



### Christmas Message from our Ministers...

Dear Friends,

Happy New Year to you all. What a blessing it is to know that whatever 2025 will hold for us we can be confident in the enduring presence of God with us.

We thought it would be good to share something of our Christmas Day outreach with you. We had a wonderful day, though it is fair to say that the run up was, as ever, hectic! Over 80 guests plus our volunteers shared in a fabulous Christmas lunch in the building. Twenty of our homeless community were served with Christmas-in-a-Bun at church and 328 meals were delivered out to those in their homes.

All those who enjoyed our hospitality were so thankful and those who joined us had a great time as they shared in the service, had the wonderful food and also, of course, joined the fun and games afterwards. As you can imagine, none of this would have happened without the sacrificial giving of peoples' time, talents and resources. If you helped in any way, please know that we are SO thankful and that your input has hugely blessed others and shared something of the love of God with them.

We are mindful that so much of what we do at SwanBank is dependent on those who are willing to step up and help. How we use our time as Christians is an important part of our discipleship and expresses our commitment to serving the church and its mission through which we serve Christ himself. We are blessed to be part of SwanBank and know that God is challenging us to be present and active in serving our community evangelistically and practically.



To serve well, we need the people resources to make a difference and, crucially, we also need to be spiritually tuned into God.

With this in mind, we have an advanced notice so we can sort this out in our diaries. As a church we are designating Lent 2025 as a time of deep and focussed prayer and reflection.

To do this wholeheartedly, we will not be having church business meetings during the 40 days of Lent, which begins on 6<sup>th</sup> March. Instead, there will be opportunities to pray individually and together as a church family. We will also be encouraging us all, including those in small groups, to commit to coming together for whole church Bible study and prayer.

You'll hear more of this in due course but please be encouraged to make a note of this and also discuss it with your small group if you are in one.

In Lent 2025 we will be going deeper with God. But for now, may you know God is with you in 2025.

With Love

*Kathryn and Ruth*

## January 2025- Circuit Preaching Plan

Venue	Time	5 <sup>th</sup> January COVENANT SUNDAY	12 <sup>th</sup> January	19 <sup>th</sup> January	29 <sup>th</sup> January
Swan Bank	9.00am 10.30am 6.15pm	Brooks Stephens  CITY CELEBRATION	Jefferies Jefferies Stephens 	Stephens  Stephens A Johnson	Brabbs Brabbs Jefferies
Potter's Church	9.30am 11.15am	Hancock Hancock	Price Price	Price Price	Hancock Hancock
Oasis Church	10.45am 6.00pm	Own Arrangement	Boateng	Brabbs	A Johnson
Wesley Hall	10.45am	Zinyemba	Tattersall	Own Arrangement	Nixon
The Gateway	10.45am	Tattersall	Andrews	Cooke	Wakelin 
Mt Pleasant	10.45am	Tretheway	Tindale	Batho	Wilshaw
Packmoor	11.00am	Boateng	Stephens 	Tindale	Brooks
Village Church	11.00am	Jefferies 	A Johnson	Jefferies	Boateng
Whitehill	10.30am 6.00pm	Wakelin  Harrison	Cooper Jefferies	Law Q&A	Shaw Cooper

## Prayer for the New Year



Some years ago, whilst struggling to pray about a difficult situation I saw a rainbow on the horizon that grew stronger as I prayed. These days I still find it helpful, when at a loss to know how to pray, to take situations to the centre of God's rainbow where they are surrounded by his love. It is also good to remind ourselves that prayer makes a difference

whether we see it or not. Col 4v2 NIV "Devote yourselves to prayer being watchful and thankful". So, as we reflect on 2024 and look forward into the new year let us pray:

*Dear Lord,*

*We thank you for all the good things that have happened in the past year and we pray that we might also see good coming out of the challenging times. In the year ahead we pray:*

*For the world: We thank you that you are the Light of the World, the Light shines in the darkness and the*

*darkness has not overcome it. We pray that more of your light would pierce dark situations bringing more breakthrough and that there would be greater humanity, peace, justice and love. We ask that all these situations would cause people to seek and find that you are the Way, the Truth and the Life.*

*For our area: We pray your blessing on our neighbourhoods and an improvement in people's circumstances. May the church grow in love and unity and always put you in the centre of every activity bringing about greater change to the atmosphere in the community.*

*For friends and family: We pray all would know of your love for them and they would take more steps towards you as they explore faith.*

*For ourselves: Thank you that you love us, are interested in all aspects of our lives and that your plans and purposes for our lives are good. Please help us to have a greater awareness of your presence as we seek to walk more closely with you along the path of life throughout this year.*

*All these prayers we bring before you and declare "Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven". Amen*

**Megan Potter**

## The Importance of Prayer



One of the most important aspects of the Christian life is prayer. All of us pray regularly each day as part of our private devotions, which is very good.

But we also should be praying regularly together as a church in corporate times of prayer. As we read the books of Acts in the New Testament, we discover that the Church was birthed in prayer and grew through prayer.

Every Thursday morning, a small group meets at 9 o'clock, in the prayer chapel for about thirty minutes as we pray for the work of Swan Bank and its leadership. You are more than welcome to join us if you can. If anyone has any suggestions of other times that the Church should meet to pray, then those suggestions are most welcome.

We do appreciate all the prayers, whether individually or in home groups, they are most helpful. However, there is a need for the church to come together on a regular occasion to pray.

Throughout the history of the Church every revival has had its roots firmly based in the Church coming together to pray. How we need a revival of God moving in these days in which we live!

Every Blessing,

**Arthur Wakelin**

## 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  
*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

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

**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

**Whitehill Methodist Community Church**  
**Mid-Week Services**

Whitehill Road, Kidsgrove, ST7 4DS  
 Every Wednesday commencing at 10.15am

- 1<sup>st</sup> Jan. – **No Service**
- 8<sup>th</sup> Jan. – Alison Price
- 15<sup>th</sup> Jan. – Chris Mason
- 22<sup>nd</sup> Jan. – Rev Arthur Wakelin
- 29<sup>th</sup> Jan. – Doreen Leese

**FOUNDATION SAFEGUARDING TRAINING**

FOR **ALL** VOLUNTEERS WITHIN THE CHURCH, WHO **MUST** RENEW EVERY 4 YEARS

Swan Bank Church, Lower Hall  
 16<sup>th</sup> 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

**2025 New Year UNITED CELEBRATION**

**Sunday 5th January - 6.15pm**

Swan Bank Church, Swan Square, Burslem, Stoke-on-Trent, ST6 2AA



Join us for a city-wide celebration to welcome in the New Year



Host  
 Rev Kathryn Stephens



Worship Leader  
 Paul Critchley



City Centenary Update  
 Robert Mountford



Guest Speaker  
 Bishop Matthew Parker

For more information contact  
[email@saltbox.org.uk](mailto:email@saltbox.org.uk)



**Community Grocery**

We're reopening after the Christmas break at 10am on Monday 6<sup>th</sup> January.



**ADVANCED SAFEGUARDING TRAINING**

THIS COURSE IS FOR, PREACHERS, WORSHIP LEADERS, GROUP LEADERS AND SENIOR CHURCH STEWARDS.

Swan Bank Church  
 9:00am to 2pm, Saturday  
 11<sup>th</sup> Jan 2025

(There is an alternative date of 4<sup>th</sup> Feb in Nantwich if you can't make the 11<sup>th</sup> of Jan.)

Please book by contacting

**Liz Thompson or Shirley Brooks**

This course needs repeating every 4 years.

### Our Swan Bank Christmas Diary

#### Thursday 28th November

In the run up to Christmas the church was beautifully decorated by a



Fantastic team of volunteers. We were fortunate again to have the Christmas tree donated by Tudor-Davies Funeral services.

#### Monday 2nd December



Nan Hulse has taken over the manager's role at our Community Grocery and was busy getting the shop ready for the Christmas period. She is also signposting people to our Soup Kitchen which is held every Thursday till the end of March. The grocery will re-open on the 6th January.

#### Friday 6th December

Burslem lights switch on followed by carols at the Crown by our very own Swan Bank choir.



#### Saturday 7th December

A great time was had by all at the Messy Church Christmas party. Lots of Messy crafts and lots of Lego as well!



#### Friday 13th December

Kathryn met Coleen Nolan for a recorded interview that was aired on Radio Stoke on Christmas Day.



#### Saturday 14th December

The care homes ministry team and choir visited several care homes to deliver carol concerts. They included singing at Scotia



Heights, Camoys Court and Hempstalls Hall care homes.



There was also a Christmas Fayre at Hempstalls Hall which raised £427 for the work of Swan Bank on Christmas Day.



#### Sunday 15th December

Our Nativity was held today. A great time was had by everyone from the young



to the not-so-young, all getting in to the Christmas spirit. A toy collection was made with the donations



presented to two local schools for families who may be struggling this Christmas.

#### Monday 16th December

Our busy choir and other singers were out and about on the new Kiln Gate estate singing carols and handing out bags of chocolate coins to the residents.



Jan  
Feb  
Mar  
Apr  
May  
June  
July  
Aug  
Sept  
Oct  
Nov  
Dec

Bonus

**Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> December**



The Knit & Natter group enjoyed a lovely Christmas meal together. Everyone is looking forward to meeting again on Wednesday mornings in the New Year. Why not come along to see what we do?



**Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> December**

Our Soup Kitchen was very busy today providing a full Christmas meal to 27 people. Many of our guests said how much they enjoyed it and also appreciated the opportunity for a hot shower as well.



**Friday 20<sup>th</sup> December**

Everyone enjoyed the film night where we showed Narnia, the story of the Lion the witch and the Wardrobe by C.S. Lewis.



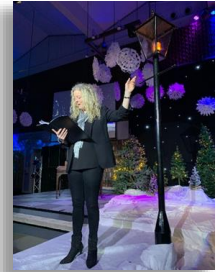
**Friday 20<sup>th</sup> December**



Our neighbours from Number 11 kindly volunteered to make our Christingles for our two services on Sunday. Thanks to everyone involved.

**Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> December**

Our two Christingle services were well attended as ever. They really are very special services for all the family.



**Christmas Eve**

Our midnight communion service is always a special part of our Christmas celebrations.

**Christmas Day**

What an amazing, busy, chaotic day! Over 80 meals served to guests at the church, 328 meals delivered out into the community, 20 rough sleepers fed from our



front door. All made possible by 100 amazing volunteers. As Kathryn said...



"It's all because we love Jesus and we love people!"

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](https://www.youtube.com/@SwanBank/streams)



[www.facebook.com/swanbank/?locale=en\\_GB](https://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](mailto:officeassistance@swanbank.org.uk).