

Many of you will know that I like to promote UCB's Word for Today booklets and I put some each quarter at the back of each of the Churches but you can always ask me if you want a copy, or sign up for your own to pop through your door regularly - I particularly wanted to share the reading for 1st January* for those who didn't see it - so encouraging.... **Make prayer your first priority**

01 JANUARY 2026

'Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.'

John 16:24 NKJV

Prayer should be your highest priority. Why? Because when you fail to pray, you set yourself up to fail. You're saying in essence, 'I don't need God's help or input.' God comes by invitation. Prayer opens the door and welcomes Him into your situation. Jesus said, 'Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.' An unknown poet wrote: 'I got up early one morning and rushed right into the day. I had so much to accomplish that I didn't have time to pray. Problems just tumbled about me, and heavier came each task. "Why doesn't God help me?" I wondered. He answered, "You didn't ask." I wanted to see joy and beauty, but the day toiled on, grey and bleak. I wondered why God didn't show me. He said, "But you didn't seek." I tried to come into God's presence; I used all my keys at the lock. God gently and lovingly chided, "My child, you didn't knock." I woke up early this morning and paused before entering the day. I had so much to accomplish that I *had* to take time to pray!'

The psalmist said, 'O God...early will I seek thee' (Psalm 63:1 KJV). The first voice he wanted to hear in the morning was God's. The first conversation he wanted to have – was with the Lord. Before others made demands on his time and energy, he wanted to know God's will. Has your prayer life been hit-and-miss? Rearrange things and make it your first priority each day. If you do, you'll begin to thrive spiritually.

[Genesis 1-3, Matthew 1](#)

Marina

* (From UCB Word for Today, UCB Westport Road Stoke on Trent ST6 4JF)

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MARDLE

FEBRUARY/MARCH

2026

Mulbarton Benefice newsletter



FOLLOWING JESUS
Sharing the journey

WITH THE VILLAGES OF MULBARTON,
FLORDON, BRACON ASH AND HETHEL

FROM THE RECTORY

Email: adrian@mulbchurch.org.uk

On 15th February, I'll be stepping down after twelve years serving as Rector here. It's hard to sum up such a long journey in a few words — but I want to say thank you.



When I arrived in 2014, I rang the church bell twelve times, marking (traditionally) the number of years a priest might serve in a place. I had no idea how true that would turn out to be.

Our children were just 4 and 7 when we came. This is the place where they grew up. And truthfully, it's a place Sarah and I have done a lot of growing up too. We've shared a lot with you over these years — joy and grief, change and challenge, everyday life and sacred moments.

Amidst all the inevitable challenges and shifting sands, this church community has loved us well. For my part, you're a group of worshiping people I've done my best to serve, along with the wider parish communities — I have not always done that perfectly, but I have done it with heart and sincerity. So I want to say thank you for your welcome, your honesty, your grace and your support.

I had been feeling for some time that I needed a break from public life and from church, not uncommon for those who enter the

ministry young. Those close to me know the journey I've been on to reach this decision, and to set the date of my departure for mid-February, after having secured agreement from the diocese. I am grateful for the reassurance and support people have given.

It was not a decision I came to lightly or easily, but I do believe it is the right time — for me, for my family, and perhaps for the church and wider community too — to make space for something new. Who knows what the unwritten chapters of our books will hold? I pray it will be many good things for us all.

Sarah will continue in her employed role with Mulbarton PCC, in which she assists with administration for the whole benefice, assisted by industrious volunteers, Heather, Tracey, Chris, David and others.

Rev Di Rowlandson and Rev Andrew North both have Permission to Officiate in the benefice, along with rural dean and other visiting priests. Bev Theobald is now licensed as an Authorised Worship Assistant, and Rachel Burchell will also soon be commissioned as an AWA. Between them, the Sunday worship and pastoral work will continue during vacancy. The appointment of a new vicar will take a few months. Please be praying for all involved with that and for a good outcome.

As I take my leave, and when all around is changing, we hold onto Jesus—who is the same yesterday and today and forever—and who transcends the limits of our human experience. Following Him and sharing the journey remains a vital vision, as we continue our own pilgrimages into all that the future holds.

With love and thanks,

Adrian

Note From The Editor

I would take this moment to say a big thank you to Adrian for all his support, contribution and hard work over the years in helping me with Mardle.

Chris Carter

*Thank
you!*

Go well on your ecological, green-passioned journey; say the Anglican Climate Change Prayer as you go:

**Holy God, earth and air and water are your creation, and every living thing belongs to you:
have mercy on us as climate change confronts us.
Give us the will and the courage to simplify the way we live, to reduce the energy we use, to share the resources you provide, and to bear the cost of change.
Forgive our past mistakes and send us your Spirit, with wisdom in present controversies and vision for the future to which you call us in Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.**

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Peter Nicholls

From The Registers

FUNERALS AND BURIAL OF ASHES

20 Nov 2025 Dr John MALLEN (Flordon)

24 Nov 2025 Valentina KLEYMENOVA

1 Dec 2025 Sarah LADBROOK

11 Dec 2025 Christopher STRAFFORD

30 Jan 2026 Catherine Hayes (Hethel)

31 Jan 2026 Jeanette Holmes

5 Feb 2026 Daphne SPALDING

How to be a greener Christian #23

As many will know, Cathy and I expect to leave in the summer, in late 2027 to be part of a sustainable cohousing community (Angel Yard) in the City. In the interim, we will be trying to improve the EPC of a terraced house: finding the pitfalls, difficulties and expenses of doing that! With the Angel Yard newbuild being designed from scratch, the cohousing group is finding that compromises have to be made on grounds of cost. For example, steel has much more embedded carbon than cross-laminated timber, but the latter would make the apartments and houses unaffordable.

Now seems a sensible moment to lay down this mantle after almost four years of writing about 'green' issues. Is there someone willing to take it up?

In the first piece, I started with "Should followers of Jesus live more sustainably than anyone else?" No, but they should surely take the lead.

Because:

1. This is God's world. It's "very good"; (Genesis 1.31) and we have a duty of care (1.28)! The word 'subdue' in v.28 has been misused to imply foot-on-neck domination of creation, but a scholarly reading demands that we consider how God cares for us. With love and consideration and always wanting us to thrive. Subdue us; make us calm, peaceful, content, functioning as we should be, thriving.

2. Jesus calls us to love our neighbour as ourselves. And who is your neighbour? Anyone you choose (see the 'Good Samaritan' parable in Luke 10). Even (especially?) those very many who are severely impacted by a changing climate in lands far away and out of sight.

3. How we live matters if we are to have climate credibility with our family and friends. As individuals and as a community of faith, we need to set an example.

In writing this column, I've majored on travel, energy, food and stuff as four areas of consumption that profoundly affect our carbon footprint. I've talked about personal lifestyle, community influence and political activity if we are to make a difference. I've tried to pick up our growing concern to protect biodiversity. And I have tried to give a bit of practical help, like low-carbon, tasty recipes. Have you got a chilli con carne recipe? Swap the mince for Quorn mince; you'll hardly know the difference, but the planet will,

News from Hethel Church



First, a **huge thank you** to everyone who has said kind things to Cathy and me, sent cards or contributed to gifts - including a wonderful photo montage of Hethel Church presented to us this morning. We both serve in the sense of "we love because he loved us" (1 John 4.19) and in the spirit of what Jesus said to the apostles in John 17: "Does the servant get special thanks for doing what's expected of him?

It's the same with you. When you've done everything expected of you, be matter-of-fact and say, 'The work is done. What we were told to do, we did.' We are grateful for your generous words, nevertheless!

The bell has been rung several times since December, to the appreciation of the locals. Now we await installation of the ground-stage ladder that will allow safer access to the silence chamber, after which I'm hoping that we can have a 'grand opening' with a knowledgeable speaker and (after chats with insurers) maybe trips to the tower to see 'John' in place.

And then there's **Wild about Hethel** (and Bracon Ash). In mid-2025, our wildlife advisor Dr Anne Edwards emailed:

"One thought for 2026: what about making it Hethel's year of Biodiversity and encourage recording throughout the year? I did something similar in Hethersett in 2011. It turned out to be very popular. The Hethersett Environmental Action Team (HEAT) was left some money so we published the year-long survey. People sent in observations, photos, anecdotes, drawings and poems. The printed copies got snapped up very quickly and although it is a bit out of date now, it can still be found on-line: <https://bit.ly/wildhethersett>."

That publication is awesome and somewhat daunting. Although **Wild about Hethel** is focussed on Hethel and Bracon Ash, others from further afield could join in if they wished. Basically all you (or your children or grandchildren) need is a smartphone and a free app.

On Saturday 31 January, Dr Anne will be at Hethel Church to give an introductory talk and to help you get going. She will be there from 11.15 am to 3.15pm and will talk through what to do at 11.30am and again at 2pm. Bring your phone (you'll be able to download the app there). There will be a small exhibition in the church and hot drinks available on a serve yourself basis. My hope is that a slow start will gather pace and enthusiasm as people realise the power of the group and how interesting a shared study of our beautiful and fascinating world can be.

Shalom, Peter Nicholls

FEBRUARY/MARCH 2026

*Please check church website for information and changes nearer the time
JANUARY*

| | | |
|-------------------|--|---|
| Sat 31 | 11.15am | Hethel Church: Wild about Hethel (See Page 3) |
| FEBRUARY | | |
| Sun 1 | 9.00am 10.00am | Bracon Ash Church: Morning Prayer Mulbarton Church: All Age |
| Mon 2 Thur 5 | 10.00am 9.15am 10.30am 7.00pm | Mulbarton Social Club: Community Hub Harvest House: Coffee and Prayer Funeral:Daphne Spalding, Mulbarton Church Hanover Gardens: Alpha |
| Sun 8 | 8.30am 10.00am 3.30pm | Hethel Church: Communion Mulbarton Church: Morning Worship Flordon Church: Evening Prayer |
| Mon 9 Thur 12 | 10.00am 9.15am 2.30pm 7.00pm | Mulbarton Social Club: Community Hub Harvest House: Coffee and Prayer Hanover Gardens: Mid week Communion Hanover Gardens: Alpha |
| Sun 15 | 10.00am 12.30pm | Mulbarton Church: Benefice Communion (Adrian's Last Service) Bracon Ash Village Hall: Lunch |
| Mon 16 | 10.00am | Mulbarton Social Club: Community Hub |
| Wed 18 | 7.30pm | Mulbarton Church: Ash Wednesday Service |
| Thur 19 | 9.15am 7.00pm | Harvest House: Coffee and Prayer Hanover Gardens: Alpha |
| Sun 22 | 10.30am 6.00pm 7.00pm | Hanover Gardens: Church@ Hanover: Harvest House: Together Meal Mulbarton Church: Together Service |
| Mon 23 Tues 24 | 10.00am 2.00pm | Mulbarton Social Club: Community Hub Mulbarton Social Club: Mardlers |

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| Thur 26 | 9.15am 10.30am 7.00pm | Harvest House: Coffee and Prayer Flordon Church: Communion Hanover Gardens: Alpha |
| MARCH | | |
| Sun 1 | 9.00am 10.00am | Bracon Ash Church: Morning Prayer Mulbarton Church: Wild Church |
| Mon 2 Thur 5 | 10.00am 9.15am 7.00pm | Mulbarton Social Club: Community Hub Harvest House: Coffee and Prayer Hanover Gardens: Alpha |
| Sun 8 | 8.30am 10.00am 3.30pm | Bracon Ash Church: Communion Mulbarton Church: Morning Worship Flordon Church: Evening Prayer |
| Mon 9 Thur 12 | 10.00am 9.15am 2.30pm 7.00pm | Mulbarton Social Club: Community Hub Harvest House: Coffee and Prayer Hanover Gardens: Mid Week Service Hanover Gardens: Alpha |
| Sun 15 | 9.00am 10.00am | Bracon Ash Church: Communion Mulbarton Church: Communion (Mothering Sunday) |
| Mon 16 Thur 19 | 10.00am 9.15am 7.00pm | Mardle Deadline today. Articles to Sarah Miller via sarah@mulbchurch.org.uk titled Mardle Mulbarton Social Club: Community Hub Harvest House: Coffee and Prayer Hanover Gardens: Alpha |
| Sun 22 | 10.30am 6.00pm 7.00pm | Hanover Gardens: Church@ Hanover Harvest House: Together Meal Mulbarton Church: Together Service |
| Mon 23 Tues 24 | 10.00am 2.00pm | Mulbarton Social Club: Community Hub Mulbarton Social Club: Mardlers |
| Thur 26 | 9.15am 10.30am 7.00pm | Harvest House: Coffee and Prayer Flordon Church: Communion Hanover Gardens: Alpha |
| Sun 29 | 10.00am | Mulbarton Church: All Age Service |
| Mon 30 | 10.00am | Mulbarton Social Club: Community Hub |