



**St Mary's Church**  
Stotfold & Fairfield Parish Church  
Church Road  
Stotfold SG5 4NE  
[www.stotfoldchurch.org.uk](http://www.stotfoldchurch.org.uk)  
Charity No: 1131275

Winter  
2025

# *Parish Magazine*



A visible reminder to our community during this time of Advent and Christmastide of Emmanuel, God with us.

***We are your Parish Church  
and Open Every Day for:***

a time of quiet, personal prayer,  
reflection or to light a candle.  
There is also a Prayer Box where  
you can ask the vicar to pray  
for a person or situation  
at our daily services.

**Mon - Sat: 9.30am to 4.30pm**

To receive our Weekly Messenger  
email: [stotfoldparishchurch@gmail.com](mailto:stotfoldparishchurch@gmail.com)

**Christmas Tree  
Festival Weekend**

**Weekend of the  
6th/7th December**

**Sat 10am - 4pm**

**Sun 11am - 4pm**

Refreshments,  
stalls, and games  
in our Church Hall.

**For dates and times  
for all of our special  
services see page 5**





Have you ever wondered why most churches in the Church of England call the communion service held on December 24th Midnight Mass?

Normally when Anglicans share the bread and wine we typically call it “Holy Communion” or “The Eucharist,” while the Roman Catholics use the word “Mass.”

History and habit explain why Anglicans still use the name Midnight Mass, because you can't separate the Mass from Christmas.

Some nine hundred to a thousand years ago the English began to shorten the words for the annual festival “Christ's Mass” or “Cristes-messe” to Christmas. [As an aside the abbreviation Xmas began in the Middle Ages, the first letter of the based on the initial letter chi (X) in the Greek Χριστός (Christ)].

At its root Christmas is about communion, coming close to God and one another. Connecting with God and with each another is at the heart of Christmas.

We prepare ourselves for Christmas with a four-week Church season called Advent, a name which comes from the Latin word for ‘Coming.’ This year Advent begins on Sunday 30 November. For several years the Church of England has promoted this season of preparation and encouraged the public to attend their local church at Christmas using publicity material around the theme of “Follow the Star.”

This year we have a new theme based on the idea of sharing the joy of Christmas and connecting with one another. The theme of joy springs from the Bible passage when an angel of the Lord appeared to the shepherds keeping watch over their flock by night with the message “I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people.” This year's theme highlights not only the joy of the birth of Emmanuel, which means “God with us”, but also the joy of connecting with one another.

Of course Christmas can be for some people a challenging time for those who are not feeling particularly joyful, which is why this year St Mary's Church is holding its first “Blue Christmas Service. For more about that see page 4

There are many examples of joy and connecting in the nativity story. Fearful and confused by the message from the Angel Gabriel, Mary visited her cousin Elizabeth, whose own baby leaped with joy inside her when the two women saw each other. Elizabeth connected with Mary by praying a blessing over her. Mary in response sang a song of great joy about the saviour coming to feed the hungry and raise up the lowly.

After the shepherds visited the newborn Christ, they left praising God and revelled in the joy of sharing all they heard and seen.

And several years later when the star stopped over the place where Mary, Joseph and Jesus were living, the wise men were “overwhelmed with joy.”

I look forward to sharing the joy of Christmas with you at your parish church this year.

Wishing you a season of joy and connection

*Bill*



***Our Special Christmas Services  
are all listed on page 5***

**If you would like an arrangement to be placed in  
Church in celebration of a special occasion  
or in remembrance of a loved one  
please contact**

**Ann Scarr  
01462 834844**



## Blue Christmas

This year the Church of England in its promotional resources for Advent and Christmas is focusing on Joy.

But for those who are grieving, ill, lonely or struggling for any reason may find it challenging when they see everyone in party mode. Not everyone connects with adverts on the television like Sainsbury's Big Friendly Giant or Asda's Grinch.

In my own case my wife, Theresa, suddenly died on 22 December last year and so for me and my family there will be sadness amid the joy.

This year for the first time St Mary's Church is holding a "Blue Christmas Service" at 3.00pm on Saturday 20 December.

This will be a gentle service of readings, prayers, music and candle-lighting. There might be a calm Christmas carol or two but there won't be enforced jollity with bouncy carols, Christmas jumpers and reindeer antlers bobbing on our heads.

A Blue Christmas service acknowledges pain in dark times but also speaks of the light that Christ brings. Our faith doesn't gloss over pain, but we practice and believe in God's presence beside us in our pain.

We hope you can join us. It sometimes helps to share our pain and find strength in quiet solidarity.

**Revd Bill**



As always there is a crate in St Mary's Church where you can leave your donations to The Need Project.



Throughout the year we deliver your gifts weekly to their offices where every item is so gratefully received.

*Merciful God,  
Look with compassion upon those in need today.  
Provide them with food, shelter, and hope.  
Strengthen their hearts, guide their steps,  
and surround them with kindness and care.  
May they feel Your love and never lose faith.  
Amen*



## Celebrate Christmas in Your Parish Church St Mary's, the Parish Church of Stotfold & Fairfield

### **Churches Together Carols by Candlelight**

**4.30pm Sunday 30 November**

Join us as we come together to sing traditional carols with the Salvation Army Band. The Open the Book team will be acting the Nativity story. Refreshments.

### **Christmas Tree Festival**

**10am - 4pm Saturday 6 December**

**11am - 4pm Sunday 7 December**

Come and see the trees displayed in our church that our community has decorated in celebration of Christmas. Stalls & refreshments in our Church Hall.

### **Big Carol Sing**

**2pm Wednesday 10 December**

Dust off those Christmas jumpers and reindeer antlers and join us for an enjoyable afternoon of carol singing followed by refreshments.

### **Families at Four Christingle**

**4pm Sunday 14 December**

A service suitable for children of all ages. Each child will be given a decorated Christingle Orange with a lighted candle. Collection is in support of the Children's Society.

### **Blue Christmas - Saturday 20 December at 3pm**

**The Christmas season is associated with joy and celebration, but for some it can be a challenging time, for those who are bereaved or struggling for any reason. This is a gentle service of readings, music and candle-lighting. It acknowledges pain in dark times but also speaks of the light that Christ brings.**

### **Family Christmas Carol Service**

**6.30pm Sunday 21 December**

Sing your favourite carols and listen to Bible readings about the birth of Jesus.

### **Midnight Mass**

**11.30pm Christmas Eve**

A traditional Communion Service with carols. All are welcome.

### **Nativity (Crib) Services**

**3pm & 4pm Christmas Eve**

Children can wear their own costumes as we retell the story of the Nativity in words and carols.

### **Christmas Day**

**10am** - A service for the whole family with carols and Communion. Join us as we celebrate together the greatest story ever told.

## **Our Charity Collections This Christmas**

This year our collections at our Blue Christmas Service, Family Christmas Carol Service, Nativity (Crib) Services, Midnight Mass and Christmas Day Communion will be on behalf of Garden House Hospice Care.

Nearly 40 years ago, Garden House Hospice Care was founded by our community to meet a vital need: expert palliative and end of life care for local people. Since then, they've supported thousands of patients and families - caring for and empowering them to live well so they can spend precious time together, and, when the moment comes, ensure comfort and dignity in their final days.

Four decades later, the need has never been greater, but their future has never been more uncertain.

They are facing a funding shortfall of £1.178 million this year having already taken action to reduce what they can control, cutting £1,035,000 in expenditure. But with National Insurance costs up by over £200,000, utility and food bills doubling, medication costs soaring with no NHS funding for medicines, and a decline in charitable income they are still left with a £750,000 gap before the end of the financial year. Next year, the shortfall is projected to grow to at least £1.1 million .

The impact is already being felt having been forced to reduce the number of beds on their Inpatient Unit from 12 to 8, scale back a third of their community services, and delay essential property repairs and maintenance. They now have a waiting list of people in urgent need of care who they cannot guarantee to support.

Under the current financial model, hospices like theirs receive only around 29% of their funding from the NHS. The remaining 71% relies on charitable giving - a model that no longer meets their growing demand.

They cannot continue in this way and be able to deliver their outstanding care to the patients of today and the patients of tomorrow which is why they are our Church's Charity of Choice this Christmastime.



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We've got online carol-singers again!

### Smile Lines:

#### Who was the Real Virgin?

A ten-year-old, under the tutelage of her grandmother, was becoming quite knowledgeable about the Bible. Then one day she floored her grandmother by asking, "Which virgin was the mother of Jesus? The virgin Mary or the King James Virgin?"

***Took me a moment!***

#### Santa's sleigh

Father Christmas nervously went for his sleigh-driving test. He came rushing back in a thunder of reindeer and pulled up in front of the toy factory. "At last!" he shouted, "No-el plates!"

## What is Christingle?

Christingle is a joyful celebration that brings families and communities together to share the light of Jesus and spread a message of hope. Christingle celebrations are named after the Christingles that are lit during the ceremony.



Christingles are oranges wrapped in red tape, decorated with dried fruit and sweets, with a candle on top. During the service, each person takes a Christingle, and the candles are lit to create a warm, magical glow symbolising the light of Christ and bringing hope to people living in darkness.

Christingles are made using oranges, ribbon, sweets, dried fruit and a candle. Each of these elements has a special meaning and helps to tell the Christian story:

- The orange represents the world

- The red ribbon (or tape) symbolises the love and blood of Christ

- The sweets and dried fruit represent all of God's creation

- The lit candle represents Jesus' light in the world, bringing hope to people living in darkness.

Christingle celebrations have been taking place for over 50 years. The first Christingle service in this country took place at Lincoln Cathedral in 1968, but Christingles themselves go back much further, to the Moravian church in Germany. At a children's service in Marienborn in 1747, Bishop Johannes de Watteville looked for a simple way to explain the happiness that had come to people through Jesus and he created a symbol – the Christingle – to do this.

All the money raised at our Christingle Services will support The Children's Society. Who fight for hope by deeply understanding the needs of young people and by supporting them through their most serious life challenges. They work with young people who have suffered years of abuse, who have run away from home or are struggling with mental health issues. They look out for young carers and those who are at risk of being groomed by criminal groups and help refugees who have no one else to turn to in this country.

The Christingle service at St Mary's Church, this year is on Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> December at 4pm and if you would like a collection box to have at home prior to the service so that you can bring your offering to the service you can pick one up from the church. They are on the shelf by the north door which is on the side by the car park.



**We look forward to seeing many of you on the day.**





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## Keep your Eyes Peeled

In Stotfold during the week of Monday 8th December you may come across one of our knitted angels.

If you find one please take it home to enjoy and if you should find more than one, please pass it on to someone else to share the joy of Christmas.



## Smile Lines

### The Wrong Gift

A young couple began to assemble a special Christmas gift they had bought for their children. They had bought a kit for a tree house, but it didn't make sense. Then they realised that the materials were for a sailboat, so they wrote to the company to complain. The company's reply was brief: "While we regret the inconvenience this mistake must have caused you, we are more concerned about the man who is out on a lake somewhere, trying to sail your tree house."

## Baptisms



We have celebrated many baptisms (christenings) in Stotfold through 2025, with a number of local families or families with a link to St Mary the Virgin church. In baptism a person joins the family of God.. A baptism marks the first step in a Christian's journey with God which continues for the rest of our lives.

Baptism services are always joyful events, often welcoming a whole host of young families and children. We try to involve brothers and sisters of the child to be baptised in the service, often engaging them to help fill the font with water. The font in St Mary's church has been used to baptise many generations of Stotfold families and is thought to date from either the 14<sup>th</sup> or 15<sup>th</sup> century. It was moved, in 2018, to the south aisle so now we can gather everyone in a baptism service around the font and it makes a perfect spot for photographs after the service.

So, if you would like to book a baptism (christening) for a baby or child in your family please contact us at St Mary's church, email Sara Clark [sara.clark3@live.com](mailto:sara.clark3@live.com) to discuss dates and arrangements.

For adults who may wish to be baptised we advise a little more preparation before the service so please speak to Rev. Bill or Graham for more information - contact information is on our church website [www.stotfoldchurch.org.uk](http://www.stotfoldchurch.org.uk)



Loving God,

We pray for all children.

We pray that they know and feel the security that is their right.

We pray that they know and feel the love that is theirs through you.

Guide all who are a voice for children and young people  
to speak loudly and clearly

so that security and safety, love and hope  
might be the experience of all your children.



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### **Know what?**

As we were putting out cookies for Father Christmas one Christmas Eve, I accidentally dropped one. I picked it up and dusted it off before placing it back on the plate. "You can't do that," argued my four-year-old. But I assured him that Father Christmas would never know.

He shot me a dubious look. "So, he knows if I've been bad or good all year, but he doesn't know if you dropped his cookie on the floor?"

### **Morning**

There are two kinds of people in the world. There are those who wake up in the morning and say, "Good morning, Lord," and there are those who wake up in the morning and say, "Good Lord, it's morning."



**Celebrating  
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Of Helping To Keep Our  
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**E:[stotfold.news@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:stotfold.news@yahoo.co.uk)**



# Stotfold Library Regular Adult Events

## Silent Book Club

Every First Wednesday of the Month  
5pm-7pm

Welcome to introvert happy hour!

No assigned reading, just bring your own book.



## Adult Cosy Colouring Club

Every First Friday of the Month  
12noon-3pm

Try the growing trend of colouring bold and easy designs with alcohol markers.

All supplies provided.



## Knit and Knatter

Every Friday  
10:30am-12noon

Bring your own knitting or crochet project to work on while have a chat.





## *Special Offer*

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### **Gas and Electricity for our Church and Church Hall**

Until the end of September 2027 as part of our commitment to being good stewards of the environment we have contracted to purchasing electricity that is 100% generated from renewable sources and Voluntary Carbon Offset gas where the additional cost to the brown gas that we use goes into a fund to plant trees to offset the carbon load.

***The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it***

Psalm 24:1



## **All About Christmas Trees**

**How many are sold each year?** According to recent figures, about five million real Christmas trees are sold in the UK each year.

**How old are they?** Your typical Christmas tree of six to seven feet is between ten and 12 years old.

**How are they grown?** Seed is collected from trees either in the wild or in specially selected seed orchards. It is sown in a nursery, where the seedlings then grow for three to four years. The young plants are then planted by a grower and grown on for a further seven to nine years. While they are growing, the grower will fertilise, shape and prune the tree many times each year.

**What are the different types of Christmas trees? Here are just some...**

**Nordmann Fir** – the most popular Christmas tree in the UK. Much loved for its symmetry, strong branches and excellent needle retention. The lush, dark green needles provide great background for displaying ornaments.

**Fraser Fir** – the tree with the wonderful fragrance. Pyramid-shaped, it has strong branches with dark green, needles that are silvery underneath.

**Noble Fir** – A bluish-green tree with short, stiff branches ideal for heavier ornaments. A fresh fragrance, and great needle retention.

**Douglas Fir** – Very popular in the USA, with a great shape, and probably the strongest scent of all Christmas trees. Only problem – harder to decorate as usually very dense branches.

**Norway Spruce** – A dark green conical shaped tree with a strong fragrance. Needs to be well-watered for good needle retention.

**Blue Spruce** – This is ideal for your small or second tree. It's beautiful, unique blue colouring and good stiff branches are great for showing off heavy decorations. Needs watering well.

**Lodgepole Pine** – Beautiful tapered branches with green/yellow needles. A tree loved by traditionalists.

The British Christmas Tree Growers Association (BCTGA) estimates that approximately 75% of the trees sold in the UK consist of Nordmann Fir, with the remaining portion comprising Norway Spruce, Fraser Fir, and a selection of other less prevalent species

The BCTGA urges people to buy a British grown tree to support the local economy, agriculture and the environment. Buying British means money is going directly back into the country's economy and helping provide employment in the agricultural sector.



A natural two-metre Christmas tree without roots, disposed of burning on a bonfire, planting it or having it chipped to spread on a garden, will have a carbon footprint of around 3.5kg of CO<sub>2</sub>. A two-metre Christmas tree made from plastic has a carbon footprint of around 40kg of CO<sub>2</sub>.



A huge thank you to E H Crouch Funeral Director's who for so many years now have so very kindly donated our real Christmas Tree for everyone to enjoy over the Advent and Christmas period.

For those of you who are not aware the central trunk then forms the basis each year of our Easter Cross and the crosspiece will have come from either the vicarage or from one of our congregation.

Even before the time of Christ, evergreen trees were seen in winter as a symbol of fertility.

It was the 16<sup>th</sup> century monk, Martin Luther, who is credited with the idea of having lights on Christmas trees. He added candles to his tree, to look like stars in a forest.

It was Woolworths who first sold manufactured Christmas tree ornaments – back in 1880.

In a survey of the nation's favourite smells, real Christmas trees came eighth, just behind the sea, but ahead of perfume.



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### **The Samaritans: 116 123**

Whatever you're going through, you can call us any time for free.

### **Anxiety UK: 03444 775 774**

Our team often have their own lived experience and understand the distress, isolation and misery that anxiety can cause. We are here to help and support you to find ways to control anxiety instead of it controlling you.

### **Mind: 0300 123 3393**

If you're finding things hard emotionally right now, you're not alone. Mind are there to provide information and support.

### **Refuge's National Domestic Abuse Helpline: 0808 2000 247**

We can talk in confidence, in many different languages, 24/7.

### **Child-line: 0800 11 11**

We are here for all young people, whatever you're going through.

### **Hourglass: 0808 808 8141**

Protects and supports specifically older people experiencing any form of abuse. The helpline is available 24/7.



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## **Friends of St Mary's Church**

St Mary's Church is the oldest church in this area and the present building dates from 1150 or even earlier. Friends of St. Mary's are a group of people who wish to preserve this building because it is ancient, fascinating and part of Stotfold's heritage.

Membership Forms are available at the rear of the church or contact Ann Scarr on 01462 834844.



## **Book Sale & Coffee Morning In Our Church Hall**

**Saturday 24 January  
10am - 12 noon**

## **Jigsaw Sale**

**21 February 10am - 12 noon**

**Wonderful display of jigsaws  
for sale at bargain prices.**

**All boxed and checked as complete.**



## **Table Top Sale**

**Saturday 21 March St Mary's Church Hall**

**10.00am - 12noon**

For tables contact Chris Webster 01462 834108

Raffle Refreshments Everyone Welcome



Once again our altar will be turned for our Christmas Tree Festival Weekend and the then Advent / Christmas season when all our nativity figures will then be gradually displayed. We look forward to welcoming you to many of our services.

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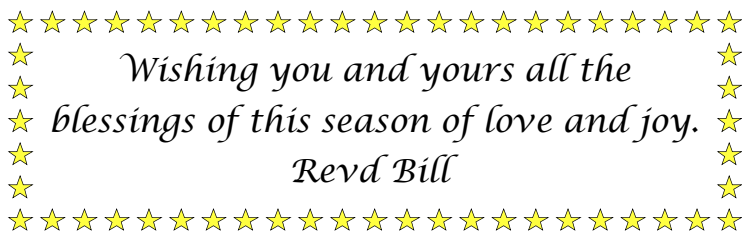
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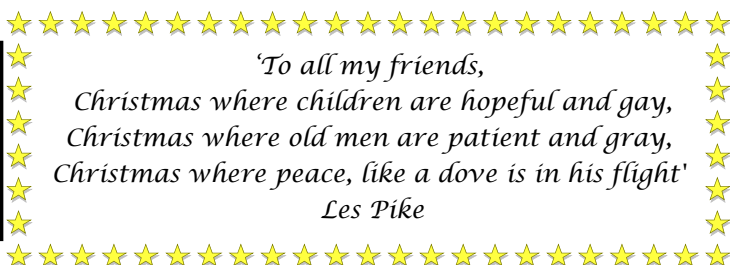


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*Jean Prutton would like to wish  
all her friends at St Mary's Church  
a happy and peaceful Christmas  
and to thank them for their kindness  
and help during the past year.*



*Jean Poulton  
wishes all her friends  
a very happy Christmas  
and a healthy and  
peaceful 2026*

Our very best wishes to everyone for a  
happy and peaceful Christmas  
and the New Year.  
Jenny and David



We are really looking forward to enjoying  
Christmas in our new home in Stotfold.  
Wishing you all a blessed Christmas!  
With love Graham and Sara



The Strickland family wish  
everyone at St Mary's Church  
A Happy Christmas and  
Peaceful New Year

Chris and Jackie sending  
our friends at St Mary's  
Best Wishes for a Happy  
Christmas and a  
Peaceful New Year.

Wishing you a Christmas blessed with  
God's love and grace. Peace be with you in your  
homes and in your hearts always. Carol Grosvenor



**Good wishes this  
Christmas and New Year  
to all the congregation,  
friends old and new.  
Jean and Roger Billson.**

*Wishing everyone joy and  
peace this Christmas time and  
blessings for the coming year.  
Love Carole Taylor*



Wishing everyone a happy and peaceful time at Christmas.  
Hazel Irwin



Missing being in Stotfold this Christmas  
but wishing everyone a Christmas  
filled with love, joy and peace  
as we celebrate Emmanuel, God with us.  
Rev. Emma



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## To request our Weekly Messenger

\*\*\*\*\*

As this year there will be a lot happening in our Church during 2026 and so to be aware of special services and upcoming events please do subscribe to our Weekly Messenger which will then arrive in your inbox each week.

Here is the link to subscribe:

<http://eepurl.com/gYMiBf>

Or email;

Stotfoldparishchurch@gmail.com

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There is also a 'donate' button on our website: [stotfoldchurch.org.uk](http://stotfoldchurch.org.uk)



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## St Mary's Church Hall

**Hall dimensions are:**

15.5m x 6.4m (51'x21')

The ceiling is 3m high and can accommodate some bouncy castles.

Kitchen facilities

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## **OUR REGULAR WORSHIP SERVICES**

### **Mon - Sat 9am: Morning Prayer**

Short service where we pray for our community and the wider world.

### **Wed 9.45am: Holy Communion**

A said service.

### **Sundays (*not 3rd Sunday*) 10am: Parish Communion**

#### **3rd Sunday**

#### **9am: Holy Communion**

A said service

#### **10am: Parish Praise**

A more informal service

### **Additional Services:**

#### **1st Sunday of the month**

8am: Said Communion

4pm: Tea Time Praise

#### **4th Sunday of the month**

9am Morning Prayer

## **Men's curious reluctance to ask where they are going**

If you are travelling far this Christmas, pray that your satnav works, or that there is a woman in the car. Research has found that men are so reluctant to ask directions that they waste hours and miles every year. Over a lifetime of travel, it can work out to a wasted journey from Land's End to John O' Groats.

Very few men will ask for help or check a map to avoid unnecessary travel. They prefer to wander hopefully until they find their route on their own, regardless of how long it takes them.

Which of course has inspired the joke: Why did the Children of Israel wander in the wilderness for 40 years? Because Moses was a man and wouldn't ask directions...

## **3rd Sunday - 21 December**

On the 3rd Sunday in December which is 21 December there will only be one service which will be a 10am Communion Service.

Bill is delighted to share the joyful news that we have received a generous anonymous donation to pay for the full cost of a new white chasuble and matching stole in his wife Theresa's memory.

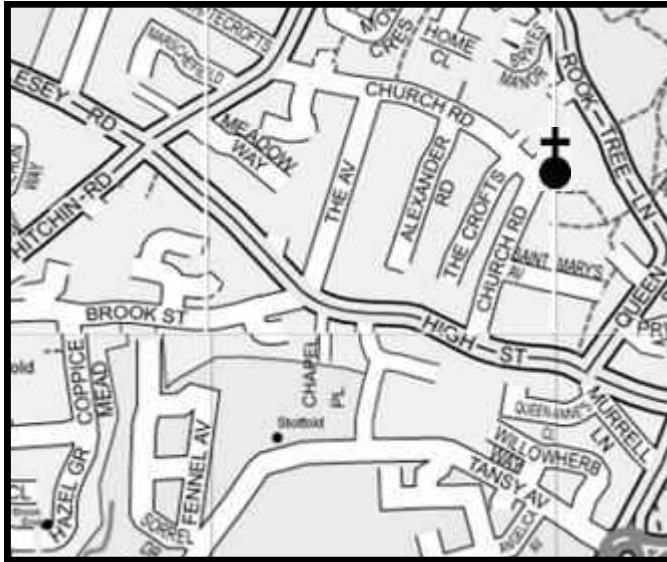
Juliet Hemingray created our existing white Chasuble and Juliet has now created a beautiful design which blends in with our existing altar frontal and the pulpit and lectern falls

The chasuble will be blessed at this communion service and this will be the only service as Bill would like the whole church to be together for that blessing as we remember Theresa in this way on the eve of the anniversary of her death.

## **Sunday School**

**In the Church Hall at 10am 2nd & 4th Sundays**

# St Mary's Church



[www.stotfoldchurch.org.uk](http://www.stotfoldchurch.org.uk)

## RECTOR:

Revd Bill Britt                      01462 730218                      [revd.bill.britt@gmail.com](mailto:revd.bill.britt@gmail.com)

## ASSOCIATE MINISTER:

Revd Graham Clark                      07842 215560                      [grahamclark250@gmail.com](mailto:grahamclark250@gmail.com)

## CHURCHWARDENS:

Jenny Bennett                      07885 833615                      [jenny.bennett105@gmail.com](mailto:jenny.bennett105@gmail.com)  
Paddy Harris                      07904 421716                      [paddy.j.p.harris@gmail.com](mailto:paddy.j.p.harris@gmail.com)

## BAPTISMS:

Sara Clark                      07895 003453                      [sara.clark3@live.com](mailto:sara.clark3@live.com)

## WEDDINGS:

Revd Bill Britt                      01462 730218                      [revd.bill.britt@gmail.com](mailto:revd.bill.britt@gmail.com)

## CHURCH HALL:

Maureen Winters                      07727 688877                      [stotfoldparishchurchhall@gmail.com](mailto:stotfoldparishchurchhall@gmail.com)

## TREASURER /

## MAGAZINE EDITOR:

Alison Collis                      07979 317338                      [stotfoldparishchurch@gmail.com](mailto:stotfoldparishchurch@gmail.com)