

# Keep in touch with St Alban's Church

**Revd. Marie Flint**

**Parish Office: 0161 477 0456**

**(Mon & Fri 9.30-12.30)**



**December 2023 – January 2024**

## To Contact the Church.....

Parish Office: 0161 477 0456 (**Mon & Fri 9.30-12.30**)

Email: [stalbanofferton@gmail.com](mailto:stalbanofferton@gmail.com)

Priest in charge **Revd. Marie Flint**

Churchwardens Eileen Comerford

David Griffiths

Treasurer David Haslam

P.C.C. Secretary Janet Renshaw

You can find lots of information about the church and its activities on our Parish Website and on Facebook:

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

 **St. Alban's Church Offerton**





✦ CHRISTMAS SERVICES  
AT ST. ALBAN'S CHURCH, OFFERTON

- ✦ • Sat 2nd Dec - 3.30pm - Christmas Messy Church ✦
- Sat 9th Dec - 11am-1pm - Christmas Fair
- Sun 10th Dec - 6pm - Albany Carol Service
- Sun 17th Dec - 4pm - Carol and Nativity Service (children are invited to come dressed as a nativity character)
- Thur 21st Dec- 7.30pm - Blue Christmas (remembering loved ones no longer with us at Christmas) ✦
- Sat 23rd Dec - 3pm - Community carol singing by Aldi on Lisburne Lane
- Sun 24th Dec - 4pm - Christingle Service
- Sun 24th Dec- 11.30pm - Midnight communion ✦
- Mon 25th Dec - 10.45am - we celebrate Christmas Day with our friends at St. Saviour's Church, Great Moor ✦

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

## Marie writes-



As we enter advent this year, as we prepare our hearts and homes and church for the arrival of the infant Christ at Christmas, I am feeling a little daunted at what lies ahead. Perhaps you are too. It is always a busy time of year with shopping to do, presents to wrap, cards to write and decorations to find in the loft.

We also have a busy church programme for Advent and Christmas. We've got our Advent course, on Wednesday evenings at 7pm in the Galilee, where we will be working our way through the Church of England's Living in Love

and Faith course. Do come along if you are able! We have our Christmas Fair on 9th December at 11am – please spread the word! We also welcome the wonderful people who meet at The Albany to church for their carol service on 10th December and have our own carol service on 17th December. We are introducing a new service to St. Alban's this year – Blue Christmas on the evening of 21st December at 7.30pm to remember loved ones no longer with us at Christmas. We'll be singing Christmas Carols with Dialstone Methodist church and the community outside ALDI on the afternoon of 23<sup>rd</sup> December. Christingle is on Christmas Eve at 4pm and midnight mass on the same day at 11.30pm. This year we'll be celebrating Christmas Day with our friends at St.Saviour's Church at 10.45am. And of course, there's Christmas Messy Church and Praise and Play Christmas Party. It certainly will be busy, but also very exciting, as we have a wonderful opportunity to meet people in our community and to tell them about Jesus. What a gift!

Whilst all this preparation is happening, I am reminded that the world is in a dark place at the moment. You can't watch the news for longer than 2 minutes before being reminded of the horror of war and conflict. We are in the middle of a climate emergency; and closer to home, families living in Offerton struggle with the cost of living and many in our community will be alone this Christmas. There are strong themes of light and dark in the Christmas story – the bright light shining over the stable at Bethlehem heralding the light that is Jesus Christ – a light which, according to John's gospel, 'shines in the darkness; and the darkness cannot overcome it'. Jesus, through us, brings light into the dark places of the world. How will you be shining your light this Advent and Christmas?

One of the ways, we, as a parish, will be shining lights, is to generously give to people in need. We will be supporting 2 particular charities. Through our Parish Christmas card we will be donating to Migrant Help – a charity that support people claiming asylum living in this country. They have been particularly helpful in supporting

members of our own congregation as they negotiate accommodation offered by the Home Office. Particularly, through our Christingle collection, we'll be supporting The Children's society who provide specialist support that empowers young people to make positive changes and rediscover their hope. Personally, the Flint family prefers to donate money to Shelter and The Wellspring to help support people who are homeless, rather than spending money on Christmas cards.

Jesus is not only a light in the darkness, but words from Isaiah 9 remind us that he is also the Prince of Peace:-

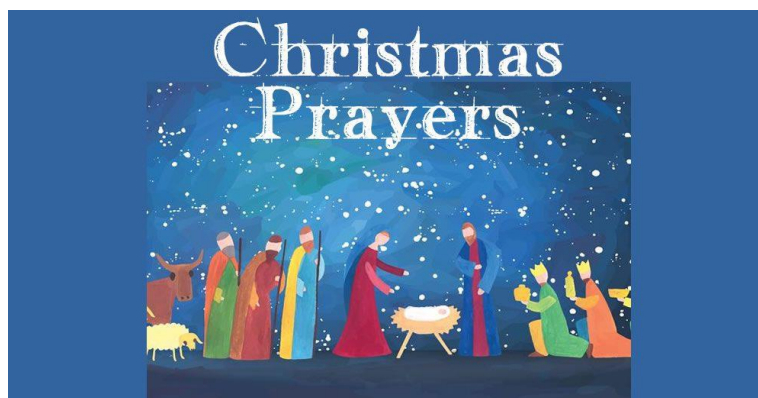
“The people walking in darkness  
have seen a great light;  
on those living in the land of deep darkness  
a light has dawned.

For to us a child is born,  
to us a son is given,  
and the government will be on his shoulders.  
And he will be called  
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.  
Of the greatness of his government and peace  
there will be no end.”

In all the busyness that Advent and Christmas brings, please take time to pray that peace would reign, and ask God to show you how you can be a beacon of light and hope and peace.

*Wishing you all a wonderful Christmas and New Year, filled  
with love, laughter, hope and peace.*

*Rev'd Marie*



## Praise and Play

We had a wonderful visit from PCSO Radhesh  
- as we thanked God for people who care for us



ST ALBAN'S CHURCH, OFFERTON INVITES YOU  
TO OUR

**merry**  
**CHRISTMAS**  
**FAIR**

STALLS, GAMES, REFRESHMENTS, GIFTS AND  
KID'S CRAFTS

COME AND MEET FATHER CHRISTMAS!

**9TH DECEMBER**  
**11 AM - 1 PM**

[WWW.STALBANOFFERTON.ORG.UK](http://WWW.STALBANOFFERTON.ORG.UK)

## St Alban's going for Bronze in 2024

We will try to make St Alban's church more eco-friendly and over the coming months we will pass on ideas for becoming more Eco friendly at home too.



## The 12 Days of a Green(er) Christmas

**On the first day of Christmas** If you buy a real Christmas tree, get it from a sustainable source. After Christmas plant it or take it to a local recycling centre. You can even rent a tree.

**On the second day of Christmas** If you need some new Christmas lights or electrical goods don't bin the old ones, donate them, or take them to your local recycling centre.

**On the third day of Christmas** Buy recycled Christmas cards, send an e-card or make your own. **Re-use cards and wrapping.** Make Christmas tags out of old Christmas cards. Recycled brown paper has a much lower ecological footprint than Christmas wrapping paper. You can decorate it yourself.

**On the fourth day of Christmas** Give homemade presents. Fun to make and more personal.

**On the fifth day of Christmas** Buying presents that use batteries? If so, why not add recycled batteries and a charger?

**On the sixth day of Christmas** When shopping use your LOAF

LOCAL ————— ORGANIC ————— ANIMAL FRIENDLY ————— FAIRTRADE

**On the seventh day of Christmas** Buy eco-crackers or, in the best Blue Peter tradition, make your own. all you need is a few tube rolls, paper and some small gifts people might actually want, and you get to write the mottos and jokes ha ha.

**On the eighth day of Christmas** Decorate a tree for wildlife (suet balls etc), but make sure it's where the birds can see the cat coming. Use fallen twigs to create a 5-pointed star and find other natural things to decorate it with.

**On the ninth day of Christmas** Use the wrapping paper recycling test: scrunch it up into a ball, if it stays in shape, you can recycle it. Alternatively use magazine articles to wrap presents, the recipient will enjoy reading them.

**On the tenth day of Christmas** if possible, freeze leftovers rather than binning them.

**On the eleventh day of Christmas** Had time to read all those magazines you bought to over the festive period. Why not pass them on to a friend in the New Year?

**On the twelfth day of Christmas** Why not make your own eco-resolution.

Check out our Eco Tips [www.stalbanofferton.org.uk](http://www.stalbanofferton.org.uk) - Eco Church.

*Adapted from an idea by Jean Burrows, Hutton and Shenfield Union Church (Bronze Eco Church)*

## Wear your Christmas Jumper

Bring your under 5's to Praise & Play on 19<sup>th</sup> December and wear your Christmas Jumper with pride all donations will be given to the Children's Society.  
Father Christmas will be there.



## CHRISTMAS FAIR

**St Albans Christmas Fair**  
**Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> December 11am-1pm**  
Raffle, tombola, tea/cake, children's crafts and much more.  
Come along and join in the fun



We're going to have another go to make our bug hotel – weather permitting.

**Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> December at 1.15pm after our Christmas Fair**  
Come to the Fair and stay to make the hotel

– bring your wellies.



## Celebrate National Hot Chocolate Day

with us, come along to church and indulge in a yummy hot chocolate and biscuits.  
(or if you prefer coffee or tea)

**Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> December**  
**12.30pm-1.30pm**

All funds raised will go towards Church repairs.



## Christmas Services

We hope you will join in St Alban's services to celebrate the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

17<sup>th</sup> December 4.00pm – St Alban's Carol Service

21<sup>st</sup> December 7.30pm – **Blue Christmas Service** – a service to remember our loved ones who are no longer with us and putting their names on the remembrance tree.

24<sup>th</sup> December 4.00pm – Christingle Service – a service for everyone.

24<sup>th</sup> December 11.30pm – Christmas Eve Midnight Mass – a joyous service to welcome our Lord.

**We wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year**

**2024 our year for going for Bronze with A Rocha - Eco Church**



## 25<sup>th</sup> December – and there were shepherds



Luke's story of the birth of Jesus is brilliantly told – the angel's visit to Mary to tell her she would be mother of the long-promised Messiah, the old priest in the Temple told by another angel that his wife would have a son to be called 'John', who would prepare the people of Israel for that event, and then Mary and Joseph making the 60 mile journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem, as required by the Roman census. When they got there, no room at the inn, and they settled instead for a convenient stable, where Mary gave birth to a boy child.

Suddenly, Luke changes the tone. 'And there were shepherds ...' – that's what he actually wrote, just like that. 'And there were shepherds', doing exactly what shepherds do, looking after their flocks by night. But this night was different: yet another angelic message – a call to abandon their sheep and go into Bethlehem to see the baby Messiah. They were given directions and a 'sign' to identify Him. He would be lying in a feeding trough. Well, at least they would recognise that.

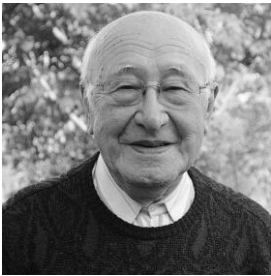
And why the shepherds, in this glorious story of our salvation? Because the event needed witnesses, and the chosen witnesses would be this bunch of scruffy, smelly shepherds straight from the sheep- pen. Nothing could speak more eloquently of God's purpose than that. This was not a Saviour for the strong, rich and powerful, but for everybody. The carpenter and his wife guarded the Saviour of the world, and the very first witnesses were not kings or priests but a handful of shepherds.

## Ministry on ice

As a chaplain to the local hospital, I sometimes get called out early. In a rush to work one morning, with no time for breakfast, I pulled up to the drive-through window at a fast-food restaurant, determined to at least grab some coffee. Because I was in a hurry, I asked them to put a couple of ice cubes in the coffee so it would cool down more quickly and I could drink it faster. I sat there at the pick-up window for a few minutes, wondering where they had to go to get my coffee, when a frustrated teenager finally came up and said, “I’m sorry for the delay, but the ice you wanted in your coffee keeps melting!”



## Reflecting



Old age, believe me, is a good and pleasant time. It is true that you are gently shouldered off the stage, but then you are given such a comfortable front stall as spectator, and, if you really have played your part, you are more content to sit down and watch. – *Jane Harrison*

## Oh dear - when church bulletins don't get it quite right:

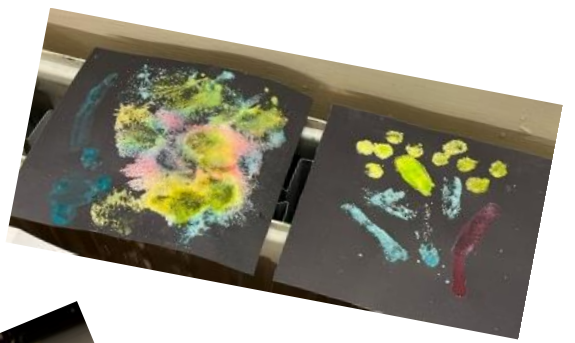
- Remember in prayer the many who are sick of our community.
- Don't let worry kill you off – let the Church help.
- Next Thursday there will be try-outs for the choir. They need all the help they can get.



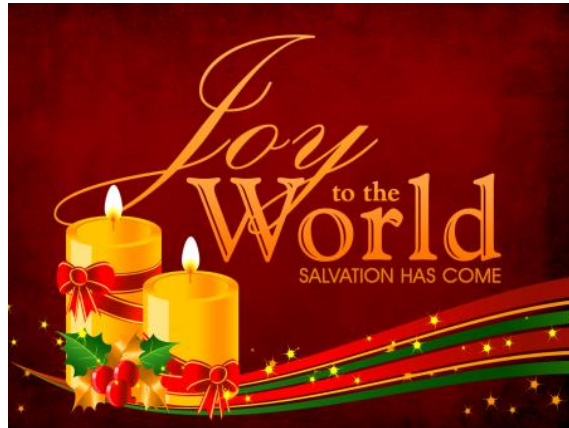
# Messy Church – November

In November we made hearts of remembrance, poppies, guardian angels, plastic spoon angels, edible sparklers, firework art with straws, edible bonfire, and salt painting and a large poppy cross.





## Christmas throughout the Christian world



For nearly four weeks leading up to Christmas Christians recognise a period called Advent. It means 'coming'. It is a time of spiritual preparation. 'Coming' refers to Jesus' first coming as a baby, but it also looks forward to a day when Jesus is expected to return in triumph at his 'second coming' to establish perfect justice and a new order of peace.

Originally Christians marked Advent as a time when they refrained from excessive eating and drinking. Then Christmas Day reintroduced them to the joys of feasting. Christmas celebrations lasted for twelve days, with gifts exchanged as a climax at Epiphany (6 January). Today, however, Advent is more likely to be associated with accelerating festivity, with the days following Christmas something of an anti-climax until 'twelfth night', on which decorations are removed. Many Christians worldwide are trying to revive the spirit of Advent by setting aside time to pray and address global poverty.

Christmas Day is celebrated as the anniversary of Jesus' birth, although the actual date is not known. Most Christians celebrate it on 25<sup>th</sup> December. However, the Orthodox Church (the ancient churches in Eastern Europe and parts of Asia) follows a different calendar and celebrates on 7<sup>th</sup> January. Christians make a point of taking communion on Christmas Day. Many make it the first thing they do as the clock strikes midnight.

On 6<sup>th</sup> January the Christmas festival continues with a celebration of Epiphany, which means 'the appearance'. Christians remember the visit of wise men (magi) to Jesus, bringing gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. The Christmas tradition of exchanging gifts originally honoured these men, who were the first non-Jews (Gentiles) to worship Jesus. It forms a reminder that in Jesus God was giving Himself for the benefit of the entire world.

Orthodox Christians use this day to recall the baptism of Jesus as a grown man. The significance of Jesus being baptised was that He identified Himself with human beings in all their need. They mark the day by praying for God's blessing on rivers, wells and water sources.

Christmas has never been just an escapist festival for Christians. Those who treat it seriously recognise that not all the world is able to face the days with frivolity or joy. The day after Christmas, Boxing Day, was historically marked as the feast of St Stephen. He was the first man to be put to death rather than give up his belief that Jesus was God. And two days later a day remembering the Massacre of the Innocents recalls Herod's attempt to destroy Jesus by killing all male babies in Bethlehem. Although not so widely marked as Christmas Day, it gives Christians the opportunity to pray for children in today's world who suffer as a result of the actions of adults.



## Christmas



At Christmas, play and make good cheer;  
for Christmas comes but once a year.

– *Thomas Tusser*

## 25 BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

Can you find the names of 25 books of the Bible in this paragraph? This is a most remarkable puzzle. Someone found it in the seat pocket on a flight from Los Angeles to Honolulu, keeping himself occupied for hours. One man from Illinois worked on this while fishing from his john boat. Roy Clark studied it while playing his banjo. Elaine Vicks mentioned it in her column once. One woman judges the job to be so involving, she brews a cup of tea to help calm her nerves. There will be some names that are really easy to spot . . . that's a fact. Some people will soon find themselves in a jam, especially since the book names are not necessarily capitalized. The truth is, from answers we get, we are forced to admit it usually takes a minister or scholar to see some of them at the worst. Something in our genes is responsible for the difficulty we have. Those able to find all of them will hear great lamentations from those who have to be shown. One revelation may help, books like Timothy and Samuel may occur without their numbers. And punctuation or spaces in the middle are normal. A chipper attitude will help you compete. Remember, there are 25 books of the Bible lurking somewhere in this paragraph.

Answers are at the end of the Magazine

Don't cheat now!!

## Stockport Home Library Service

**Do you or someone you know struggle to visit the library due to health issues or caring commitments?**

**Stockport's Home Library Service can deliver your choice of books, talking books and DVDs direct to your door in the Stockport area completely free of charge.**

**For more information, please contact us on 0161 474 5600 or [homelibraryservice@stockport.gov.uk](mailto:homelibraryservice@stockport.gov.uk) and speak to one of their friendly members of staff.**



## Our Parish Christmas Card

If you would like to be included in this year's Christmas card, please submit all names that you would like putting on the card along with your donation to Eileen by 10<sup>th</sup> December for distribution on 17<sup>th</sup> December.

This year all donations will go towards the Migrant Help Charity.





## 25<sup>th</sup> January – Conversion of St. Paul



January is a month of the beginning of great things! As well as the naming of the Son of God, we celebrate the conversion of the greatest ever apostle of the Christian faith. Many books have been written on Paul, and here is the briefest of introductions.

He was a Jew, born as 'Saul' at Tarsus, and brought up by the rabbi Gamaliel as a Pharisee. A devout, fanatical Jew, Saul persecuted the Christians, and watched with satisfaction the first Christian martyrdom, the stoning of Stephen. Then, on his way to Damascus, Saul had a vision of Christ that stopped him in his tracks. He realised that this Jesus whom he was persecuting was in fact the Messiah for whom he had longed.

Saul changed overnight. He was given a new name, Paul, and became an evangelist for the cause of Christ. He became a leader in the early Church, and his special calling was as an apostle to the Gentiles. He wrote epistles to the young churches that he founded – and thus, inadvertently, wrote a great part of the New Testament.

Life as the greatest apostle was hardly full of perks: Paul was stoned, beaten, mobbed, homeless, hated, imprisoned, and finally martyred. Tradition has it that he was beheaded in Rome during the persecution of Nero in 64AD and buried where the basilica of St Paul 'outside the walls' now stands. His mighty faith in Christ has kindled similar belief in many hundreds of millions of people down the centuries.

## Where did Christmas stockings come from?



No one is really sure, but a story is told of St Nicholas, a bishop who lived in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, who may have started the custom by accident. St Nicholas was of a wealthy family, and of a generous heart. As Christmas approached one year, he wanted to help a poor family whom he knew, but he did not want them to know it was him. So, he climbed up on their roof on Christmas Eve and dropped some coins down the chimney.

The next morning the coins, to the great surprise of the family, were found in the stockings of the ladies, who had hung them to dry by the fire the night before. Every year after that they put their stockings out, in the hope that some more money would fall into them. They told the story of this amazing appearance to their friends and neighbours, and the custom caught on.

## Where did Christmas crackers come from?

Christmas Crackers are a traditional Christmas favourite in the UK. They were first made in about 1845-1850 by a London sweet maker called Tom Smith. Smith had seen the French 'bon bon' sweets (almonds wrapped in pretty paper) on a visit to Paris in 1840. The crackers were originally called "cosaques" and were later renamed "crackers" due to the sound they made when pulled apart.



### Cracker Jokes

**What do you call a boomerang that does not come back?** A stick.

**Why was the turkey in the pop group?** he was the only one with drumsticks!

**What do you get if you eat Christmas decorations?** Tinselitis!

**Who is Santa's favourite singer?** Elf-is Presley

**What do you get when you cross a snowman with a vampire?** Frostbite

**What do Santa's little helpers learn at school?** The elf-abet.

***Nigel Beeton writes: Sadly, one lesson we learn as we get older is that those we love are not always going to be there next year and all we have left are memories. So, this Christmas we should treasure those moments with our loved ones...***

### **Your Christmas Dinner Table**

Gaze around your dinner table  
As you dine on Christmas Day  
Treasure them while you are able –  
One day they may well go away.

Love is really hard to measure,  
Love's not easy to define,  
But memory's the only treasure  
That will stand the test of time.

So, treasure all that Christmas laughter,  
Hold it close – that's my advice.  
For there may come a time soon after  
When memory is worth great price.

It is sad that life is temporary,  
Happy times will disappear;  
When those you treasure are a memory,  
The memory is a treasure dear.

*By Nigel Beeton*



**St Alban's Church, Offerton**

# **Blue Christmas**

**Christmas without a loved one**

**A reflective service of hope and  
remembrance for those who are  
hurting this Christmas**

**Thursday 21st  
December at  
7.30pm**

# The Everlasting turkey



On the first day of Christmas my true love said to me  
I've bought a big fresh turkey and a proper Christmas tree.

On the second day of Christmas much laughter could be heard  
As we tucked into our turkey – a most delicious bird.

On the third day of Christmas people came from just next door,  
The turkey tasted just as good as it had done before.

On the fourth day of Christmas came relations young and old  
We finished up the Christmas pud and had the turkey cold.

On the fifth day of Christmas, outside the snowflakes scurried,  
But we were nice and warm inside, and had the turkey curried.

On the sixth day of Christmas, the Christmas spirit died.  
The children fought and bickered – we had the turkey rissoles fried.

On the seventh day of Christmas my true love he did wince  
When he sat down at table – and was offered turkey mince.

On the eighth day of Christmas, the dog had run for shelter,  
For he'd seen our turkey pancakes and the glass of alka-seltzer.

On the ninth day of Christmas, by lunchtime dad was blotto,  
He knew that bird was back again, this time as a risotto.

On the tenth day of Christmas we were drinking home-made brew,  
Anything to help us face that steaming turkey stew.

On the eleventh day of Christmas our lovely tree was moulting,  
And with chilli, soy and oyster sauce, the turkey was revolting.

On the twelfth day of Christmas we had smiles back on our lips,  
The guests had gone, the turkey too – WE DINED ON FISH AND CHIPS.

# Welcome



We welcome into our church family -

Beau Faith Reece who was baptised on 12<sup>th</sup> November 2023

## Chester Diocese News

If you have access to a computer you may want to catch up on the latest news by logging on to –

[www.chesteranglican.org](http://www.chesteranglican.org)

## **25 Books of the Bible answers**

Amos, Mark, Luke, John, Joel, Judges, Job, Hebrew, Esther, Acts, James, Ruth, Romans, Titus, Matthew, Genesis, Hosea, Lamentations, Revelation, Timothy, Samuel, Numbers, Malachi, Peter and Kings

St Albans Church is a vibrant &  
active Church of England  
Parish Church in Stockport



We welcome visitors of all faiths and of no faith.

Our services are as inclusive as possible, and all are welcome to join the church family for services and events.

**Regular Services and Events at St Alban's & St. John's**

Sunday

9.00am Holy Communion Book of Common Prayer  
(1<sup>st</sup> Sunday only)

10.30am Holy Communion

4.00pm 4@4 A Contemporary Service (4<sup>th</sup> Sunday only)

Tuesday

10.30am Praise & Play

Wednesday

10.30am Holy Communion – St John's

Friday

10.00am Coffee morning

Saturday

3.30pm-5.30pm Messy Church (1<sup>st</sup> Saturday of month)