

SPOTLIGHT

Offington Park Methodist Church Magazine



May 2024

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Cover Picture - Bosham, West Sussex

The cover picture of Bosham Harbour was taken by a church member from the Christian Youth Enterprises Sailing Centre (CYESC) boat during the church leadership away weekend in January.

Bosham harbour is a picturesque tidal inlet within the Chichester Harbour Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), which speaks volumes about its scenic appeal. Surrounding the harbour is the village of Bosham, which is believed to have been inhabited since Roman times. Its charming cottages, historic church, and maritime atmosphere make it a popular destination for tourists and sailors alike.

Being tidal, the water levels can change dramatically throughout the day as the tide ebbs and flows. At low tide, there are mudflats and at high tide otherwise accessible roads become impassable without a boat. Waterfront pubs and cafes allow visitors to relax and enjoy the tranquil surroundings.

Bosham Harbour has been immortalized in art and literature, with its scenic beauty inspiring many artists and writers over the years. It's a place that captures the essence of coastal England and continues to enchant visitors with its timeless charm.



Dear Friends,

One recent Wednesday morning at 11.15am, I stood in the vestibule at church surrounded by so many buggies, you could barely move. The church was full of families with children having fun playing, snacking and some even sleeping. There was a table of adults having a chat over a cup of coffee and others planning bible study or church services. A real community hub. It was the most wonderful sight.



These are the excited people, mostly visitors to our church who can't wait to go and experience the Lighthouse soft play. This is repeated four days a week. Ask yourself, 'how many churches in our Circuit or even District can say that their buildings are so well used all week?' I have had so many conversations starting with, 'this is exactly what this community needs', and 'this church will be a real community hub,' and simply, 'WOW,' when they see the newly refurbished hall for the first time.

So, thank you to all those who believed that this could and should become a reality - and prayed, helped with finances, encouragement, planning, sourcing equipment, looked for grants, sat at many, many, meetings (which aren't over yet), had sleepless nights, painted, cleaned, and now signed up to help. The list is endless.

So many times we have been struggling, and something or someone has come just at the right time with the very thing we needed. You can call that coincidence if you like, but I prefer to call it a God-incidence. We have been assured that this is a God Given, God Blessed and God Centred project all the way along.

Thank you too to those who challenged and tested at the beginning. We are a church where everyone has a voice and they were all heard, listened to and where possible acted upon. Compromise has and may still have to happen, but this is part of a growing, progressive and evolving community of the people called Methodists who believe in social holiness, justice for all and a merciful, faithful and loving God.

If anyone thinks the hard work is now over, they are greatly mistaken.

Continued on next page

Now different work can begin, but I will save that for next time.

I look forward to celebrating with you all on **Sunday 2 June** as we gather to give thanks to God for the fruits of our labours.

I know some who will not be able to attend, and others who would have dearly wanted to be at this service but who will be with us in Spirit.

With my love and prayers as always ,

Dawn

A JOURNEY THROUGH THE BIBLE

Ezekiel



Can we mess up so much for so long that God will just give up and walk away? That's how it looks in the book of Ezekiel.

Ezekiel sits on the edge of a river in a refugee camp in Babylon. God's people have been captured. It's over. Defeated. Hopeless.

Suddenly, God's glory flashes before Ezekiel! And God gives him a job. He must explain to the exiled people that God's judgement has come. They've gone too far. They crossed the line with their rebellion, selfishness and idolatry. Babylon will keep attacking Jerusalem until it is completely destroyed and all God's people are refugees.

Yet God isn't finished with Israel. The vision of God's glory shows Ezekiel that God's presence is no longer in the temple in Jerusalem; he has come into exile with them!

Ezekiel isn't just a book of judgement; it's also a book of hope. God won't leave us, even when the consequences of our actions feel like more than we can handle. God never walks away! Do you want to know God's long-term plan to bring people back to Himself for good? Simple - he explains it all to Ezekiel!

A CLOSER LOOK AT...MARY *the mother of Jesus*



What sort of woman does God use to bring Jesus into the world?

"I am the Lord's servant" was Mary's response to the incredible news that she - a virgin - would give birth to the Messiah.

This was the highest honour ever afforded to a human being, but consider what it meant for Mary.

It meant losing her reputation. Who would believe her story? She would be thought of as immoral and dishonest by just about everyone she knew.

It meant losing control. Although she could not know it at the time, it involved a long journey to Bethlehem, giving birth in a stable and fleeing to Egypt in fear of her child's life. This was surely not the life Mary imagined for herself. It wasn't comfortable or easy.

It meant confusion and pain. Jesus' ministry was completely different from Mary's expectations. Imagine her distress as she watched his tortuous death, unable to understand or rescue him from those horrors. As was predicted soon after Jesus was born, 'a sword pierced her own soul'.

What an honour! But what a cost. In a way, we can all bring Jesus into our world by living as the Lord's servants, just as Mary did. But, like Mary, it may not be what we expected, and it will come at a cost.

Follow the familiar story by reading the Gospels

We invite any man, grumpy or not,
to join us on 14 May at 10:00am
when we will discuss:



Customer Service

**Is it getting worse or is it just me?
Are we just getting older and grumpier?**

We will be meeting in the Quiet Room.
Refreshments will be available from Zach's café.



MANY 'HANS' MAKE LIGHT WORK!

David B is no longer Property Coordinator and Hans L has taken over this role. He is looking for volunteers to help prepare the Mary Humphrey Hall as a soft play party room, beginning

Saturday 4 May from 10:00am

All trades (and none) are needed, so please do come and help us. If you don't do DIY, you can still make coffee and serve bacon butties! **If you can help, or for more details, speak to the Welcome Desk or Hans.** This is vital preparation to enable our continuing, growing ministry and witness for Christ, in addition to offering a great experience for soft play users, so please help where you can.

BIBLE HEROES

Elijah

***Israel was in trouble.** Three years of drought had brought the nation to its knees; but wicked king Ahab was leading the people to worship the false god Baal. How could Elijah help them see the truth about the living God?*

Cue a showdown on the mountaintop: Elijah the prophet of the God of Israel vs the prophets of Baal. Elijah laid down the challenge: "We'll each call to our god, and then let the true God answer with fire!"

There on the mountaintop, surrounded by enemies, stood Elijah. For hours, the prophets of Baal had danced, prayed and shouted to their god. But there was no answer. Elijah stepped forward in confident faith and cried out, "Answer me, Lord, answer me, so these people will know that you, Lord, are God."

Instantly, fire burst forth upon the altar.

We too live in a culture that has turned away from God. How can we help those around us see the truth? It might not be a dramatic, fiery spectacle like Elijah's but God is still revealing himself in response to our prayers.

*Why not stand with Elijah on the mountaintop altar and see that **faith expects God to display his power?***



OFFINGTON CAMEO

in the Allan Fletcher Hall

CAMEO



Friday May 10:

Walking the South Downs
(from the comfort of your chair!)

With Margaret Hallard

This is an OPEN MEETING and anyone is welcome to attend. There will be some history, a bit of natural history and a visit to some important places along the way. We look forward to welcoming friends old and new!

Friday May 24:

"A day to remember"
(Members Meeting)



You are very welcome to join us for coffee at 10:15am and a prompt start at 10:30am

Margaret H

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

There's something that I really hate: that's cabbage piled up on my plate.
So give me broccoli, carrots, peas - but not the cabbage, I beg you, please!

Another thing I dislike too, is onions lurking in my stew.
They disguise everything with their taste, so leave them out
or it goes to waste!



And as for everyone's favourite dish,
I'll have the chips - you can keep the fish.
Serve me sausages, scampi or pies, but I don't want fish to go with my fries.

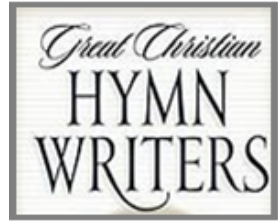


When it comes to bread, I like it toasted.
And potatoes, well, I like them roasted.
I don't like eggs, but I do like cheese.
Am I really all that hard to please?

JEK

SAMUEL MEDLEY

**I know that my redeemer lives;
What joy the blest assurance gives!
He lives, he lives, who once was dead;
He lives, my everlasting head.**



Samuel Medley was born on June 23, 1738, in Cheshunt, Herts. He was the second son of Guy Medley who ran a school in Cheshunt. His mother was the youngest daughter of William Tonge, a renowned schoolmaster at Enfield, and Tonge was responsible for much of the young Samuel's education.

At the age of 14, Samuel was apprenticed to an oilman in the city of London. In 1755, however, his life took a very different turn when he joined the Royal Navy. Here, he initially trained as a doctor and served as a surgeon's mate, but a serious leg injury during the Battle of Lagos in 1759 led him to retire from the Navy and pursue a career as a Baptist minister.

In 1762, Medley married Mary, the daughter of Nottingham hosier William Gill and from 1762 to 1766, he kept a successful school in King Street, Soho, London. Here, he became acquainted with the Baptist minister Andrew Gifford. Medley joined Gifford's Particular Baptist church in Eagle Street, Holborn, in December 1760, and Gifford encouraged him to enter the Baptist ministry.

He began preaching on 29 August 1766, and on 6 June 1767 he accepted a call to lead a congregation at Watford, Hertfordshire, which had been without a minister since 1763. He was ordained at Watford in July 1768 and just over three years later in April 1772 he began a ministry at the Baptist church in Byrom Street, Liverpool. He became known for his work amongst the seamen of the port of Liverpool and stayed at Byrom Street until his death in 1799.

Despite his physical disability, Medley became an influential preacher



and prolific hymn writer. Many of his hymns are characterised by their fervent devotion and strong scriptural basis.

Medley's Liverpool meeting-house was enlarged in 1773, and in 1789 a new building was erected for him in the same street. His old meeting-house was consecrated in 1792 as St. Stephen's Church.

Medley's methods of preaching were not universally liked, but his daughter collected up some of his witticisms. Adult baptism was not an essential for membership in his church, which became practically Congregational, and Congregationalist Robert Halley ranked him as a great preacher, but a 'small poet'.

Medley wrote around 230 hymns during his lifetime, one of which is the hymn "O Could I Speak the Matchless Worth." This hymn, which he wrote in 1775 while at Byrom Street, Liverpool, is much better known as "**I Know That My Redeemer Lives.**" It is still sung today in churches across the world and is esteemed for its deep theological reflection and heartfelt expression of faith.

Some of his other well-known hymns include "Awake, My Soul, in Joyful Lays" and "O Jesus, Let Me Praise and Sing."

Medley regularly visited London, and at least once a year he preached at the Surrey Chapel, Southwark and at Whitefield's Tabernacle, Tottenham Court Road.

Samuel Medley's hymns continue to be cherished for their rich theology and profound expressions of Christian faith, ensuring his legacy as a significant figure in English ministry and hymn-writing. His words continue to resonate through the hymns he composed.

Samuel Medley died on 17 July 1799 after a painful illness.

THE LIGHTHOUSE @ OFFINGTON PARK

the lighthouse
@ Offington Park



As you can see from the photos below and on the page opposite, our wonderful new soft play frames are installed and ready to be used. They have been inspected to ensure that they conform to British Standard EN1176 for indoor playgrounds and there are a few minor fixes required, which the installer, SPI Global Play, will be returning to attend to shortly. We are so excited!!



With the physical aspects now complete (with some exceptions, of which more later) our focus is entirely on the operational aspects of the café (seating, tableware, soft furnishings) and to the systems, processes, media promotion and associated equipment to launch The Lighthouse on 1 June. There is still a great deal of work to do, and our Community Worker Tess is really busy talking to suppliers and service providers. She's not too busy to stop for a chat, though, so if you see her do say hello! We are looking forward to making the community café a welcoming, comfortable physical space where children can run and slide and adults can relax over food and a drink.

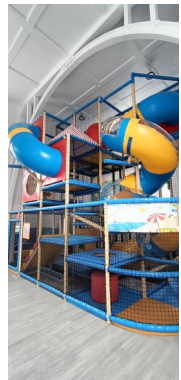


As Spotlight went to press, we are awaiting a survey by UK Power Networks which will inform us of what needs to happen to move our current three-phase electrical installation from the Mary Humphrey Hall to the main kitchen. Once this has been done, we can modernize the kitchen to a high standard and futureproof it. We may still need to schedule the kitchen work in stages, although we are hoping that if we can get the electrical move done within a few months we may be able to complete the refit in one go before the winter begins.

That said, we still plan to offer from launch a welcoming café service, a clean, clutter-free café area and a decent food and drink menu.

During May, we will be working hard on promoting The Lighthouse and developing our new website www.lighthousesoftplay.com (not yet live) . We are already taking party bookings and have three parties booked on the first Saturday after launch.

Finally, we are collating and analyzing the quotes we've had for the new toilets in the main hall and we are more than hopeful that we can get these installed by the launch date. We would value your prayers as we complete this work, which is vital in bringing a more secure and safe area as well as providing everything in one place.



We continue to be amazed by the way God has blessed this project from the initial visions through the grant application processes to now seeing the reality. We still need money to complete vital works, so please do pray that funding will be there when it is needed. We also ask for your prayers for the launch and for the continued growth in mission opportunities.

BE A LIGHT at THE LIGHTHOUSE

On 1 June, we are opening our soft play and café:
The Lighthouse@Offington Park.

the lighthouse
@ Offington Park



SOFT PLAY AND CAFE

The Lighthouse is intended to put the church squarely at the heart of the Broadwater community by offering a much-needed play area for children up to age 10. It is also intended to encourage faith exploration as well as providing a steady stream of income to fund the church and our future mission.

BUT, much more than that, it is an opportunity for us to work together **as a church**, have fun together **as a church** and witness to the people of Broadwater **as a church**.

We have a small team of willing helpers that have already signed up, and to them we send a great big ‘thank you!’ But Offington is a large church and we really shouldn’t be scratching around to find willing hands to staff such a wonderful, *God-given* witnessing opportunity.

We’re seeing many new people coming to our church almost every day, but if we’re not there to welcome and talk to them when they do come, we’re hardly encouraging them to come back again. We sometimes struggle to find helpers at Zach’s café which welcomes around 40 adults and children every opening day. This is crazy. Please take some time to think about **why we struggle** and **what you can do about it**.

Soft play isn’t everyone’s cup of tea – we know that - and some of us may have other commitments, but we have a responsibility – duty, even – to witness that Christ’s church is alive and his love is for everyone.

The Lighthouse and Zach’s café are our chance to show the local community that we are a thriving, vibrant, family-friendly and welcoming place, yet we don’t support it and even seem reluctant to support it. **Now, here’s the thing:** every New Year, at our covenant service, we acknowledge that Christ has many services to be done: some are easy, others are difficult, some are suitable to our natural inclinations and interests and others are contrary to both. We pray that Christ will use us as He sees fit and own that the power to do all these things is given to us through Christ, who strengthens us.

This couldn't be any clearer, could it? This isn't about us and what we like or don't like – it's about us living out the covenant prayer.

This involves all of us together witnessing to the community and drawing them closer to God. Age is no barrier – you may be a 'senior member' but you can still offer a friendly smile, a welcome chat, or encouragement to the Lighthouse and Zach's teams. We need people who will sit and talk with someone or serve in the café cutting up cake or pouring coffees. There's lots of small ways we can all get involved.

The Lighthouse team, and the community, need the prayerful and practical support of us all - **as a church**. So, please, please do think about where you can help and get behind the church to support these mission-focused initiatives. We are God's hand and feet in this place. Lets all be conspicuous by our presence, not by our absence!

Thank you.

Zach's Café and The Lighthouse Teams

A PRAYER FOR THE LIGHTHOUSE

Gracious and loving God,

We thank you for the joy and laughter that will fill this soft play facility. We thank you for the bustling energy of children as they climb, slide, and imagine, and the bonds of friendship that will soon be formed in this space between children and adults alike.

Bless this place with safety and security, that every child who visits may be able to explore and grow without fear. May the soft mats and colourful structures be a haven of fun and learning.

Grant wisdom to the staff and volunteers, and to the parents and carers, that they may exercise patience and kindness, fostering an environment of inclusivity and respect.

Bless the families who will gather here, that they may find moments of connection and delight amidst the busyness of life. Help us remember the precious gift of childhood and the importance of play in nurturing young spirits. In your name, we pray for continued joy, laughter, and growth within these walls. Amen.

CHURCH FAMILY NEWS



SIGNIFICANT BIRTHDAY

Pauline D

OFFERTORIES

Month	Cash & Envelopes	Standing Orders
March	£419.00	£6,055

THE CUCKOO

The cuckoo is a fascinating bird known for its unique behaviour and distinctive call. They are medium-sized birds with slender bodies, long tails, and pointed wings. Their plumage blends into their surroundings with shades of grey, brown, and white. They are found on every continent except Antarctica, in woodlands, forests, grasslands, and even urban areas.

Many cuckoos lay their eggs in the nests of other bird species. The cuckoo chick hatches first and often pushes the host bird's eggs out of the nest or receives more food from the unsuspecting parents.

Their call is iconic and has inspired folklore, poetry, and music for centuries and in many cultures, it heralds the arrival of spring.

Many cuckoo species face threats from habitat loss, climate change, and other human activities. Efforts are underway to protect the populations and habitats of these remarkable birds with intriguing behaviours and a significant cultural presence across the world.



CHRISTIANITY AROUND THE WORLD

Mexico's Christian community has deeply influenced the nation's identity and values and continues to thrive.



Catholicism is the predominant form of Christianity in Mexico, introduced by Spanish missionaries who accompanied the conquistadors in the 16th century and set about spreading the teachings of the Catholic Church. They built churches and missions and established religious orders across the land. Today, Mexico boasts one of the largest Catholic populations in the world, with millions attending mass regularly and participating in religious festivals throughout the year.

Protestantism has also experienced significant growth in recent decades, fuelled by missionary efforts. Evangelical churches, Pentecostal congregations, and other Protestant denominations have emerged as dynamic forces in Mexican society, attracting followers with their emphasis on personal conversion, outreach to communities and charismatic worship.

One notable aspect of Christianity in Mexico is how elements of indigenous spirituality blend with Catholicism. This fusion of traditions is most evident in religious festivals such as the Day of the Dead where pre-Columbian rituals honouring the dead coexist with Catholic customs of prayer and remembrance.

The influence of Christianity permeates Mexican art, literature, music and folklore. Iconic images of the Virgin of Guadalupe, Mexico's patron saint, adorn churches, homes, and public spaces, symbolizing both religious devotion and national pride.

Christians of all denominations are actively involved in efforts to lower poverty, promote human rights, and foster understanding in a nation marked by inequality and strife. As the country grapples with the complexities of modernity and globalization, many Mexicans find solace, strength, and hope in their Christian faith, drawing inspiration from its timeless message of love, redemption, and eternal life.

From grand city cathedrals to humble chapels, the presence of Christ is felt daily in the hearts and lives of millions of Mexicans.

WHAT'S ON - MAY 2024

Thu	2	11:00am	Bible Fellowship	
Sun	5	8:00am	Rev Debra Chidakwa-Akue	Holy Communion
		10:30am	Rev Rosemarie Clarke	Morning Worship
Mon	6		BANK HOLIDAY	Zach's Café is closed today
		6:45pm	Offington Bells	
Tue	7	12:00pm	Tuesday Lunch & Social Club	
Thu	9	11:00am	Bible Fellowship	
		2:00pm	Knit 'n' Natter	
Fri	10	10:30am	Offington CAMEO	Walking the South Downs OPEN MEETING see p7
Sat	11	9:30am	YARD SALE	See poster on p29
Sun	12	10:30am	Rev Dawn Carn	Holy Communion
		3:30pm	Messy Church Team	Messy Church
Mon	13	6:45pm	Offington Bells	
Tue	14	10:00am	Grumpy Old Men	Customer Service - has it got worse or is it just us?
		12:00pm	Tuesday Lunch & Social Club	
Wed	15	10:30am	Mid-month Holy Communion	
Thu	16	11:00am	Bible Fellowship	
Sat	18	10:00am	Coffee Morning	For Christian Aid
Sun	19	8:00am	Breakfast Church Team	Breakfast Church
		10:30am	Rev Dawn Carn	Morning Worship
Mon	20	6:45pm	Offington Bells	
Tue	21	12:00pm	Tuesday Lunch & Social Club	
Thu	23	11:00am	Bible Fellowship	

WHAT'S ON - MAY 2024

Thu	23	2:00pm	Knit 'n' Natter	
Fri	24	10:30am	Offington CAMEO	"A day to remember"
Sun	26	10:30am	Rev Dawn Carn	Fun Church
		10:30am	Rev Debra Chidakwa-Akue	Morning Worship
Mon	27		BANK HOLIDAY	Zach's Café is closed today
Tue	28	12:00pm	Tuesday Lunch & Social Club	
Thu	30	11:00am	Bible Fellowship	

A little girl told her mother she wasn't going to church anymore as it was 'too dangerous'. On being asked why it was dangerous, she said, 'last time I went, I heard someone say the choir had murdered the anthem, the organist had drowned the congregation and there was a canon in the pulpit'.



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Alter Egos Tour

Saturday 4 May 2024 @ 11:00am

If you've walked around the Broadwater & Worthing Cemetery in South Farm Road, you will probably have read a few names on the thousands of gravestones there.



There are quite a few names that are shared with famous people, past and present. This is the focus of our May tour. We will share details about the life of a person buried in the cemetery and accompany it with a cameo of the celebrity with the same name.

So, come and find out about the life of **Mary Berry** who, with her husband, ran a lodging house in Cobden Road, and her alter-ego the celebrated TV cook and presenter of The Great British Bake Off.

Learn about **Jane Austen**, whose gravestone is in the form of an open book (highly appropriate, considering the famous author that is her counterpart). Hear about Worthing baker **John Noakes**, who was married three times, his third wife being some 44 years younger than him. Noakes shares his name with John Noakes, the late Blue Peter presenter.

Also featured are the **Adams Family**, **Florence Nightingale**, and **Henry Cooper**. There are other names, too: we know there is a **Peter Kay** amongst them, but unfortunately not all have enough of a story to be included in our tour booklet.

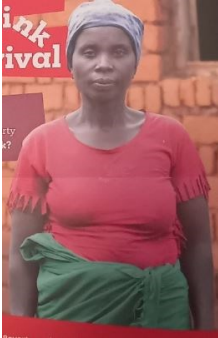
Our tour starts at 11 am by the Chapels in South Farm Road. Hot and cold refreshments are available for a small donation.

(Please help the environment by bringing your own cup).

CHRISTIAN AID WEEK 12-18 May 2024



Christian Aid is pushing back against poverty this year. Poverty is an outrage against humanity. It robs people of dignity and it lets injustice thrive.



Christian Aid is helping people like Aline Nibogora (pictured), a determined mother from Burundi, who was pushed to the limit by poverty. She was abused by her violent husband and forced to flee, homeless and hungry. But she pushed back harder.

With small business training funded by Christian Aid, she kickstarted a vital income for her and her children.

This year Christian Aid Week takes place from 12-18 May. As in previous years we will be placing envelopes on the chairs in church on Sunday 12 May and asking if you could please fill and return them to church on Sunday 19 May or as soon as possible after that date.

We will also be holding a coffee morning in Zach's Café on
Saturday 18 May 10am-12noon
when there will be a Bring and Buy stall and a Cake stall.
We would welcome your support at this event.

Chris & Liz L

OUR ALLAN FLETCHER HALL IS AVAILABLE FOR HIRE

To book or enquire, visit
www.offingtonpark.org.uk
[/venue-hire](#)
or email us at
offingtonparkchurch@gmail.com



REMEMBERING JOY EARL

(adapted from Matthew's eulogy)



Joy was born in Bristol to Percival Graham (known as Percy or Gray) and Dorothy Flook on 27 July 1931. Sister Sonia was born five years later.

Joy and Sonia both went to Knowle Park Infants and Primary School, and Joy later attended Merrywood Senior School. They both had great pleasure in playing their parents' pianola and as their house was by a bus stop they opened the window and people thought they were fantastic at playing the piano!

Joy's first job was with Phoenix Insurance and this was followed by an administration role at Ashton Park School. This gave us our first hint of her love of children. The family attended Knowle Park Congregational church where there was a large youth club and social life was valued. Quite a few relationships were formed there, including that of Joy and Len, who were eventually married in 1955 and set up their first home together on a Jersey Cattle farm in Backwell, now North Somerset.

Matthew arrived on 27 July 1958 - yes, Joy's birthday! - and after they had moved to Salisbury, James was born on 16 July 1961 and Tom followed on 4 October 1964. The family spent eight happy years there.

Church was very important to both Len and Joy, and this was where they made many friends. Friendships continued to grow when they moved to Hove with Len's work. Son Ben was born on 28 July 1970, narrowly missing the birthdays of Matthew and Joy! For a time, Joy was also a Samaritan, which used her gift of listening to the full.

The family moved to Worthing in 1979 and started to attend Offington Park, where they became lifelong members. They joined the choir and hosted the Young People's Fellowship, with Joy providing plenty of the refreshments, on many occasions. Their lounge at Rugby Road was often extremely packed. Joy's hospitality was legendary.

They joined many groups, forming Arun Choral Society together with some church friends. Joy also joined a book club. Together, Joy and Len

co-founded a Home Farm Trust local group and raised £50,000 for a home which was opened by Princess Anne. Joy was also a member of the Tuesday Ladies Group, now Cameo.

Over the years, Joy enjoyed many happy holidays with the family and with friends, and in later life with Sonia on many coach trips and cruises. They became well-known for their laughter, as their voices sounded identical.

Joy and Len were thrilled to see all the family marry and loved looking after the grandchildren Josh and Dane, whom they took on day trips. The family also visited Disneyland Paris.

Christmas was always a happy family time. The most memorable game was 'the family coach' where each of us played a part of a coach or an item on the trip. Len was a fantastic storyteller and when your part was mentioned you had to stand up, turn in a circle and sit down again! Another game, the 'spoon game', also caused much hilarity.

While the family were growing up, Joy took in two little girls - Sarah and Rachel - after seeing the job advertised in the paper. She became their surrogate grandma and they have remained close ever since. Joy was actively involved in their lives and the girls are now parents themselves. Steve, their dad, took great pleasure in keeping Joy's garden tidy.

A deep friendship was also formed with church members Chris and Liz L, when they met on holiday in South Wales. They went on many walking holidays together and, after Len died, Joy greatly valued their friendship.

Joy cared wonderfully for Len when he became very ill, with palliative care from St Barnabas. The loss of Len was made easier by visits from the grandchildren who, in later years, took her shopping to Tesco. After, they enjoyed some goodies in the café. Joy also loved playing and reading with them and with the great-grandchildren in Eastbourne.

Matthew ended by saying 'Joy's time in the Poets was very happy with lots of visitors, who all talk about Joy as a special lady who was so kind and always interested in everyone. We're honoured to call her Auntie, Grandma, Sister - and Mum'.

MOTORING

The Hazards of pavement parking



In urban areas around the world, the sight of cars parked partially or entirely on the pavement has become all too common. Whilst for some it is a convenient solution to limited parking spaces, this practice poses numerous hazards and concerns that extend far beyond mere inconvenience. From safety risks to accessibility issues, the impacts of pavement parking are substantial and deserve highlighting.

The major hazard is the threat posed to pedestrian safety. To navigate pavement parking, pedestrians, including children, the elderly, and individuals with disabilities, are sometimes forced to walk into the road, a hostile environment where they are vulnerable to traffic accidents.

Moreover, pavement parking can obstruct visibility for both drivers and pedestrians, particularly at intersections and crossings. This reduced visibility significantly heightens the risk of accidents, as drivers may struggle to see people crossing the road or other vehicles approaching. In densely populated areas with high foot traffic, impaired visibility can be severe.

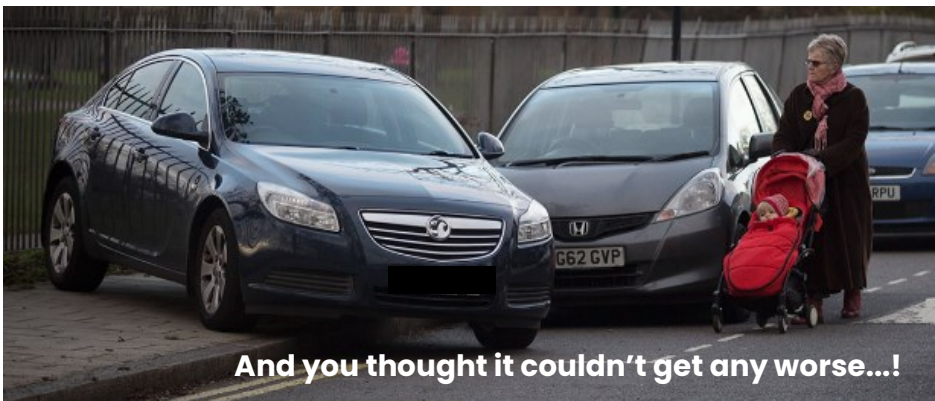
In addition to safety concerns, pavement parking presents challenges to accessibility, effectively excluding individuals with mobility impairments from taking the safest route. Wheelchair users, those with buggies, and people with visual impairments often find it difficult or impossible to navigate around parked vehicles. This infringes upon their right to access public spaces safely and independently, further marginalizing already vulnerable populations.

There's also the detrimental effects on the urban environment. The weight of vehicles on paths can cause damage to paving stones and kerbs, leading to costly repairs and maintenance. It also contributes to the degradation of green spaces and detracts from the overall visual appeal of neighbourhoods.

So, how do we tackle it? With a multifaceted approach that combines enforcement, infrastructure improvements, and public awareness campaigns. Local authorities must enforce existing parking regulations rigorously, but also must invest in parking facilities and alternative transport options. Pavements need to be wide enough to accommodate foot traffic and measures such as bollards, planters, or designated parking zones can prevent vehicles from encroaching onto the path.

Maybe a widespread public education campaign is needed to raise awareness about the hazards of pavement parking and promoting responsible parking behaviour. Drivers need to know that 'actions have consequences' and need to show respect for pedestrian spaces.

Strangely, some drivers think it helps other drivers with traffic flow. It doesn't. It just adds to the problem. It's dangerous and thoughtless, so **PLEASE DON'T DO IT.**





PRAYERS FOR THOSE IN WAR ZONES

God of peace,

With hearts weighed down by sadness, we lift before you the people of Ukraine, Gaza, Sudan, Israel and Iran, and all who dwell in the midst of conflict and war. We bring before you in prayer all who are affected by violence, strife, and the horrors of battle.

Grant solace to those whose homes have been shattered, whose loved ones have been lost or torn from them by the ravages of conflict. May Your comforting presence envelop them in their darkest hours, bringing them hope amidst despair.

Grant courage to the soldiers who stand in harm's way, protect them from danger, and guide their actions with wisdom and compassion. Strengthen their resolve to uphold justice and defend the innocent, even amidst the chaos of war.

Give humanitarian aid workers and peacemakers the resilience and determination they need as they work tirelessly to alleviate suffering and bring light to the darkest corners of conflict. May their efforts be blessed with success and their compassion inspire others to join in the noble pursuit of healing and reconciliation.

Illuminate the minds of leaders and decision-makers with the light of understanding and empathy. Inspire them to seek workable resolutions to conflicts, to prioritize the well-being of all people, and to work tirelessly for peace.

Bring an end to the violence that ravages our world, and usher in an era of harmony and cooperation among nations and peoples. May your love and compassion reign supreme, guiding us all toward a future where swords are turned into ploughshares and war is no more.

In your mercy, hear our prayer. Amen.

Make every effort to live in peace
with everyone and to be holy;
without holiness no one will see the Lord.

Hebrews 12:14



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MONEY MATTERS

All About Giving



In a world often marked by self-interest and material pursuits, not to mention everyday hustle and bustle, finding moments of peace and purpose can be a rare gift. For some of us, our spiritual community and the act of giving to the church provide precisely that. Whether it's through financial contributions, volunteering time and skills, or offering emotional support, giving to the church can be a profound expression of faith and a vital aspect of our lives.

In Christianity, for example, the act of giving, or tithing, is often seen as a way to express gratitude to God and support the work of the church. It's a tradition based on the belief that everything we have is ultimately a gift from a higher power, and sharing those gifts is an integral part of living a fulfilling life.

Throughout the Bible, there are numerous references to the importance of giving, with verses like Proverbs 3:9 urging us to "honour the Lord with our wealth and with the first-fruits of all our produce." And it's not just about cash - our acts of charity and service, too, mark out our spiritual growth and journey of faith.

At its core, giving to the church is about more than just financial support; it is about fostering a sense of community and fellowship. When we give to the church, we are not only supporting the physical infrastructure and ministries but also financing the essential services to those in need, such as food banks, shelters, counselling services, and educational programs. By contributing financially or volunteering time to these initiatives, we directly impact the lives of our neighbours and contribute to the betterment of society as a whole. Of course, as well as income from varying other sources, the church relies on

our freewill giving. Through this, we continue to provide a space where people can come together in shared purpose and mutual care - so vital in a world where meaningful connections can sometimes feel elusive.

Giving to the church can also be seen as an investment in our own spiritual growth. By supporting the work of the church, we enable the continuation of religious teachings, worship services, and community outreach efforts that nourish our faith and deepen our understanding of our own spiritual beliefs. It's a way of ensuring that future generations will have access to the same opportunities we have for spiritual growth and enlightenment.

The decision to give to the church is deeply personal and varies from individual to individual. For some, it's a way to express gratitude for the blessings in their lives. For others, it's a form of obedience to religious teachings. And for many, it's a combination of both, driven by a desire to live out our faith in practical ways.

But let's be clear: giving to the church is not just about financial transactions; it's about investing in something larger than ourselves.

It's about supporting a community of believers, reaching out to those in need, and nurturing our own spiritual journey.

In a world that often emphasizes individualism and self-interest, the act of giving to the church embodies the values of stewardship, fellowship, and compassion and stands as a powerful reminder of the need for generosity.

So whether through financial contributions, volunteering, or simply offering a listening ear to a fellow member, let us all embrace the joy of giving to the church.

Then we can truly say that we have made, and will keep making, a positive difference in the world around us.

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JC's LITTLE NUGGETS

"Locked in"

(John 20: 19-29)



This reading reminded me of a long-past part of my life where, like the disciples, I found myself "locked in a room," except that this was a room of my own making.

I was the owner of a failing business. I blamed everything and everybody for the lack of success - everybody, that is, except myself.

I withdrew into that 'room', away from others, everyday fearing that knock on the door from the Bailiffs. I shut out everything from the world - I didn't answer letters, and ignored the phone calls.

As the business kept on failing, my debts and doubts grew and I wondered who I could turn to. Certainly not the family, as the shame was too great.

Just like those disciples, who had deserted Jesus during his time of need, I had moved away from the Vine and as a result I was fearful and in disgrace. But for those same disciples, Jesus came not to chastise, but to say "peace be with you", to give them encouragement to make a new start.

My 'Jesus' was the Methodist minister at the church I had left. He came to me, unlocked my room, and gave me a new start. Yes, the company went bankrupt, but I learnt a lot from that experience. I learnt of the faithfulness of God, which we read about in Joshua 1, v9: 'Be strong, do not be discouraged, for the Lord will be with you wherever you go'

God bless you all.

JC

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NEXT EDITION

Copy Deadline

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Please submit material for the next edition
to the Editors at:

offingtonspotlight@gmail.com

Bill was a constant worrier, and he used to irritate his friends all the time by telling them his worries. One day, Bill met his friend Alex and they chatted for a while. After the conversation, Alex realised that Bill hadn't offloaded his worries onto him.

The next time they met, Alex asked Bill what had happened to make him change. Bill told him that he'd found a firm of professional worriers. "All I do is phone them up every day, tell them my worries, and then put the phone down. That's it. I don't have to worry anymore", Bill told Alex.



Alex said, "My goodness, how much does it cost to have a firm like that?" "£500 a week", Bill told him.

"But how on earth can you afford that?" asked Alex.

"That's their worry!", replied Bill.

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