



# SWANBANK

## October Newsletter 2024

### Message from our Ministers...

Dear friends,

I wonder how you imagine God? I wonder if the image of a white-bearded man in the clouds has come to mind, or maybe has in the past.



It's certainly how God has been depicted in everything from Renaissance art through to the Simpsons. It's not actually an un-Biblical idea.



There are a good number of times in the Bible where clouds make an appearance both physically and in imagery. Beautifully, they first appear as a part of God's promise after the flood: "I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth." (Genesis 9:13) Soon after, a pillar of cloud becomes the sign by which God guides the people out of Egypt and across the desert, and then becomes a protection from Pharaoh's army as the pillar moves to being behind them.

From then on there are many moments throughout the Old Testament when God's presence is indicated by clouds, but it doesn't stop there. We only need get to Jesus's baptism to encounter the voice of God coming from a cloud to affirm the Father's pleasure. Clouds then appear in a load of imagery through to Jesus coming in the clouds in Revelation.

Now with all the rain that we've had recently, our relationship with clouds might not be the best ever, but my recent experience is that clouds can remind and reassure us of the presence of God, even when we can't feel it. When the clouds seem at their most heavy and dark, when life feels at its most heavy and dark, maybe that is when God is most present, most abundant, surrounding and holding us.

*Ruth*

## Vows Renewal



Hi everyone, Jane Hughes here. I just wanted to tell my church family that Paul and myself have been married for 50 years on the 19th October 24. We were married at Swan Bank by the reverend Brian Kirkpatrick, some of you will remember him. I was born in Burslem in 1954 and I remember the old black building, as Swan Bank use to be. Growing up I always thought it looked a bit scary and I remember asking my mum if Dracula ever lived there. I attended Moorland Road High school just round the corner from the church. The school used to take us to the church to sing for special occasions.

Paul and I have been associated with Swan Bank now for over 50 years, although now we live in Longton, we attend on a regular basis as to us it feels like home.

On Saturday 19th October at 2.00pm, we will be renewing our wedding vows, Kathryn will be officiating. If anyone wishes to attend the service we would appreciate your support, as over the years we have made many friends. God Bless! **Jane**

## Swan Bank Choir

Do you enjoy singing? Have you ever been in a choir or would like to join one? If the answer to these questions is 'Yes!' then Swan Bank Choir could be the choir for you.

We're a friendly group of fellow Christians who meet in the fellowship room at 7:30pm on the 2nd and 4th Mondays of the month led by our very own Ruth Jeffries. There is no requirement for anybody to be able to read music but if you're able to hold a tune and listen to others, you'd be off to a flying start!

We learn a varied repertoire of music and the intention is for the choir to take part in some services and to visit local care homes to sing for and with the residents. However, if you just wish to attend the Monday practices, you'd be more than welcome to share in our evenings of song and fellowship.

If you are interested in more information, please speak to **Ruth Jeffries** or **Alison Hendricken**.

## The Symphonia Verbum Orchestra Presents: 'Around the British Isles' at the Kings Hall at 5pm on Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> October.



For tickets or more information, visit [www.svo.org.uk](http://www.svo.org.uk) or call Joe Hearson on 07938 579926.

## Church at the Margins



I always believed as a minister, that I needed to free myself from the ecclesiastic shackles of being within the walls of the church building and just doing 'churchy' or religious duties. It was because of this that I sought to create 'chaplains' at several 'pot-banks', the George Hotel, Port Vale Football Club and the Werrington Young Offenders Institution. If I engaged in these duties, it enabled me to spend time amongst people who rarely, if ever, came to church. How could I see people won for Christ if I was rarely amongst non-churchgoers.

The wonderful thing about the Swan Bank Mission was its people who never tried to stop me from being out in the community; I always felt that the members backed me in this calling. The temptation that comes to every minister is to spend all his time with church activities, visit only church members and attend business meetings - there was no end to these with their problems etc.

I could tell many stories of meeting folk outside the confines of the church through my various chaplaincies, but I will confine myself at this time to the work at Werrington. It was the then Home Mission Division that asked me to be the Chaplain at the Werrington Young Offenders Institute, and at first, I refused because of the time the task would entail. Only when it was agreed that I would be allowed to divide my pay for the job and share the work with John Mayer

and Norman Guntripp did I become the chaplain.

I would spend at least 4-5 hours each week at this institution. I visited teenagers in their cells, meeting them when they were first convicted and then before they were freed again. I led monthly Sunday services in the chapel and at Christmas was able to give each young person a card and little gift. A number of Swan Bank members would help me conduct services on the wings. I supported the young people in various official meetings they were required to attend as their lives were assessed; here I rubbed shoulders with the officers and staff. I only found one governor was a problem when we clashed over football. He was unfortunate that he supported the wrong team!

I constantly found myself on the wings as well as in the cells. Holding some keys enabled me to go through most doors and enabled me to visit the teenage offenders in their workshops and their classes. I was able to get alongside young offenders as well as the officers. Most of the youngsters were guilty of minor offences but some were individuals for whom violence was the norm, there were even murderers - knife crime was common even then.

I was fortunate to be joined by volunteers from Swan Bank who felt a call from God to assist in this work like Shirley Brooks, Jimmy Barrard and Bernard Gibbs. We all felt that each teenager needed to feel and hear about God's love for them. Most of these youngsters had a very poor home-life, if any home-life at all. All needed a lot of 'TLC'. I'm glad to say we were able to provide that in good measure. Shirley was seen as a mother to not a few and the way she made tea had to be experienced. We ensured that at least if we solved a little of their problems, by the time they were released they were aware that God loved them.

**Rev John Hibberts**



## October 24 - Circuit Preaching Plan

Venue	Time	6 <sup>th</sup> October	13 <sup>th</sup> October	20 <sup>th</sup> October	27 <sup>th</sup> October
Swan Bank	9.00am	TBC	Stephens	Jeffries	Brabbs
	10.30am	Jeffries (Baptism)	Stephens 🕒	Jeffries (Baptism)	Brabbs
	6.15pm	Stephens	Jeffries /K. Davies	Stephens	Stephens
Potter's Church	9.30am	Cooke	Price	Hancock	Phillips
	11.15am	Cooke	Price	Hancock	Phillips
Oasis Church	10.45am	Dalton 🕒	Wakelin	Andrews	Community Sunday
	6.00pm				
Wesley Hall	10.45am	Stephens 🕒	Boateng	Brooks	Own Arrangement
The Gateway	10.45am	Mason	Brooks	Tattersall (Harvest)	Own Arrangement
Mt Pleasant	10.45am	Own Arrangement	J. Johnson	Stephens 🕒	Own Arrangement
Packmoor	11.00am	Own Arrangement	Tretheway	Tindale	Wilshaw
Village Church	11.00am	Own Arrangement	Jeffries 🕒	Own Arrangement	Mason
Whitehill	10.30am	Leese	A Johnson (Harvest)	Cooper	Shaw
	6.00pm	Wakelin	Cooper	Q & A Jeffries	Bowers

### Prayer Ministry



Last year I was given a picture from God regarding the need to encourage intimacy through prayer within the worship space.

I was made aware of the precious gift of Prayer Ministry and that we have the blessing of the Holy Spirit to lead us to support this powerful ministry. We now have a strong group of praying members who are supporting this important ministry.

Prayer is a powerful gift given by our loving Heavenly Father. Our Father is interested in every aspect of our lives, even those things we may see as minor. God simply wants to bless us, his Children. As we are adopted in his family we can cry "Abba"- Daddy , he is listening and close by (Romans 8 v 15-16).

Through prayer we have direct access to an ever present, all powerful, loving Heavenly Father.

I believe the Lord is close to the broken hearted and saves those crushed in spirit (Psalm 34 v 18). Sometimes, we cannot express our pain,

particularly when grieving or when going through a storm in life. The Holy Spirit gives us comfort and reveals God's love and care despite our valley experience. He gives us peace as sometimes he is the only person who truly understands what we are going through. We can trust God to sustain us and give us strength in every situation

I believe God wants us to hold onto our faith in him when we are afraid. He will never let us down. Isaiah 41 v 10 says "Do not fear, for I am with you, do not be dismayed for I am your God and I will strengthen you. I will uphold you with my right hand"

We can have confidence in our Lord through his Holy Spirit and we can trust God to answer our prayers according to his perfect will.

It has been a blessing to serve in the Prayer Ministry Team and to see God's wonderful hands at work.

To God be the Glory, Amen.

**Sarah Dobson**

## Christian Resources for Life – The Book Centre Hanley

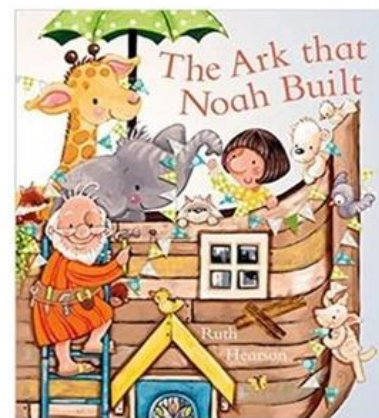
**SATURDAY 12TH OCTOBER IS GOING TO BE A SPECIAL DAY**

### **IT IS INDEPENDENT BOOKSHOP DAY**

There will be something for all the family at



On 12th October **Ruth Hearson**, who is a fantastic **childrens' author and illustrator** will be in the bookshop in Gitana St. Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent in the afternoon. Ruth will be reading some of her stories to accompanied children aged 2yrs to 6yrs old. There will also be **DISCOUNTS and SPECIAL OFFERS**, stickers and balloons, **CHRISTMAS CARDS and GIFTS** all day 10-4. Bring your children and join in the fun ! (more news later)



### **PHOTO COMPETITION**



Have you entered our

### **PHOTO COMPETITION** yet ?

Just drop your 5x7 unframed photos (max 3) showing "GOD'S WORLD", into the shop during Sept or Oct and you could win a £50 book voucher as visitors to the shop vote for their favourite. The sooner your photos are in the shop, the more votes you are likely to get (see the news item on our website for more details)

### **IN CASE YOU MISSED THE NEWS ABOUT THE CHANGE**

A while ago the Methodist District decided that the Methodist Book Centre would benefit from being allowed to operate independently. Consequently, earlier this year, the business was transferred to a newly created charity and operates independently.

Thus we are now **THE BOOK CENTRE— Christian Resources for Life**

And we still have

The same premises in Gitana Street, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent ST1 1DY

The same phone number **01782 212146** and the same email—**enquiries@crfl.co.uk**

The same staff team led by The Book Centre Manager Miss Julie Ann Ellis

## Community Grocery Store - Birthday Event, Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> October

# HAPPY Birthday

COMMUNITY GROCERY BURSLEM  
TURNS 2 AND WE'D LOVE FOR  
YOU TO CELEBRATE WITH US.

LOWER HALL  
SWANBANK CHURCH, BURSLEM,  
ST6 2AA  
12.30PM  
SUNDAY 6TH OCTOBER

JOIN US FOR COFFEE AND CAKE  
AS WE CELEBRATE THE PAST 2  
YEARS AND LOOK FORWARD TO  
EVEN MORE!

## The Alpha Course



Why not come and join a series of weekly conversations, exploring the basics of the Christian faith? You're invited no matter where you find yourself on your faith journey as everyone is welcome. Starting at 7pm every Wednesday in the Coffee Lounge at SwanBank. For more information contact **Liz Thompson** either by email at [liz@swanbank.org.uk](mailto:liz@swanbank.org.uk) or telephone the office on 01782 575129.

## Regular Activities at Swan Bank

### Sunday

**Sunday Night Young Adults** – Fellowship Room, 7:30-9:00pm

### Monday

**Bible Study** – Meeting Room 1, 10:00-11:30am

**Dementia Activity Group** – Coffee Lounge, 1:00-3:00pm

**Gospel Choir** – Fellowship Room, 7:30-9:00pm  
*2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Mondays of each month*

### Tuesday

**Little Treasures (0-4 years old)**– Lower Hall, 9:30-11:00am (*term time only*)

**Chatty Café** – Coffee Lounge, 10:00am-12noon

**Tuesday Club** – Coffee Lounge, 1:30-3:30pm

### Wednesday

**Knit & Natter** – Meeting Room 1, 10:00am-12noon

**Foodbank** – Coffee Lounge, 2:00-4:00pm  
(*To receive a food parcel an E-voucher will be required beforehand from a referral agency*)

### Thursday

**Prayer Time** – Prayer Chapel, 9:00-9:30am

**Younger Youth (School years 3-6)** – Upper Hall, 5:45-7:15pm (*term time only*)

**Youth Club (11-16 years old)** – Upper Hall, 7:30-9:00pm (*term time only*)

### Saturday

**Messy Church (Primary school aged children)** – Lower Hall, 10:00am-12noon (*first Saturday of each month*) Breakfast included and only £1 per child!

**Women's Walking Group** – Rendezvous usually at Swan Bank before going to the start of the walk (*3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday of each month*). See **Liz Thompson** for details.

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



## SWAN BANK NOTICEBOARD

**Hold the Date**

On Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> November (6pm onwards) we'll be putting up the decorations in the church in readiness for Christmas. If you can help in any way, then please contact **Jon Boulton**.

## LITTLE TREASURES

**Toddler Group**

**Tuesdays, 9.30-11am**  
**£1 per child**

**SwanBank Church, ST6 2AA**

**Approach**  
Dementia Support  
Part of Dougie Mac

SWANBANK

Every Monday  
13:00 - 15:00

Join us at Swan Bank Methodist Church and take part in our fun and engaging Dementia activity group.

Enjoy these **FREE** group sessions for people living with Dementia and their carers at Swan Bank Methodist Church, Swan Bank Square, Burslem, Stoke - On - Trent, ST6 2AA.

Contact Approach Dementia Support for more information:  
01782 214999 or enquiries@approachstaffordshire.co.uk

We're always looking to restock our supplies of Pot Noodles and wrapped chocolate biscuits. Donations can be dropped off at the church office anytime.

The **weekly prayer meeting** has now moved to a new day! It's 9am every Thursday in the Prayer Chapel but initially it is worth checking with the office beforehand to make sure it is running.

Swan Bank Church, Swan Square, Burslem, ST6 2AA

Office hours:- 10am - 4pm, Tuesday - Thursday



01782 575129



[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)



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

### Future Articles

If anyone has any stories or articles to be considered for inclusion in future newsletters, please contact Shirley Brooks or Nigel Johnson directly or email :-

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

# Need Help or Advice (or know someone that does)?

## Childline

Free advice service for young people  
[www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)  
121 online chat available  
Tel. 0800 1111

## Mind

Advice and support for mental health  
[www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)  
Tel. 0300 123 3393  
email [info@mind.org.uk](mailto:info@mind.org.uk)

## Samaritans

Emotional support for anyone struggling mentally  
[www.thesamaritans.org](http://www.thesamaritans.org)  
Tel. 116 123  
Email [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org)

## Kooth

Online counselling and emotional wellbeing service for young people  
[www.kooth.com](http://www.kooth.com)

## Young Minds

Advice and support for mental health  
[www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)  
Text YM to 85258

## Supportline

Confidential helpline for emotional support on any issue.  
[www.supportline.org.uk](http://www.supportline.org.uk)  
Tel. 01708 765200

## Refuge

Help for people facing domestic abuse  
[www.refuge.org.uk](http://www.refuge.org.uk)  
Tel. 0808 2000 247  
121 online chat at [www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk](http://www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk)

## Shout

Free and confidential crisis text line  
<https://giveushout.org>  
Text SHOUT to 85258

## Youth Access

Find advice & counselling services locally  
[www.youthaccess.org.uk/services/find-your-local-service](http://www.youthaccess.org.uk/services/find-your-local-service)

## NHS Urgent Mental Health Helpline

[www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/mental-health-services/](http://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/mental-health-services/)  
Tel. 111

## Brighter Futures

A local support service for help with homelessness and mental health issues  
[www.brighter-futures.org.uk](http://www.brighter-futures.org.uk)  
Tel. 01782 406000

## CAMHS (North Staffs)

NHS Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services - advice and support  
[www.combined.nhs.uk/services/camhs-north-stoke/](http://www.combined.nhs.uk/services/camhs-north-stoke/)  
Tel. 0300 123 0987

## Citizens Advice (North Staffs & Stoke)

Provides local support for people facing debt and financial problems  
[www.snsCab.org.uk](http://www.snsCab.org.uk)  
Tel. 0808 278 7876

## Papyrus Hopeline UK

Help for young people experiencing thoughts of suicide  
[www.papyrus-uk.org](http://www.papyrus-uk.org)  
121 online chat available  
Tel. 0800 068 4141 or Text 88247

## FRANK

Honest info and advice about drugs  
[www.talktofrank.com](http://www.talktofrank.com)  
Tel. 0300 123 6600  
Text a question to 82111

## Kidscape

Info and advice about bullying  
[www.kidscape.org.uk](http://www.kidscape.org.uk)

## North Staffs Carers

Providing support for unpaid carers  
[www.carersfirst.com/home](http://www.carersfirst.com/home)  
Tel. 01782 793100

## Community Drug and Alcohol Service

Provides local support for drug and alcohol addiction  
[www.scdas.org.uk](http://www.scdas.org.uk)  
Tel. 01782 283113