



Benefice Newsletter December 2025



From Revd Karen

We are entering a really busy time of year when the church calendar says its Advent and we should be pausing, watching and waiting, whilst the reality of preparing for so many services means that I'm permanently meeting myself coming backwards.

I recently went on retreat at Launde Abbey in Leicestershire with the Rural Mission Hub. We are a group of ministers, lay and ordained who are passionate about sharing the love of Christ outside of the towns. It's tough as our denominations can seem to be focused on the urban areas and as ministers we can feel stretched too thin. We are lucky in Gloucestershire. The parish groupings are quite small with up to nine parishes in a benefice. In Leicester Diocese one benefice has twenty parishes and over thirty churches. Their priest was too busy to attend the retreat. We really missed her as the theme of the twenty-four-hour retreat was 'pause.' We were invited to remember that Advent is about pause and to find a place for Jesus in the frantic busyness of November and December. How might you pause this Advent?



Advent Blessing from John Birch

God of hope, who brought love into this world,
be the love that dwells between us.
God of hope, who brought peace into this world,
be the peace that dwells between us.
God of hope, who brought joy into this world,
be the joy that dwells between us.
God of hope, the rock we stand upon,
be the centre, the focus of our lives
always, and particularly this Advent time.

Benefice Contacts

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Website and Social Media for St Edward's

<https://www.achurchnearyou.com/church/14393/>

Facebook:
<https://www.facebook.com/people/St-Edwards-Church-Stow-on-the-Wold/61566790355827/>

Instagram:
https://www.instagram.com/st_edwards_stow/

Online services links

7 Dec: <https://bit.ly/StEd071225>
14 Dec: <https://bit.ly/StEd141225>
21 Dec, 10.30: <https://bit.ly/StEd211225>
21 Dec, 15.00
Carols: <https://bit.ly/StEd211225Carols>
25 Dec: <https://bit.ly/StEdXmas2025>
28 Dec: <https://bit.ly/StEd281225>

STAMPS FOR CHARITY

Do you have any used stamps? These can be put in the box in church and Val sends them to the RNIB to aid their fundraising

A look back at November



We had something of a candle theme going in St Edward's! We started with an All Soul's Service – a beautiful reflective experience with Chopin preludes from Adam and poetry from Revd Karen and the opportunity to light a candle to remember a loved one.

Lumos brought their second concert experience to St Edward's Church later in the month. This time it was the music of Hans Zimmer. The church looked stunning with all the candles creating a unique setting for the music on the stage that was built in around an hour. This time there were portable red



lights which were very appropriate for the Feast of Christ the King and might they be available in other liturgical colours? The church was full with 190 tickets sold for one performance and 150 for the second. The music was really well done with pieces from Gladiator, Inception, Interstellar, Madagascar, The Lion King and Pirates of the Caribbean. Lumos have moved from the big churches and cathedrals to medium sized ones this year and it seems to be working well for them and for us. Their musicians love the fact that we turn on the heating for them! Lumos are booked to come back in April, July and October next year.



And a look forward to December

As Karen has already mentioned it is a really busy time for churches. There's news from the village churches on the next page. At St Edward's we actually start in November with the first Sunday of Advent falling on 30th November this year. Following on from a wonderful candlelit introduction from Lumos last weekend, first up is Advent Carols on 30th November at 3pm. On Friday 12th December we are delighted to host the annual Kate's Home Nursing Christmas Carol Service; then we have our main Carol Service on Sunday 21st December at 3pm and on Monday 22nd we have a new venture - in the words from the organisers:

"Join us for a magical musical evening as **Jennifer Morafkova** returns from her studies at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama, joined by the fantastic singer and pianist **Rebecca Reavley**. Together, they will present a beautiful programme of **Operatic favourites and Christmas Classics**—the perfect way to spark your festive spirit!! All proceeds from the event will support the **Sparkhouse Creatives Fundraiser**, a local Community Interest Group dedicated to providing accessible, affordable, and inclusive arts opportunities for young people and the wider community."

All this before we arrive at Midnight Mass on 24th December at 11pm and the joy of Christmas Day!



How to catch a pastor

And finally, we're not quite sure what Karen is suggesting here but this was sent with the caption "looking after your priest this Advent season"...those of you are regulars at our Wednesday coffee morning may be aware of a slight priestly affinity to coffee...

St Edward's PCC –

At our November meeting we talked about working collaboratively with the Church Room team, various upcoming concerts and how we can publicise events most effectively.

We reviewed recent services and considered wider options for the future including lay led services in the event of clergy cover not being available.

We spent some time considering the vision and what is important to us as a church and wider community and how we can best engage with our many visitors.

We agreed that we will look to appoint a part time Director of Operations to support us with this.

Our next meeting will be held in January 2026; as always please do speak to any member of the PCC if you would like to know more or if you have suggestions.



News from our village churches

St Nicholas, Condicote

We are now able to enjoy the lovely new organ and be warm at the same time due to moving the intake of electricity from one phase to another.

The service to celebrate our patron, St Nicholas, will be at 9.15am on December 7th. We will be having our very popular family Service at 5.00pm on Christmas Eve, with lots of contributions from the children.

St Mary's, Upper and Lower Swell

We have had two funerals in the last month - Philip McNamara and Tom Blythe, both at Lower Swell church. Thank you to Nicholas for getting music out of the organ on such cold days!

Coming up this month:

December 18th – Lower Swell Primary Carol service at 5.30pm, Lower Swell.

December 19th Carols by Candlelight 6pm, Upper Swell.

Dec 24th Christmas Eve 8pm, Lower Swell village. All welcome.



A MESSAGE FROM OUR LOCAL FOODBANK

We would like to thank all of our local donors for their generous support throughout 2025.

During this Christmas period we are able to receive donations of food, toiletries, household cleaning items and pet food until the end of week commencing 15th December.

Donation locations include The Baptist Church, Tesco, Coop and The Old Bakery Tea Room.

Merry Christmas and let's hope for a New Year which sees a reduction in people needing the support of North Cotswold Foodbank.

Services

Mondays 9.00am (Except 29 th December)	Morning Prayer in the Lady Chapel at St Edward's Stow
Wednesday 3 rd December 3.00pm	Prayers and hymns at Beechwood Park
Thursday 4 th December 11.00am	Holy Communion, Newlands Court
Sunday 7 th December 9.15am	Patronal Service, St Nicholas Condicote
Sunday 7 th December 10.30am	Holy Communion, St Edward's Stow with bells before the service
Sunday 14 th December 11.00am	BCP Matins (lay led) St Mary's Upper Swell
Sunday 14 th December 10.30am	Holy Communion, St Edward's Stow
Sunday 14 th December 3.00pm	Dementia Friendly Service, Edwardstow Court
Friday 19 th December 6pm	Carols by Candlelight, St Marys Upper Swell
Sunday 21 st December 9.15am	BCP Holy Communion, St Mary's Upper Swell
Sunday 21 st December 10.30 am	Holy Communion, St Edward's Stow
Sunday 21 st December 3.00pm	Carol Service, St Edward's Stow
Wednesday 24 th December 5pm	Family Service, St Nicholas Condicote
Wednesday 24 th December 8pm	Midnight mass Bethlehem time St Mary's Lower Swell
Wednesday 24 th December 11pm	Midnight Mass, St Edward's Stow
Thursday 25 th December 9.15am	Morning Service, St Nicholas Condicote
Thursday 25 th December 10.30am	Holy Communion, St Edward's Stow
Sunday 28 th December 9.15am	BCP Holy Communion, St Nicholas Condicote
Sunday 28 th December 10.30am	Holy Communion, St Edward's Stow

Dates for your diary

Friday 12th December 6.30pm – Kate's Home Nursing Christmas Carol Service, St Edward's

Saturday 20th December 9.30am – Peal attempt by Moreton Bell ringers

Monday 22nd December 6.00pm – Mistletoe and Magic Christmas Concert, St Edward's

Regular Events

Wednesday Coffee Club - 9.00-10.30am in Huffkins. No official coffee club but Revd Karen will be there loading up on caffeine on the 24th if anyone wishes to join her!

Closely Knit - 10am-noon every Saturday in the Church

Mother's Union – no meeting this month

Cotswold Dementia Café Every 1st and 3rd Friday of the month, 2-4pm at the Baptist Church Hall off Back Walls. A community café offering friendship, support, advice and more for anyone living with or caring for someone with dementia.