

**December 2024 newsletter**

A group of purple candles

Description automatically generatedSunday 1 December sees the start of the season of Advent so for once all commercial Advent Calendars are in sync with the Advent Season! Advent is a season of preparation and expectation as we prepare to celebrate the coming of Christ in his incarnation whilst looking ahead to the time when he shall return. As we enter the period of Advent can I encourage you in all the busyness of this season to step out from the tinsel and lights and take time for yourself and with God.

Also, as we enter Advent, I pray that we would not just focus on the negative news that is gripping the world but remember the many ways that God has blessed us personally and as a church this year and always carrying the thought in our hearts that we live in hope – great hope and of course that hope is in our Saviour Jesus Christ.

**Gratitude and Generosity Sundays** – thank you to everyone who has responded to the message whether it has been to increase their weekly/monthly giving or in giving a one-off donation to cover various costs. It is most appreciated. If you would like to know a little more about parish share which was spoken about on these 2 Sundays then do take a look at the following video from the diocese https://www.chester.anglican.org/news/diocesan-synod-report.php . We give thanks that our parish share is paid in full, and we pray that we can continue to do that into the new year. Thank you.

A close-up of a sign

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**Christmas Fair!** Saturday 7 December 2024. Please do encourage friends and family to join us 11am – 2pm. Thank you to everyone who has donated items to sell, to raffle etc. Let’s hope we can make this year a real bumper year in raising funds for our general fund but also in welcoming folk into our church. **If you still have items to donate, then please do bring them to church this Sunday 1 December** – that would be most helpful. Thank you. Unfortunately, we cannot take books/CDs/white elephant gifts together with electrical items. If you have donated any electrical items and would like them returned, then please do let Gill know.

A black and white logo

Description automatically generated**Jonathan Starkey** – so many people enjoyed the evening with Jonathan at St Lawrence. It was great to welcome folk into a warm St Lawrence Church on a very cold night to enjoy Jonathan’s musical gifts and talents and a glass of wine and nibbles! A big thank you to him and his team for setting up such a wonderful evening. £1,000.26 was raised for general church funds. Thank you.

A person holding a piece of art

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**Art auction** - this year Charmaine will not be making a piece of artwork to auction but instead will be auctioning a one-to-one training day with her in her glass studio in Great Sutton.

You will make a copper-foiled feather or alternative similar design to be discussed during the summer of 2025

**What’s included**

* The auction is for one person.
* You will learn how to cut and grind glass into shapes
* Taught the art copper foiling and soldering
* Incudes tuition with tools and materials in a fully equipped glass studio
* Access to her extensive glass art and design library
* Refreshments throughout, please bring your own lunch as this is a full day course.

The auction sheet will be left on the table at the back of St Thomas for you to make your bids. All funds raised will go to the Church General Fund.

**2024 Christmas Shoebox appeal**

A huge thank you to all who supported the shoe box appeal. 625 shoeboxes were collected and sent to Teams4U and will be sent overseas to Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Bosnia and Romania bring some light and love to a child at Christmastime. Thanks also to Doreen Wardle who masterminds the appeal!

**Angels of Hope - please bring your angels to church by 8 December so they can be packed and ready to distribution**.

Considering the current fuel costs etc the wardens and staff are asking that everyone be prudent with regards to heating in church. We want to provide warm and welcoming churches, but we have to be sensible and be good stewards of our funds so perhaps put an extra layer on when coming to church. The heating will be on, but we will be trying to keep it at a set temperature. Please also do ensure that lights and sockets that are left on stand-by mode are switched off.

**Beacon Project** - The steering group met again on 13 November, fundraising and grant applications were discussed. The faculty has been applied for to the diocese and so following that Gill met with a group from the Diocesan Advisory Committee who joined her for an investigative look around St Thomas to inform their further discussions. They were very encouraged by the project and so we now await any recommendations from them. We also met with Environmental Consulting Engineers who will be conducting an eco-study of the site too! A prayer group for the project has now been set up, if you would like to join that please do have a word with Keith Nelson.

**FIG** have been very active, with another successful bag pack, and a wonderful ‘Light Party’ held during the October half-term. Our various scout groups joined us for this event too with some of their parents and leaders, resulting in another positive connection with our scout unit. We have received further funding as part of our Co-Op twelve month partnership scheme, which has now sadly come to an end, however, due to such a positive working relationship with our local branch, they wish to continue supporting us at a local level, and will offer volunteer support at bag packs, and still donate weekly to our Toms Tots group, and also donate to our FIG project by providing all the bags, and occasional other items for hampers and fun days where possible.

You will note from the calendar that we shall be providing Christmas food hampers once again to vulnerable families in our community via our schools. If you can help on either of the dates noted below you would be welcomed with open arms! The Christmas bag pack is always very busy so the more hands we have in setting up church, receiving the food, delivering the food and then tidying up afterwards would be great as we have such a busy week that week!

**Toms Tots** – we move on to a new theme this half-term, looking at ‘special times and places. The group welcomed ‘Pudsey’ for Children in Need and Father Christmas himself is attending our Christmas party (courtesy of our own Tom Foxall). The families are encouraged to join us a café church, so please if you do see a new family go and say hello and give them a St Thomas Welcome.

**Date for the diary – 25 January 2025 7pm Burns Night Ceilidh at St Thomas – get those dancing shoes out and ready to have a great night of fun and fellowship. Tickets will be on sale early in the new year.**

**Dates for December 2024**

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| 1st | 10.45am | Café Church – Advent |
| 2nd | 5.15pm | What’s Next? Christmas trip to Ten Pin Bowling |
| 3rd | 10.30am  7pm | Enid Humphrey’s funeral at St Thomas  Wrapping and sorting for the Christmas Fair – coffee lounge |
| 4th | 7.30pm | Meeting for service leaders and readers in the Rectory |
| 5th | 3.30pm | Setting up church for Christmas Fair – tables etc – lots of help required to move tables and chairs please |
| 6th | Anytime | Stall holders setting up |
| 7th | 11am – 2pm | Christmas Fair at St Thomas |
| 8th | 4pm | ABC at St Lawrence |
| 10th | 7.30pm | Café Church team meeting – via zoom |
| 11th | 2pm | Tea at Two in the coffee lounge |
| 13th | 1pm | PALS Christmas Lunch in church hall |
| 14th | 10.30am | Carol Singing in Port Arcades followed by coffee & mince pies in Trinity Church |
| 16th | 3.30pm | Setting up church ready to receive food collection – collecting food from Aldi 4.30pm – all welcome! |
| 17th | 9am | Food delivery to schools |
| 18th | 6.30pm for 7pm | Carols and Curry at The Bunbury Arms, Stoak Village – further details to follow |
| 19th | 7pm | Blue Christmas Service at St Thomas |
| 22nd | 10.45am  11am  6.30pm | Nativity at St Thomas  Nativity at St Lawrence  Parish Carol Service at St Lawrence |
| 23rd | 10am  3.30m – 5.30pm | Christingle making in coffee lounge  Community family fun day at St Thomas |
| Christmas Eve | 4pm  11.30pm | Christingle at St Thomas  Holy Communion at St Thomas & St Lawrence |
| Christmas Day | 10am | Family Communion at St Thomas and St Lawrence |
| 29th | 10am  11am | Holy Communion at St Thomas  Holy Communion at St Lawrence |

Pastoral matters – please do let the clergy or the churchwardens know of any church family members that are sick in hospital or at home and would appreciate a visit.

I think that is it for now. Take care & God bless

Rachel, Gill & the staff team

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