Keep in touch with St Alban's Church

Revd. Marie Flint

Parish Office: 0161 477 0456

(Mon & Fri 9.30-12.30)



February 2026

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You can find lots of information about the church and its activities on our Parish Website:
www.stalbanofferton.org.uk

Find us on Facebook, Instagram, X and
www.achurchnearyou.com

Marie writes –



It doesn't seem that long ago that we were packing away our Christmas trees and finishing off the last of the Christmas chocolates and here we are in February turning our attention to the season of Lent, with Ash Wednesday on 18th February.
As we cycle our way through the church calendar, there are certain services that always stand out to me because they are particularly powerful, or they contain great symbolism or meaning, or the words we use and the prayers we say stand out. Ash Wednesday is one of them. I find it strangely moving as we all line up to receive the imposition of ashes. Imposition of ashes does sound rather grand, doesn't it? But it's not really. It's a simple, but powerful moment where we come to receive a cross of ash painted onto our heads, where the words '*Remember you are but dust and to dust you shall return'* are said.

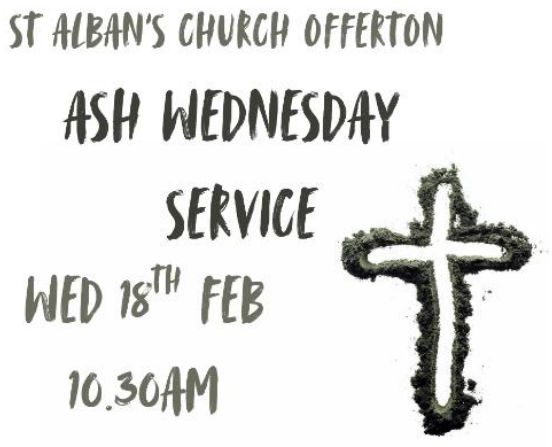
These words are a stark reminder of our own mortality and might remind us of the words used at a funeral service – 'earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust'. 'Remember that you are but dust' is a timely reminder, gently putting us in our place. But it is not a reminder that we are worthless or insignificant. Nor it is a reminder that should have us leaving feeling depressed. Receiving the ashes is in fact, quite the opposite. Because we cannot be insignificant or worthless when God loves us. God has created us out of the dust of the ground and we continue to 'be' because we are enfolded in God's love. A reminder of our mortality is a positive thing because it reminds us that we have this amazing relationship with God. Even though we are dust, we exist, we live and breathe and have our being and God loves us. God sees us as having eternal value.

'*Remember you are but dust and to dust you shall return'* is followed by the line '*Turn away from sin and be faithful to Christ'*, so there's a penitential element to what we do on Ash Wednesday as well. They're quite similar words to the words used by Jesus himself in the first chapter of Mark's gospel –*'Repent and believe the good news'* Jesus urges. And I'd like to suggest that penitential means more of a self-examination – a real self-knowledge. What am I really like? How do I look to God? What is the truth about me? And once we ask those questions of ourselves, we might spend some time in guilt or sorrow, but ultimately make steps to change, or amend or resolve– to turn towards Christ. '*Turn away from sin and be faithful to Christ*' is a gracious invitation to start afresh with God – a new beginning if you like.

It is the sign of the cross that is marked on our foreheads – again looking forward to all that happened on the cross – but also looking back at our own baptism when we were marked with the sign of the cross for the first time. In the innocence of our childhood or in the ardour of adult

commitment we receive, in baptism, God's grace for our Christian journey. And so, we are reminded of that wonderful gift of grace through the marking of a cross once again on Ash Wednesday. We are reminded, through this marking of a cross, that we are so loved by God. Our Ash Wednesday service will be at St. Alban's at 10.30am on 18th February. We will also be offering 'Ashes to Go' in the community in the afternoon, as a way of blessing our neighbours in Offerton. Please be in touch if you can't get out of the house and would like to receive ashes at home.

Wishing you a prayerful and restorative lent season,



Everyone is still welcome to attend our Start! course



Our Christmas Fair







Thank you to everyone who came and supported our Christmas fair at the end of November and to the team who helped organise the successful event. We welcomed lots of visitors from the community which was super. MP Lisa Smart also popped in to say hello, we were visited by Dame Sarah Storey who came along and showed us her Olympic Gold medals from Paris 2024. What a treat!











Thank you again to our wonderful friends who donated prizes for our Christmas Raffle!

St. Alban's Christingle Service









Church bulletin notices that did not come out quite right……



We apologise for the following typo in last Sunday's bulletin: 'Lunch will be gin at 12:15.' Please correct it to read '12 noon.' "

Any church member aged over 18 can join our lay ministry programme. It requires a minimal amount of training and time. The first course is six weekly classes of about 200 hours each Tuesday night.



Our Christmas

























Are you ready for the General Synod elections in July?



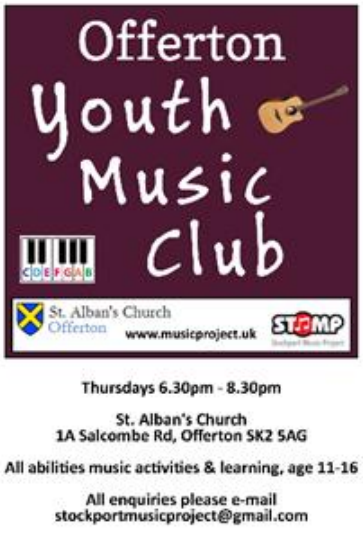
This summer brings us the election of a new General Synod. And the people who get voted on to this new General Synod are the ones who will be voting either for or against the stand-alone services of blessing for same-sex couples that are expected in 2028.

Whatever you believe, when it comes to choosing your candidates for the next General Synod, here are some common-sense tips from synodical experts:

“It’s not always clear from what candidates say about themselves what their actual position is on some quite hot-potato issues like human sexuality and women’s ministry.”

“If the candidate does not mention an issue that you care about, don’t assume they would agree with you, and if they do say something be very clear as to what they are and aren’t saying.”

“It might be helpful to talk about listening positively to and respecting the views of others, even when we find ourselves disagreeing.”



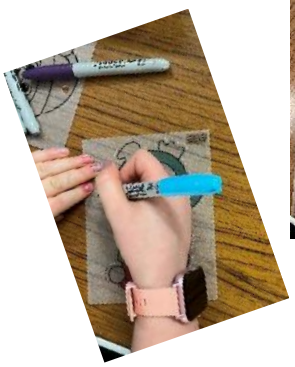


Messy December

The theme was of course Christmas - nativity crosses, decorated purses, Christmas baubles, Christmas shrinkies, edible manger scene and follow the angel.



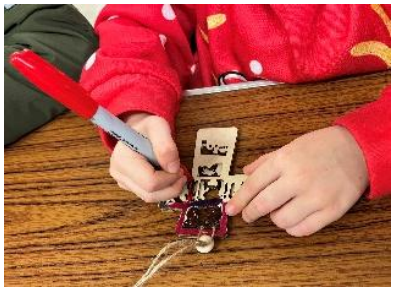
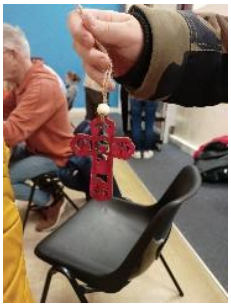














Messy January

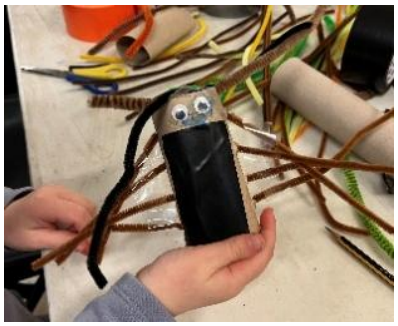
Epiphany and perseverance were our theme – macrame, the wise men, ice cream making and eating! of course, animals out of rubbish, aboriginal art, gingerbread people.

















February 2026

Let's talk Compost ……

Garden compost is just decayed, organic matter. It is an excellent way to use waste kitchen and garden materials, and the end product is a great soil improver helping retain nutrients, water and improve structure.

The composting process itself creates a habitat for different munching and crunching creatures, attracted by their required temperature as the heat rises and falls.

How does it work? Conditions for successful composting must be favourable for the organisms acting as decomposers. Such organisms need air, a moist environment, and an appropriate balance of nutrients, especially nitrogen and carbon.

To get a good mix it is helpful to distinguish between 'green' (leafy/succulent) and 'brown' (fibrous/woody) materials, which should be mixed in equal volume. Too many browns and the heap stays dry, too many greens mean the air is squeezed out and the good organisms die.

Greens (providing nitrogen)

- Grass cuttings
- Kitchen fruit and vegetable waste
- Coffee grounds and tea leaves
- Young leaves or nettles
- Annual weeds

Browns (providing carbon)

- Cardboard
- Dead flowers
- Shredded paper
- Autumn leaves
- Twigs
- Shredded woody prunings
- Straw





A good compost pile is well layered. Interspersing green and brown layers throughout.

Composting tips

- Compost bins can be small or large, to suit your space and amount of waste.
- Choose a sheltered, shady spot for your compost bin, ideally directly on the soil.
- 25-50% should be soft leafy green material.
- The other 50-75% should be chopped-up woody, brown material.
- Turning or mixing the compost adds air, which is necessary for the composting process. This should be done several times a year.
- Garden compost can take between six months and two years to reach maturity. Larger quantities of material tend to compost more efficiently, but smaller bins, while slower, should still produce good results.
- Composting tends to be faster in warm weather and slows down over winter.
- Mature compost is dark brown, with a crumbly, soil-like texture and should smell like damp woodland.
- It's unlikely that all the material will turn out like this, but any uncomposted bits can be added back into the next batch of composting material.

www.rhs.org.uk

If you are unable to compost you can put your garden waste into your green bin and the council will take it away, but you need to buy a permit for this to happen.
Buy your permit in March/April for the following 12 months. If you buy it in September for example it will only last until the end of March.

February 2026

Easy steps to a greener garden

As gardeners we can do much to help the natural world here's just a few ideas.



Pile up branches, logs and other non-compostable natural materials in a tucked away spot – they'll soon become a useful habitat for many creatures such as hedgehogs and amphibians



We can all do our bit to help prevent flooding and reduce the amount of water our gardens use. There are many beautiful plants that cope well with dry conditions, and there are many ways to reduce your water use, from installing water butts, to recycling grey water to water your plants.



To keep your plant choices as eco-friendly as possible. Use online lists of 'Plants for Pollinators' or look out for the logos on plant labels; these tell you the plant is a particularly good choice for bees and other helpful pollinating insects.



To reduce your gardening carbon footprint, grow from seed as much as you can and use peat-free compost.
When you buy plants, choose British-grown wherever possible. Avoid buying imported plants/trees/seeds if possible. If you're buying plants online check out how their plants have been grown.





By creating habitats, and providing food sources such as berries, leaves and flower pollen we can help wildlife come into our gardens. The best way is to grow lots of different plants, including trees and hedges as well as flowers. Try to leave an undisturbed corner. Put in a pond is a great way to attract wildlife - just make sure that creatures have easy access to get in and out!



Making room for plants will benefit both the wildlife and people who share your neighbourhood. So many front gardens are now paved. Consider having a hedge or a mall tree in your front garden. If this is not possible have a planter or pots where you can grow flowers or even fruit and vegetables.



If you carefully select the plants you buy and grow them in the correct manner you are more likely to enjoy a healthy and happy garden – free of pests and diseases. When problems arise, we really should see them as part of the biodiversity in are gardens rather than pests. The adage that a weed is only a flower in the wrong place, comes to mind. If, however, you do decide to use chemical controls it is important to do so in a minimal targeted way whilst fully adhering to the instructions. If you do resort to chemicals, try to buy organic ones.

Some of the above ideas originated from www.rhs.org.uk

Introducing Dame Sarah Mullally – the 106th Archbishop of Canterbury



The Rt Revd and Rt Hon Dame Sarah Mullally DBE officially became Archbishop of Canterbury on 28th January 2026, when she was legally confirmed at St Paul's Cathedral. Most people know that she had been Bishop of London for several years, and that she is the first woman to ever become Archbishop of Canterbury. But what else do you know about her?

Born in Woking in 1962, and is one of four children, with two sisters and one brother. She attended Winston Churchill Comprehensive School and Woking Sixth Form College. She went on to South Bank Polytechnic and Heythrop College, University of London

She worked as a nurse in the National Health Service, which she has described as "an opportunity to reflect the love of God". She specialised as a cancer nurse and became a ward sister at Westminster Hospital, before being made Director of Nursing at Chelsea and Westminster Hospital. In 1999, at the age of 37, she was appointed the Government's Chief Nursing Officer for England in the Department of Health. She was the youngest person ever to be appointed to the post. Bishop Sarah was made a Dame Commander of the British Empire in 2005 in recognition of her outstanding contribution to nursing. She had become a Christian at the age of 16. While working as the Chief Nursing Officer for England, she discerned a call to ordination and entered training ministry at the South East Institute for Theological Education. She was ordained in 2001 and served her curacy in St Saviour's Battersea Fields, initially as a self- supporting minister, before leaving her government post in 2004, which. she has described at the time as "the biggest decision I have ever made". In 2012 she was installed as Canon Treasurer at Salisbury Cathedral and three years later took the role as Suffragan Bishop of Crediton in the Diocese of Exeter, the fourth woman to become a Bishop in the Church of England.

On 12th May 2018, Bishop Sarah was installed as the 133rd Bishop of London at St Paul's Cathedral, the first woman to hold the role. Bishop Sarah sits in the House of Lords as one of the Lords Spirituals, having been introduced on 24th May 2018. Her maiden speech paid tribute to the NHS on its 70th anniversary, telling the Lords: "I am the Bishop I am today because of that first vocation to nursing, and compassion and healing are constants at the heart of who I am." She was sworn in as a member of the Privy Council in March 2018 and became Dean of Her Majesty's Chapels Royal in July 2019. As Bishop of London, she led the Church of England's Living in Love and Faith process from 2020 to 2023. This included the formative stages of discernment and decision making which saw the introduction of the Prayers of Love and Faith for same-sex couples.

She has served on the Church's National Safeguarding Steering Group and is also Lead Bishop for Health and Social Care issues. As a Lord Spiritual, she has drawn from both her pastoral experience and her background in nursing and healthcare and has played a key role in the ongoing debates on assisted dying. This year, she chaired the Triennium Funding Working Group that developed the Church of England's three-year spending plan that led to significant investments in local churches and parish clergy. Archbishop Sarah has continued her interest in the health service having been a non-executive director at the Royal Marsden NHS Foundation Trust then at Salisbury NHS Foundation Hospital. She is also Chair of Christian Aid.

The famous mermen font at St George's Church, Anstey, by Michael Garlick, via Wikimedia Commons



Last month we stood at the doorway of a church in West Yorkshire. Open the door of that church or any church and the first thing to greet our eyes is the font. It marks the beginning of Christian life in the church. Many fonts have fine carvings of the seven sacraments that nourish the Christian. Others are octagonal in shape: a reminder of Noah and his seven family members saved in the ark from the Flood.

This month's font is a symbol of the ship sailing the seas of life. It is in St George's Church, Anstey, in Hertfordshire. Around the font are carved mermen – mythical, pagan creatures that belong to a pre-Christian age which the newly baptised is called on to renounce. When it was carved in the 11th-12th centuries, baptism occurred within eight days of birth. Babies would be immersed three times into the waters of the font: dying to the old life symbolised by the mermen, and rising to new life, to be clothed in a white robe and given a lighted candle as a guide through life. They would then grow up in the church, moving from that west end through the upturned boat of the nave to the altar at the east end.

That movement is a sign of the pilgrimage we are all called to make. Like a journey on the seas of this world, we may sail through tranquil waters and peaceful days. There may be times when the skies are cloudy and the waters stormy. Martin Luther, when he was faced by struggles like that in his life, would say the words 'I am baptised' to strengthen and reassure himself. 'I am baptised' we can say as we travel in faith, knowing that there is always a light to guide and a goal that is sure and eternal.

Cycle of Prayer

This month we pray for the staff and pupils at Castle Hill and Banks Lane Juniors and we pray for more local renewable energy projects in our community and that our parish and the Church of England is moved to climate action to meet our net zero target by 2030.



Did you know that there is a good selection of Christian books to borrow at the back of church? Please help yourself and just return it when you've finished with it. We'd love to hear what you think of them too, so we'd welcome any short reviews of any of the books for inclusion in this magazine. Please email stalbanofferton@gmail.com with your reviews. Happy reading!

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

Stockport Ecumenical Lent Course 2026

All are welcome to join us as we chat and learn together ways in which we can develop a rhythm of life that will help us grow as disciples of Christ.

DRAW NEAR

LIFE-GIVING HABITS FOR LENT

Every Monday from 23rd February to 23rd March
at 7.30pm - 9pm
at The Strawberry Gardens, Offerton, Stockport, SK2 5BS

For more details please contact:
raj.patta@methodist.org.uk
or
revmarieflint@gmail.com

St Albans Church is a vibrant and 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

Sunday

9.00am Said Holy Communion with traditional language (1st Sunday only)

10.30am Sung Holy Communion for all the family (children's club 3rd Sunday)

Tuesday

10.30am Praise & Play (term time)

Wednesday

1-3pm Knit & Natter

Thursday

2-4pm Adult Craft Club (1st Thursday of month)

5.30pm Evening Prayer at St Alban's

6.30-8.30pm Youth Music Group (term time)

Saturday

10am-12pm Gardening club (1st Saturday of month)

3.30-5.30pm Messy Church (1st Saturday of month)