

February 2026

FOCUS

Issue 300



Parish Magazine of St Stephen's, Hightown

The
300th
Edition

Editor's Note



This month, we are proudly celebrating our 300th issue of Focus. Even for a commercially produced magazine, a 300th issue circulating for more than 30 years would be a considerable feat! But considering that Focus is a small parish magazine, produced by volunteers, makes it even more

amazing.

On 1st June 1995, the 'St Stephen's Parish Magazine', founded in 1989, was reborn as Focus. The original parish magazine had been made possible through the hard work of Martin and Julie Butcher, Barry and Val Monchar, Tony and Elizabeth Richardson and Ann and David Brisbown-Lee. Pauline Goodchild took over the editorship of the new Focus magazine from June 1995, and alongside Beth Cresswell and Elizabeth Richardson, produced a monthly issue, in spite of no technology. A massive effort, when they would meet and sort out all the pieces of paper, type them up, assemble them in order and take them to the printer's. As Pauline had sometimes to work away from home, this was not always easy. Pauline was at the helm for 25 years!

I took over the editorship of the Focus from the start of 2020 with the help of Microsoft Publisher and Martin Butcher. The COVID pandemic did slightly throw things off track, but the magazine continued to be produced on the church website during those times. The readership of Focus increased, online, during the first lockdown. My dog, Mack, wrote an article for every issue during the year 2020 to 2021, (hidden talents), and when we were finally allowed to be outside with family or friends, he would be recognised and fussed over, by children and their parents, on the beach. He loved it!

On page 6 you can find some interesting facts about 1995.

Enjoy the nostalgia!

Entries for future issues of Focus to be sent to

Focus.Mag.2023@StStephensHightown.org.uk

Please submit before last day of month

Dear Friends,

I hope you all had a really good Christmas and New Year. We were delighted to welcome so many new faces to our services and events over the season, it was lovely to see you, and there is always a welcome for you here.

This month on Sunday 1st, we celebrate the 'Presentation of Christ in the Temple', or Candlemas. Our Christmas trees, cribs and decorations will then be put away for another year, well not quite, but you know what I mean! And before you know it, we are looking towards Ash Wednesday and the start of Lent!



Lent invites us to pause, to take stock of our lives, our hearts, and our priorities, and to make space for God's gentle voice amid the noise of daily life.

For some, this season is marked by giving something, or several things up — a small sacrifice to remind us of Christ's great sacrifice for us.

For others, it's about taking something on — a new habit of prayer, a daily act of kindness, or taking time out each day to read and reflect on Scripture. However we choose to journey through these forty days, the aim is the same: to draw closer to the One who walked the road to the cross out of total love for us.

This year, let us see Lent as an invitation. An invitation to slow down, to pause, to listen, and to let God shape us more into the likeness of Christ. Whether in the stillness of prayer, or worshipping together, or in the service of others, may we find ourselves renewed in faith and hope as we journey onwards together towards Holy Week and the triumph of Easter Day.

God Bless,
Keith



Wednesday 18th February
St Stephen's Church
10.30am Service with Imposition of Ashes
7pm Service with Imposition of Ashes (Anglican Churches Together of Altcar, Formby and Hightown)

Church Services at St Stephen's

February

Sunday 1 st Candlemas	10:30	All-Age Eucharist
	18:00	Evensong
Wednesday 4 th	10:30	Eucharist
Friday 6 th	09:30	Morning Prayer
Sunday 8 th Second Sunday before Lent	10:30	Eucharist with Healing
	16:00	Toddler Church
	18:00	Evensong
Wednesday 11 th	10:30	Eucharist
	19:00	Sanctuary @ Seven
Friday 13 th	09:30	Morning Prayer
Sunday 15 th Sunday next before Lent	10:30	Eucharist & Sunday School
	18:00	Evensong
Wednesday 18 th	10:30	Eucharist with imposition of ashes
ASH WEDNESDAY	19:00	Anglican Churches together Eucharist with imposition of ashes
Friday 20 th	09:30	Morning Prayer
Sunday 22 nd First Sunday of Lent	10:30	Eucharist
	18:00	BCP Holy Communion
Wednesday 25 th	10:30	Eucharist
Friday 27 th	09:30	Morning Prayer

Prayer Prompts for February

Mother Theresa's Words on Love

Wk 1. Love is sharing, love is giving the best we have. We are carriers of God's love and whoever you are, you can become one also.

Wk 2. People today are hungry for love, which is the only answer to loneliness and great poverty. In some countries there is no hunger for bread. But people are suffering from terrible despair and hatred. They need someone who will understand and respect them.

Wk 3. God is purity Himself, nothing impure can come before Him. God is love and he loves us in spite of our sinfulness.

Wk 4 . All works of love are works of peace. We do not need bombs and guns to bring peace, we need love and compassion. Let us understand that unless we are full of God, we cannot give love and peace to others and we will not have peace in the world.

Let us pray for the people of:

Riverside, Sandhills, Bankside and all those living on local farms.

Please pray for the repose of the souls of:



Robin Smith
Chris Cresswell
Helen Newlove



Eternal rest grant unto them O Lord and let perpetual light shine upon them.
May they rest in peace and rise in glory.

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advertisers who continue to support our parish church.

300 Issues ago in 1995:

Cost of Living Prices

800g white sliced loaf of bread 53p

Pint of milk 36p

Dozen eggs 63p

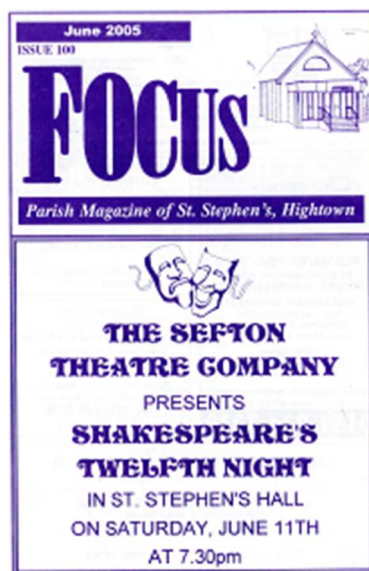
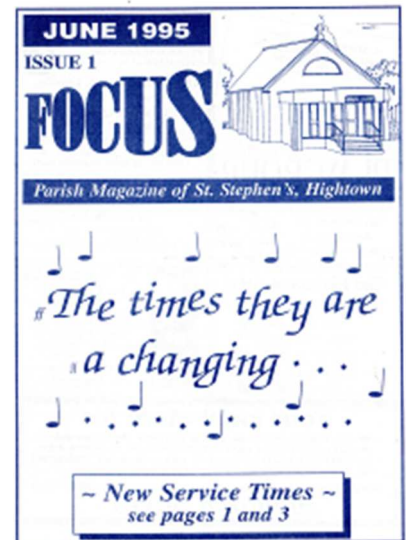
Average house price £53,759

Average annual salary £13,302

Technology

Toy Story - 1st feature length computer animate film.

Windows 95. Microsoft launched the game changing operating system, a technological milestone.



Public Life

John Major was Prime Minister.

Princess Diana gave her famous Panorama interview.

TV

Blockbuster shows like ER and Friends dominated. Father Ted had just appeared on our screens.

Popular Toys

Buzz Lightyear Ultimate Talking Action Figure

(Aw! He had a friend in me!)

Disney's Pocahontas dolls

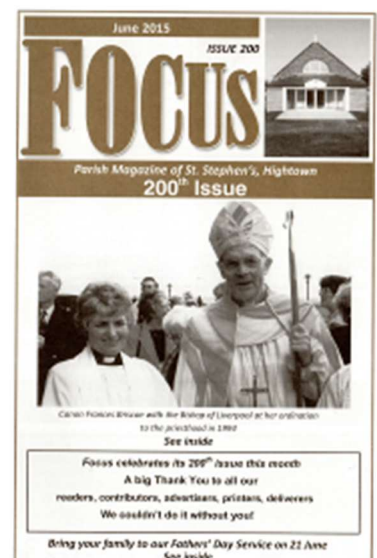
Pop Music

1995 was a massive year for many of music's top female stars: Mariah Carey, Annie Lennox, Alison Moyet and Celine Dionne to mention a few.

Top Baby Names

Girls: Jessica, Ashley, Emily and Samantha

Boys: Michael, Matthew, Christopher and Jacob



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8th Sue Taylor

15th Hilary Munro

22nd Dave Phillips

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Jan Williams



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Who's Who at St Stephen's

Vicar	Revd Keith Thornborough
Associate Priest	Revd John Reed
Warden	Judith Welch Judith.Churchwarden@StStephensHightown.org.uk
Warden	Jane Copeland Jane.Churchwarden@StStephensHightown.org.uk
PCC Secretary	Beryl Howard
PCC Treasurer	Keith Aldis
Gift Aid Secretary	Brian Taylor
Safeguarding	Cath Marshall cathmarshall47@yahoo.co.uk
Electoral Roll	Beth Cresswell
Sacristan Team	Hazel Roberts
Health and Safety	<i>TBA</i>
Flower Rota	Sue Taylor
CMS Secretary	Berenice Gibson
St Stephen's Youth Club	Jane Croxton
Church Hall Bookings	Sally Fraser
Focus Editor	Colette Hudson: Focus.Mag.2023@StStephensHightown.org.uk
Focus Adverts	Colette Hudson Adverts@StStephensHightown.org.uk
Focus Distribution	Mr. and Mrs. K. Bradshaw
St Stephen's Church Website	StStephensHightown.org.uk

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You can also contact me on 07926 587776 to make an appointment.

Caroline Speakman

Member of the Society of Willwriters

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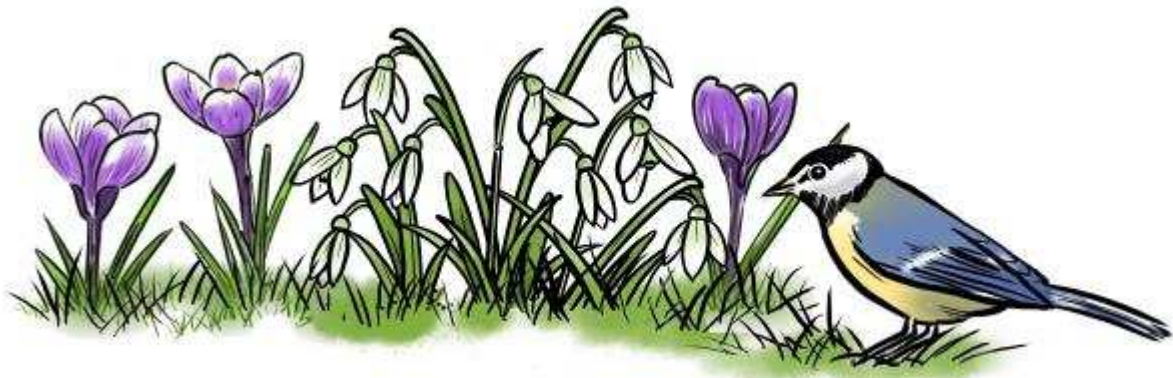
Easy Eco Tips for God's Good Creation

In the Bible, caring for creation is God's first instruction to humans. This Lent, a time when Christians traditionally fast and focus on God, we encourage you to take up our Lent challenge – living more simply and finding new ways to cut your carbon footprint.

FEBRUARY

This Lent, take part in Climate Steward's Carbon Fast. Lent is a time when Christians traditionally fast and focus on God. The Carbon Fast will help you consider ways to live more simply, give you new ideas to cut your carbon footprint and invite you to focus on God and consider the whole of his creation. Beginning on 5 March, you'll receive a weekly email containing key facts, suggestions for how you could reduce your carbon footprint and a prayer to lead you through this Lenten season. Each week features a different theme designed to help us take climate action in manageable ways that bear witness to a God who has promised to restore all of his creation. Find out more and sign up at climatestewards.org/resources/carbon-fast/

For more practical ways to enjoy, nurture and defend nature, sign up to A Rocha UK's Wild Christian email: arocha.org.uk/wild-christian



Smile Lines

A teacher told her class of young children to draw a picture of someone they knew. As they drew, the teacher walked around keeping an eye on their progress. One little girl was working diligently, and the teacher asked who she was drawing. The child replied, "I'm drawing God." The teacher protested that nobody had ever seen God so nobody knew what he looked like. Without looking up, the girl said, "Don't worry, they will in a minute."

Hightown

The Happiest Place to Live? By Colette Hudson

Have you ever wondered why nobody publishes a special newspaper for good news? I recently heard an interview, on Radio 4, with a journalist claiming that the reason was that it wouldn't be news and wouldn't sell. She said that the readership wouldn't pay to hear about the neighbour who went to mow the lawn for the elderly gentleman next door, or the school child who had walked to school, had their lessons, eaten their lunch and returned home safely. Why? Because these are common occurrences and items that make the news are much more rare. Most people are kind and honest, most children are not abused, receive an education and have food to eat, and most people are not beset by earthquakes or tsunamis. So the absence of a good news newspaper is actually a positive and should give us comfort.

However, this being February and Valentine's day on 14th, I have been reminded me of how lucky we are to live in this little known village of

Hightown, with its community of people who clearly show their support and care for each other in practical ways, and I think it's worth sharing this good news of sisterly and brotherly love:

My husband, David, had gone out walking our dog, Mack, on a late winter's afternoon. He had been gone for a couple of hours, the weather was changing for the worse, with squally showers coming in from the west, and the hours of darkness were fast approaching. He didn't have his mobile with him, (no surprises there), and according to the tracker, he had been in the one spot, in the dunes between Hightown and Blundellsands, for 2 hours. I began to get worried. Some of you may know that there is a Hightown Dog Walkers WhatsApp group, primarily for use for when a dog has gone missing. It works most efficiently. Well, as both my dog **and** my husband were missing, I put out an alert on the app. I was overwhelmed and humbled by the response! Within minutes, several brave people, some of whom I knew and others I didn't, had gone out in the most horrible weather conditions to look and call for them, yet others, offered their support online should I have needed it. To cut a long story short, David and Mack returned home safely that evening, neither of them the worse for wear. Many thanks, once again, to all you kind-hearted people.

If you have any good news stories, please send them in to Focus. Hightown might attract the attention of The Happiness Research Institute, Copenhagen, giving Denmark some competition as the happiest place to live!

Date For Your Diary

**World Day of Prayer Service, Friday 6th March 2026 at 2pm,
St Stephen's**

All Welcome

The World Day of Prayer is an international ecumenical Christian laywomen's initiative. It is run under the motto "Informed Prayer and Prayerful Action" and is celebrated annually in over 170 countries on the first Friday in March. The 2026 World Day of Prayer materials from Nigeria bring us a powerful invitation drawn from Matthew 11:28-30. At a time when people worldwide are carrying heavy burdens, our Nigerian sisters offer profound insights into finding rest in God.



Through their exploration of different kinds of burdens - shame, systemic oppression, religious persecution, poverty and despair - the writers help us understand both the weight of human suffering and the depths of divine rest.



Their work shows us that true rest isn't just about physical relief, but about transformation through God's grace and community support.

You'll find this theme beautifully expressed across all program components. The Worship Service features a playlet about a young girl named Chioma and stories of three Nigerian women: Beatrice, Jato, and Blessing.

Their experiences reveal how God provides rest through community support, faith, and hope.

The WDP Nigerian committee has woven together their cultural wisdom with the universal need for rest. Through symbols like the calabash bowl, which represents both daily sustenance and divine provision, they remind us how God meets us in our weariness. As we prepare for WDP 2026, may we learn to embody Jesus' invitation: 'Come to me, all you who are weary.' Together, let us become channels of God's rest in our troubled world.



Hymns for Professionals

Dentists: Crown Him With Many Crowns
Golfers: There Is A Green Hill Far Away
Librarians: Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silent
Contractors: The Church's One Foundation

Village Organisations and Activities

Tuesday Group, St Stephen's Hall Tuesday morning 10.30am	Beryl Howard Jan Branigan
Hightown Friendship Group 1st Wednesday at 8pm St Stephen's Hall	Marjorie Walker
Gardening Club	Hilary Munro
Bowling Club, Sandy Lane	Diana Killen
Hightown Club	Chris Scrine
Blundellsands Sailing Club	Rohan Pickard RohanPickard@gmail.com Deryk Johnson DerykJ@gmail.com
Yoga Classes, Hightown Club	Rose Billinge
Flower Show	Debbie Underhill
Open Mic Poetry Group 3rd Thursday 7.30pm St Stephen's Church hall	Sally Anne tapiabowes@gmail.com Alex
Craft Group, Every Thursdays	Sue Taylor
Hightown Parish Council	Jenny Farrar clerk@hightownparishcouncil.uk www.hightownparishcouncil.uk
Community Library, Alt Centre, Lower Alt Rd. Mon 12-2, Weds 11.30-12.30, Fri 10-12	Linda Munro lindamunro@hotmail.com
Zumba Gold, Dance for all aged 55 plus,	Nicky Garsforth
Creo Dance Company Mon Tues Wed Thurs Sat Children 3 to 18 years	Georgia Cardwell

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

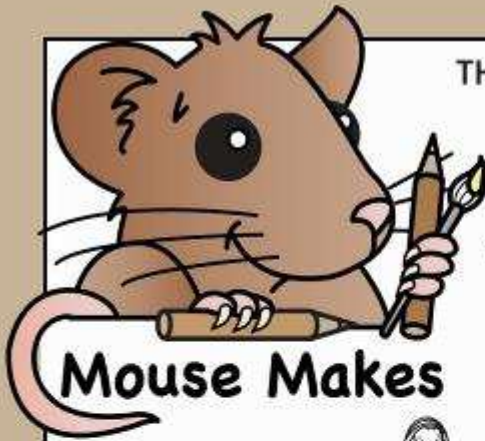
ONE MAN SAID HE HAD BOUGHT A FIELD, BUT NEEDED TO MEASURE IT

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.



Mouse Makes

Read the story in
Luke 4:1-13



THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS

After Jesus was baptised in the River Jordan where did the Holy Spirit lead him to? v1

How many days was Jesus being tempted by the devil? v2

What did Jesus eat? v2

What did the devil tempt Jesus to turn a stone into? v3-4

What did the devil offer Jesus if He worshipped him? v7-8

What did the devil ask Jesus to do? v9



FIRST TEMPTATION

THE DEVIL SAID:

"If you are God's Son order this stone to turn into bread."

JESUS REPLIED:

"Man shall not live on bread alone."

Read Deuteronomy 8:3

WE LEARN:

Read the Bible

Learn God's word.



SECOND TEMPTATION

THE DEVIL SAID:

"I will give you power and wealth if you worship me."

JESUS REPLIED:

"Worship the Lord your God and serve only Him."

Read Deuteronomy 6:13

WE LEARN:

Put God first

Worship only Him.



ROGLORYLO
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LORDNH



FORTYDAYS SON KLORDNH
TDOWNONWORSHIP
TESTWORLDLTUNB
LVTEMPTATIONGR
EIAMJESUSFNGDE
NLKPDSETEROAA
THOLYSPIRITYMD
IMJERUSALEMFSJ
WILDERNESSJUMP

JESUS • BAPTISED • RIVER • JORDAN • HOLY SPIRIT • LED
WILDERNESS • DESERT • FORTY DAYS • HUNGRY • DEVIL
TEMPTATION • STONE • BREAD • WRITTEN • SON • WORLD
KINGDOMS • GLORY • WORSHIP • SERVE • GOD • HIGH

JERUSALEM • TEMPLE • SON • JUMP • DOWN • LIFT • FOOT • LORD • TEST • LENT

THIRD TEMPTATION

THE DEVIL SAID:

"If you are God's Son throw yourself down, the scriptures say God will take care of you."

JESUS REPLIED:

"Do not put the Lord your God to the test."

Read Deuteronomy 6:16

WE LEARN:

God cares, trust

Him do not test Him.





Toddler Time

A new fun group for Toddlers 0-4yr and their carers!

St. Stephen's Church Hall

Fridays 10:00am-11:30am term time

Play- Craft- Snack- Story- Songs- Fun!

ALL WELCOME!

Toddler Church

St Stephen's Church

2nd Sunday of each month 4:00pm

A service for pre-schoolers and their families

Fun songs, a bible story, craft and refreshments

We look forward to meeting you!

Youth Club

From age 7

Friday Evening Term Time

6pm until 7:15pm


£2.50 includes snacks and drinks

Contact: Jane Bessant 07776 305 660

**Please note that there will be no youth club
during school holidays**



ST STEPHEN'S CHURCH SUNDAY SCHOOL



EVERY 3RD SUNDAY @ 10:30AM



Magazine part-sponsored by John Gibson - notary services