priest currently working as a Learning and Development Officer in the Methodist Church.

Revd Dr Raj Bharath Patta - A public theologian and Lutheran minister from India, currently serving as a recognised and regarded minister of the Methodist Church in Britain at the United Stockport Circuit.

Dr Forough Ramezankhah - A lecturer in law at the School of Law, Keele University specialising in immigration and asylum law.

Please follow this link <https://tinyurl.com/hzbx5szz> to reserve a place. We look forward to seeing you

The Revd Simon Sutcliffe | Free Church Chaplain

Keele University, Keele, Staffordshire, UK ST5 5BG
Tel: 01782 731703.

Email: s.sutcliffe@keele.ac.uk | keele.ac.uk/faith



Letters to our 'At Home' Group

Hello again. A while ago I wrote a piece for the Magazine about the 'At Home' group and how I have become involved with them.

For those new to SwanBank, the 'At Home' group are dear and loved members of the SwanBank Church family who for various reasons are now unable to attend church in person. We at SwanBank keep in touch with them throughout the year with regular pastoral visits and with seasonal gifts. Our aim is to let them know that they remain in our thoughts and prayers.

Two years ago, I met with Janet Bagnall, our Pastoral Team Coordinator, and volunteered my writing skills and talents. Janet was keen to develop a further link with our 'At Home' group, and so in February 2024 I began handwriting letters to accompany the monthly SwanBank Magazine that is posted out to them.

I'd like to share with you how things are going with my letter writing. I try to find nice notelet cards or writing paper to brighten their day. These have included pictures of flowers, animals, pets or scenery. If I go away, I write a holiday postcard, from Tenby or Llandudno for example. I sometimes include a photo I have taken, including the SwanBank floral Easter cross, the Christmas tree or Advent wreath.

I hand write every letter because at SwanBank we want each person to know they are special and thought about. Although I have never met the 'At Home' members, I think of them as I write and always keep them in my prayers. My letters always end with a greeting from you, the SwanBank Church family, as I know we remember them in our thoughts and prayers.

The two years of monthly letter writing seem to have passed very quickly. I look forward to continuing my link with SwanBank 'At Home' group.

Jane Barnes



Good News Stories from Grocery Members

The work of the Grocery goes on week by week, as part of the work of SwanBank. Sometimes we don't always see or hear how we have touched the lives of the people who we serve. Here are a few of the stories I have received from Grocery members over the last few weeks, they are really a great encouragement to myself and the team. SwanBank and the Grocery are working together in partnership with the Message Trust.



Nan Hulse



I would just like to say a huge thank you for Christmas. The performance put on by the church was absolutely wonderful. It was really quite clever for it to be engaging with the children but also showing them what the true meaning of Christmas is. My daughter loved holding the candle in her orange, at the end, whilst we all sang. But the biggest thanks goes to Nan and her team at the Grocery. The gift bag of food and snack bits was wonderful, but the toys and books were massively unexpected. You could genuinely see how much love and care was put into the whole thing. My two got to pick out a present and a book and Nan even let my oldest have another one when she couldn't pick between two. It was so thoughtful and it was massively appreciated. All the hard work and support you all put in throughout the year does not go unnoticed and I'm sure you made a lot of people's (us included) Christmas that little bit less stressful. Thank you for everything.

Hi Nan and team, Happy New Year! Many thanks for the hamper that you provided for my family prior to Christmas, it enabled us to enjoy festive treats and time together without worrying about finances. The grocery is such a hub of kindness, I enjoy visiting and chatting to the team and everyone is always happy to help. I didn't anticipate a life where my family would utilise such a service, but I don't feel shame, just hope and generosity and light. Please can you thank the team and all involved in the grocery for their kindness and access to a fabulous scheme.



Great place, great staff, always willing to help. I went today with a young mum who I'm supporting, the staff couldn't do enough, even gave her books and Duplo for her little boy. It was just fabulous, thank you so much.
This message is from a support worker from the YMCA.



Thank you so much for your help today. Mum left so happy and she is so pleased to have lots in and not have to worry for the rest of the week. Thank you very much.

Working Through Guilt

Old age gives us time and with it regret for past failings and mistakes. They swim up through our memories. In many cases those we have hurt, either intentionally or unintentionally, have died, so repair, restitution and apology are impossible - a source of lasting grief.

But guilt is not always a negative force. We are coming up to Easter, which has as its prologue the greatest betrayal of all. Judas, unable to reverse it, hanged himself. But another betrayal matters, though in a different way. Jesus had relied on Peter. 'On this rock I will build my Church.' However, on the eve of his arrest Jesus foresaw Peter's moment of weakness and eventual repentance. 'When you turn back to me, you must strengthen your brothers.' Peter protested that he would follow Jesus to prison and death. Jesus replied, 'The cock will not crow tonight until you have thrice denied that you know me.'

And so it turned out. Peter followed Jesus and the soldiers to the High Priest's house. The servants sitting round the courtyard fire put it to him three times that he was a follower of Jesus. Almost as soon as he uttered the third denial the cock crew and Jesus looked straight at him. Peter remembered his words, went out and 'wept bitterly'.

But he recovered and, as forecast, went on to establish

and extend the Christian community. But the guilt that helped propel him never went away. It made a powerful contribution to his success. When he was sentenced to crucifixion, he asked to be crucified upside down as he did not feel worthy to die exactly as Jesus had done.

Others followed in Peter's footsteps. In 19th century London, Dr Thomas Barnardo gave street children shelter. Late one night a homeless boy knocked at his door. 'Sorry', said Dr Barnardo, 'We're full up for tonight. Come back tomorrow.' In the night the boy froze to death. Overcome by remorse Dr Barnardo vowed never to turn a child away again, no matter what the pressure on space was. Now 60,000 children have passed through the homes he founded.

It is never too late to make up for the sins of commission and omission we all commit, even if restitution is indirect and not in the form expected.

There is always a way. Let me quote a poster in Hanley Market: 'There are 1,440 minutes in a day. You have 1,440 chances to make a positive impact!'



Margaret Brown

March 2026 - Circuit Preaching Plan

Venue	Time	1 st March	8 th March	15 th March Mothering Sunday	22 nd March	29 th March Palm Sunday
Swan Bank	9.00am	Jeffries 	Worthington	Jeffries	Brooks	Jeffries
	10.30am	Jeffries 	Brabbs	Jeffries	Jeffries (Host)	Jeffries
	6.15pm	Young Adults	Jeffries 	A Johnson	Jeffries	Brabbs
Potter's Church	9.30am	Zinyemba	Price	Hancock	B Barber	Cooke
	11.15am	Zinyemba	Price	Hancock	B Barber	Cooke
Oasis Church	10.45am	Wyatt	G Davies	Brabbs	Community Sunday	Nixon
Wesley Hall	10.45am	Tattersall	Boateng	Wakelin 	Boateng	Stanyer
The Gateway	10.45am	Boateng	Andrews	Tretheway	Mason	Tattersall
Mt Pleasant	10.45am	Batho	Tindale	Own Arrangement	Own Arrangement	Tindale
Packmoor	11.00am	Wilshaw	Own Arrangement	Brooks	Tindale	Wakelin 
Village Ch	11.00am	Brooks	Jeffries 	Own Arrangement	Wakelin	A Johnson
Whitehill	10.30am	Mason	Cooper 	Cooper	Cooper	Batho
	6.00pm	Cooper	Wakelin	Q & A	Cooper 	Bowers

SwanBank Easter Preaching Themes

DATE	MORNING THEME	EVENING THEME
22 nd Feb	The Beatitudes - Righteousness - Matthew 5:6	Sunday School Stories Revisited - David and Goliath
1 st March	The Beatitudes - Merciful - Matthew 5:7	Sunday School Stories Revisited - Esther
8 th March	The Beatitudes - Pure in Heart - Matthew 5:8	Sunday School Stories Revisited - Samson
15 th March	The Beatitudes - Peacemakers - Matthew 5:9	Sunday School Stories Revisited - Gideon
22 nd March	The Beatitudes - Persecuted - Matthew 5:10-11	Sunday School Stories Revisited - The Fall of Jericho
29 th March	Palm Sunday	Sunday School Stories Revisited - Jonah and the Whale

Opening of a Night Shelter at No.9 Chapel Lane

A new chapter in supporting some of Burslem's most vulnerable residents is about to begin with the opening of a dedicated Night Shelter at No. 9 Chapel Lane (a property owned by SwanBank). This will be delivered in partnership with Adullam, a respected faith-based charity with a long track record of helping people facing homelessness and hardship. It is the intention that the day to day running costs for the Night Shelter will be met by external service providers including S-o-T City Council.



The Night Shelter will be open every day of the year, providing a safe, warm, and welcoming space for those who would otherwise be sleeping rough on the streets of

Burslem. This vital new provision builds on the already outstanding work taking place at Number 9, where support is offered throughout the day and meals are served every Wednesday and Saturday evening — services that will continue unchanged.

Those involved in the project have expressed deep gratitude for the dedication of volunteers and staff who have sustained these essential daytime and evening services. The new overnight shelter is not a replacement, but an important addition — extending care beyond daylight hours and ensuring that help is available around the clock.

The partnership between Adullam and the Rough Sleepers Team marks a significant step forward in a shared mission: to reduce rough sleeping in and around Burslem and to address the complex challenges that many individuals face. From mental health struggles and addiction to unemployment and relationship breakdown, the issues are varied and deeply personal. For many

in the community, these are not abstract problems — they are realities witnessed daily on local streets.

By working closely together, Adullam and other frontline teams will focus not only on providing immediate safety but also on longer-term solutions. The aim is to move beyond crisis response and towards meaningful change — helping individuals access the support, housing, and stability they need to rebuild their lives.

The opening of the Night Shelter represents months of planning, collaboration and determination. It reflects a collective commitment across organisations and volunteers who have long recognised the need to offer more comprehensive support.

With its year-round operation and coordinated approach, the new Night Shelter stands as a powerful statement of compassion and action — ensuring that some of Burslem's most vulnerable residents are not alone, and that practical help is available every night of the year.

“Loving father, We lift up the Community of Burslem to you, we thank you for every life, every story and every person who calls this place home. We ask for your blessing over the Night Shelter, let it be a refuge in times of hardship and a stepping stone toward restoration and new beginnings.

We pray for the teams serving at Number 9, unite them in purpose and protect them in their work, please strengthen when they are tired, give wisdom when decisions are difficult and that compassion never runs dry.

Lord, we ask for your provision, for resources, volunteers, finances, and encouragement. Provide more than enough to meet every need, open doors that no one can shut. May your light shine brightly through every act of kindness and service. Amen”



Liz Thompson

Youth and Children’s Leader Vacancy



*Yet, O Lord, you are our Father;
we are the clay, and you are our
potter; we are all the work of
your hand.*

Isaiah ch 64, v 8

The Potteries Mission Circuit of the Methodist Church in Stoke-on-Trent is seeking to appoint a

YOUTH and CHILDREN’S LEADER

Part time (30 hours a week) £22,542 pa

This is an exciting opportunity whereby the postholder will lead the Youth and Children’s Ministry at Forsbrook and Blythe Bridge Methodist Church whilst also being instrumental in discerning the development of a Youth Church based at the Blythe Bridge site and serving the whole Circuit.

For an initial conversation please contact Revd Pam Roberts on

paroberts38@gmail.com

For an application pack please email:

oneoffbb@gmail.com

Applications by noon on March 16th 2026

Interviews w/c March 23rd 2026

Wednesday’s The Edge for Young People



Step up to "The Edge" a place for young people who want to think, grow, and explore what following Jesus looks like in real life. It's a place for honest questions, good friends, and plenty of fun

Every Wednesday in term time	Open to all those in School years 7-11
7pm-8.30pm	

Contact Nick@swanbank.org.uk for more details

Prayer Focus – “Jesus wants you just as you are”

I have recently been reflecting on a hymn which was particularly relevant when I first heard about the Christian faith; a song which has a clear honest message. The hymn "Just as I am" speaks in the most honest way about our relationship with Jesus and how we can enter that relationship.

This song was written by Charlotte Elliott in 1835. She was an English poet and hymn writer. She lived with long term illness and physical weakness. Charlotte believed in God but struggled with a deep question; "How can someone like me come to God when I have nothing to offer?" She had an inner conflict which shaped the heart of the hymn. Then one evening after reflecting, Charlotte realised a powerful truth. God doesn't ask people to come to him perfectly; he asks them to come honestly, as they are, with quiet conviction.

She began by writing the opening line - "**Just as I am,**

without one plea, but that thy blood was shed for me”.

The hymn teaches us that we come to Jesus without excuses, without pretending, without fixing ourselves first. Grace from Jesus can transform us, restore us, heal us and empower us.

Each verse repeats the same truth in different ways; come with guilt, come with fear, come with weakness, come with doubt. The hymn teaches a timeless truth, God meets people where they are. No masks, no performance, just honesty. In a world that demands perfection "Just as I am" offers rest, grace and love (without conditions)

“Thank you Jesus, that you love us just as we are, and you want to bless us by your Grace which enables us to become more like you, Amen”

Sarah Dobson



Swan Bank Church, Swan Square, 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 or



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

Issue No. 29



SWANBANK NOTICEBOARD

Whitehill Methodist Community Church

They hold mid-week services every Wednesday starting at 10:15am. All are welcome! You can find them at Whitehill Road, Kidsgrove, ST7 4DS,

Lent Course

The Lent course started on the 25th Feb and continues every Wednesday until 25th March. Please feel free to gather from 7pm for a 7:30pm start in the Fellowship room.

Community Grocery

Don't forget our Grocery is open Monday to Friday from 10am to 4pm. **Everyone** is welcome to use it. Also, the manger, **Nan Hulse**, is looking for extra volunteers, especially on Mondays.

Grocery Coffee Morning

Just a quick reminder that the Community Grocery is holding a coffee morning on **Tuesday 3rd March** in the SwanBank Coffee Lounge from 10am to 12noon.

Volunteer Safeguarding Training Dates

Just a reminder that all volunteers within the church need to renew their Safeguarding Training every 4 years. There is a Foundation Training session on **Monday 30th March, 7-9:30pm** and an Advanced Training session on **Saturday 21st March (9:30am- 4pm)**. To find out more please speak to **Shirley Brooks** or email her on..... shirley@swanbank.org.uk.

Answers to Prayer?

We would love to hear about any experiences that you may have with regards to answers to prayer. If there is anything you'd like to share, then contact either Shirley or Nigel and we'll hopefully be able to include it in a future edition of the Magazine.

Messy Church

Our Messy Church meets the first Saturday of each month and is aimed at primary school aged children. However, they really need the help of a cook to maintain what they are doing. Is this something you could do even just once or twice a year?

Baptism and Membership

The next Baptism and Membership service is on **Sunday 29th March**. Please contact **Ruth** if this is something you are interested in by calling the office on 01782 575129 or emailing ruth@swanbank.org.uk.

Pastoral Network of Care

Are you part of our Network of Care? If so, don't forget our next whole team meeting is on **Tuesday 31st March, 7.00 - 9.00pm**, Gaynor Morton from Dougie Mac Dementia Services, will be sharing with us.

Fairtrade Stall

Ann Worthington will be holding a Fairtrade stall at church on **Sunday 15th March**, after both the 9am and 10:30am services. Please bring cash as Ann can't take card payments.



Church Events or Articles for the Magazine

If there are any church groups or events (at SwanBank or even further afield) that you would like advertising on the noticeboard or if you have articles for the Magazine, then please contact either **Shirley Brooks** or **Nigel Johnson**

