



# SWANBANK



## June Magazine 2026

### Monthly Message

As we move into June, we have just about concluded our Sunday morning service theme, *"No Greater Story"*. Over recent weeks we have been reflecting on the wonderful truth that God not only calls His people but also equips us for the life of faith and for the work He gives us to do.

I'm sitting writing this letter on a sweltering Pentecost Sunday! Today, in our 10.30am service, as we celebrated Pentecost, we focused especially on the theme *"God Equips Us"*. Included in this was equipping through the Bible, through prayer, through the Holy Spirit and through being together as His church. Pentecost reminds us that the Christian life is never something we are expected to live in our own strength. When the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples, fearful and uncertain people were transformed into courageous witnesses to the love of Christ. God's Spirit brought comfort, courage, wisdom, and power, and that same Spirit continues to work in and through the church today.

Today, as we reflected on the importance of being together, one of the most moving moments of the morning came when we invited people to write down why they had come to church that day. The responses were honest, heartfelt, and deeply powerful. Some came to pray for family members or difficult situations. Others came to give thanks for God's love and faithfulness. One person wrote, *"Because I don't fit in anywhere else, but I am welcomed here."* Another shared, *"Because I need Jesus and want to give thanks that I am 39 days sober and clean and God is helping to turn my life around."*

Reading these responses reminded us that



church is so much more than a building or a Sunday routine. Church is a place where people are welcomed, known, supported, challenged, healed, encouraged and loved. It is a community where we encounter the presence of God and where we walk alongside one another through both joys and struggles. We are strengthened by the Holy Spirit, and we are also strengthened by each other.

The church exists to make Jesus known. We are here so that people may come to discover the love of God for themselves, to learn how to follow Jesus, and to care for one another as part of God's family. In a world where many people feel isolated, anxious, or disconnected, the witness of a loving Christian community matters enormously.

With that in mind, I want to encourage us all to prioritise meeting together as church. Not simply as an optional extra when life is less busy, or when we haven't got anything better to do but because Jesus calls us to gather, worship, pray, grow, and serve together. We need one another more than we sometimes realise, and through His Spirit, God continues to shape us together into His people.

God bless you all. **Kathryn**



Small Groups



I'm pleased to report the first anniversary of the small group that began following the completion of the Alpha course in 2024. As joint leader with Lisa Cox the group has given me an opportunity

to share something of what I've learned from being a Christian for over 40 years.

Initially I was concerned how we might find enough to discuss in an hour and a half meeting. I needn't have worried. People who were once strangers or casual acquaintances now seem like friends.

The first anniversary meeting contained a cake and a balloon, as well as us continuing to examine the book of James. The meetings allow us to ask questions, disagree and if someone has an urgent need, the agenda of the meeting can be put to one side. As well as Bible Study we incorporate worship, prayer and light refreshments.

My thanks to everyone who has been so faithful in their attendance. It's been a pleasure and a privilege to be a part of it. We look forward to seeing where God leads over the next 12 months.



Ian Clarke

If anyone is interested in joining a Small Group then please have a chat with **Phil Andrews** (our Small Group Co-ordinator)

April Synod - Update

Chester & Stoke Methodist District met for their Spring Representative Synod at Church in April.

For those wondering, a Methodist Synod is a governing assembly of ministers and lay representatives that meets to discuss church life, ministry, and policy within a district or region.



The theme for this Synod was '**Rooted and Rising.**' The morning sessions reflected on what it means to be 'Rooted' in the historical sense of who we are as Methodists, what 'Healthy Soil' looks like for growth from having a positive safeguarding culture in our district and churches.

In the afternoon we reflected on observing where God may be causing 'New Shoots' to form so we can work with this and when we need to be able to 'Prune and Let Go' of ministries that have had their season to enable new growth.

June 2026 - Circuit Preaching Plan

Venue	Time	7 <sup>th</sup> June	14 <sup>th</sup> June	21 <sup>st</sup> June	28 <sup>th</sup> June
SwanBank	9.00am	Jeffries/Stephens	Stephens	F Hibberts	A Johnson
	10.30am	Jeffries/Stephens	Stephens	F Hibberts	A Johnson
	6.15pm	Stephens	Cooke	Jeffries	Stephens
Potter's Church	9.30am	Price/Nankevill	Price	Cooke	Hancock
	11.15am	Price/Nankevill	Price	Cooke	Hancock
Oasis Church	10.45am	Davies	TBC	Dalton	Davies
Wesley Hall	10.45am	Tattersall	Brooks	Own Arrangement	Stephens
The Gateway	10.45am	Batho	Tattersall	Boateng	Tindale
Mount Pleasant	10.45am	<b>No service</b>	Tinsdale	Wakelin	Worthington
Packmoor	11.00am	Wakelin S	Own Arrangement	Tindale	Dutton
Village Church	11.00am	A Johnson	Jeffries	Jeffries	Stanyer
Whitehill	10.30am	Zinyemba	Cooper	To Be Confirmed	Nixon
	6.00pm	Cooper	Wakelin	Q & A	Wakelin



### A view from Oasis Community Church

Over the past year, I have often referred to myself as the “New Pastor” of Oasis Community Church. After a full year in post, that terminology seems less appropriate — or is it?

When you take up a role in ministry, you spend a lot of time discerning whether the gifts and abilities that God has given you will match the criteria of the role. However, I have realised that the greater emphasis has rather been on how much I still need to grow. Certainly, in my capabilities, but more importantly, in my heart.

Since coming to Oasis, I have made many mistakes and errors of judgement. The common factor has always been that I have often relied too heavily on my own thinking, rather than humbly depending on God. This does not mean I believe I am in the wrong place. Quite the opposite — I truly believe God has called me here. But it does mean that I am still being

shaped. I am still learning what it means to trust Him more deeply and continue to lead with greater humility.

It reminds me of the book of Job. Throughout so much suffering and testing, Job displayed incredible faithfulness. Yet by the end of the book, we also see that God was still working in his heart. I’m certainly no Job, but it is a reminder that no-one is ever the finished article.

So, although I am now a year into my role, in terms of spiritual growth, I still feel very much in my infancy. However, I also know that I am not walking this journey alone. I have a God who loves and cares for me, and despite my many imperfections, he can still use me in amazing ways.

**Gareth Davies**  
**Pastor - Oasis Community Church, Biddulph**



### Trusting the Path I Didn't Plan

I often say I don't why I am where I am. As a 34-year-old millennial with a young family, I can say that my life, presently, revolves heavily around work, and ultimately in that area, I have, largely, always moved with the tide and trusted that God will guide my path. I currently work as Regional Officer for Safeguarding for the Methodist Church and as Safeguarding Consultant for Greenbelt Festival. I'll also soon be starting freelance safeguarding training work with the Church of England. Yet my path into this work began somewhere quite different.

I studied music, and creativity has remained a constant thread throughout my life and faith. Alongside teaching music in prisons, I was a professional performer, session musician and a musical director. More recently, I've continued creative work with B-Arts in Stoke, producing soundscapes for theatre and poetry, as well as running community songwriting and choir workshops.

Between those creative roles, I worked within the Probation Service as both a Probation Officer and later in quality development, and prior to that in roles in prison youth work and chaplaincy. Looking back, I can see how God was shaping me through all of it,

teaching me about justice, restoration, creativity, compassion, and the value of every person.

My work has taught me that love and forgiveness are far more complicated than we often teach. Going far beyond giving people what they think they want and growing far wider than avoiding consequences of our actions. Yet in our imperfect world I continue to see God at work in imperfect people, imperfect communities, and imperfect attempts to care for one another with grace and truth.

I live in Chell with my loving wife and our seven-year-old daughter who anchor me. I savour the moments with them whenever time allows.

Increasingly as life for many my age becomes more pressured, more squeezed, and with ever heightening expectations I've come to believe that the holiest moments in life are the quiet, ordinary ones we are too often rushing past.

**Thomas Simm**



Reflections on a Greek Odyssey

The Greek Saronic Islands whispered secrets to me as the wind passed between the sails, the islands surrounded themselves in mystery as our sailboat cut through the clear sapphire waters after we departed from Athens. For a week



in May I sailed with my three close friends, Captain Adrian Firth, First Officer Nigel Johnson and Third Officer Keith Stubbs, who are well known at SwanBank. We

sailed among the islands and observed the cliffs glowing at dusk, hidden coves in Methana, and for me, the unusual sight of fresh octopus (the captain's favourite) and fish with their mouths open sporting razor sharp teeth! As I was

seated under the vine-shaded taverna, I became suddenly aware that for me the pressures of work schedules, busy motorway traffic and ever-increasing customer demands had finally disappeared



and I was left with the realisation that I had now fully arrived in retirement or as Keith & Nigel would say "The Promised Land". I have been retired for over a year now, but it has taken me a little time to adjust to a new lifestyle after 52 years of full-on work. Just sun, wind, water, and the steady rhythm of the sea splashing against the hull of our fine sailing vessel, which was aptly named Athena. This was the



start of another great adventure holiday, and I was fortunate to share it with brilliant crew mates that you can fully depend on, along with a friendship that has been forged over decades in

some cases. What could possibly go wrong?

Well, one afternoon, a sudden Meltemi wind rose as we were coming into the harbour at Perdika, and we could see other boats being caught in the crosswinds and were being jostled about. I instinctively knew that my full attention was needed and a sharp look out for the instructions from our captain, as this berthing was going to require very experienced skills (a bit like an airliner pilot landing in crosswinds). It just so happened that it was my duty on the anchor winch, and it was my job at the captain's precise command to deploy the anchor in a straight line. From my position at the front of the boat, I could see everything unfolding, as we lined up to reverse into the dock the wind picked up even more, the order was given to lay down the

anchor, and everything seemed fine at first. Then then I noticed the bow thrusters which were working hard to keep our vessel in a straight line suddenly stopped. As quick as a rat up a drainpipe the captain was full on the wheel and using the powerful engine to get us lined up and docked with no fuss. As the anchor chain rattled down in the harbour, the wind howled through the mast lines, but the anchor did its job and held firm. Nigel and Keith fastened the stern ropes, then a quick tension on the anchor and we were fully secured and safe.

Afterwards, we all sat in the cockpit, wrapped in fleeces, sharing the last of our beers. The sky was bruised with crimson and purple, the waves lapping against the hull. Later that evening stars emerged one by one, a vast glittering heavenly dome above us, with the water now calm below.

I murmured the old Methodist hymn "Will your anchor hold in the storms of life?" half under my breath. The words felt alive here, not distant or pious, but carved from the same sea that surrounded us. My friends aboard the Athena joined me in a time of reflection as we chatted about our journey through life with its ups and downs, and griefs we had weathered together.



In that moment, contentment settled over me like a warm bath. Not the fleeting thrill of adventure, but something deeper. Life's tempests come — illness, uncertainty, the quiet ache of time passing you by. Yet here, with these souls aboard the Athena, I felt securely moored. The anchor wasn't just iron and chain; it was my faith, friendship, and the simple grace of being present at this wonderful time.

Later, as the sea calmed to glass, I stood on deck counting constellations. No grand resolutions. Just gratitude for the wind that fills sails and friends who help trim them. The voyage taught me that contentment isn't just the absence of storms, but knowing your anchor will hold—and that the stars look brightest when shared with true friends.

*"Will your anchor hold in the storms of life,  
When the clouds unfold their wings of strife?  
When the strong tides lift, and the cables strain,  
Will your anchor drift, or firm remain?"*

*We have an anchor that keeps the soul  
Steadfast and sure while the billows roll;  
Fastened to the Rock which cannot move,  
Grounded firm and deep in the Savior's love."*



'Miltos' Willis

### Prayer Focus – Our God Cares Deeply

I have recently (along with our choir) felt honoured to support the Baby and Children's Memorial service. We sang "Hide Me Now (Still)", which in itself is a prayer that God will carry us in our storm.

Every year we support grieving parents and their families from our local hospital. This year the Church was packed with over 400 guests. It was a protected, peaceful space where families could be still and remember their child. I feel parents came to honour their precious children. Candles were lit, songs were sung, prayers were offered; and tears were shed. The atmosphere was emotional, as you would expect, but it was also gentle and there was comfort to be found. The Holy Spirit was very much present. After the service, as I left, I heard a lady speaking about the service and said how wonderful it was. Another choir member said she saw a grandmother who comes every year and finds it helps her to grieve the loss of her grandchild.

My prayer was that the grieving parents and their families could sense that they were being held by our loving Heavenly Father who understands and offers love and hope, something the world can not offer. We serve a big God who is able to carry us through every storm we may be faced with.

In Psalm 27 verse 5 King David speaks of being

hidden with God in his dwelling during times of trouble. Where we can be given peace comfort and protection. As we have just celebrated Pentecost, we are reminded that the Holy Spirit is our comforter and all we need to do is ask him to carry us in our time of need. We need to do this on a daily, hour by hour and minute by minute basis. God, through Jesus renews our strength and gives us hope for the future. Hope which we will not find from the world. Hope is found in Jesus. As we look to him, we can find a joy and peace, which the world does not offer.

#### PRAYER

*Father God Thank you for being near to everyone reading this.*

*To the weary, give rest.*

*To the hurting bring healing.*

*To the anxious and lonely, speak your peace.*

*To the one who feels forgotten, remind them they are yours.*

*Meet every need today.*

*Be Provider, Protector and Hope for every situation.*

*We place it all in Your Hands.*

*In Jesus name,*

*Amen*

**Sarah Dobson**



### Young Adults Weekend Away - Update

This is a rather overdue update around the young-adults weekend away that took place in mid-February! As a group of 18-30 (ish) young adults we went away for the weekend to Yarnfield and spent some time looking into the minor prophets. I found the weekend to be spiritually reflective as we considered what

it means to be anointed and sent out. Something that I particularly enjoyed was that Craig bought a wealth of theology books with him around the minor prophets with a diverse theological outlook which we found were really interesting to flick through!

**Jess Hickerman**

## Reflection on Psalm 23

During the last few weeks, on Sunday evenings, we have been reflecting on this wonderful Psalm. It is special for me as it was my beautiful mum's favourite psalm and is also written on her headstone.

**"The Lord is my shepherd"** - To me, that is enough.

**"I lack nothing"** - For He is my guide and protector.

**"He makes me lie down in green pastures"** - He lets me rest under His protection.

**"He leads me beside still waters"** - He guides me safely from harm.

**"He restores my soul"** - To be refreshed, not parched, giving me all I need for the journey.

**"He guides me along the right paths"** - For He knows the ways in which we should go and directs us.

**"For His name's sake"** - For He is my Saviour, your Saviour, and our friend.

**"Even though I walk through the darkest valley"** - Some things we do not understand. He is there with us, carrying us. Just like in the poem, 'Footprints in the sand'. When you see only one set of footprints it is then that He is carrying you.

**"I will fear no evil, for You are with me"** - He will comfort us in those moments.

**"Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me"** - Sometimes they also correct us if we are going the wrong way or wandering.

**"You anoint my head with oil"** - To bless and protect me, and you.

**"My cup runs over"** - For He lets me drink freely of His love.

**"Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life"** - What a wonderful thing to have his goodness with us.

**"And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever"** - God has prepared a room for each of us and our loved ones. Please look for your favourite version of Psalm 23.

Lloyd Gray



## Lots going on at the Grocery!

April and May have been very busy months in the Grocery, and we have seen God's blessing on us. Here are a few of our highlights.

- 220 Easter Eggs were donated to the Grocery and given out free to our customers
- 7 volunteers attended the Maundy Thursday Service
- 2 volunteers have found employment and 2 more have had interviews and waiting to see if they have been successful.
- 622 people shopped in the Grocery during April
- 40 new people became members of the Grocery in April
- We gave 34 packets of six oatcakes free to all our customers on Staffordshire Day.
- We worked with the ladies from the Hazrat Belal Mosque to provide a hot drink and home-made cake and Samosas to our customers.
- I attended a year 7 careers morning at St Margaret Ward School and shared with 90 students about the work of the Grocery.
- We received food donations from Whitehill Methodist Church and members of the public.
- We gave 80 copies of the church magazine to our customers.
- The Grocery, alongside SwanBank, was involved in planning and took part in the Burslem Family Funday at Vale Park.
- I attended a prayer day in Manchester at the Message Trust.
- The Grocery has been working with Circus Starr – giving out free tickets to families for the event in June.
- We are also planning a new Cook & Eat course starting in June
- I'm planning for a new intake evening at Jackfield's Primary School in June

I would like to say a big thank you to all our volunteers, who support the work of the Grocery day in and day out which enables me to share the work of the Grocery in the community.

Nan Hulse



Civic Prayer Breakfast - Friday 5<sup>th</sup> June



**2026 STOKE-ON-TRENT ANNUAL CIVIC PRAYER BREAKFAST**

Friday 5 June, 2026  
Kings Hall, Kingsway Stoke, ST4 1JH  
Run time 07:30am - 10:00am

Join us to celebrate 'Stoke-on-Trent Day'

**Guest Speaker**  
Jon Rouse CBE  
Chief Executive  
Stoke-on-Trent City Council  
"The importance of the faith and voluntary sector in the city"

**Guest Interview**  
Laura Nicholls  
Director of Stoke City Community Engagement

**Guest Interview**  
Naomi Parton  
Head of Port Vale Foundation

**Event hosts**  
Lloyd Cooke & Sam Taylor (Saltbox)

**Worship led by**  
Paul Critchley (Presence Worship)  
St. Peter's CofE Academy Gospel Choir

**Tickets £15.00 including an updated breakfast menu, individual table service and free car parking**

**Book your place:**  
By Card - Call 07825 745142  
By Cheque - Made payable to Saltbox - Send to: Saltbox, Bemersley House, Gitana Street, Hanley, ST1 1DY  
In Person - Buy from: The Christian Book Centre, Gitana Street, Hanley, ST1 1DY  
General Enquiries - email@saltbox.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 2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> 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 – (3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday of each month). See Liz Thompson for details.  
**'NEW' One Step Forward (Men's Walking Group) – (2pm on 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday every other month).** See Matt Nixon for details.

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



MAY 2026

**HOSPITALITY & HOPE AT SWANBANK**

Please consider whether you can donate any of the following items:

**MEN'S**  
Boxers - medium  
Jeans - 32", 34" waist  
T-shirts - small / medium  
Hoodies - medium  
Trainers - size 8 & 9  
Warm Coats

**WOMEN'S**  
Knickers - sizes 8, 10  
T-shirts - sizes small / medium  
Joggers / jeans - sizes 8, 10, 12  
Trainers - size 5 & 6  
Coats - warm and/or waterproof

**OTHER**  
Sleeping Bags, Blankets

Please only donate items that are listed above, many thanks Hospitality and Hope Team.



SWANBANK NOTICEBOARD

**Wednesday Volunteering**

We are often very busy in the building and at our reception door on Wednesdays. Could you offer the occasional 2 or 3 hours of time to help out? For more information, please speak to **Liz** who will explain what might be involved.

**The District Prayer Book**

The District Prayer book is a great resource to find out what is happening around the Circuits associated with the Stoke and Chester District. Please follow the link below if you want to know more.

[District Prayer Book](#)

**Gateway Coffee Morning**

The next Gateway Coffee Morning at Goldenhill Church is on Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> June (10am till 12 noon). All are welcome!



**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. All are welcome!

**3<sup>rd</sup> June - David Bowers**

**10<sup>th</sup> June - Pastor Glynis Cooper**

**17<sup>th</sup> June - Rev. Ruth Jeffries**

**24<sup>th</sup> June - Rev. Arthur Wakelin**

**Interested in Refreshments?**



Each Sunday we provide refreshments after each of our three services with the help of a fantastic group of volunteers. It would be great if someone could step forward to organise the rotas of the refreshment teams. To learn more please speak to **Shirley** if you feel this is something you would like to do.

[shirley@swanbank.org.uk](mailto:shirley@swanbank.org.uk)

**SB Morning Service Themes – A people called Methodists**

**7<sup>th</sup> June** - All can be saved

**14<sup>th</sup> June** - Scripture, Tradition, Reason, Experience

**21<sup>st</sup> June** - Faith in Small Circles

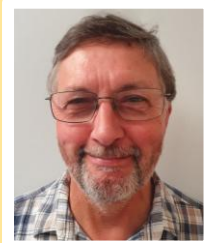
**28<sup>th</sup> June** - A heart strangely warmed

**Church AGM – Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> June**

Our church AGM is after the **10:30am** service on **7<sup>th</sup> June**. Please stay if you want to learn more about the work of SwanBank. We will also be electing representatives to sit on the Church Council.

**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

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[admin@swanbank.org.uk](mailto:admin@swanbank.org.uk)



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

Sunday 10:30am Service, live stream links:-



[www.youtube.com/@SwanBank/streams](http://www.youtube.com/@SwanBank/streams) or



[www.facebook.com/swanbank/?locale=en\\_GB](http://www.facebook.com/swanbank/?locale=en_GB)

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