



November Magazine 2026

Monthly Message

Dear Friends,

One of the things I love about SwanBank is our desire to be a church where everyone is welcome. Whoever you are, whatever your story, and wherever you are on life's journey, there is a place for you here.

We recently gathered to grieve and give thanks for the life of our much-loved former minister, Reverend John Hibberts. These weeks have reminded me of the wonderful legacy that John and his wife Val left us. They helped create a culture at SwanBank where people were welcomed, valued and made to feel at home. We give thanks for all they brought to this church and for the foundations of love and belonging on which we continue to build.

Recently, I have been thinking about the difference between being welcomed and truly belonging—and wondering whether God might be nudging us to consider it too.

Welcome matters enormously. It is the smile at the door, a friendly conversation over coffee, or someone making space beside them. It is knowing that you have been noticed and that someone is glad you came. But belonging goes deeper.

Belonging is when you no longer feel like a visitor: when people know your name, you feel able to join in, ask questions, be yourself and admit when life is difficult. It is knowing that your presence matters.

Welcome says, "We're glad you're here."
Belonging says, "You're one of us, and we're better because you're here."

As ministers here, Leslie and I sense that God is nudging us to deepen that belonging. We are not starting from scratch; we are building on the legacy of John and Val, and of everyone who has worked, past and present, to make this a welcoming community.



Leslie has suggested "Finding Your Feet at SwanBank" gatherings: relaxed, friendly spaces for people who are new to church, returning after time away, or wondering about their next step. You can read Leslie's article in this edition.

Of course, gatherings alone cannot create belonging. It grows through small, everyday choices: noticing someone on their own, remembering a name, offering an invitation, or looking beyond our usual circle.

So perhaps the question for each of us is: Who might God be inviting me to help belong?

Let us keep being a welcoming church. Let us honour John and Val's legacy by building a community where people do not simply come through the doors, but find a home, a family, and a place to grow in faith in Jesus and in discipleship.

I am expectant for what God might do as we make more room for belonging.

Kathryn

Prayer Focus

In a world of constant change and challenges we are called to lean into God's direction to keep our focus. We can easily drift and fall due to the circumstances of life. Our loving Father is right by our side, and his eyes are forever on us.

In Mark 12:30, quoting Deuteronomy 6:5, Jesus identifies this as the first and greatest commandment: *"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength."*

Jesus also said he was the Way the Truth and the Life. We can find and trust the word of God to give us an anchor and solid foundation. We need to cultivate prayer and the reading of God's word to guide our thoughts and steer our life choices so we become more like Jesus, and we can know his peace and serve him effectively. In our own strength we know this is impossible as we often fail. Seek me with all your heart (Jeremiah 29 v 13) means putting the Lord above all else in devotion.



Sarah Dobson

"Heavenly Father, I come before You today. Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. Wash my mind, heart, and soul clean. Forgive me for wrong thoughts, hidden struggles, and anything that grieves Your Spirit.

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Tear down every stronghold and negative mindset in my mind, and fill my thoughts with what is true, pure, and peaceful. Purify my motives and guide my steps. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen."

Christmas Treats!

It's that time of the year where we're starting to prepare for our Christmas activities! As part of that, it would be great if you could buy a box of sweets (the usual suspects – Celebrations, Quality Street, Roses etc..) that the church can then use over the Christmas period.



CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS

We are pulling together a team to put up our church Christmas decorations and Christmas tree on Thursday 26th November (from 7pm onwards). If you are interested, then can you please speak to the office.



November 2026 - Circuit Preaching Plan

Venue	Time	1 st Nov. All Saints Day	8 th Nov. Remembrance Sunday	15 th Nov.	22 nd Nov.	29 th Nov. 1 st in Advent
SwanBank	9.00am 10.30am 6.15pm	Simcoe All -in - OA Stephens	Newton Stephens/Newton Memorial Service	Chapman A Johnson Newton	Worthington Newton TBC	F Hibberts F Hibberts Stephens/Cooke
Potter's Church	9.30am 11.15am	Price Price	Price Price	Hancock Hancock	Price Price	Cooke Cooke
Oasis Church	10.45am	Dalton	Davies	Davies	Cooke	Davies
Wesley Hall	10.45am	Boateng	Wakelin	Vaughan	G Newton	Stephens
The Gateway	10.45am	Own Arrangement	Cooke	Brooks	Mason	Kirk
Mount Pleasant	10.45am	Tindale 2:30pm Commemoration	Tindale	Own Arrangement	Tretheway	Wakelin
Packmoor	11.00am	Wakelin	Dutton	Stephens	Tindale	Boateng
Village Ch	11.00am	Andrews	Edwards	Brabbs	Edwards	Newton
Whitehill	10.30am 6.00pm	Shaw Wakelin	Cooper Memorial Service	Nixon Stephens	Wakelin Cooper	Brabbs Cooper

A Late Lesson

Recently I have been thinking about what matters and what does not. Like all my family I had always defined myself in terms of academic success. My aunt put in the newspaper that all six of us had degrees. We bristled with prestigious qualifications, which in 1970s society meant fat salaries. We were complacent meritocrats.

Right through the Bible money and property, often in the form of livestock, have defined and described people. Prophets warned kings and the rich against excessive reliance on such tangible and measurable assets. But the lure of status and hierarchy was strong.

As times became more settled, learning and intelligence advanced to the fore. Solomon's sense of priorities reflected this. God offered to give him whatever he wanted. He asked for wisdom. 'I need to know the difference between right and wrong so that I can govern my people justly.' God was favourably impressed and gave him not only what he had asked for but also what he had not asked for - wealth, honour, long life, death to his enemies etc. Intelligence had got him everything until he pushed his luck by tolerating strange gods among his women's quarters. After his death God drove his dynasty out.

Over the last century we have seen a modern version of this rise and fall of a group of men exercising power. Are our universities rather like the Sanhedrin?

However, the bigger the state, the more minds are needed to run it. Printing, examinations, regulations and, eventually, the Net created a meritocracy with a firm belief in its right to rule and be paid for it. Now we have thousands of podcasts and drones. And AI looms. The results might be devastating.

Perhaps we have relied too much on intelligence and education. Perhaps we have drifted too far from our one-time view of ourselves as full of white-hot zeal. St. Paul was clear. In 1 Corinthians 13:2 he says, 'I may have all knowledge and understand all secrets, but if I have not love, I am nothing.'

When I was a pupil at Clayton Hall Grammar School, one of the favourite morning assembly readings of our headmistress, Miss Elsie Farrar, was 1 Corinthians 13. Now, at 83 I realise the truth of its message. Professional achievement is in itself no more valuable than sporting records or huge sums in the bank. The clever are not necessarily better than the less clever and their certificates can lose value when society changes.

What matters in the sum of one's life is the contribution to God's plan. We cannot know what any individual plan is, but we can pursue the basic message and hope for the best!

Margaret Brown



COME AND JOIN US FOR THE FIRST OF SIX AMAZING CONCERTS.
ALL IN AID OF THE LORD MAYOR'S CHARITY - DEMENTIA STOKE



THE CITY OF STOKE-ON-TRENT MALE VOICE CHOIR & POTTERIES MEN SING
WITH PENKHULL VILLAGE BRASS

SATURDAY 14TH NOVEMBER 2026
LINGTON CENTRAL HALL, STAFFORDSHIRE ST3 2JH

DOORS 6.45PM | CONCERT 7.30PM

TICKETS £12 | UNDER 12S FREE

TICKETS AVAILABLE TO PURCHASE ONLINE BY SCANNING THE QR CODE, OR FROM THE CHOIR



FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT SHAUNEY CONNOR ON 07562 670 430,
EMAIL INFO@POTTERIESMENSING.CO.UK, OR VISIT OUR WEBSITE:
WWW.POTTERIESMENSING.CO.UK

POTTERIES MEN SING
SIX TOWNS TOUR

CITY OF STOKE-ON-TRENT
MALE VOICE CHOIR

Stoke-on-Trent Lord Mayor's Charity
Supporting Dementia and Dementia Awareness

The City of Stoke on Trent Male Voice Choir
present to you

POTTERIES MEN SING
in a
Six Towns Tour
of our great city.

Calling at:

LONGTON	BURSLEM	TUNSTALL	HANLEY	FENTON	STOKE
Central Methodist Hall	Vale Park (Port Vale FC)	Methodist	Sacred Heart Catholic Church	Christchurch	Minster
14th November 2026	21st November 2026	12th December 2026	30th January 2027	26th February 2027	24th April 2027
7:30pm	6:00pm	7:30pm	7:30pm	7:30pm	7:30pm

All proceeds and donations will go directly to
Supporting Dementia and Dementia Awareness
in the Stoke-on-Trent area,
the chosen charity of the Lord Mayor 2026/27

Remembering John Hibberts



John Hibberts started his time at SwanBank in September 1983. He arrived to begin an outstanding ministry alongside his wonderful family, Val, Rachel, Jonathan, Katherine and Peter. Prior to arriving at SwanBank, John had a successful ministry in Bamber Bridge from 1973, and the congregation were devastated when he decided to move to Burslem!

Many tributes have been shared about John's impact on the community of Burslem. John was the Chaplain at Port Vale, who shared this message: "Everyone at Port Vale was saddened to hear of the passing of John Hibberts."

Young Offenders. Fr Simon, a fellow Chaplain, said of John: "Prison chaplaincy is very much a 'ministry of presence': often, there's little to be done beyond being there. John maintained a very visible presence on the wings, sometimes in his deerstalker, or else his flat cap with its Port Vale badge. But in crises too he brought a skilled pastoral manner to bear and was always calm himself and reassured those around him. This, derived from his personal closeness to God, and his cultivation of holiness."

John was always ready to listen and offer wise words, give you the biggest hugs and share a joke. He shared key family moments: marriages, births, key birthdays and funerals; always a comforting and wise presence.

One thing was clear about John: his passion for mission and how much he loved to share his faith. John put others first. John's ministry was wide-reaching, for example across Methodism through his strong involvement in Easter People. It is impossible to summarise all the things John did, but we can all say:

"Well done, good and faithful servant."

Matthew, 25:23.

Upcoming retreat

'AN ADVENT RETREAT'

led by Rev Rob Cotton

(Minister of Ashley & Market Drayton Methodist Churches)

& Rev Obeth Obeth Thevanesan

(Minister of Audlem & Nantwich Methodist Churches)

SATURDAY 12TH DECEMBER

10AM - 3PM

A day of prayer, quiet time
and guided reflection,
including lunch and refreshments

Ashley Methodist Church
Wesleyan Road, Ashley, TF9 4JT

£20
per
person

We have a small number of funded/partially funded places available for the day if finances are a barrier, so if you would like to access one of those, please mention on enquiry.



Enquiries

retreats@ashleymethodist.co.uk

For more information & to book
www.ashleymethodist.co.uk/retreats

Dates for your Christmas Diary

Thurs 26th Nov. - Church Decorating 7pm

Sun 29th Nov. - 1st Sunday in Advent

Wed 2nd Dec. - 1st Advent Bible Study at 7:30pm

Sat 5th Dec. - Christmas Messy Church

Wed 9th Dec. - 2nd Advent Bible Study at 7:30pm

Fri 11th Dec. - Carol Pub Crawl around local
hostelries (venues and times to follow)

Sun 13th Dec. - Nativity at the 10:30am service

Wed 16th Dec. - 3rd Advent Bible Study at 7:30pm

Sun 20th Dec. - No 9am service, traditional carols at
the 10:30 service. Christingle services at 4 and 6pm

Christmas Eve - 11:30 midnight communion

Christmas Day - 10:30 Christmas Day Celebration

Sun 27th Dec. - 9am and 10:30am services but no
evening service

SWANBANK INVITES YOU TO OUR

225TH BIRTHDAY PARTY



14/11/2026

At 6:00pm

Swanbank Church
Swan Square
ST6 2AA



This Year **Swanbank turned 225** and we want to celebrate with you through classic party games and lots of food! An opportunity to reminisce, to have a laugh, and to share together as we celebrate the past, present, and future of our Church community.

Bring and Share!

If able, please bring a 'party food' of your choice to share with others.

Some hot food will also be provided.



We'd love to set a challenge for our budding bakers to take part in Swanbank's very own Bake Off!

Create and bring a decorated cake inspired by our church, its community, faith, or traditions. Every entry will be displayed and judged by a special panel, with prizes awarded for the most creative and impressive designs. Whether you're a seasoned baker or just love getting creative, we'd love to see your masterpiece!

If you would like to attend Swanbank's Birthday Party, please scan the QR Code to register or speak to a member of staff



Christmas Day

Volunteers Needed

Can you spare some time this Christmas Day? Whether you can help with transport, deliver meals, prepare and serve food, or simply offer friendship and company, every little bit helps us share the love and hope of Christmas with our community.

If you can help with any of these, please sign up using the QR code or call the office on:
01782 575129

SWANBANK 

CHRISTMAS DAY

Typically, we need people to help with the following,

- Delivery of meals and 'At Home' gifts
- Collecting people from home to attend the Christmas Dinner at Church
- Picking up after the Christmas Dinner and taking folk home
- Kitchen – food preparation
- Serving Dinner
- Dishes, table clearing, room clearance
- General cleaning and tidying, washroom checks and topping up supplies and cleaning
- Checking in visitors
- Chatting and making all welcome in the auditorium
- Coffee lounge and quiet space, accompanying those who prefer this area

Look out for the sign-up sheet at church closer to Christmas.



Finding Your Feet at SwanBank

A place to begin, belong and discover your next step!

One of the really encouraging things about SwanBank is that we regularly welcome new people into our church family. Almost

every week, someone new comes through our doors! People arrive from different starting points. Some have been Christians for years; others are returning to church, exploring faith for the first time, or aren't yet sure what they believe. How can we help everyone to find their feet - to feel they belong and discover their next step?

That's why we're developing Finding Your Feet – a regular, informal, welcoming gathering to meet others, explore the foundations of Christian faith, discover more about SwanBank and consider where their journey might lead. We envisage it running weekly, with a rolling five-week pattern built around five key aspects of our shared life at SwanBank:

Encounter – making space to meet with Jesus through worship and prayer

Belonging – helping everyone find a place so that they feel at home

Growing – encouraging a life-long journey of becoming more like Jesus

Compassion – discovering how we are sharing Jesus' love with our community

Service – discerning how everyone can play their part and use their gifts

Each gathering would include welcome, some Christian teaching and conversation, and stories of faith being lived out through SwanBank's ministries and communities. Importantly, this wouldn't be a course to complete. There would be no Week One! People could join at any point and stay for as long as it's helpful. Next steps might include Alpha, joining a small group, serving, exploring membership - or simply enjoying getting to know people.

Above all, we want everyone to feel genuinely welcome, with the opportunity to really belong, find their feet and enjoy becoming part of something bigger. Could you help make this happen? I'm looking for people interested in helping develop and co-lead 'Finding Your Feet.' And if you'd like to come along when it starts - probably early in the New Year - I'd love to hear from you too! Please let me know either in person or by dropping an email to leslie.newton@swanbank.org.uk.



Leslie Newton

gofundme

Scan to donate to SwanBank Church's fundraiser
"Help Us Keep Cooking for Our Community"

Our ovens and kitchen equipment have served us for years, but they're struggling to keep up with the people we support.

From our weekday soup kitchen to Christmas Day celebrations, we provide food, friendship and a caring space for isolated and vulnerable people all year round.

Every donation will help us continue this vital community work.

SWANBANK

ONE STEP FORWARD

MEN'S WALKING GROUP

Join us every alternative month.
Come along for a wander, a chat
and a coffee

Next walk:

2pm Saturday, 21st November
Starting at Westport Lake Cafe

Speak to Matt Nixon for details

Arriving at SwanBank!

Hi everyone.

My name is Gill Newton, and I arrived at Swanbank at the start of September along with my husband Leslie, who is now one of your ministers, and also our daughter Laura.

I've been worshipping in the Methodist church since before I can remember, having been born to Methodist parents, the eldest of three children in a farming family in North Cornwall. From my earliest days my faith was nurtured through Sunday School, Girls' Brigade and Circuit Youth Fellowship. I was part of a Mission Band in my teens and early twenties and have also been a member of various singing duos, groups and choirs over the years. I became a Local Preacher in 1990 before training for the ministry in 1995 at Wesley College in Bristol, which is where I met Leslie!

Prior to ministry I worked for the TSB Bank for 16 years in various towns and cities in Cornwall, Devon, Somerset and Dorset. During my years in ministry, I have served in the Barnsley and Bramhall

& Wythenshawe Circuits, and as Chair of the Sheffield District. I now serve in the Methodist Connexional Team as the Ministerial Co-ordinator for Oversight of Ordained Ministries. I am in the office in London a couple of days each week and I also spend a lot of time in various conference centres, being privileged to journey with those who are discerning their vocation within the life of the church.

In my spare time I like to crochet or knit. I am also an avid keeper of scrapbooks, I like to read and I can play the piano and guitar, but I'm a bit out of practice these days! I also serve as the National Chaplain for Girls' Brigade England and Wales. I'm glad to be here, am grateful for your welcome and look forward to getting to know you all much better over the coming weeks and months.

Gill Newton



*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

YOUNG PEOPLE'S MINISTRY PIONEER

Full-time 37.5 hours per week (£30,127.50 pa)

This is an exciting, pioneering opportunity to lead and develop our Young People's Ministry at Forsbrook and Blythe Bridge Methodist Church, building relationships with schools and within our wider community, in order to help young people to learn about the love of Jesus.

The postholder will have a dynamic, spirit-led role in creating a continuum of provision for young people from pre-school age through to age 18, welcoming and valuing all young people, including those with SEND and neurodiverse needs.

For an initial conversation please contact Revd Pam Roberts on

paroberts38@gmail.com

For an application pack please email:

office@potteriesmission.co.uk

Applications by noon on 19.11.2026

Interviews w/c 23.11.2026

Pastoral Network of Care

The important role of SB Pastoral Link Visitors who undertake home visits cannot go unnoticed. The home visits they undertake help in ensuring that members are not forgotten and that SB cares. They highlight any issues, offer holy communion & seasonal gifts from the church whilst sharing the unconditional love of Jesus.

The role of Pastoral Link is extremely important to the life of the Church. Visits are carried out monthly and logs simply record a visit. The logs can be placed in the pastoral tray in the office or handed to Doreen Gowie, one of our Steering Team members. Blank Visit Logs can be obtained from the Pastoral Tray in the office.

On behalf of all members of the Pastoral Team, I would like to express our sincere thanks to our Pastoral Links for sacrificing their time in undertaking such an important role for our church family.

Doreen Gowie

(Pastoral Link Visitor Co-Ordinator)



Service at Scotia Heights Care Home

On 13th October, Shirley, Rev Arthur, Ellie, Janet, staff and residents had a wonderful time at the Scotia Heights Care home monthly service. Arthur also led a special blessing for the Activity Coordinator, Nicki, and her partner, Dan, as they prepare for their forthcoming wedding. It was a lovely occasion, and we wish them every happiness for their future together.



Shirley Brooks

Carol Singing in Local Care Homes

Would you like to join us singing carols in our local care homes? Since space is sometimes limited in the venues, please register your interest with me at shirley@swanbank.org.uk. So far, the dates and venues are –

- 8th Dec. 11am Goldendale Care Home, Plex St, Tunstall, ST6 5JA.
- 22nd Dec. 11am Chatterley Court, Chell Heath Road, ST6 6PD.

More dates to follow in the December edition!



Shirley Brooks

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 – Fellowship Rm, 10 -12noon.
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.
One Step Forward (Men's Walking Group) – (2pm on Saturday of every other month). See Matt Nixon for details. Next walk is planned for 20th November.

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

SWANBANK NOTICEBOARD

Gateway Coffee Mornings

The next Gateway Coffee Morning at Goldenhill is on **Saturday 14th November** (10am till 12 noon). All are welcome!



Fairtrade Stalls at SB

Ann Worthington is holding Fairtrade stalls on Sunday 15th Nov. and Sunday 13th Dec. They'll be open on both dates from 10-10:30am and 12-12:30pm. It's a great opportunity to get some lovely Christmas gifts as well as helping a great cause.

Please remember, it's CASH only!



Mid-Week Service

The Stoke-on-Trent Mission Circuit hold a mid-week service at **Whitehill Methodist Community Church** (Whitehill Road, Kidsgrove, ST7 4DS) every Wednesday starting at 10:15am.

4th Nov. TBA

11th Nov. Ann Worthington

18th Nov. Rev. Arthur Wakelin

25th Nov. Martyn Leech

All are welcome!

Men's Fellowship Prayer Breakfast

There will be a prayer breakfast in the Coffee Lounge on Saturday 28th November starting 8am.

Can you let **Stewart Chapman** know on 07552 949990 if you intend coming so he can plan the catering.

Tuesday Club Carol Service

The Tuesday Club are holding their Carol service on Tuesday (of course), 15th Dec at 13:45pm. All are welcome to join in.

Fun Fact

Did you know it's 3 years since we re-started the Magazine in November 2023? That's gone quickly!



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**.



Past issues can be also found at <https://www.swanbank.org.uk/newsletter/>

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. 37



Something to test that brain cell!

Nativity Word Search

C A N O I T A V L A S D N S H S
Q S H E P H E R D S R F A L L U
R A T S A M T S I R H C T E J S
N E M E S I W S H E E P I G O E
J G N I K M A R Y G I U V N S J
M O S Y I H X Q U R Q W I A E T
D O N K E Y R E G N A M T D P M
Z I L I N N K E E P E R Y O H F

angels
Christmas
donkey
innkeeper
Jesus
Joseph
king

manger
Mary
nativity
salvation
sheep
shepherds
star
wisemen

