



In focus

January 2026



THERE are so many ideas for the new year on social media: the new you, the best you, how to stay positive, how to keep to your goals for the year . . .

I'm not one for setting goals in the new year or for making resolutions. But I think most of us reflect at this time of year; we look back at the good things that happened,

and the not so good; we look forward to more good things, but inevitably there will be challenges. That is life!

For me though, whatever is going on in my life, the good or the challenging, the fact that I have faith in Jesus brings meaning to it all.

Having Jesus brings me a purpose in serving Him and following His ways as best I can. He also brings hope. I know and trust that God is with me through everything. I know I am not alone. I know my future is secure. This brings me great joy. I am better with Jesus than I am on my own, He gives me strength to overcome the trials and an inner peace that reminds me, even in the chaos, God has my back and it will, in the end, be OK.

So as we enter 2026, I pray that you will all know more good than bad. I pray you will know hope and peace in troubled times. And I pray you will know joy that only Jesus can bring you. I pray that you will know Jesus' love, and friendship that will outlive all the years.

May you have a very happy and blessed 2026.

Revd Linda Hayes

Welcome

to our SERVICES 10.30am

We commence our Sunday mornings with prayer in the church between 9.45am and 10.15am.
Everyone is welcome.

For seven weeks starting 4th January, the sermon series is entitled **Covenant people** and will be led by Revd Linda Hayes unless otherwise stated.

Sun 4th

Subject: **A new covenant** to incl. Communion
Reading: *Genesis 17 : 1-8*

Sun 11th

Subject: **A forgiven community** Revd Simon Gray
Reading: *1 John 1 : 8 - 2:2*

Sun 18th

Subject: **A community of grace**
to incl. Communion
Reading: *Galatians 2 : 21 - 3:9*

Sun 25th

Subject: **Missionary community** Belong
Reading: *Acts 17 : 16-34*

Sun 1st February

Subject: **A united community**
Reading: *Phil 2 : 5-11*

You are very welcome to join us any Sunday morning.

All ages welcome. Activities available for the young at heart.

Light refreshments are served after the Service.



Previous sermons are on our Facebook page

Coming up . . .

Sun 4th
Prayer Breakfast

9.00am - 10.00am

Prayer led by Anita

Mon 1st
Leaders' Meeting

2.00pm

Sun 11th
Church New Year Lunch

12.30pm approx

Sun 25th
Church Members' meeting

12.30pm approx

Contacts: Revd. LINDA HAYES Mob:07963 803884 or pastorlinda103@gmail.com
Anita Pike Administrator and hall bookings 07814 445929 or calm.pike82@gmail.com

Weekly Meetings

TUESDAYS

Turkish language school 5.00pm-6.30pm

Belong 7.00pm-9.00pm
Fortnightly discipleship group exploring aspects of faith.

WEDNESDAYS

Sunflower Café
12.30pm - 3.00pm



Livewires

3.30pm - 4.30pm



For Key stage 1 children with parents +carers; older and younger siblings welcome.

FRIDAYS

Flowerpots

10am - noon
Baby and toddler group.



SATURDAYS

Impact Church 6.00pm
Polish church

SUNDAYS

Bethel Prayer House 3.00pm

Paint Pots nurseries Mon to Fri



Tel: (023) 8078 4969
pp7@paintpotsnursery.co.uk



NEVER STOP PRAYING

1 Thessalonians 5:17

New Year

AS one year ends and another begins, we take time to review our lives. It is a time to thank God, the creator of all our days and years, for the gift of each day, for new days to come, and for the promise of eternal life with the God who loves us.

GREAT Maker of the year,
Old Time by You begun,
each day, each minute and
each hour,
all passing one by one,
through all my time be near.
Oh, guide me with your hand.
My hours are steps, my days
are roads
to your sweet timeless land.

Source: Circle of Prayer

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Lord Jesus,
As we step
into 2026, tune
our hearts to
Your goodness.
**Let this New Year be marked
by Your presence.**

*Fill us with faith instead of fear,
peace where worry weighs heavy,
and joy to strengthen our hearts
so that we can live each day with
thankfulness and generosity. Amen*

Source: compassionuk.org

2026 Bible verse for children,
teenagers and young adults.

Proverbs 3:5-6:

Trust in the Lord with all your
heart, and do not lean on your
own understanding. In all your
ways acknowledge Him, and He
will make straight your paths.

Dear God,

Prayer for Healing

LORD, please touch my body
and my spirit with Your healing
power. Bring strength where
there is weakness and peace
where there is pain. Restore me
fully by Your grace. Amen

HOSANNA Prayers

Starting Friday 9th January
Usually the first Friday of the month

St James Road Methodist Church, Room 7

A joyful, multicultural evening of prayer, praise,
worship and testimonies.

WHEN my heart feels heavy and my
spirit grows tired, please fill me with
Your strength. Lift me up when I feel
weak and remind me that I am never
alone in my battles.

Give me courage to face each day
with faith, and peace to trust Your
plan even when I don't understand it.

Help me stand firm when life feels
uncertain and give me the endurance
to keep going, one step at a time. Let
Your love be my source of power,
Your presence my comfort, and Your
promises my hope. Amen



IT'S good to reflect on the Advent and Christmas season, to remember the things that made this time special to us.

Here's what some of our church folk said:

ANGIE Marchment: had a lovely time with her son, daughter and sister-in-law and had the bonus of receiving a new devotional book *Daily Prayer* by Nick Fawcett which she is now enjoying.

ANITA Pike: three musical highlights for Anita. Firstly, her daughter Catherine is a member of *Cambreensis*, a Christian choir, and she and Les attended their Christmas concert at the Millennium Centre in Cardiff. A full orchestra and organ accompanied them as they sang beautiful arrangements of carols and songs.

In contrast the unaccompanied singing at the Lantern Parade was special too with local people wanting to gather together in the dark with their little lights and their voices.

Lastly her dad's organ playing at chapel on Christmas Day - just wonderful!

DENISE Ward: there was a lot going on within the Ward family over Christmas and Denise was delighted that God held everything together.

GARY Greaves: liked all the elements over the Christmas period including food, drink and being with Sandy's family.

JANN Sexton: loved the glow of the lit candles that greeted her when she walked into church on Christmas morning and also finding out that her next door neighbour was still alive! (See Jann for the full story!)

JOANNE McNeil: Jo enjoyed having Christmas dinner at her brother Jamie's house. She loved all the presents and money she was given.

JON Fisher: enjoyed being together with his brother and family. He was cheered by the news of his brother delivering meals on Christmas Day with the Salvation Army. Jon was very grateful for everything he had. A television highlight was watching the King's Speech.

KAREN Eaves: went to Denise's house on Christmas Day and particularly relished feeding turkey to the family cat!

LES Pike: music played a big part in Les's Christmas festivities. Firstly, there was Catherine's concert in Cardiff - see Anita's notes.

Then he sang with his acapella group *Ocean Harmony* at a packed venue, The Dancing Man, down opposite Mayflower Park, and in particular, singing *O Holy Night*. On to another group, this time for a charitable cause, held at Kimbridge Barn, near Romsey; again carols and songs with some audience participation in a lovely setting.

And our Lantern Parade in Freemantle Lake Park was a highlight, whole heartedly singing together.

And finally, two Christmas CDs got their annual airing with the Salvation Army Brass Band and a traditional jazz band playing all the old favourites.

LINDA Hayes: after pretending she didn't like anything about Christmas at all(!), Linda enthused about the Lantern Parade which was a real highlight for her and she said that's when her Christmas really started, closely followed by the *Bethlehem's Got Talent* the next Sunday.

PHYLIS Harcourt: the candlelight service gave her a nice warm feeling inside and she said there was a lovely atmosphere.

TONY and JEAN Hulse: enjoyed Christmas overall and especially being with the family.

Lantern Parade

IT WAS great to see a good crowd of all ages at our Lantern Parade on 14th December; we had a creative and happy time together.

For the first hour folk beavered away making their lanterns at the church: carefully colouring in the frame, cutting out the squares of cellophane for the windows, glueing and taping it all together, attaching a stick and popping a tealight inside, all accompanied with plenty of goodies to eat and drink.

The weather kept dry and the procession set off along to Freemantle Lake Park and up to the shelter where, heartily and joyfully, we sang our carols and Christmas songs.

Linda prayed a blessing over us and we went on our way feeling Christmas was just round the corner.



Walking through Freemantle Lake Park . . .



. . . towards the shelter



Denise and Linda, in good voice

What are the true definitions of the words below?

LITHE

- A. Five per cent of the Israelites income given to the Lord
- B. Type of solid wooden wheel used by Romans
- C. Able to move easily and gracefully e.g. athlete or dancer
- D. Ancient word for a carpenter's apprentice

LING

- A. Type of rainbow when only half can be seen
- B. Type of fish caught for food
- C. Type of swing made from rope and used by the children of Israel
- D. Species of stick insect found in the Middle East

MERIBAH

- A. Referring to a place where the Israelites quarrelled with Moses over water.
- B. Dowsing or divining with a stick.
- C. Type of ancient Egyptian pottery
- D. Middle eastern dish that has lamb in it

ZIZ

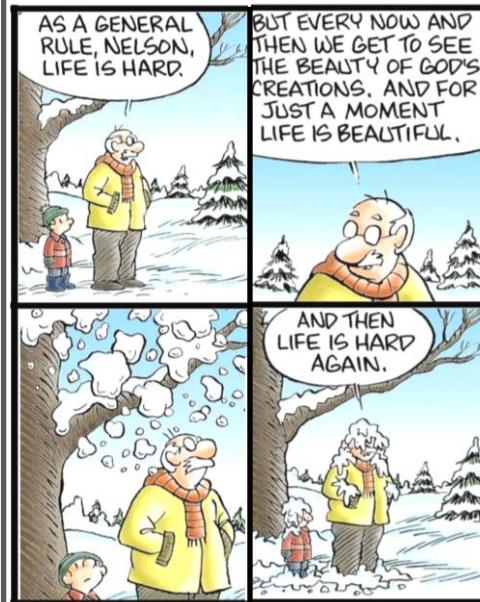
- A. Part of Jewish folklore, a giant bird or mythical creature.
- B. Ceremonial shield used by Roman soldiers.
- C. Type of musical instrument.
- D. Popular ancient wine with extra sparkle.

What a load of rubbish!



OUR Litter pickers did a great job on 6th December collecting this great mound of rubbish, mainly found in the cut-ways close to the church. The council then collected it during the following week.

There was a good turnout of folk from church and community and we all enjoyed well deserved drinks and pastries afterwards.



Thank you!

... for your financial giving towards the work and witness of this church during December which came to £1,443. It is always appreciated. Over the last year the weekly average given was £332.57

... to Linda for leading our services during Advent.

... to Steve for sorting out a major problem with the church laptop containing all the financial data.

... everyone who made the church look so lovely during Advent both inside and out: the decorations, the tree, the stable construction. And also packing everything away afterwards

... to the folk who read the Scriptures and lead our intercessory prayers on a Sunday morning all through the year.

... also to those who have written and contributed articles for *In Focus*.

... to people who bring contributions towards the breakfasts on the first Sunday of each month.

... to our Lord for being such a faithful God to us.



to Hayley Stala
on 9th January
and Angie Marchment on 1st Feb.

Sunflower Baptist

NOTICE BOARD

Our minister, the Revd Jack Frost explained why he stood on just his left leg while conducting the midnight service on New Year's Eve.

It was so that he would start off the New Year on the right foot.

dates to Remember

February

Sat 14th - Quiet Morning
Preparation for Lent,
9.30-11.30am

Tues 17th - Pancake Party
3.30-5.00pm (time tbc)

Holy Week

Sun 29th Mar - Palm Sunday

Wed 1st Apr - Easter Party for families
3.00 -5.00pm

Thurs 2nd - Maundy Thursday

Fri 3rd - Good Friday Reflections

Sun 5th - Easter Celebrations

May

Sat 9th - Litter Pick

ANSWERS TO QUIZ ON PAGE 6.

Life, C; Living, B; Membership, A; Ziz A.



The Bible is a book. But it's more than a book

WHEN the author of Hebrews said that God's word is alive and active, it wasn't just because the Bible is a really good book. It is that - where else would you get such deep wisdom, fantastic poetry and terrific stories in one volume?

But mainly it's because the Bible is God speaking directly to us. Out of all the muddle and mess of history, through frail and fallible human beings, His words have been faithfully transmitted from generation to generation. And they still speak powerfully to us today, because God himself energises and inhabits them.

If that isn't amazing enough, the words of God also witness to the Word of God - Jesus Himself. Here's the author of Hebrews again: 'In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets', but 'in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son' (Hebrews 1:1-2). In His words and in His Word, God speaks to us.

So, through 2026 we need to keep the Bible at the heart of church life and our own lives. May we all experience the presence of Jesus in the Bible's life-giving words.

Source: The Bible Society

DID YOU KNOW THAT:

- Psalm 118 is the middle chapter of the entire Bible?
- Psalm 117, before Psalm 118 is the shortest chapter in the Bible?
- Psalm 119, after Psalm 118 is the longest chapter in the Bible?
- The Bible has 594 chapters before Psalm 118 and 594 chapters after Psalm 118
- If you add up all the chapters except Psalm 118, you get a total of 1188.
- 1188 or Psalm 118 verse 8 is the middle verse of the entire Bible?
- And this central verse has an important message!
"It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in man" Psalm 118:8

God is with you
God is for you
God sees you
God hears you
God knows you
God cares about you
God loves you

Someday

it won't matter how rich
you were, the car you
drove, the house you lived
in, or how popular you
were. On that day, only
a relationship with
**JESUS CHRIST will
matter! Amen**