



CONTACT

February & March 2026

Where strangers become friends

WANT TO FIND OUT MORE?

If you would like to find out more about the Church and its activities, more details can be found on our website:

www.gasgreen.org.uk

or Facebook page:

www.facebook.com/GasGreenBaptistChurch

Alternatively, you may like to get in touch via any of the contact details given below:

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Articles for the Magazine to the Editor please - see back page for magazine deadline.

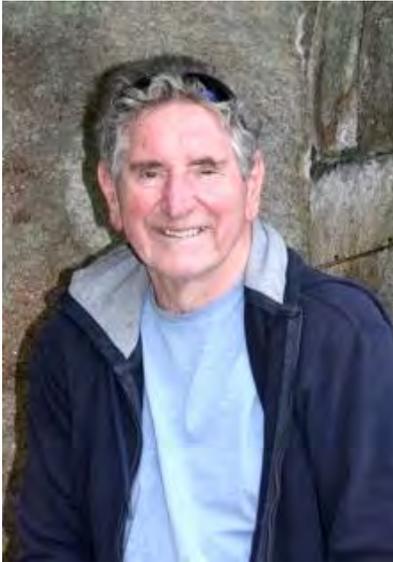
Weekly notices to Tony Dymock (Tel: 01242 244594 or E-mail: secretary@gasgreen.org.uk) by Thursday evening at the latest.

Prayer requests to Debbie Bonanos

E-mail: deborahbonanos@gmx.co.uk by 12 midday Wednesday



**Yes, I have given up chocolate for Lent-
all this is for afterwards!**



FROM THE MINISTER

Dear Friends,

Stories, we all like stories. There are days when we like true stories and occasions when we like fictional stories. Recently Val and I went to see Hamnet, the fictional story re the relationship between William Shakespeare and his wife Agnes. The film shows how they deal with the loss of the son Hamnet to the plague. It is a very moving story full of emotion and at times challenging our very being. Agnes and William were always searching for the why, and

why this could be. It can be the same for any family where a child has died. But what came out of this story?

Once there was a man whose life was one of misery. The days were cloudy, and the nights were long. Henry didn't want to be unhappy, but he was. Within the passing of the years, his life had changed. His children were grown; the neighbourhood was different. The city seemed harsher.

He was unhappy. He decided to ask his minister what was wrong. 'Am I unhappy for some sin I have committed?' 'Yes,' the wise pastor replied. 'You have sinned.' 'And what might that sin be?' 'Ignorance,' came the reply. 'The sin of ignorance. One of your neighbours is the Messiah in disguise, and you have not seen him.'

The old man left the office stunned. 'The Messiah is one of my neighbours?' he began to think who it might be.

Tom the butcher? No, he's too lazy. Mary my cousin down the street. No, too much pride. Aaron the paper boy? No, too indulgent.

The man was confounded. Every person he knew had defects. But one was the Messiah he began to look for him.

He began to notice things he hadn't seen. The grocer often carried the sacks to the cars of older ladies. *Maybe he is the Messiah.* The Police Officer at the corner always had a smile for the kids. *Could it be?* And the young couple who'd moved next door.

How kind they are to their cat. Maybe one of them...

With time he saw things in people he'd never seen. And with time his outlook on life began to change. The bounce returned to his step. His eyes took on a friendly sparkle. When others spoke, he listened. After all, he might be listening to the Messiah. When anyone asked for help, he responded, after all this might be the Messiah needing assistance.

The change of attitude was so significant that someone asked him why he was so happy. 'I don't know,' he answered. 'All I know is that things changed when I started looking for God.'

Now that is curious. The old man saw Jesus because he didn't know what he looked like. The people in Jesus's day missed him because they thought they did. How are things looking in your neighbourhood?



Thanks to Max Lucado and Shakespeare



Many of you will have seen a pink box at the back of the church with a label saying Foodbank! It is usually empty so I thought I would explain why it is there.

I volunteer at Elim Church where the Trussel Trust Foodbank is based. We are open on Tuesday and Wednesdays at Elim but also at the Salvation Army on a Monday and at St. Pauls on a Friday.

Whilst most people think that Cheltenham is a wealthy town there are many many people living in poverty. Last year the Foodbank gave out 4060 parcels to people in need. This represents a massive amount of food which is given by many groups including churches, schools, and individuals. We also do collections several times a year at Tesco and Waitrose. It is not a free for all system -everyone who comes has a voucher and this voucher tells us how many people there are in that family needing food. Our biggest group is single people-many of whom are in work but living in rented accommodation and rent and bills keep rising. The most challenging group to pack bags for is "kettle " people. These are people living in a hotel room with no cooking facilities whatsoever. There are always items needed to replenish the stock so if anyone is interested or feels they can support the foodbank I will give Debbie a list to go on the Aide Memoir each week.

I will do this for a month and if the box remains empty, I will simply utilize it elsewhere!

Val

Stepping Into a New Year Together

A new year often makes us pause and reflect. We think about where we've been, what we've learned, and what we hope for next. For both the church and our wider community, this New Year offers a simple invitation: to walk forward together.



Discipleship may sound like a church word, but at its heart it is about learning how to live well. It is about learning to love God, to care for others, and to keep growing — step by step. It is not about having all the answers. It is about being willing to take the next step.

To those who have been part of the church for a long time, be encouraged. God is still at work in you and through you. Faith is not about being perfect or doing more. It is about staying close to Jesus and letting Him shape how we live each day.

Some days faith feels strong; other days it feels quiet or heavy. That is normal. What matters is not how fast we move, but that we keep going. Small things — praying, listening, serving, encouraging — may seem ordinary, but they matter deeply.

To our leaders and volunteers, thank you. Your care and commitment make a difference, even when it goes unseen. Remember that you are not meant to carry everything alone. Walking together is part of how we grow.

To our community and neighbours, please know this: you are welcome. You do not need to have everything figured out. Questions are okay. Taking your time is okay. The church is not a place for perfect people, but a place where people can be known, supported, and loved.

Discipleship does not end at the church door. It shapes how we live at home, at work, at school, and in our neighbourhoods. It shows up in kindness, forgiveness, service, and care for those who are struggling. When lived out this way, faith becomes something that blesses the whole community.

As we begin this New Year, discipleship can start simply:

- Taking a moment to pray
- Spending time with others in honest conversation
- Offering help where it is needed
- Encouraging one another to keep going

A new year does not ask us to become different people overnight. It invites us to continue the journey with fresh hope.

A Prayer for the Year Ahead

God of hope and new beginnings,
As we step into this new year, we place ourselves in your care.

We pray for our community—for those who feel hopeful and for those who feel tired or uncertain. For those carrying questions, worries, or quiet concerns, remind them they are not alone.

Help us to be a church that listens well,
That makes space for honest conversations,
And that offers prayer, care, and support whenever it is needed.

Guide us to walk with kindness, patience, and understanding.
Teach us to serve one another with open hearts and willing hands.

May this year be one of shared journeys,
Where burdens are lightened through care,
And hope is found in walking together.

Amen.

Happy Birthday!



to BMS Birthday Scheme members celebrating their birthday during
the coming weeks:

March 24th Amy Butler

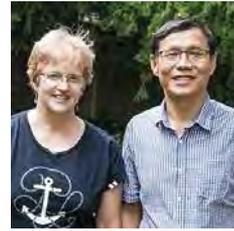
Are you one of the 10,000 members of the Birthday Scheme? You will receive a lovely birthday card. and in return you are invited to make a donation to the work of BMS, and support projects around the world. Every year more than £250,000 is raised in this way. Please talk to Marian, our Mission Treasurer, about what is involved, and become a part of this scheme.

Helen and Wit Boondeekhun

Boondeekhun's Bulletin

December 2025

www.bmsworldmission.org/hwboondeekhun



Dear Friends

Wishing you all a Joyful Christmas and a Blessed New Year!

Thai people love a celebration and Christmas is no exception, so we always take the opportunity to share the good news of the nativity with our friends and neighbors. All three of our churches are planning to hold events and are busy preparing. Maesan will be on the 14th December with a family celebration, inviting children from the local primary school along with their parents. Wang Daeng is on the 13th and 21st December. The first of these is for the village health volunteers and the second for family and friends. Ban Dara has decided to hold theirs outdoors in the local market area with performances by both children and adults in the congregation. A local Christian band will also be playing, and there will be games, food and gifts. This will be on 21st December in the early evening.

We praise God for all those who have come to faith in the past year or so. All the churches have people ready to be baptised which is exciting. In Maesan they held their first baptismal service in many years on 7th December with three new believers dedicating their lives to follow Jesus. It was such a joyful occasion for them and the whole church as they gathered down by the river. Please pray for them as they are likely to face opposition and hostility in the coming days.



In early October we attended the TBMF conference, which had the theme of REST: Refresh, Engage, Surrender and Trust. It was a wonderful refreshing and uplifting time. Straight after that we travelled south for a family reunion with Helen's two sisters and brother, our son, daughter in law and granddaughter, as well as several nieces and their partners - 13 of us in all. It was the first time that Helen and her siblings have been all together in one place for 31 years! It was a very special and enjoyable time.



Thailand is currently in a time of mourning for the Queen Mother who passed away at the end of October. The protestant churches in Uttaradit decided to hold a memorial service in Wang Daeng in our lovely new building. There were about 150 people crammed in for a time of giving thanks for the life of Queen Sirikit. It was combined with a time of heartfelt prayer for the district of Tron, a gospel sermon and a powerful testimony. Several people responded to the appeal, including Blue, Suree's 12 year old granddaughter. Educational scholarships for those in need were awarded to 21 local young people.

many opportunities will arise to share the gospel with folk in the community



We praise God that the football ministry is up and running again thanks to Ajarn Tah coming to help us as a football coach. There are now two teams who practice three days a week. At the end of November they travelled to Petchabun province for a competition within the Immanuel Football League. Ajarn Tah has begun a youth group for the older team members and, along with Pastor Sky, he regularly visits the families of the young footballers. It is a wonderful way to build relationships within the community as well as improving the good reputation of the church. We pray that

Please pray for all of our Christmas outreach events on 13th, 14th and 21st December, and for the follow-up

Pray for those recently baptised in Maesan, and for those preparing for baptism in Wang Daeng and Ban Dara

Pray for the ongoing evangelism and discipleship in the three churches

Pray for wisdom, health and strength for Pastors Neng, Sky, Areerat and Newton

Pray for the football ministry - for Coach Tah building good relationships and opportunities to share the gospel, and for continued funding

Pray for the Ban Dara church building project due to begin January - for safety, good relationships with neighbours and for finance

Pray for the mission team from Cross Culture Church in Australia visiting our 3 churches from 15th-26th January

Pray for wisdom in making decisions regarding Wit's health

Blessings to all!

Wit & Helen

If you would like to support Helen and Wit Boondeekhun by prayer and committed regular giving, visit bmsworldmission.org/partners or call 01235 517617 for a 24:7 Partners leaflet.



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“Thank You” from Robert Thang

As many readers will know, for some years we have been financially supporting a group of needy children in the church in Burma led by Rev. Robert Thang, who worshipped at Gas Green whilst studying for his Ph.D. at the University of Gloucestershire. We send regular gifts to help with their schooling, and also an additional gift at this time of year to buy them Christmas presents. We have recently received the following “Thank You” message for those Christmas gifts.,

If you would like to contribute to this cause, please see Marian Lee.

Dear Debbie and Deborah

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

A Warm Christmas Greetings from Kalaymyo, Burma!

Hope this email finds you well and everything goes well with you.

I am grateful to you for your wonderful Christmas gifts for the children which they really appreciate and love for their gifts. Please be kindly informed that as Gloria moved to another place staying with her uncle, she was replaced with Philip (Son of Sai Din Thang and Hnem Boih).

All the blessings and peace.

Robert

and from Swindon Village School

It was agreed that a tenth of the recent unexpected legacy received from the late Sally Reeve should be donated as a “Tithe Gift” to other local charities. One of these was Swindon Village School, who have sent their thanks as below:

Hi Deborah

We hope you are well.

we just wanted to drop you a quick note to let you know that with your very kind donation we have been able to buy each child in school a book. We have wrapped them all and will be gifting them to the children as part of our festive funday tomorrow.

I am sure the children will love their surprise gift so thank you once again for your very generous donation. It really does mean a lot.

Kind Regards

Amy Pearce & Emma Smith,

Chairs, Friends of Swindon Village Primary School

Registered Charity 10596

“CHRISTMAS CRACKER” HOLIDAY CLUB

Friday night was carol singing, gift giving and hot dog and soup eating. Sunday Morning was Scratch Nativity and Carols and communion in the evening. Monday morning at 10 am, 24 children bounded through the doors ready for a Christmas Cracker session. As one non-church parent said to me – they absolutely love coming here! We tried our best to match their enthusiasm!

We did a much-shortened version of the scratch nativity, and then the children made crafts to remind them of the story. The crafts were: table



Nativity Decorations

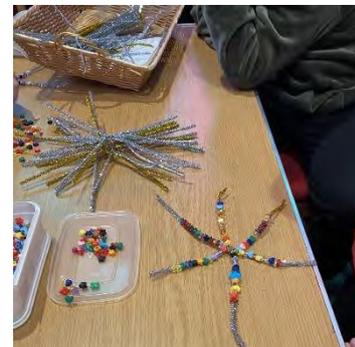
decorations in Christmassy mugs and containers, decorating ceramic angels with a tea light to shine through, a star nativity to colour, stars using pipe cleaners and beads. Snow globes which were very popular, and then decorate a Christmas tree cake.



Ceramic Angels



Decorated Christmas Tree



Pipe Cleaner Stars

A roll the potato onto a plate was a popular game with the winner managing to roll her potato onto the plate. We then had some group activities which lasted until the pizzas arrive which meant it was lunchtime! Following lunch we held a short Christingle service and then sent 24 very happy children home.

Our next holiday club will be the Easter Extravaganza which will be on Monday 30th. March at 10am. Please let me / Sharon know if you are able to help at this event.

Val



1st Cheltenham Company THE BOYS' BRIGADE & THE GIRLS' ASSOCIATION



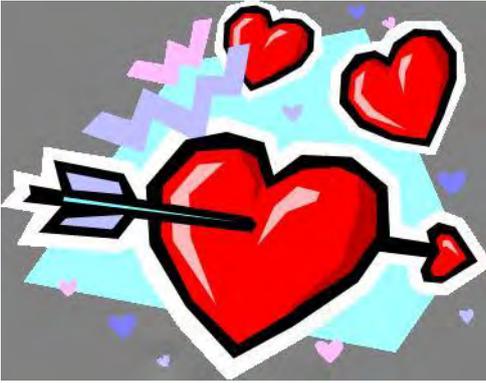
This year, the last Friday meeting before Christmas took the form of a “Chocolate Bingo” evening. This was well supported by members, parents, and friends. As well as being a good opportunity to socialise together the event raised a very useful sum of around £300 for our funds. Our thanks to Keeley for organising the event, and to all who supported it.



The New Year began with our annual visit to the pantomime at the Everyman Theatre, which this year was “Robin Hood”. Twenty of our members attended, together with Leaders, the largest number for several years, and all enjoyed the show.

The following Saturday, 17th January, members of the Junior and Company Sections joined with around 100 others from the Battalion to take over the Stroud Bowl for the afternoon for the 10-pin bowling competition. All who took part enjoyed the afternoon. Special congratulations to Lila-Rose, who won the individual competition for the Junior Section, and to all members of our Junior team, who were placed second in the team competition for their age group.

Tony Dymoc



Valentine's Day mystery

There are two confusing things about this day of romance and anonymous love-cards strewn with lace, cupids and ribbon: firstly, there seems to have been two different Valentines in the 4th century - one a priest martyred on the Flaminian Way, under the emperor Claudius, the other a bishop of Terni martyred at Rome. And neither seems to have had any clear connection with lovers or courting couples.

So why has Valentine become the patron saint of romantic love? By Chaucer's time the link was assumed to be because on these saints' day - 14th February - the birds are supposed to pair. Or perhaps the custom of seeking a partner on St Valentine's Day is a surviving scrap of the old Roman Lupercalia festival, which took place in the middle of February. One of the Roman gods honoured during this Festival was Pan, the god of nature. Another was Juno, the goddess of women and marriage. During the Lupercalia it was a popular custom for young men to draw the name of a young unmarried woman from a name-box. The two would then be partners or 'sweethearts' during the time of the celebrations. Even modern Valentine decorations bear an ancient symbol of love - Roman cupids with their bows and love-arrows.

There are no churches in England dedicated to Valentine, but since 1835 his relics have been claimed by the Carmelite church in Dublin.

The very first Valentine card, a legend

The Roman Emperor Claudius II needed soldiers. He suspected that marriage made men want to stay at home with their wives, instead of fighting wars, so he outlawed marriage.

A kind-hearted young priest named Valentine felt sorry for all the couples who wanted to marry, but who couldn't. So secretly he married as many couples as he could - until the Emperor found out and condemned him to death. While he was in prison awaiting execution, Valentine showed love and compassion to everyone around him, including his jailer. The jailer had a young daughter who was blind, but through Valentine's prayers, she was healed. Just before his death in Rome on 14th February, he wrote her a farewell message signed 'From your Valentine.'

So, the very first Valentine card was not between lovers, but between a priest about to die, and a little girl, healed through his prayers.

Winnie the Pooh and Lent 2026

Remember the Winnie the Pooh stories? And Kanga's insistence on Baby Roo's taking his Strengthening Medicine? It's 'really quite a nice taste when you get used to it', she explained, although I'm not convinced Baby Roo always agreed.



It can be helpful to think of Lent as a sort of medicine; an opportunity to strengthen us in the things that are good, rein in other facets of our personality, and reset the compass to the true North of following Jesus. A Spring-clean of the soul, if you like.

Baby Roo (and Piglet on the one occasion he was subject to it) found Strengthening Medicine not to their liking, and we may groan inwardly at the thought of 'giving up something for Lent'. Think of what lies behind this 'giving up'. It's so that we may be strengthened, our character refined, our prejudices examined, our junk thrown overboard, and we may come to Passiontide and Easter more fit to walk the way of the Cross, and rise in new life with Jesus at His Resurrection.

Nor is Lent just a case of giving up chocolate. One year I gave up Facebook for Lent, having spent far too much time scrolling through it each day. It freed me to do other, more constructive things. And instead of giving up, why not take up something you've been meaning to do but never got round to; something life-affirming, something good for God.

Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, which this year falls on 18th February. Many Christians go public with their intention to keep a good Lent by being 'ashed' - the sign of the Cross made on the forehead in a mixture of ash and holy oil at a special service that day. The ash is usually the burnt remains of the palm crosses from last year. Having been ashed, the intention of the 40 days of Lent is to maintain a steady course closer to God, symbolised by the giving up of something - like chocolate - which has a hold on us. We walk with Jesus on the way to the Cross, mindful of the 'riches of God's kindness, forbearance and patience' as St Paul has it, and mindful too of Jesus' choice of the Cross as a way for us to enter those riches more fully.

And to face the immensity of that sacrifice, and the immensity of God's riches made available to us in Jesus, we need all the Strengthening Medicine we can get!

The Big Bash!



JESUS OFTEN TOLD STORIES WITH HIDDEN MEANINGS

ONE STORY WAS ABOUT A RICH MAN WHO DECIDED TO HAVE A PARTY

HE SENT OUT LOTS OF INVITATIONS

OH! NO!!

BUT PEOPLE STARTED MAKING EXCUSES

ONE MAN SAID HE HAD BOUGHT A FIELD, BUT NEEDED TO MEASURE IT

ANOTHER MAN SAID HE NEEDED TO TEST DRIVE THE OXEN HE HAS JUST PAID FOR

ANOTHER MAN SAID HE HAD JUST GOT MARRIED - AND HIS WIFE WOULDN'T LET HIM OUT!

SO THE RICH MAN INVITED ALL THE POOR AND NEEDY INSTEAD.

THE PARABLE MEANS WE SHOULDN'T MAKE EXCUSES FOR NOT FOLLOWING JESUS.

WORDSEARCH: CANDLEMAS

Candlemas, 2nd February, comes exactly 40 days after Christmas. In New Testament times 40 days old was an important age for a baby boy: it was when they made their first 'public appearance'. Mary, like all good Jewish mothers, went to the Temple with Jesus, her first male child - to 'present Him to the Lord'. Thus, we have the Festival of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple (Luke 2: 22-40). So where does the Candlemas bit come in? Jesus is described in the New Testament as the Light of the World, and early Christians developed the tradition of lighting many candles in celebration of this day.

Words to find: *Candlemas, Forty, Days, After, Christmas, New, Testament, Important, Age, Baby, Boy, First, Public, Appearance, Mary, Jewish, Temple, Festival, Presentation, Described, Light, World, Candles, Lighting, Early*



