

STAYING CONNECTED

Dear Friends

A new calendar year brings again the celebration of Epiphany, Christ's "showing forth," in the world. The visit of the Magi, the first non-Jewish witnesses to the Christ-child, marks a powerful moment when God's light shone beyond the boundaries of Israel, illuminating the way for all nations to find Christ.

So, how does the message of Epiphany speak to us today, and what does it challenge us to do as we move forward?

The Epiphany story invites us to consider:

1. God's Light is for Everyone.

The star that led the Magi to Bethlehem was a symbol that the birth of Christ is for all people. Today, we are called to ensure that the light of Christ continues to shine for all to see in our villages.

2. Seeking and Discovering Christ.

The Magi did not just stumble upon Jesus—they sought Him. Are we still seeking Christ in our lives? The world is full of distractions, yet we are called to seek out the presence of Christ in the ordinary and extraordinary moments of our lives.

3. Transformation and New Beginnings.

The Epiphany marks a moment of transformation. Likewise, as we look towards the future, we are invited to allow this encounter with Christ to shape us—both individually and as a church community. The New Year is a perfect time to re-commit ourselves to God's mission, to grow in faith and to embrace the new opportunities God places before us.

I pray that, as we move into the future together, we may be people who live out the message of Epiphany in practical and transformative ways—bringing light, love, and hope to those around us.

With every blessing,

Ben Williams (Team Vicar)

⚠ Experience Christmas: A Week to Remember! (1-3 December)

This week has been nothing short of magical! ⚡ Three of our four local primary schools brought their Year 3 classes to join us for *Experience Christmas*—and what an adventure it's been.

Together, we stepped into the Christmas story, exploring five beautiful parts that remind us of the true meaning of the season:

- ⚡ **Preparation** – Preparing our hearts for what's to come
- 🎃 **The Announcement** – Mary and her incredible visit from the Angel
- 🏰 **The Journey** – Joseph and Mary's trek from Nazareth to Bethlehem
- 🎁 **The Promises** – The Wisemen following the star
- 🐾 **The Message** – The Shepherds hearing the good news

And just when the story reached its most joyful moment, the children discovered **“The Gift”**—the birth of Jesus. We shared how Jesus is God's gift to the world, and if He had come with a tag, it would have read:

To the world with love from God

The children's faces lit up as they grasped the wonder of that message. ❤️

A huge thank you to our amazing team who made this possible—it was a time filled with laughter, learning, and a whole lot of joy. We also visited Gotherington Primary on Wednesday, 10 December..

So by the first week of December **240 children** had heard the Good News of Jesus through *Experience Christmas* this year. What a blessing to share this story of hope and love with so many young hearts.

Lucy Betts, Children's and Family Minister



**Church of the Ascension,
Southam**

Services January 2026

Sunday 4 January

9.30 am—Holy Communion at Church of the Ascension, led by Ben Williams

Sunday 11 January

9.30 am—Holy Communion at Church of the Ascension led by Lucy Barbour

Sunday 18 January

10.00 am—Church on the Hill, Cleeve Hill, led by Pete Barbour

Sunday 11 January

9.30 am—Holy Communion at Church of the Ascension led by Ben Williams



**St Martin de Tours Church, Woolstone,
St John the Baptist Church, Oxenton,
and using 'The Old Chapel' in Gotherington**

SERVICE INFORMATION FOR JANUARY 2026
All services start at 10:00 am unless otherwise stated.

Sunday 4 January :	Holy Communion	Oxenton
Sunday 11 January:	Morning Praise	Gotherington Village Hall
Sunday 18 January:	Holy Communion	Woolstone
Sunday 25 January:	Café Church	Gotherington Village Hall

Team Rector	Reverend Tim Garrett	tim@stmbc.uk
Team Vicar	Reverend Ben Williams	ben@stmbc.uk
CHURCH OFFICE	See Notice Boards	07354 874617
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PCC Treasurer	Michael Bower	01242 672900
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On Sunday 7th December, our church was filled to the brim for our annual Christingle service. It was a truly special occasion, with the congregation gathering together to celebrate the light of Christ in the midst of the Advent season.

But the joy didn't stop there. We were delighted to welcome three of our local pre-schools for their very own Pre-School Christingle service. The children brought such energy and excitement, filling the church with singing, listening, and wide-eyed wonder as they heard the Christmas story. Together, they crafted their own Christingles—a beautiful reminder of God's love shining in the world.

The atmosphere was one of warmth, community, and celebration. It was wonderful to see so many people come together, young and old alike, to share in this tradition.

A heartfelt thank you goes out to everyone who helped make these services possible, and to the pre-schools for joining us. Your presence made the day even more memorable.



Sunday Bible Readings from the Lectionary

Epiphany

- 4 January

Isaiah 60.1-6

Psalm 72.[1-9]10-15

Ephesians 3.1-12

Matthew 2.1-12

Epiphany 1

- 11 January

Isaiah 42.1-9

Psalm 29

Acts 10.34-43

Matthew 3.13-17

Epiphany 2

- 18 January

Isaiah 49.1-7

Psalm 40.1-12

1 Corinthians 1.1-9

John 1.29-42

Epiphany 3

- 25 January

Isaiah 9.1-4

Psalm 27.1,4-12*

1 Corinthians 1.10-18

Matthew 4.12-23

Epiphany 4

- 1 February

1 Kings 17.8-16

Psalm 36.5-10

1 Corinthians 1.18-31

John 2.1-11

Candlemas

Malachi 3.1-5

Psalm 24.[1-6]7-10

Hebrews 2.14-18

Luke 2.22-40

Our next themed readings:

11 January

The Gospel According to Joseph:

Hidden Patterns

Genesis 37 (2-13) and (23-34)

18 January

The Gospel According to Joseph:

Temptation

Genesis 39 (1-23)

25 January

The Gospel According to Joseph:

Discipline

Genesis 42 (1-9) and 45 (1-9)

1 February

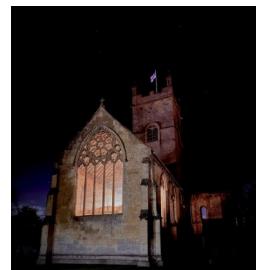
Candlemas

Luke 2 (22-40)



Some images
taken at Midnight
Communion at St
Michael's.

Thank you Ian



**Our Pastoral Assistants are here
to support the pastoral work in this benefice.**

- *If you would like to chat or need help - you or your family, friends or carers can contact us on your behalf.*
- *If you are going into hospital, moving or going into a care home - so we can keep in touch.*
- *If you can't get to church and would like Home Communion in the comfort of your own home.*

Contact: the Church Office 07354 874617

Email: pastoral.stmichael@gmail.com



HOME COMMUNION

Our Pastoral Assistants' Team offer anyone who can't get to church a short Home Communion service in the comfort of their own home.

We are also available to pray with those who can't get to church, in their homes, if that is helpful.

Please call the Church Office
07354 874617

St Michael's Church Weekday Open for Visitors/Private Prayer

Monday 11am - 2pm

Wednesday 10am - 4pm

Thursday 12pm - 2pm

(times may occasionally change due to
Services or volunteer availability
- check with Church Office 07354 874617)

Thursday 10.45am Communion Service St Michael's Church

1st & 3rd Thursdays

Jan n/a 15th

Feb 5th 19th

If you do NOT wish to receive copies of
Staying Connected, please phone the
Church Office on
07354 874617

For more information about our services please see:

www.stmichaelsbishopsleeve.co.uk

Email: admin@stmichaelsbishopsleeve.co.uk

Tel: 07354 874617

“Look I am doing a new thing”
Perfect quote for a new year!

As we enter 2026 let us count our blessings.

Maybe your Christmas has been blighted by sorrow, illness, disability or separation or even disunity.

On the other hand maybe, it has been joyful and full of blessings, if so, wonderful, praise God for that. However we feel, God is ever present. He has not deserted us!

A year is a perfect time to renew our faith.

Follow The Lord but don't just follow, let Him lead you.....

Be led in your prayers.

Be led in your conversation.

Be led in your actions and relationships.

1. Don't be shy of praying for yourself. What is greatest need now?
— Bring it to the Lord in prayer.

2. What are the greatest needs in your family and your church family?
— Bring them to The Lord in prayer.

3. During January there will be a rush for the Sales.' Some have saved and waiting for a particular bargain but there will be many spending what they cannot afford.

— Bring all those who struggle financially to the Lord in prayer.

4. Daily we hear of violent acts, disastrous natural disasters, war and greed in God's world. Pray for victims, for perpetrators and for those power.
— Bring all these situations to The Lord in prayer.

Be blessed as we move into 2026. Thank you for praying faithfully throughout 2025. SL.

St Michael & All Angels, Bishops Cleeve

*Please join us for our
SUNDAY SERVICES*

All at 9.30 am

1st Sunday – Morning Prayer

2nd Sunday – Holy Communion (with choir and organ)

3rd Sunday – Holy Communion

4th Sunday – Holy Communion (with choir and organ)

All at 11.15 am

1st Sunday – Café-style service (with children's activities)

2nd Sunday – Contemporary Worship (with children's groups)

3rd Sunday – Contemporary Worship with Holy Communion
(with children's groups)

4th Sunday – Contemporary Worship (Explorers Extra at St Michael's Centre)

5th Sunday - Joint Service (Explorers Extra at St Michael's Centre)

The Church of the Ascension, Southam

*Please join us for our
SUNDAY SERVICES*

all at 9.30 am unless otherwise stated.

1st Sunday – Holy Communion at Church of the Ascension

2nd Sunday – Holy Communion at Church of the Ascension

3rd Sunday – Church on the Hill at 10.00 am

4th Sunday – Breakfast Church at Southam Village Hall

The Parish of Woolstone with Gotherington and Oxenton

*Please join us for our
SUNDAY SERVICES*

all at 10.00 am unless otherwise stated

St Martin de Tours, Woolstone

1st Sunday—Holy Communion at St John the Baptist, Oxenton

2nd Sunday—Morning Praise at The Old Chapel, Gotherington

3rd Sunday—Holy Communion at St Martin de Tours, Woolstone

4th Sunday—Café Church at The Old Chapel, Gotherington

5th Sunday—BCP Holy Communion at St John the Baptist, Oxenton