



The world seems to be spinning ever faster. Global events, or our own circumstances might trouble us at times. And yet Jesus invites us to follow Him, carrying a load that feels light. He offers us life in all its fullness, but our experiences can often cause us to feel like we are withering rather than flourishing.

Across the centuries wise people of faith have discovered that the best way, perhaps the only way, to truly flourish is to seek a deeper, more intimate relationship with God. Our souls thrive when they are rooted in the love of God, and when all we are and all we do flows from this place.

Throughout 2025 at St Mary's we will be encouraging one another to go deeper with God as we form new habits in prayer, engagement with the Bible and in our compassion for others.

The aim is not to pile lots of extra things onto ourselves, but rather to create space to find God within our hearts and to allow ourselves to be shaped in new ways by His love.

There are some initiatives already being planned, but others will emerge as we are attentive to the leading of the Holy Spirit together.

Read on to find out more!

Key dates for your diary

Lots has already been planned but there will be other events and activities shared as the year gets underway.

Sunday morning services

*Usually 9am and 10.30am **except on:***

16 March – 10am Morning Prayer, 4pm Confirmation Service

18 May – 10am Communion followed by APCM

3, 10, 17, 24, 31 August – 10am All Age Communion

9 November – 10am Remembrance, 5pm Remembering loved ones service

21 December – 10am Communion, 6pm Carol Service

Church Weekend at Home

15-16 March (read more on page 5)

Church Family Shared Lunches, 12.15pm

19 January

8 June

28 September

7 December

Lent and Easter

5 March 7.30pm – Ash Wednesday Service at St Mary's

12, 19, 26 March, 2 and 9 April, 7.15-9pm – ASMA Lent course

13-20 April – Holy Week and Easter services

Contemporary Evening Prayer

A new initiative we are trialling. All 7-8pm.

19 January

16 February

30 March

13 April

11 May

24/7 Prayer Week

1-8 June

Explore@4, Sundays 4pm fortnightly during term time

All welcome at this service which encourages intergenerational conversations about faith.

12, 26 January

9, 23 February

9, 23 March

6 April

4 May

1, 15, 29 June

13 July

7, 21 September

5, 19 October

2, 16, 30 November



Jema writes

My prayer is that this year we will:

- ◆ Personally encounter God in new ways.
- ◆ Learn from one another as we testify to God at work in our lives.
- ◆ Grow in our love for those not yet part of our church family.

Going Deeper with God

Throughout the year

We will take opportunities at our Sunday services to hear from one another about the spiritual practices which already help us go deeper with God.



If you have something you would be willing to share, either in person on a Sunday, or as a short video clip, please speak to Jema.

Many within the church family have wisdom to share informally with those who are younger in the faith. It would be great to pair people up, who could meet several times during the year for accountability and encouragement.

If you could offer to be a spiritual guide, or would like to be paired up with a guide, please speak to Jema.



Have you read a book, watched a video or used an app that has helped you go deeper with God?



If you would like to share a review of a resource that you have enjoyed, please contact Jema.

Going Deeper Creatively

29 March, 28 June, 1 November: 10am-12pm

'Creativity is not something we do it's an expression of who we are', writes author Fiona Horrobin. Everyone is invited (16+yrs) to these sessions where we will seek God and explore what it looks like to flourish in Him through the media of various creative arts and crafts. Creative activity can help bring us to new horizons in our discipleship, there will be no right or wrong, just a freedom to explore, respond, or simply observe. Chat with Erica Bebb for more information.

Going Deeper with God

Season 1: January to April

This first season of the year will include opportunities to explore the Christian faith and make a public commitment to follow Jesus. It will also feature our Church Weekend@Home!

Alpha Course



Starting on 21 January there will be a 10 week Alpha Course, run jointly with, and held at, St Edyth's Sea Mills. All welcome on Tuesday evenings to explore the Christian faith and to ask questions in a safe, supportive environment.

If you would like to take part, contact the church office to book your place. If you have a friend who would like to do it, you can come along with them if you want to.



On Sunday 16 March at 4pm Bishop Neil Warwick will be coming to St Mary's for a Confirmation Service. If you would like to be confirmed and/or baptised, making a public declaration of your intention to follow Jesus, we would love to celebrate with you at this service.



If you are interested in baptism or confirmation, please talk to Jema as soon as possible so that we can support you as you prepare for this.

Also at the Confirmation Service there will be an opportunity for children to be Admitted to Receive Communion before Confirmation. This is open to any child, ideally 4 yrs + who has never been formally welcomed to the Lord's Table. There would be some informal preparation and children who have taken part will receive a certificate at the Confirmation service.

If your child is interested in being prepared to receive Communion, please talk to Jema as soon as possible.



Join a new Home Group

Small groups can be a great way to be intentional in our discipleship. They provide a supportive environment within which to explore the Bible, pray for and serve one another. **A new Home Group is starting on**

Tuesday evenings, fortnightly, from 8pm. This will be led by Ash Chambers and she would love to chat with anyone who is interested at an initial gathering at her house on Tuesday 14 January.

Ash writes: *I'm married to Richard, we have three children aged 22, 14 and 6. We joined St Mary's last summer, and I am discerning a sense of vocation within the Church of England. I have enjoyed getting to know some of our young people at Bulb on Sunday evenings and have recently joined the prayer ministry team. I've been running a Home Group in my previous church and would love to start a new group here. I hope it might appeal to those at a similar stage of life to me, but it's open to anyone. Do chat with me if you are interested.*



Please talk to Ash directly, or let the church office know if you are interested and your details will be passed to her.

Church Weekend@Home! 15 March 2025



Join in with various activities on Saturday 15 March based around the theme of Going Deeper with God. The morning session will be at St Edyth's Sea Mills and will include a talk from a guest speaker, activities for our younger members and a shared act of worship together, finishing with a buffet lunch.

There will be optional activities in the afternoon and a family-friendly social at St Mary's in the evening. More information coming soon!


Monthly Tasters, an exploration of Spiritual Practices to help you develop a Rhythm of Life, offered by Bristol Diocese

The phrase Rhythm of Life is used by Christians to describe a systematic way of helping you, as an individual, deepen your relationship with God with every year that passes. It is about enabling your experience of God, rather than being busy doing things for Him.



Starting in January a team from the diocese will be offering Monthly Tasters, providing resources that give participants a taste of a type of spiritual practice. The invitation is to try it and see if

you like it. Then you can decide how to develop a Rhythm of Life for yourself, based on the tasters you have enjoyed. Support and accountability will be offered through optional one hour sessions using Zoom where you can discuss your thoughts and feelings with others in small groups and ask questions of experienced practitioners.

 **TAKE ACTION** Pick up a leaflet from church and visit the **Bristol Diocese website** to register your interest (or talk to Jema if you need help with this).

Lent Course 2025

Live from Rest: Going deeper into the life-giving refreshment of God.



Join the ASMA (Avonside Mission Area) family to worship, reflect and spend time in God's presence. Topics will include Sabbath, Solitude, Simplicity and Christian meditation.

7pm refreshments for 7.30pm start, ending by 9pm.

5th March - Ash Wednesday service, St Mary's Stoke Bishop.
12th March – St Edyth's, Sea Mills
19th March – St Peter's, Lawrence Weston
26th March – St Mary's Shirehampton
2nd April – St Andrew's, Avonmouth
9th April – St Mary's, Stoke Bishop.



Jesus said: Come to me...and I will give you rest...Learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. Matthew 11:28-29

AVONSIDE MISSION AREA

Avonmouth · Lawrence Weston · Sea Mills · Shirehampton · Stoke Bishop

Going Deeper with God


Season 2: April to August

As the year continues, here's a taster of some other things that will be on offer.

24/7 Week of Prayer 1-8 June 2025

Our Week of Prayer will coincide with the global *Thy Kingdom Come* wave of prayer which takes place in the week leading up to Pentecost.



 **TAKE ACTION** If you are interested in being part of the planning team, please talk to Jema.

Month of Guided Prayer during June

An opportunity to go deeper in prayer with the support of a Prayer Guide who will meet with participants weekly (for around 45 mins) for four weeks. The guides support participants and hold them accountable to the prayerful practices that they try out over the course of the month. It's a flexible, supportive approach for those who would value some guidance in trying out new ways of praying.

Gold Project

If you are feeling nudged to go deeper with God into His Word, you might like to take part in a Gold Project group which will be on offer during the summer term. The Gold Project offers group based open-learning for Christians, you can read more here www.goldproject.org The director of the charity is theologian Dr David Ball, who is based within the Avonside Mission Area.



Going Deeper with God

Season 3: September to December

Scripture, Theology and Culture course

An opportunity to encounter Jesus, examine the Bible and explore theology with the Mullers Charity, based in Bristol. Each September a new course cohort begins, with a daytime version (Tuesdays) in person over one year, or a digital version (accessing videos in your own time, approx. 2hrs per week) over two years. The courses are completely free and run by friendly theologians! Find out more at www.mullers.org/training



Am I called?

Every Autumn the diocese run a short course where people can explore whether God is calling them into a particular role within the church. It might be that over the year God is calling people from St Mary's to serve in new ways and this course could be a good place to begin.

5-4-3-2-1 Prayer Triplet

These are essentially mini versions of small groups, with the same aims of friendship, accountability, growing in faith and prayer.

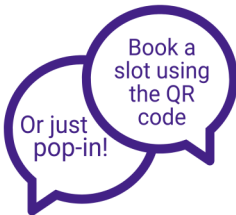
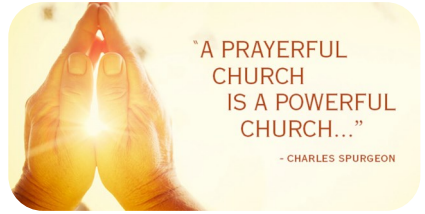


If you are looking to join a small group or a 5-4-3-2-1 triplet, please talk to our Associate Vicar, Simon.

Prayer

As a church family we can come alongside you in prayer in various ways:

- There are people available to pray for individuals at each of our services on Sunday, during the distribution of Communion and after the service, and sometimes at other points too.
- If you write a prayer on the paper provided in church and attach to the string across the organ pipes, your prayer will be included in the Saturday prayers.
- Email your prayer request to prayer@stmarysb.org.uk
- Contact one of the clergy directly.
- Visit the ASMA Prayer Hub on Wednesday mornings.
- Use the QR code, if you would like to book an appointment to pray with someone in person.



Prayer Hub

Wednesdays 10.15-11.45

Would you like prayer for inner peace, guidance, healing, or simply to meet with God?

St Mary's Shirehampton - Lady Chapel

For more information: 0117 9687449 or hubprayer@stmarysb.org.uk

