



Message from our Ministers...

Dear Church Family,

I can't quite get my head round the fact that this will be our 4th Christmas at SwanBank! As you may well know, I am a lover of pretty much all things Christmas; the twinkly lights, the music, the drama of it all simply push all of my buttons! Whilst Christmas holds all of this, it also holds a reminder that at the heart of the story there is incredible simplicity. The story of Christ's coming is one of divine humility: the Son of God entering our world not in splendour, but as a child born in a manger. This story invites us to reflect on God's love for us, so deep and unconditional, that He chose to dwell among us, bringing light to every corner of our lives.

In the season of Advent, as we prepare our hearts to welcome Christ anew, we are reminded that Jesus is indeed our Light in the darkness, our Hope in times of struggle, and our Peace in a world that so desperately needs it. Just as the angels announced His birth to shepherds, we too are called to carry the good news of Jesus Christ with joy and gratitude.

One story that beautifully parallels our journey of faith is C.S. Lewis's classic, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. In this beloved tale, the land of Narnia is covered in perpetual winter, a cold and barren place under the rule of the White Witch. But as Aslan, a lion who represents Christ, arrives, the snow begins to melt, and new life returns. It's a reminder that Christ's coming brings warmth and renewal to our own lives, breaking through the coldness of sin and despair to bring hope and transformation.

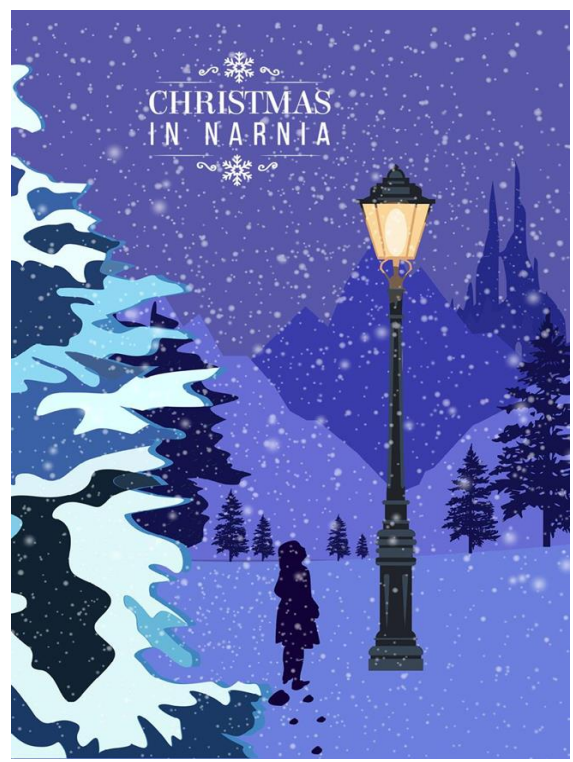


As we celebrate Christmas this year, we pray that the work we do as a whole church family, demonstrating acts of kindness, love, and compassion, would be as transformative as the return of Aslan, bringing light and life to Narnia.

Wishing you and those around you a blessed Christmas filled with joy and peace.

With love and blessings,

Ruth x



Enabling Church – a vision being realised

Eight years ago, I had a conversation with a friend about how her friends- who had physical disabilities- found attending our church quite difficult. This thought challenged me, and after a few days surfing the internet, I found a practical course that was written to raise awareness and help to make church accessible to all.

What followed was a conversation with the minister and agreement with the church council to attend and then deliver an 8-week course on enabling church to members of our congregation. I now represent 'Enabling Church' on the Church Council and the Property Committee. Over the past few years, the accessibility and inclusion has improved greatly....

- We have provided a Sensory area within church for children,
- We welcome people of all abilities and try to meet their needs.
- We have removed the moving backgrounds on the visuals during the service making them easier to see.

- Dementia friendly activities group

However, we still have some areas that would benefit from changes to enable people with all abilities to attend and enjoy the facilities and services. For example,

- Access to all parts of church, including the platform, for those with mobility issues.
- Appropriate aids to ensure those with visual and hearing impairments can have an improved experience of church.
- Signing during the service and sermon- or a system of auto generated subtitles for people with hearing loss.

When I reflect on the progress over the last few years, I am grateful to God for His guidance and to the many members of Swan Bank who have become more aware and started to help our church to become a true 'Enabling Church'. If you have any ideas or want to help, please contact me direct or fill in the Enabling Church contact form by following the link,

[Enabling Church Suggestions Form · ChurchSuite Forms](#)

Sue Simcoe

Christmas Day Hospitality

Each year on Christmas Day, we welcome guests into the church who would otherwise



be alone, providing a meal and a variety of entertainment. At the same time, we extend this hospitality to people at home. This outreach and hospitality will see between 300-500 people being given a meal and fellowship at a time of year that can be difficult for a lot of people. This would not be possible without the love and support of our community of volunteers, who give up their time over the Christmas period to support this work!

We always welcome volunteers in the following roles, feel free to sign up and join us:

- Refreshments - people to serve tea and

coffee, and chat to guests in the building throughout the day.

- Cleaners - to keep the building and especially, toilets, clean and restocked throughout the day.
- Drivers - We need people who can drive their own car, ideally with a supporting passenger; to
 - deliver meals to people at home from 9:45am
 - bring guests into the church for 10:30am service
 - take guests home at 3:15pm

We aim to match drivers with guests who live in their area or on route if possible. If you would like to volunteer, please contact the office or email christmasday@swanbank.org.uk All roles are subject to signing a safeguarding self-declaration form.

Craig Rome

Spotlight on Volunteering

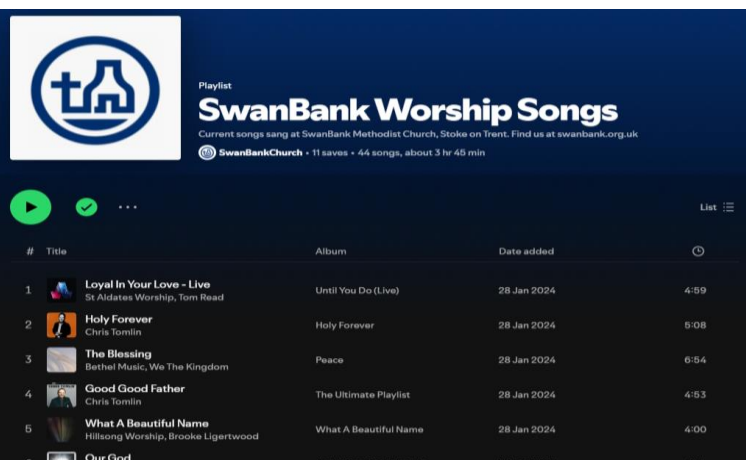
SwanBank Church has many opportunities for people to volunteer in the life of the church. Volunteering is a great way to test a calling, learn a new skill, make new friends and serve God - all at the same time! We believe that matching a person's giftings to the most appropriate volunteer role is an important part of furthering the church's mission. It is essential to maintain the highest standards of quality and safety for both those who volunteer and for individuals who either work alongside or receive help from the volunteers. To achieve this, we consistently adhere to all safeguarding procedures and follow agreed, written procedures for all volunteering roles. Many of the roles require the volunteer to apply for a DBS and attend our Safer Space Foundation study session. If you are interested in joining one of our volunteering teams, please contact either Centre Manager -

Liz@swanbank.org.uk or Volunteer Coordinator shirley@swanbank.org.uk or speak directly to one of the stewards, office staff or a team leader who will give your details to **Liz Thompson** or **Shirley Brooks**.

Volunteering Opportunities

- Stewards
- Swanbank Kids
- Midweek youth clubs
- Pastoral
- Refreshments
- Community Grocery
- Housekeeping team
- Refreshments
- Worship team
- Tech Team
- Clerical
- Care home ministry
- Choir
- Leading Home Groups
- Over 50's ministry
- Homeless ministries
- Welcome team
- Prayer team
- First Aiders

If your gift/ability isn't mentioned on the list. Please let us know – we can consider setting up new roles.



Did you know that we have a Swan Bank Spotify playlist with all of our current and upcoming worship songs?

It's a great way to keep worshipping through the week and to get familiar with any new songs. Here's the link,

<https://open.spotify.com/playlist/03mw6PdC4KrPbswGRQBCE8?si=AFak5yHqRrOtzKfztKXVrg&pi=e-c7e4-fgqRG-L>

SAFEGUARDING FOUNDATION TRAINING



FOR VOLUNTEERS, WHO **MUST RENEW**
EVERY 4 YEARS

Swan Bank Church, Lower Hall
16th Jan 2025, 19:00 – 21:30

Please either book via the link below

[Safeguarding Foundation Training \(16-Jan-2025\) · ChurchSuite Events](#)

or contact

Liz Thompson or **Shirley Brooks**

via the office to book or check if you need to attend the training

Prayer Focus

When the Angel Gabriel told Mary that she would conceive and bear the Son of God, Jesus, she responded "I am the Lord's servant, let it be done to me according to your word." (Luke 1:38).

Mary's response is considered a model of how to respond to God's call in life. She showed obedience and trust, even though it would have been risky, and she might have faced public shame. She was not controlled by fear. She showed humility. We are all unique children of God and have special gifts to be used for God.

Sarah Dobson

Advent Prayer

Dear God,

As we prepare for Christmas and look forward to

celebrating Jesus's birthday we are reminded of your perfect plan and Mary's role for your Son to come to earth to save us.

We thank you for Mary and her obedience and faith. We thank you for Jesus and his redeeming love he has for us.

As we remember his humble birth and life, we are reminded that he is a gift to everyone and continues to meet people at their point of need.

Help us Lord to seek God's will for our lives. Reveal your will for our lives Lord and help us to respond to your call to use our gifts to glorify your name.

Help us Lord to use Mary's example of trust and obedience and live our lives to glorify you, in Jesus' name, Amen.

Winter has arrived!

Winter has arrived, bringing extra work and challenges. Just last night, I left my wellies outside, only to find them full of snow this morning! It's a chilly reminder that the season of frost and early sunsets is upon us.



My daily routine has adapted to the changing season. Shorter days mean much of my work—rearing poultry—is now done by torchlight. Each evening, I'll have to coax the free-range turkeys into their shed. Unlike my well-behaved chickens that go inside on their own, the turkeys' instinct is to stay outside and seek trees for roosting. If I'm late and it's already dark, finding them in the woods can be quite a palaver. Roll on Christmas, eh?

Lower temperatures present their own set of challenges. Young chicks must be kept warm to prevent them from piling up and smothering each other. My mobile poultry sheds are on exposed fields, and sub-zero temperatures for more than a day can cause the water pipes to freeze. With over a tonne of water consumed daily by the birds, frozen pipes mean I'll be lugging jerry cans to each

shed. Costs rise and productivity drops, as the birds require extra feed and grow slower, and hens lay fewer eggs.

Today's snowfall does offer a silver lining: I can walk around the farm this morning and look for paw prints, which might reveal any comings and goings of foxes or other unwanted furry visitors.

Despite the difficulties, there is much to appreciate about winter. It's a beautiful season, not just for the occasional snowy landscapes but also for the still, misty days where the hills stand majestically above the lower ground. You cannot fully appreciate this beauty from photographs; you need to be there, enveloped in it, to truly experience the peace and wonder.



Winter is often used as a metaphor for hardship, but it's a character-building hardship that fosters resilience as we meet challenges and solve problems. Winter will pass, and with it, spring will arrive, bringing brighter days and new growth, reminding us that hardship, like winter, is temporary and purposeful.

Howard Dobson

Christmas at SwanBank

Out of our ordinary acts, in our ordinary lives, the world-transforming extraordinary love of God shines through.

This Advent and Christmas, you are invited to experience the wonder of how God's love is revealed in the ordinary; 2000 years ago, a seemingly ordinary birth changed the world.

We would love for you to join us as we celebrate Christmas and all that it means.

For more information about each event and how to book please see our website or Facebook page.



www.swanbank.org.uk



December 24 - Circuit Preaching Plan

Venue	Time	1 st December	8 th December	15 th December	22 nd December	29 th December
Swan Bank	9.00am 10.30am 6.15pm	Stephens Stephens Jeffries 🕒	Taylor Taylor Stephens	A Johnson A Johnson Nativity Brabbs	No 9am Service Stephens - Carol Service 🕒 Christingle Services (4 & 6pm)	Stephens Jefferies No 6:15 Service
Potter's Church	9.30am 11.15am	Hancock Hancock	Law Law	Price Price	Cooke Cooke	Price/Hancock Price/Hancock
Oasis Church	10.45am 6.00pm	Stubbs	Stephens	Wyatt	Own Arrangement	Community Sunday
Wesley Hall	10.45am	Wakelin 🕒	Christingle 4pm	Brooks	Nativity	Stephens 🕒
The Gateway	10.45am	Own Arrangement	Mason	Boateng	Tattersall - Carol Service	Harrison
Mt Pleasant	10.45am	Jeffries 🕒	Tindale	Own Arrangement Carol Service 3pm	Own Arrangement	Own Arrangement
Packmoor	11.00am	Harrison	Wilshaw	Tindale - Carol Service	Wakelin	Tindale
Village Church	11.00am	Mason	Jeffries 🕒	Andrews	Jeffries	J Johnson
Whitehill	10.30am 6.00pm	Dutton Cooper	Cooper 🕒 Leese	Christingle Q & A	Cooper – Nativity Team	Leese Cooper

Homeless Hospitality

Homelessness and rough sleeping is nothing new and for many years we have read about how the Government and Councils plan to tackle this problem. During the pandemic, we saw a huge effort made to get all rough sleepers off the streets and into temporary accommodation with the 'Everybody In' campaign. And yet, a report recently published indicates that homelessness is sadly increasing across our city, with enquires up 28% on the previous year, with rough sleepers being the most visible form of homelessness.

To that end, it was decided that following on from our recent 'Church on the Margins' initiative, we would, as a church do something practical to help rough sleepers in time for this coming winter. So, on the 14th November, Swan Bank opened its first winter Soup Kitchen in the coffee lounge, aimed at showing hospitality and feeding those most in need from Burslem and the surrounding area.

Hot lobby, vegetable soup and fresh bloomer



bread was served to 13 individuals that joined us for the 2-hour session, and the plan is to open every Thursday lunchtime through to the end of March 2025.

A huge thanks to all our volunteers for getting on board, and I look forward to providing regular updates over the coming months on how this initiative develops.

Keith Stubbs

Christmas at Swan Bank

Wednesday 4 th	Advent Bible Study in the Fellowship Room. 7:00pm for 7:30pm start.
Friday 6 th	Burslem Christmas Lights switch on at 5:30pm followed by carols at The Crown at 6:30pm
Saturday 7 th	Christmas Messy Church, £1 including breakfast and lunch! 10am -12noon.
Wednesday 11 th	Advent Bible Study in the Fellowship Room. 7:00pm for 7:30pm start.
Saturday 14 th	Swan Bank Choir singing at Scotia Heights care home at 12noon and at Hempstalls care home at 2pm.
Sunday 15 th	Nativity Service, 10:30am. Children can come dressed as their favourite nativity character (and adults if they wish!) plus Swan Bank Kids Christmas party
Monday 16 th	Carol singing on Kiln Gate estate, also handing out chocolate coins to our neighbours.
Tuesday 17 th	Tuesday Club Carol Service, 2pm in the Fellowship Room, followed by mince pies (what else!) and hot drinks at 3pm.
Wednesday 18 th	Advent Bible Study in the Fellowship Room. 7:00pm for 7:30pm start.
Friday 20 th	Family Film Night Food (hotdogs and popcorn) from 4:30pm, film starts 5pm. Please sign up.
Sunday 22 nd	No 9:00am service
Sunday 22 nd	10:30 traditional carol service with communion.
Sunday 22 nd	Christingle Services. 4pm and 6pm.
Tuesday 24 th	Christmas Eve Midnight Communion Service, 11pm (coffee and mince pies) for 11:30pm Christmas Eve communion.
Wednesday 25 th	All Age Christmas Day Celebration Service, 10:30am followed by Christmas Day hospitality.
Sunday 29 th	No 6:15pm service
Sunday 5 th January.	Covenant Services - 9am and 10:30am City Celebration - 6:15pm

Regular Activities at Swan Bank

Sunday

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

Monday

Bible Study – Coffee Lounge, 10:00-11:30am
Dementia Activity Group – Coffee Lounge, 1:00-3:00pm

Gospel Choir – Fellowship Room, 7:30-9:00pm
2nd & 4th 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

Homeless Hospitality – Coffee Lounge, 12noon – 2pm (until end of March 2025)

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 (*3rd 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

Whitehill Methodist Community Church
Mid-Week Services
 Whitehill Road, Kidsgrove, ST7 4DS
 Every Wednesday commencing at 10.15am

4th Dec. - Rev. Peter Hancock
 11th Dec. - Ann Worthington
 18th Dec. - Christmas Communion
 25th Dec. - No Service

Donations needed for Christmas!

Nets of Chocolate Coins
 Mince Pies
 Traditional Turkish Delight
 Boxes of Biscuits

Please leave in the collection box in the office

Why is it getting harder to buy Advent Calendars?

It's because their days are numbered

What did the stamp say to the Christmas Card?

Stick with me and we'll go places!

Why did no one bid for Rudolph and Blitzen on eBay?

Because they were two deer!



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

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

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



01782 575129



admin@swanbank.org.uk



www.swanbank.org.uk

Sunday 10:30am Service, live stream links:



www.youtube.com/@SwanBank/streams



www.facebook.com/swanbank/?locale=en_GB

Future Articles

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

officeassistance@swanbank.org.uk.



Christmas Word Search Puzzle

Courtesy of Christmas-Projects.com



TYULETIDEMCHRISTMASLIGHTSPACBNG
 NSLIHAOAHVHSNBGESNOWFLAKEBDKHCI
 CRHDVCGSCTIGNTOMOTATHREEWISEMEN
 STOYSYUHAOMEDHEWNUTCRACKERV FJWG
 CNLBJCMEYSNCBORNAMENTSUZSWIYZIE
 JOLLYARRUDEHALGAKIGLYMOECRAEOCR
 ITYOJWADXNYEMISTLETOEOELSEHSLLEB
 NSCANDYCANESCDFVGRYPNDOPDURNSAR
 GOBPUACHRISTMASTREEMNGLSTREMNGE
 LCSCROOGEBLNDYCAITNAIAGTREASTYA
 ETGTWDMBVSEULSEVNHCCECSFEKRECNAD
 BSNHIAEEFUITVCJRKTSEILUCDNHOIRM
 EILJRHTMRHGSHAEFEMASGEHOQUCOAIA
 LWKFUYZNERHCDISWBGRCGEVERNAKUKN
 LECAEPWVSAYVEQUJBTNALNCSRSITAE
 SOOINREINDEERHSAOECARAHOEMOEAPV
 NHTNYEVXRNTNSUMEIKUOMCUECHVSARI
 LMSOGSAETAESPODFAVMWSIHSILESNIT
 CEDBUEUNATIVITYOFSOJACKFROSTUHS
 UOGBTNHCOEYKRMUTLNORTHPOLECFWRE
 PSWINTERSLTEISDYSPENSASWRUKRNAF
 IEFRESVOIWRSTZOMTCHLROUCLYMOIRC
 DKLTLLULMEUEPRANCEROGARLANDASETA
 JOSTVYAEAOUIHBNITREICTOEBWITYRG
 NAPWEFRXDEL CMZEPALRANEZVOXTYNOJ
 CHRISTMASDINNERCDEFBLITZENDFIMK

Angels
 Candy Canes
 Chimney
 Comet
 Donner
 Frosty
 Ivy
 Joy
 Noel
 Prancer
 Santa Clause
 Snowflake
 Tinsel
 Yuletide

Bells
 Cards
 Christmas Dinner
 Cookies
 Elves
 Garland
 Jack Frost
 Manger
 North Pole
 Presents
 Scrooge
 Snowman
 Toys

Blitzen
 Carols
 Christmas Lights
 Cupid
 Family
 Gingerbread Man
 Jesus
 Merry
 Nutcracker
 Reindeer
 Season
 Spirit
 Vixen

Bow
 Cheer
 Christmas Tree
 Dancer
 Festive
 Holidays
 Jingle Bells
 Mistletoe
 Ornaments
 Ribbon
 Sled
 Stockings
 Winter

Candles
 Chestnuts
 Church
 Dasher
 Fireplace
 Holly
 Jolly
 Nativity
 Peace
 Rudolph
 Sleigh
 Three Wise Men
 Wreath