

NEWS FROM HANSLOPE & CASTLETHORPE CHURCHES

THE LINK



Crib and Christmas Tree at St James

Epiphany to Candlemas 2026 £1.20

Diary for January 2026

(Also visit stjameshanslope.org/whats-on)

Worship

Sunday Services

Parish Mass at Castlethorpe 9.30am (Sunday School 9.15am starting 11th January)

Parish Mass at Hanslope 11.15am (Sunday School 11.15am starting 11th January)

Evening Prayer at Castlethorpe 5.00pm (2nd and 4th Sunday)

Weekday Services

Wednesday Mass at Castlethorpe 5pm

Thursday Mass at Hanslope 9.30am

Friday Mass at Hanslope at 12noon

Rosary Group

Every 1st Saturday of the month at The Vicarage 4.30pm

Following the Silence Prayer Group on Mondays

11 Weavers End, Hanslope 5.30pm

Shrine Live Stream @walsinghamanglican.org.uk

Sunday Mass 8.30am

Weekly Events

Mondays during term time

Little Angels – 9am to 11am

Wednesdays

Choir Practice – either Castlethorpe or Hanslope Church 6pm

Fridays

Hanslope Church open for refreshments and reflection – 10am to 12 noon

Craftivists and Flower Team – 10am to 12 noon

Fridays during term time

Little Lambs - Castlethorpe Church 2pm – 3pm babies and pre-school age

Little Lambs - Castlethorpe Church 3.30pm – 4.30pm school age children

Inspire Youth Group - Hanslope Church 4pm – 6pm

January 2026

Mon 5th Teatime Treats, Lincoln Court – 2pm to 4pm

Tues 6th **The Epiphany – Joint Parishes Solemn Sung Mass and Procession, Hanslope Church – 7pm**

Thurs 8th Soup and a Roll, Castlethorpe Church – 12.30pm
Advent Course, A Feast for Advent, The Vicarage – 7.30pm

Advent Course, Journey to the Manger, 12 Weavers End – 7.30pm

Sun 11th **The Baptism of The Lord, Service times as above**

- Mon 12th Church Cleaning, Hanslope Church – 11am to 1pm
 Thur 15th Community lunch, Hanslope Church – 12.30pm
 Sat 17th Castlethorpe's Monthly Coffee Morning, 10am to 12noon –
 note – venue is Village Hall
Sun 18th 2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time, Service times as above
 Mon 19th Church Cleaning, Hanslope Church – 11am to 1pm
 Cancer Support Group, Hanslope Church – 8pm
Sun 25th 3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time, Service times as above
 Tues 27th Hanslope's Standing Committee Meeting, The Vicarage 4.30pm
 Castlethorpe's PCC Meeting, Castlethorpe Church – 7.30pm
 Wed 28th Carers' Support Group, Hanslope Church – 10.30am
 Wholeness and Healing Mass, Hanslope Church – 7.30pm

February 2026

- Mon 2nd Candlemass Solemn Sung Mass and Candlelight Procession,**
Hanslope Church – 7pm
 Thurs 5th Soup and a Roll, Castlethorpe Church – 12.30pm



Sunday & Feast Day Mass Readings

- | | | |
|---|---|--------------|
| January 12th | The Baptism of the Lord | White |
| Isaiah 42:1-4, 6-7; Ps 29; Acts 10:34-38; Matt 3:13-17 | | |
| January 19th | 2nd Sunday (Epiphany 2) | White |
| Isa 49: 3, 5-6; Ps 40; 1 Cor 1:1-3; John 1:29-34 | | |
| January 26th | 3rd Sunday (Epiphany 3) | White |
| Isa 8:23b-9:3; Ps 27; 1 Cor 1:10-13, 17; Matt 4:12-23 | | |
| February 1st | 4th Sunday (Epiphany 4) | White |
| Zephaniah 2:3; 3:12-13; Ps 146; 1 Cor 1:26-31; Matt 5:1-12a | | |
| Monday 2nd February | CANDLEMAS | White |
| Procession & Sung Mass at Hanslope at 7.00pm | | |
| Malachi 3:1-4; Ps 24; Hebrews 2:14-18; Luke 2:22-40 | | |



NEW FRIDAY MASS

12 noon at St James

Weekday services at in both churches are increasingly well-attended and we hope this extra Mass will provide more opportunity for people to worship.


From the Editor – Welcome to 2026

2025 has been and gone all too quickly. As a church family we shared joyful moments but also those of great sadness with the loss of loved ones. National and international events continue to need our prayers.

At the Remembrance concert in November, I was greatly moved to realise that every one of the 130+ members of the audience was there because they *cared*. This has now led to a monthly feature we'll be adding entitled '*People Who Care*' – contributions from local people who are (or have) spent their lives caring for and about others. It took some arm twisting as those who give most in this community are the most modest and certainly don't do what they do for praise or profit. Their brief was to write from the heart, not the head. Not all have a personal faith, but all have deep moral convictions. Our Milton Keynes City Counsellor, Alison Andrew, was persuaded to start us off – see p 28.

And, with a new year, annual subscriptions are due! Many thanks for supporting The Link. Plenty of you still prefer the flexibility of the paper edition, but the online version is in colour throughout so you can enjoy the many photos we include. Past issues are free to view on the church website [The Link – St James the Great](#). The price remains at £12 for 10 issues thanks to support from our advertisers. *Mary Nokes*


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Hanslope – June Paterson
Castlethorpe – Nick Fearn

From The Vicarage January 2026



Dear Friends,

Happy Christmas and Happy New Year!

Elsewhere in this Link we have asked a number of people to reflect on their **highlights of our Christmas Worship**.

For me, the quality of the music was a particular bonus this year. The Choir have clearly benefited over time from Justin Lavender's expertise, and they were in very good number and exceptionally good voice, noteworthy, especially, were the descants in so many of the carols and the organ playing with both Craig Greene playing with such sensitivity and flare for the Carol Service and on Christmas Eve, as well as Andrew Biggs' extraordinary contribution to Christmas Midnight and Christmas Day morning. In Justin's absence, the willingness of a number of people to step up to play, from longstanding players like Natasha, Craig and Andrew, to emerging players like Rie who is growing in confidence, and I am glad we can support her in her desire to become more proficient, even if it slightly "in at the deep end", but you have to start somewhere!

I am always moved also by the participation of villagers who read at the Carol Service, especially those who don't usually read in Church. There was the lovely moment at the 3.00pm Pop-Up Nativity when Sarah Murfin (who was an amazing archangel!) extended her hand to little Albert Basson who then accompanied her on a procession around the Church. Another unscheduled event was when the children at the 5pm Crib Service sang verse one of *Away in a Manger* on their own gathered around the Crib.

There was a scintillating instant at the Midnight Mass, as "Yea Lord We Greet Thee, born this happy morning... Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing" was sung at the end of the Eucharistic Prayer and the consecrated bread and wine were elevated and the bells rang out. It was the sort of moment dear Fr Robert Nokes would have loved, and I miss him, and his thoughtful kindness and encouragement in these busy seasons, very keenly. This is the first Christmas since 2003 that I have been the only Priest living in Hanslope & Castlethorpe.

Attendance was *significantly* up on last year. There's more work to be done as we recover from the Pandemic to get back to where we were, say, 6-7 years ago, but the trajectory is a very healthy and encouraging one. We saw many new faces this year and achieved much. The still quite new "Early Midnight Mass" has reduced the attendance at Midnight, but what it has done, has brought in new worshippers for whom 11.30pm just doesn't work. The combined total attendance at 9.00pm and 11.30pm this year was higher than any Midnight Mass since 2018, and after trying different options 9.00pm is appears to be the best time for this service. This year's Christmas Day Mass recovered after a few quite sparse years post pandemic too.

And there were less visible highlights before and after Christmas Day as well. **Advent** saw some really good discussion at our two House Groups and there was an increase in those making their Confession, some for the first time, indeed there was a queue for Confession on the Thursday before Christmas (!!), and the Daily Mass on St Stephen's Day and St John the Evangelist's Day were up by more than 50% compared to last year, all signs of real commitment and personal spiritual growth.

Christmas continues, we have just celebrated the arrival of those enigmatic Magi with their gifts and we journey further into the forty days of the season which will conclude as ever with **Candlemas** on Monday 2nd February with a joint Parish Mass at Hanslope at 7.00pm that evening. We will be marking the remainder of the festive period with a short three-week season of "**The Art of Christmas**" three Thursday evening sessions of conversation, looking at seasonal works of art based on Jane Williams delightful little book. These will be very accessible and ideal for those who have not previously dipped into a House Group before. These will be held at *Applegarth*, the home of Anne & Alex Adams in Castlethorpe Road (opposite Burrow Ash Close) on Thursdays the 15th, 22nd and 29th January.

Finally, may I formally **thank** everyone who send cards and gifts to The Vicarage over the Christmas period. These are enormously appreciated by Maria and I, and we are most appreciative.

With every blessing for the year ahead,

Fr Gary



HANSLOPE AND DISTRICT CANCER WELLBEING & SUPPORT GROUP

Meets on 3rd Monday of each month at 8pm
Venue— St James the Great, Coffee Area
Contact - John Sorrell 07889 181158

HANSLOPE & DISTRICT CARERS' SUPPORT GROUP

Meets for a tea

NO MEETING IN JANUARY

...the ...
...DAY OF MONTH
...00am to 1230am— venue:
St James the Great Coffee Area
Contact - 07889181158



**DO
YOU
CARE?**

2026 Teatime Treats at Lincoln Court

Monday 2.00pm – 4.00pm
February 2nd

Jan Shipton reading Pam Ayres poems
March 2nd - Bingo

2026 COMMUNITY LUNCHES

St James Church 12.30pm
January 15th and February 19th
SS Simon & Jude 12.30pm
January 8th and February 5th

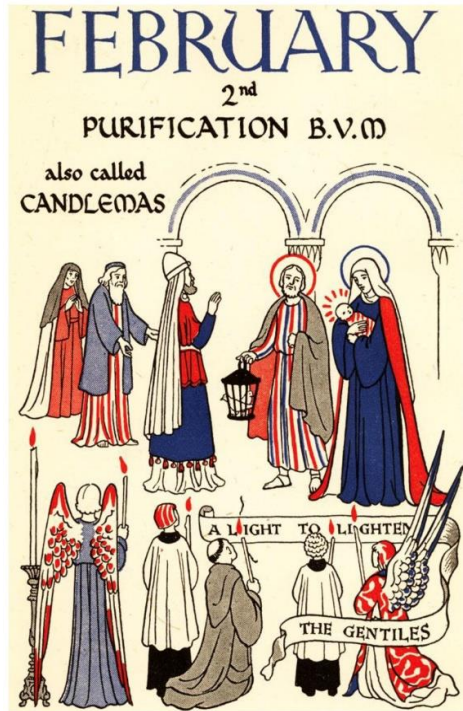
The Feast of Candlemas

Candlemas, on February 2nd, commemorates the occasion when the Blessed Virgin Mary, in obedience to Jewish law, went to the Temple in Jerusalem, both to be purified 40 days after the birth of her son, Jesus, and to present him to God as her firstborn (Luke 2:22–38). The festival was formerly known in the Roman Catholic Church and in the Book of Common Prayer) as the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary and is now known as the Presentation of the Lord. In the Anglican church it is called the

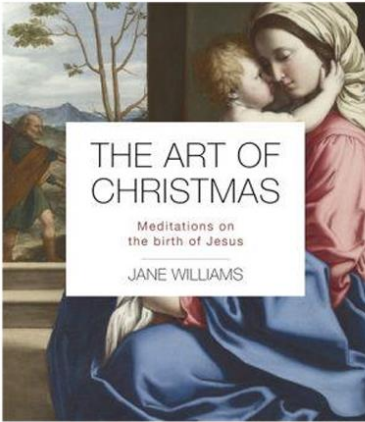
Presentation of Christ in the Temple. In the Greek church it is called *Hypapante* (Meeting), in reference to Jesus' meeting in the Temple with the aged Simeon and the prophet Anna.

The earliest reference to the festival is from Jerusalem, where in the late 4th century the Western pilgrim Etheria attended its celebration on February 14, 40 days after Epiphany (then celebrated as Christ's birthday), and wrote of it in the *Peregrinatio Etheriae*. It soon spread to other Eastern cities, and in 542 Justinian I decreed that its date should be moved back to February 2 (40 days after Christmas). By the middle of the 5th century the custom of observing the festival with lighted candles had been introduced, and the name Candlemas developed from this custom. In the Western church, Pope Sergius I (687–701) instituted the festival in Rome. In the East it is primarily a festival of Christ. In the West it was primarily a celebration of the Virgin Mary until the calendar reforms of 1969 which also influenced much Anglican thinking.

Candlemas is kept at Hanslope on February 2nd at 7.00pm. All welcome!



The Parish of Hanslope & Castlethorpe



The Art of Christmas

Join us over three Thursday evenings in January to talk about Christmas, Epiphany and Candlemas, as revealed through the pen and brush of some of the greatest artists.

Dates:

January 15th, 22nd and 29th

Venue:

“Applegarth”, 21A Castlethorpe Road

Sign Up:

In church or via our Facebook Groups

These sessions are open to anyone at any stage of their Christian journey.

www.stjameshanslope.org

www.castlethorpechurch.org



2026 Calendar of Roses for HO

On sale in both churches at only £5, beautiful A4 size calendar of roses growing in Ann Nixon-Caney's garden this year. A different rose every month printed on card and spiral bound.

Many thanks to Jamie Cooper who took the photos and designed this on our behalf in loving memory of Ann to raise money for the HO Diocese. Ann was one of its first and most loyal supporters.

Ho Group



Just a few left – please contact:

Mary Nokes 01908 337030 email m.nokes@easykey.com

or speak to Yvonne Hands at Castlethorpe.

St James the Great, Hanslope

Monthly Coffee Morning
7th February
10am to 12noon



All welcome



Annette's Baby Shower 23rd November





MK Brass and Hanslope School Choir 6th December



Extracts

Sometimes it's refreshing to read and focus on just a few lines from a well-known poem or prayer. Do you recognise this extract? To find out where these lines come from see bottom of p 28.

Be yourself. Especially do not feign affection.
 Neither be cynical about love;
 for in the face of all aridity and disenchantment
 it is as perennial as the grass.
 Take kindly the counsel of the years, gracefully
 surrendering the things of youth.
 Nurture strength of spirit to shield you in
 sudden misfortune.



The Hanslope Holy Family

were warmly welcomed in a range of activities from a PCC Meeting to a Community Lunch Christmas Party. They popped into Pre-School and Hanslope School and even ventured out of the Parish to share in Albert Sandham's First Christmas. Along the way, we even managed to lose The Three Kings... until they were safely reunited.

This year, They have stayed with some families new to hosting. All have enjoyed hearing about the story and I heard from one host how her boys loved playing with the Holy Family – they went on a Paw Patrol mission to Bethlehem and flew an aeroplane to Nazareth!

Barnaby Biggs returned The Holy Family to church on Christmas Eve. Maria Ecclestone,

their PA, is keeping them safe now until 2026 🙏
 Maria Ecclestone mariamadeley@yahoo.co.uk





“My Favourite Christmas Moment was...”

We asked a random sample of those actively involved in aspects of our Advent and Christmas worship, what memories they are taking away from our shared Christmas this year, and this is what they had to say!

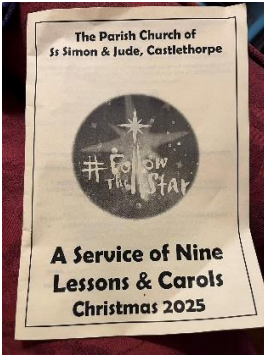
“Well, it has to be the 5.00pm Crib Service, for me this epitomises Christmas for so many reasons. To see our beautiful Church packed to the rafters with faces new and old, to hear the children singing *Away in a Manger*, (that got me grizzling) and just the incredible joy at that moment in that place, brought back wonderful memories of my childhood. It always lifts my heart to see how many people have made this part of their Christmas tradition amidst all the material madness that often takes over the season. We open the doors, and they come. How wonderful is that?!” *Melissa King*

“For me it was simply meeting and catching up with my Church family”
Rie Saito



A packed Castlethorpe for the 5.00pm Crib Service

“Our fabulous Carol Service and especially the Benefice Choir who truly excelled themselves.” *John Sorrell*



“The anthem *“Still, Still, Still”* sung so beautifully by The Choir at the Carol Service, I found it very moving”. *Trish Kempson*

“All the “firsts”, the first post-Carol Service drinks at Chris and Julie’s home in Higham Cross; first “real” baby Jesus at the 3pm Crib Service; the first ever *Compline by Candlelight* on Christmas Day before the Crib. Christmas isn’t the easiest time for me, but this year I have found peace, solace and stillness, amidst all the busyness of my working life.” *Maria Ecclestone*

“The full Church lit by candles waiting for the opening notes of *Once in Royal David’s City* to begin the Carol Service. This service with its wonderful carols and Readings marks the start of Christmas for me”.

Judi Leon

“Our Choir singing at the Carol Service so beautifully, Fr Gary singing *The Pogues* at the post-Carol Service social gathering, and the children’s faces as they met a real baby Jesus at our *Pop-Up Nativity* which was truly warming and meaningful, blessings indeed.” *Wendy Thomson*



Pop Up Nativity at Hanslope in full flow with a large congregation



A "Real" baby Jesus at the 3.00pm Crib Service at Hanslope

"All of it! A real baby Jesus and an excellent Angel with her star. The fabulous organ playing on Christmas Morning, and not forgetting the Choir's excellent singing." *Sue Collett*

A regular Castlethorpe Christmas visitor said to me that our Crib Service starts Christmas for them and now for their two young daughters too.

How wonderful, the magic of the manger." *Mike O'Shea*

"Mine were all at the Midnight Mass, singing the traditional carols (and all with the descants!); the joyful fanfares on the organ; taking Communion alongside my daughter; and lighting a candle for Mum on the first Christmas without her." *Gina Harper*

"My highlight of our Christmas worship was welcoming over 170 people to our Crib Service at 5.00pm on Christmas Eve. To see our little church absolutely filled to the rafters was joyous. After the service there were hugs, handshakes and smiles as villagers wished each other a Happy Christmas. A perfect and memorable way to start Christmas celebrations." *Nick Fearn*

"I really value the friendship of our Church Family at Christmas. My top moment was *Compline by Candlelight* on Christmas Day evening"

Diane Gordon



“Like many I really enjoyed the Carol Service and Midnight Mass singing. The Advent Course has also proved to be an amazing connection to the true meaning of Christmas. But my real top number one, surprised me as the process of coming to make my formal confession, which has led onto looking forward to Epiphany and to the full release from my sins and burdens. What a wonderful Christmas this was.” *Anne Adams*



“For me it was watching the Pop-Up Nativity, with a real live baby Jesus, when one of the children in the cast asked Isy if the baby was hers. Also singing the carols with the brilliant organist. Then, by chance, meeting my old dance teacher from 30 years ago, in the congregation!”

June Paterson

“Midnight Mass! With the superb organist playing, beautiful carols, and a great atmosphere. Finished off with those who are the usual crowd tiding up at the end and sitting down with a glass of festive Fizz.” *Glyn Hollinshea*



A packed 3.00pm Crib Service at Hanslope

News from Castlethorpe



The magic of Christmas really does exist

Over the years, the crib service in Castlethorpe has grown into one of the best attended celebrations of the year. This year was no exception with over 170 people through the doors.

Young and old, friends and strangers, villagers and those from afar, all came together to enjoy our candlelit service and to reflect on the greatest gift ever given.

Our Knitted Holy Family finally arrived at their destination, to be blessed by Father Gary and watched over by our younger attendees.

The Sunday School children dressed up and acted out the Christmas story as narrated by Aaliyah and Finnian who both read it beautifully.

Well done to all our little ones, you were all fabulous!

We were delighted to learn that our original Joseph, who had hoped to be part of our play, was on the mend having been taken into hospital quite poorly the week before! We pray little Jo

continues to improve and to let him know we are all thinking of him.

In all, a truly magical few moments for both old and young and such a pleasure to welcome them all in.

It's been a busy but enjoyable few weeks! Thank you to everyone who has made them possible, by organising or supporting them.



Churchyard tidy up

The weather in the run up to the churchyard tidy-up was so soggy we almost cancelled it! We held our nerve and were rewarded. The weather held and a gang of 15 pruned, trimmed, mowed, removed ivy and cleared gulleys and paths. A lot of the work we completed was highlighted in our recent quinquennial report. We're grateful to our volunteers who turned up and assisted with the tidy up.



Many thanks to Baked by K!

We'd like to say a massive thank you to Kimberley Tibbs, who organised the Christmas Fayre event on the 8th December. It isn't



often that the burden of fund raising for the Church is taken on by others, so we were very grateful to Kimberley and her team for organising this and kindly donating the £270 raised to the church.

Those who braved the awful weather enjoyed a range of stalls, delicious

food, the chance to win amazing raffle prizes ... and a giant elf!

Curry and Quiz Night

Once again this ever-popular event was an amazing success raising £1322 for the Church. Over 90 people packed out the Village Hall for a night of fierce competition. While the brilliant Mick Lee stretched people's brain, the equally brilliant Dina stretched



people's waistlines with a mouth-watering array of curries! A massive thanks goes out to Mick and Dina for their help in making the event such a success. A massive thanks too to Yvonne Hands, who was Dina's sous-chef for the week. Oh, and the winners..... a team of 3!

An early start to Christmas!



Under the superb organisation of Karen Russo, nearly 50 Castlethorpe seniors, including several worshippers, were served afternoon tea on 6th December by ladies from the church. The event was partly funded by our Lent coffee mornings and proceeds from Open Gardens, so it was lovely to see these villagers enjoying the wonderful spread (courtesy of the Cake Tin), free-flowing wine, many raffle prizes and the singalong with Lincoln.

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Another Fantastic Wreath Making Evening

This has become quite a tradition for many and marks the start of the Christmas countdown craziness!

Despite costs increasing and the price of the wreaths along with that, we still had over 40 places booked for our brilliant evening.

As always, we worked alongside the fabulous Jill Chapman, without whom this simply would not happen, thank you Jill, yet again!



Thanks also to everyone who came along to set up, help run or clear away, you helped make this year run as smoothly as we've ever known it.

Friends of Castlethorpe School provided some amazing Christmassy hampers for the raffle which boosted our nett profit to just over £1,200, shared between the school and the church.

Yet again, some incredible creations were taken home to hang on doors and people were already talking about "next year" as they left.



A Seasonal Celebration Concert

A small but very appreciative audience was treated to a wonderful evening of music from Adrian Boynton with the New English Singers and guests on 13th December. The programme ranged from classical organ and piano pieces, played by an amazingly talented 13-year old, to less commonly heard harmonious choral arrangements for Advent and Christmas. The

concert raised a welcome £422 for the church.

Christmas Carol Service

What a lovely evening! 90 people, including many villagers, attended our Carol Service on 21 December. From the atmospheric candle-lit start to Once in Royal David's City, through the nine lesson readings and wonderful anthems, to the rousing verses of O Come All Ye Faithful, it was the perfect way to pause from all the busyness and focus on why we celebrate Christmas. The evening continued over mulled wine and mince pies with much conversation and catching up.



So, what's happening in January?

Our first Soup and a Roll in 2026 is on **Thursday 8th January** at 12.30pm.



Our January Coffee Morning is on **Saturday 17th January**. Same time, 10-12 noon, but in **the Village Hall** as we're also inviting anyone who would like to find out more about volunteering for the Duck Race to join us for bacon baps.

Our Christmas Coffee Morning was popular!

We look forward to seeing you in 2026



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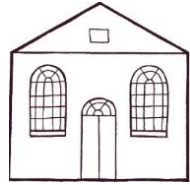
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NEWS FROM THE METHODIST CHURCH

SUNDAY SERVICES

4 January	Mr Chris Linford
11 January	Mr Mike Brough
18 January	Revd. Chris Batten (Holy Communion)
25 January	Mr Shepherd Kombo
1 February	Mrs Elaine Zemzem



Sunday services are usually held at 10.30am and are always followed by tea and coffee. We are a family friendly Church.

HOLY COMMUNION

Holy Communion is usually celebrated on the first Sunday of the month. However, this month it will be celebrated on 18 January when Revd. Chris Batten will be leading the service.



CONGRATULATIONS!

Many congratulations to our Circuit Superintendent Revd Edson Dube who was the Lifetime Award Recipient for Contributions to Religion at the 2025 MK, Bucks, Beds & Northants Black Excellence Awards which was held recently at Wilton Hall.

KNIT 'N' NATTER

A reminder that our Knit 'n' Natter group continues to meet every Thursday afternoon between 2.00pm and 3.30pm in the old schoolroom at the rear of the Chapel (enter through the side gate). Everyone is welcome to participate in our next project, which is making blankets, teddies, butterflies and twiddlemuffs for Milton Keynes University Hospital. Anyone is also welcome to bring their own knitting/crochet, or just call in for a chat and a cuppa.



HURRICANE MELISSA



Members agreed recently to send a £200 donation from Chapel funds to "All we Can." This will be used to help provide essential supplies to those most in need following the devastation caused by Hurricane Melissa in the Caribbean.



FIND US ON FACEBOOK AND KEEP UP TO DATE WITH OUR NEWS – HANSLOPE METHODIST CHURCH

TUESDAY MORNING COFFEE SHOP 10.00am - 12.00pm

Pop in for a cuppa and a chat.

Meet up with old friends and make some new friends.

We'd love to welcome you to our warm and cosy Tea Room....

People Who Care – Cllr Alison Andrew



I love where I live. It's the 21st house I've lived in – and hopefully that's a coming of age that means I am finally adulting!

I've been incredibly lucky. I had great parents who showed important it is to do things for other people – and not just yourself. I haven't always had the right balance – but now working for my I think the scales are decidedly more balanced.

I chose to move back to Hanslope (I'd lived here twice before) and joined the Parish Council. Although working in a high-pressured job, I fell in love with our village all over again. In my eyes, love is a two-way street – you have to give to get.

The PC allowed me to volunteer alongside like-minded people, and work on projects benefiting the village. The outdoor gym, Street Party, Party in the Park, public events, and more. It's rewarding, challenging, and fun to build, fix, and grow what this village has to offer.

I've had an interest in politics from a young age. Family dinners were full of debate. My Aunt, (Director of Social Services) would debate furiously with Dad (Managing Director). One red, one blue; voices raised but never hurtful. The common ground was wanting a better place for people to live. Whether through job creation or helping those who a caring society needed to extend a hand towards.

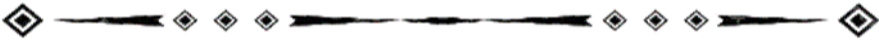
In 2023 decided to run for City Council, an elected position. Think of it as a Milton Keynes level parliament. At national level they set income tax, VAT, foreign policy, immigration, budgets for services and more. At local we look after the roads, adult social care, children's services, planning, roads, waste management, and the future of the City.

It's often frustrating – fixing the roads, bin collections – things that should be easy but often go wrong. But some matters are deeply personal – kids with special needs, people fleeing domestic violence

who need housing, children in care, homelessness. It's difficult not to lose sleep on occasion.

But with it all comes a great sense of service and a feeling that all the things I've done in my career give me a good sense of how to tackle issues. Often, I am helping people when the Council fails them. Advocating when their voice has been unheard. It can take a great deal of time and fight. It's often very difficult – but then again, so am I.

Friends think I'm mad. They see the personal toil it takes on me. But the alternative is spending life throwing cushions at the TV, being constantly frustrated with what is going on. The upsides are huge. It makes a difference. Turns out that giving does feel better than receiving. And if not me, then who?



From the Registers In Remembrance

28th November 2025 Funeral at Oak Chapel, Crownhill Crematorium

Geoffrey Phillip Ellis

Died 2nd November 2025 aged 87 years

2nd January 2026 Graveside Funeral at St James the Great

Peter John Smith

Died 2nd December 2025 aged 85 years

Page 11 Extract from *Desiderata* (Latin – desired things)
by Max Ehrmann (1927)

Bob's Ramblings January 2026

Happy New Year to you All and here we are into another year, who knows what this will bring. Our climate seems to be a little settled now but quite chilly and not much rain, however I am sure that will change.

The local sports teams are all performing well, with The Saints at sitting on top following a great win at Bath. MK Dons keeping a good pace in the top 5 and The Cobblers finding it a bit tough at the moment.

So, I start off with a Mirrlees-Blackstone 37901 engine fully restored in its BR



Metal insignia passing on a Westbury to Loughborough on 2nd Dec. Then the new Stadler Class 93, 93008-010



hauling refurbished MK5 coaches from Wolverton to Longsight on 4th Dec. Another 2-tone Grey repaint, with 57003 on an Eastleigh to Derby on the 9th Dec. Some vintage EE Type 1's 20172-189



passing on a Kidderminster to Ashford working on the 23rd Dec. With white smoke



everywhere 44871 running back to Bury from Southall on the 24th Dec. Finally, the GWR

ran their final timetables service with the HST's on the 13th Dec and fittingly the last Castle Sets 43004/186/156/189/093/198 ran consecutively back to



Laira from Plymouth North Road with a good crowd on the platforms.



What a mixture and I sincerely wish you again a Happy New Year. Bob.

Daily Mass Readings January 2026

Week 1 – Mon 12 th	1 Samuel 1:1-8	Mark 1:14-22
Week 1 - Tues	1 Sam 1:9-22	Mark 1:21-28
Week 1 - Wed	1 Sam 3:1-10, 19-22	Mark 1:29-39
Week 1 - Thurs	1 Sam 4:1-11	Mark 1:40-45
Week 1 - Fri	1 Sam 8:4-7, 10-22a	Mark 2:1-12
Week 1 - Sat	1 Sam 9:1-4, 17-19; 10:1	Mark 2:13-17
Week 2 – Mon 19 th	1 Sam 15:16-23	Mark 2:18-22
Week 2 - Tues	1 Sam 16:1-13	Mark 2:23-28
Week 2 - Wed	1 Sam 17:32-33, 37, 40-51	Mark 3:1-6
Week 2 - Thurs	1 Sam 18:6-9; 19:1-7	Mark 3:7-12
Week 2 - Fri	1 Sam 24:3-21	Mark 3:13-19
Week 2 - Sat	2 Sam 1:1-4, 11-12, 19, 23-27	Mark 3:20-21
Week 3 – Mon 26 th Ss Timothy & Titus	2 Sam 5:1-7, 10	Mark 3:22-30
Week 3 - Tues	2 Sam 6:12b-15, 17-19	Mark 3:31-35
Week 3 - Wed	2 Sam 7:4-17	Mark 4:1-22
Week 3 - Thurs	2 Sam 7:18-19, 24-29	Mark 4:21-25
Week 3 - Fri	2 Sam 11:1-4a, 5-10a, 13-17	Mark 4:26-34
Week 3 - Sat	2 Sam 12:1-7a, 10-17	Mark 4:35-41

The Book of Samuel, through which we read this month is divided into 1 Samuel and 2 Samuel, chronicles the transition of Israel from a confederation of tribes to a unified monarchy under kings Saul and David

The Book of Samuel is a significant part of the Old Testament, originally written as one continuous narrative but later divided into two books. It covers the period of Israel's history from the last judge, Samuel, through the reigns of the first two kings, Saul and David. The book is essential for understanding the establishment of monarchy in Israel and the theological implications of leadership and obedience to God.

PERSONNEL ANGLICAN

WEBSITES: www.stjameshanslope.org
www.castlethorpechurch.org

PARISH PRIEST: Fr Gary Ecclestone SSC, The Vicarage, Park Rd MK19 7LT
 email: parishpriest@handcparish.co.uk
 Phone number 07354369772

Hon. Assistant Priest:	Fr. Robin Carter	07783 164240
Safeguarding Officer	Melissa King	07525668446
		safeguarding@handcparish.co.uk
Baptism Co-ordinator:	Sue Collett	07734772030
		baptisms@handcparish.co.uk
Children's Ministry:	Wendy Thomson	children@stjamesthegreat.co.uk
Funeral Co-ordinator:	Glyn Hollinshead	07947478189
		funerals@handcparish.co.uk

CHURCHWARDENS

Hanslope	Glyn Hollinshead, 1 Warwick Rd, Hanslope	07947 478189
Castlethorpe	Nick Fearn, 32 The Chequers	07790529454

PERSONNEL METHODIST

The Revd. Kofi Tekyi-Ansah kofita@me.com

MAGAZINE EDITING TEAM

Canon Mary Nokes, 92 Western Drive, Hanslope MK19 7LE	01908 337939
Joel Sandham	07712522676
	TheLink@handcparish.co.uk

Hanslope News: Diane Gordon 53 St James Close Hanslope	07885686162
	dianegordon58@btinternet.com

Distribution Hanslope – June Paterson, 5 Manor Close	01908 510193
Castlethorpe – Nick & Jenny Fearn, 32 The Chequers	07790529454

For paper copy of Link delivered, please contact your parish representative
 For an online colour copy contact: TheLink@handcparish.co.uk

DEADLINE for FEBRUARY/LENT 2026 EDITION

WEDNESDAY 11th FEBRUARY

to our email TheLink@handcparish.co.uk



Filled to the rafters at Castlethorpe's Crib Service