

# NEWS FROM THE PEWS

St John's – Focused on Christ, united in faith, serving our community  
and a place of worship where all are welcome

## Church Services in January

### 4th January:

9.00am Holy Communion (BCP)  
10.30am All-Age Service (CW)  
6.30pm Evensong (BCP)

### 11th January:

9.00am Holy Communion (BCP)  
10.30am Morning Worship (CW)

### 18th January:

9.00am Holy Communion (BCP)  
10.30am Morning Worship (CW)

### 25th January:

9.00am Matins (BCP)  
10.30am Holy Communion (CW)

A short service of **Morning Prayer** is held in church **every Wednesday morning at 9.00am**

BCP - Book of Common Prayer  
CW - Common Worship (Modern Language)

## Contacts

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## Contact Us

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## St John's Café



It may feel rather quiet following the rush and bustle of the Christmas season so come and join us on Thursday, 15th January, between 2.30 and 4.30pm for our

for a free cup of tea, coffee or glass of squash, a slice of cake and a chance to meet up with neighbours and friends. We look forward to seeing you there.

## View from the Vicarage

You may have seen in the news that a NASA scientist has claimed to have identified the so-called 'Star of Bethlehem' that heralded the birth of Jesus. Mark Matney has analysed 2,000 year old astronomical records from China, and argues that a bright comet was visible from earth for over two months around the time of Jesus' infancy.

The Bible, of course, tells us of some specific astronomers who studied the stars 2000 years ago. These wise men (or 'magi') were more likely to have been Persian than Chinese, and probably educated laymen rather than royalty. But one day these men saw something in the heavens that truly caught their attention - possibly a comet or, alternatively, an exploding star (a supernova) or a conjunction of planets (such as Saturn and Jupiter). Whatever it was, the wise men believed this 'star' was a sign that a God-given king had been born, and set off to greet him. But this star alone wasn't sufficient to discover the precise coordinates of the Christ-child. Divine revelation was required to pinpoint his location. They had to consult the Old Testament book of Micah to discover that he would be born in Bethlehem.

You see, common sense can only get us so far in life. As we look ahead to the New Year and see all the opportunities and challenges in store, we need God's guidance. To live wisely in this world we need revelation as well as reason. To journey well through life we need God's words to navigate by. So why not challenge yourself to read a short passage of the Bible each day as we enter 2026? Or join us in church on Sunday mornings as we study the Scriptures together - we'd love to welcome you!

Happy New Year,  
Phil Weston



## News

**Church Heating** — The communication issues experienced when using the church heating have now been resolved and the system is finally working as designed. However, we have to report that the boiler is very old and can be very temperamental. We are currently in discussions with the Diocesan Advisory Committee, seeking permission to replace the boiler with a new, more efficient and reliable model. Watch this space for more information when it becomes available.

**Exit Light** — The external light above the church's vestry door has now been fitted with a Passive Infrared Sensor which means that the light will automatically turn itself on when someone approaches after dusk and it also means that the light will stay on for a while to allow users to lock the door and descend the steps safely.

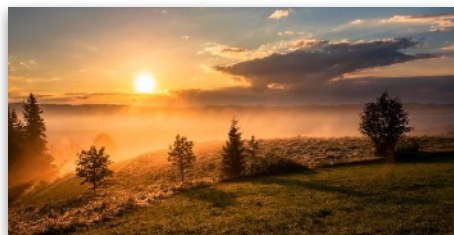
The light can still be turned on permanently using the interior switch but would users please ensure that the switch is in the "Off" position when leaving the building.

**THANK YOU** — A big thank you to everyone who donated Christmas gifts for the children who are currently in the care of *Save the Family*. They were all safely delivered in time for the big day and the staff at Cotton Hall were amazed, grateful and delighted to receive them.



## Pause for Thought

by Alan Downen



**Jesus said, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.'**  
John 8:12

There's something quietly hopeful about this time of year. The darkest days are behind us now: each morning arrives a little earlier and the evenings seems to linger a little longer. The light is coming back but it is happening so gradually that, at first, you might miss it. However, one day you will suddenly notice the sun is still hanging in the sky when you are preparing your evening meal or you may realise the birds have returned and are beginning to sing earlier in the morning. The world in our northern hemisphere is waking up again and stretching its tendrils towards something brighter.

This slow return of light feels like a promise being kept. After months of long nights and grey afternoons, we are being reminded that darkness never gets the final word. As the earth tilts back toward the sun, life responds. Bulbs push through frozen ground; trees that looked dead begin to bud; and everything that was waiting begins to move again.

When Jesus said he was the light of the world, maybe this is part of what he meant — he is the light that calls things back to life, that won't be overcome by darkness, and continues to arrive faithfully even when we've forgotten to watch for it.

We're all a bit like those bulbs in winter. Sometimes stuck, sometimes dormant, sometimes just trying to survive until conditions improve. But light has a way of finding us anyway, and of warming us back into hope and growth.

As the days lengthen and the world brightens, we're invited to remember: the light will keep returning — it always has and it always will.

Happy New Year to you all.



## Christmas with Ashton Folk

Our pre-Christmas gathering, together with Ashton Folk, was an enjoyable evening for everyone. The church was full, and the audience were in good spirits and eager to join in with the festive songs. The evening raised a much needed £590 towards our church funds.

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