

SPOTLIGHT

April 2026



Offington Park Methodist Church



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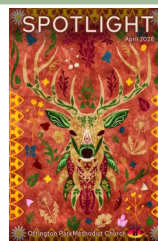
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Some content was produced with the help of AI tools and reviewed by the Editors

COVER PICTURE

This month's cover image is a stag.

Have you noticed the way a deer eats, with that gentle sideways motion of its jaw? It is chewing the cud, just as a cow does. That small detail places deer in a particular category in the Old Testament.



In Deuteronomy and Leviticus, land animals were considered ritually clean and permissible to eat if they both chewed the cud and had a cloven or divided hoof. Deer fit the bill perfectly, whereas pigs, which have cloven feet but do not chew the cud, were forbidden. Interestingly, Deuteronomy 14:5 lists several wild animals that were permissible, including both "the deer" and "the roe deer" (NIV).

The word "deer" may point to a sturdy animal - something like a red deer - while a "roe deer" was smaller, lighter and more nimble-footed. Perhaps thinking of the latter, the writer of Habakkuk says, "The Sovereign Lord is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to tread on the heights." (Hab 3:19)

This month's featured wildflowers: bluebell, buttercup, dandelion, daisy.

Dear Friends,



As we near the end of Lent our recent readings reflected on the valley of the dry bones in Ezekiel and the story of Lazarus in John's gospel, both desert places full of hopelessness and despair. The Methodist Lent course invited us to join Susie Dent in remembering the opposite of despair, a word that has become so underused it is rarely spoken of and for many is a new word to add to their vocabulary. Respair is the opposite of despair, a positive word in a language geared towards negativity if the research is to be believed.

Both of the Bible stories mentioned begin in a desert place - one literally - and the other the death of Lazarus, but when God becomes involved they become stories of hope and respair. You might notice if you look back on them how people are used in both stories, first the prophet and then those who unbind the grave clothes for Lazarus to set him free.

We will soon enter the Easter season which echoes the stories with the hopeless, tragic and seemingly final defeat of Jesus being turned around into one of Resurrection and Victory. The roller coaster of the Easter story invites us each year to sit and wait, to weep and lament before greeting Easter morning with shouts of 'He is Risen'.

It would be so easy to gloss over the difficult days of Maundy Thursday and Good Friday and to rush hurriedly into Easter morning. In doing so we miss so much of all that Jesus has done for each one of us. I was encouraged by the attendances at all of our Easter services last year, particularly as both the Maundy Thursday and Good Friday services attendance had dropped considerably over the last couple of years and questions were being asked about whether these services should be held at all.

We are living in dark and anxious times and for those without a faith there is little or no hope for the future. As a church we need to continue to celebrate our festivals albeit in different ways to bring the message to our community. I am delighted that this year we have added a passion drama to which we can invite people.

With Jesus we not only have hope for the future, but here and now and we are offering many opportunities to experience the breath of the Holy Spirit breathing new life into each of us.

I look forward to travelling with you once again through Easter.

Every Blessing

Dawn

MUD GLORIOUS MUD

It's low tide, and as the water recedes, an intriguing cast of characters begin to emerge around our coastlines. Wigeon bustle busily amongst the boats left stranded by the falling tide. Redshank scan the exposed ground for their next meal. Further off, Oystercatchers are probing for buried molluscs at the water's edge. And they are all here for one thing – our marvellous mud.



Looking out across a mudflat you'd be forgiven for thinking these are lifeless places. But this mud – a combination of organic matter and sediment which can collect into vast expanses in the sheltered, intertidal areas of our coasts and estuaries – makes for a dynamic habitat full of curious connections.

Visit an estuary in autumn and you may well notice two Curlews walking side by side, giving bubbling calls and sometimes having a bust up. They are actually defending moving territories. Occasionally they will pick up a stick or bit of seaweed, possibly to make themselves appear larger; like rutting stags dressing their antlers with bracken.



As the tide rises once more, fish resume predator duties and the wading birds must move elsewhere. This twice-daily shift can create astonishing spectacles such as the 'whirling wader spectacles' seen sometimes at Snettisham in Norfolk.

The UK has 270,000 hectares (ha) of mudflats and sandflats. It's not easy to survive somewhere that has little or no stable ground, with high levels of salinity, and that gets inundated by seawater twice a day. That's why the number of different species living in our mudflats is relatively low, but those that can survive here do so in extraordinary quantities.

In Suffolk and Essex's Stour Estuary, the European Mud Shrimp – a type of small crustacean – can exist in densities of up to 100,000 per square metre. Increase the scale across the estuary's 1,534 hectare of mudflats and there could be up to 1 trillion of them nestled within the mud here. Around our coasts, these huge densities of crustaceans, molluscs and other invertebrates ensure our mudflats provide an energy-rich buffet for birds.

But mud is globally important too. Every year, millions of migratory water birds arrive on our shores. Some come to spend the entire winter with us. These include the entire population of Icelandic and eastern Greenland-breeding Pink-footed Geese and a wide variety of wading birds. Others are making a pit stop as part of their journey between more northerly breeding grounds and non-breeding areas further south. As these birds migrate, using a route that runs from the Arctic to South Africa known as the East Atlantic Flyway, they have come to rely on this network of well-protected, interconnected sites. This is where our coastal mud comes into its own.

Our extensive coastline, dotted with sheltered bays and estuaries, combined with large tidal ranges (the Severn Estuary has the second biggest in the world!) means that many parts of our coasts, unlike most other countries, have the perfect conditions for mudflats to develop. Mudflats are teeming with life and, as the tide goes out, waders, ducks and geese are treated to a veritable feast of plant life and small creatures, on and under the surface.

The mudflats form a network of important coastal sites that lie between the estuaries of the Humber and the Thames and provide a refuge for a wide variety of wetland birds. And when it comes to protecting coastal sites, including our mudflats, it is crucial to understand the bigger picture within the landscape. The RSPB recently commissioned research into the movements of more than 10,000 Black-tailed Godwits along the East Atlantic Flyway. This revealed that these birds' journeys connected together more than 1,000 sites, four of which are included in the UK's East Coast Wetlands.

The RSPB is working hard with partners up and down the flyway to: restore wetlands in Iceland for breeding wading birds (many of which spend the winter in the UK); improve the protection of mudflats and saltmarsh at South Africa's Berg River Estuary; and strengthen conservation efforts in Senegal where coastal sites support Black-tailed Godwits, Ospreys, Whimbrel and a host of other migratory species.

This Spring, why not get out and discover a mesmerising mudflat? There's plenty of them across our beautiful land - from the vast expanses of Morecambe Bay to Northern Ireland's Lough Foyle, Nigg and Udale Bays in north-east Scotland or Ynys-hir on Wales' Powys coast. We may think there's not that many around Worthing, but you never know, though - some globally important mud could be just around the corner!

Together, we can all play our part in looking after our amazing, enchanting, and ever-changing mud.

PUB CRAWL 2 TOUR

Saturday 4 April 2026 @ 11:00 am

The cemetery tours are back for 2026!

If you haven't been on one, you are missing out - big time. Every tour is different and gives a fascinating insight into late Victorian living.



And even better—they're FREE!

This tour was requested by those who came on our first, very popular, pub crawl tour last October. This tour features the following four pubs:

- The Southdown,
- The Warwick,
- The Rose and Crown, and
- The New Street Inn.

In this tour we will unearth some of the history of the pubs and talk about the lives of previous publicans who are buried in Broadwater Cemetery.

The tour starts at 11 am (arrive from 10:45am) by the Chapels in South Farm Road. Booklets about the tour and hot and cold refreshments (including delicious home-made cakes) are available for a small donation towards cemetery upkeep. Please help the environment by bringing your own cup.

Why not become a member of FBWC?

It's only £5 per year to become a member and your membership will help finance our reasonably priced tour booklets and the cost of refreshments. You can sign up on one of the tours.

Please consider becoming a member and let's together keep this wonderful Victorian cemetery open for future generations.

Tuesday 14 April at 10:00am:

You're invited to come along for a drink and chat - you don't have to be grumpy, old or even a man!



April makes fools of us all!

Have you ever been successfully fooled, or fooled someone else, on April 1st? Share your experience!

We'll be meeting in the Quiet Room
(after coffee and cake in Zach's Café). Please join us.



There are hundreds of languages in the world, but a smile speaks them all!



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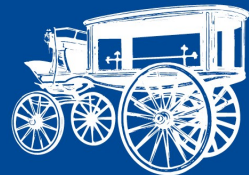


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JC's LITTLE NUGGETS

Lent: reflections and blessings



Lent is a time of reflection.

Here are some from my life of (ahem!) 40ish years.

- *The past has gone. The future is in the hands of our Lord, so live today as the start of a new life with the Lord. (Matthew 6 v 34)*
- *Whatever challenges we face or needs we have, the Lord is always with us. (Psalm 23)*
- *It is with deep regret that over the years I have worshipped different idols, only to realise there is only one to worship who gives all for us. (Matthew 4 v 10)*

Elaine (my wife) and the family have, throughout our lives, been fortunate to have lived in several parts of the country. In each place, we have through our experiences learnt that the Church, the church family, and good friends, are so precious. This is certainly our experience at Offington Park, which lives out the text of Ephesians : *consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household. (Ephesians 2 v 19)*

In this chaotic and sadly war-ravaged world, with news of human suffering hitting us 24 hours a day, it is not difficult for one's faith to flicker. But never with the Lord, whose faith in us is constant. (see *Isaiah 41 v 10*). In Mark's gospel, we read "*love your neighbour as yourself*" (*Mark 12 v 31*). This is a simple phrase, but so hard for us humans. However, it is love that, like a thread, binds us together. Each of us is created by the Lord. Take a patchwork quilt for example. Each patch, whatever its size, shape, or colour, is needed for the beauty of the whole quilt to show through.

So it is with the Church (1 Corinthians 12 v 12-30), in which we are united with the Lord who loves us all and offers us forgiveness, hope and a future. God bless you all. **JC**



THE FLIGHT OUT OF JORDAN

Regular readers of Spotlight may be aware of McCabe Pilgrimages, who organise excellent guided tours of the Middle East. For those already on tours, the McCabe team keep watch on developments and are ready to step in to support their groups if needed.

One of their pilgrim groups was in Jordan when the Iran war began and as the safety of travellers became uncertain, the team swung into action. This is an adapted account of one of the travellers.

It felt almost biblical. We had to leave Jordan quickly - though not in panic. Instead of continuing our pilgrimage to the Baptismal Site, we changed course and headed south to Aqaba. As the regional situation worsened, the only way out was by ferry to Sinai. From there, we travelled to Sharm-el-Sheikh, where modern resorts sit uneasily against the stark landscape.

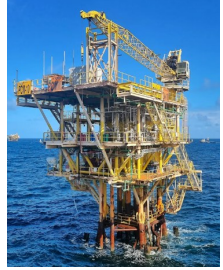
We had a bed for the night - thanks be to God - and flights were booked for us - first to Cairo the following day and then on to Heathrow the next day. That was not what we planned, and there was naturally much disappointment, but with flights cancelled and airspace closed, there was little choice.

In Egypt, two thoughts arose. First, the flight of the Holy Family: Joseph, warned in a dream, fled with Mary and Jesus to safety. It is a familiar story of fear, urgency, and refuge. Second, our own experience. Everything was arranged for us – transport, visas, shelter. We were anxious, but we were cared for. Millions of refugees are not. They flee war and poverty with far less, often forced into dangerous journeys, yet still seeking that safety for their families.

For many in this troubled world, there is no clear path, no certainty - only the hope of peace and a place to call home. As the conflict continues to weigh heavily on us all, and as we watch developments with concern and compassion, we pray: *Father God, be with all who flee, and lead them to safety and love. Amen.*

FUEL CRISIS - BUT NOT FOR EVs?

In the current oil crisis, driven by geopolitical tensions in the Middle East and disruptions to supply routes such as the Strait of Hormuz, there is evidence that suggests the crisis is also accelerating electric vehicle (EV) adoption.



Rising Fuel Prices Strengthen the Economic Case for EVs

Higher fuel prices are increasing the cost of owning conventional vehicles and driving greater interest in EVs. Online searches and consumer inquiries are rising sharply. If oil prices remain high, EVs—despite higher upfront costs—could become cheaper to own overall in some markets. Oil shocks have triggered change before: the 1973 crisis pushed consumers toward fuel-efficient cars. Today, the shift is more dramatic, with many consumers motivated less by environmental concerns and more by cost savings. Early indicators show EV demand rising with showrooms in parts of Asia reporting surging interest, while countries like Australia are seeing record demand. Consumers are seeking more stable fuel alternatives.

Energy Security and Policy Shifts

The crisis has exposed the risks of relying on imported fossil fuels. This has led to Governments rethinking energy dependence and promoting EVs, public transport, or remote working. EVs run on domestically generated electricity, including renewables, reducing exposure to global oil markets.

A Structural Shift Already Underway

Even before this crisis, EVs were reshaping energy consumption, avoiding roughly 2.3 million barrels of oil per day - a figure expected to more than double by 2030. Higher oil prices are now accelerating investment in EVs, batteries, and charging infrastructure, potentially “supercharging” the transition to a post-oil economy. High purchase prices (although used EVs are now 10% cheaper than their petrol equivalents), remain a barrier, as do upfront costs and limited charging infrastructure which is slowing adoption in some regions. A rapid drop in oil prices could also weaken momentum.

Conclusion

This oil crisis is more than a temporary disruption—it marks a turning point in global energy and transport. By raising fuel costs and exposing energy vulnerabilities, it is creating strong conditions for EV growth. If high oil prices persist, electric vehicles could shift from an alternative to the default choice for millions of drivers.

GREAT CHRISTIAN HYMNWRITERS

SAMUEL CROSSMAN

My song is love unknown,
My Saviour's love to me,
Love to the loveless shown,
That they might lovely be.
O who am I,
That for my sake
My Lord should take
Frail flesh and die?



Samuel Crossman was born in 1624 at Bradfield Monachorum, now known as Bradfield St George, in Suffolk. His early career unfolded during one of the most turbulent periods in English history—the years surrounding the English Civil War.

He was educated at Cambridge University's Pembroke College, where he graduated as a Bachelor of Divinity. Originally, Crossman showed sympathies toward the Puritan movement, which sought to further reform the Church of England. Like many clergy of the time, his views evolved as political and religious tides shifted dramatically.

After graduation, he ministered to both an Anglican congregation at All Saints, Sudbury, Suffolk, and to a Puritan congregation simultaneously.

After the monarchy was restored in 1660 under Charles II, the Church of England reasserted its authority. Crossman sympathised with the Puritan cause, and attended the 1661 Savoy Conference, which attempted to update the Book of Common Prayer so that both Puritans and Anglicans could use it.

The conference failed, and the 1662 Act of Uniformity was created. This led to the Great Ejection, when some 2,000 ministers who refused to conform to the Act of Uniformity were expelled from their positions.

Interestingly, Crossman - despite earlier Puritan leanings - conformed to the restored church and retained his place.

Shortly afterwards, he renounced his Puritan affiliations and was ordained in 1665, becoming a royal chaplain.

Crossman was appointed Prebendary of Bristol Cathedral in 1667 and vicar of St Nicholas' Church in Bristol. He became treasurer of Bristol Cathedral in 1682, and was appointed Dean in 1683, but died just a few weeks later. Crossman is buried in the cathedral.

Crossman's lasting legacy lies in his hymn writing, particularly his deeply reflective and personal approach to the Passion of Christ. He lived through a period when England shifted between monarchy and commonwealth, when religious positioning heavily influenced religious careers and when public worship was being redefined. In such an environment, hymn writing was not just artistic expression - it was a way of shaping faith during uncertainty.

Though he did not produce a large body of widely known hymns, Crossman's contribution to hymnody is significant and his relatively few works have shown remarkable longevity in worship settings.

His most famous work is "My Song Is Love Unknown", a meditation on the suffering and love of Jesus, which he wrote in 1664 as part of a larger poetic work, "The Young Man's Meditation". The hymn is notable for its intimate, almost conversational tone and vivid, emotional engagement with the crucifixion story. It also places a strong emphasis on personal responsibility and spiritual reflection.

Compared to later hymn writers like Isaac Watts or Charles Wesley, Crossman's style is less formal, more introspective, and focused on devotional meditation rather than doctrinal teaching. Crossman's hymn is rooted in the emotional and spiritual experience of the believer and the style bridges an important transition - from psalm-based worship toward more expressive, personal hymnody.

Crossman was a pioneer of more personal forms of hymn expression and his life reflected the complexity of his time: a man navigating shifting allegiances, yet leaving behind a work of enduring spiritual clarity. Unsurprisingly, "My Song Is Love Unknown" remains a staple of English-language hymnals today.

WHAT'S ON - APRIL 2026

Thu	2	6:00pm	Maundy Thursday Reflective Service	Includes meal - please sign up for catering purposes
Fri	3	11:00am	Good Friday Service	
		12:30pm	Bring and Share Lunch	Sign up - for catering purposes
		2:00pm	Passion Drama	
Sun	5	7:00am	Service on the Beach	Opposite Steyne Gardens (in the Church if bad weather)
		8:00am	Easter Breakfast	Sign up for catering purposes
		10:30am	Rev Dawn Carn	Holy Communion
Tue	7	12:00pm	Tuesday Lunch & Social Club	
Fri	10	10:30am	CAMEO	
Sun	12	10:30am	Mrs Pam Frost	Morning Worship
		3:30pm	Messy Church Team	Messy Church
Tue	14	10:00am	Grumpy Old Men	April makes fools of us all
		12:00pm	Tuesday Lunch & Social Club	
Wed	15	10:30am	Mid-month Communion	
Thu	16	11:00am	Bible Fellowship	
		1:30pm	Knit 'n' Natter	
Sun	19	8:00am	Breakfast Church Team	Breakfast Church
		10:30am	Rev Dawn Carn	Worship Leader: Mrs Gill Powell
Tue	21	12:00pm	Tuesday Lunch & Social Club	
Thu	23	11:00am	Bible Fellowship	
Fri	24	10:30am	CAMEO	
Sat	25	7:30pm	Shout to the Lord	Tickets selling fast — please see poster in Church Vestibule
Sun	26	10:30am	Rev Richard Tanner	Morning Worship

WHAT'S ON - APRIL 2026

Sun	26	10:30am	Rev Dawn Carn	Fun Church
Tue	28	12:00pm	Tuesday Lunch & Social Club	
Thu	30	11:00am	Bible Fellowship	

A JOURNEY THROUGH THE BIBLE ACTS



Who was it that first told you about Jesus? Do you ever wonder who first told them, or how many people are in the chain going back to the first Christians? What dangers, adventures and challenges were faced for that good news to reach you?

That's what Acts is all about. And it's action from start to finish! From God's promised Holy Spirit turning the frightened disciples into fearless communicators of God's message—to the first martyr, violent persecution and the spread of the gospel into Europe.

A lot of the story follows a man called Paul. He hated the church at first. But after a dramatic meeting with Jesus, he travelled from country to country sharing the gospel. People hated him, imprisoned him and tried to kill him - a lot! After so many close calls, we have to ask, why did he keep going? Because, Acts shows us, the good news of Jesus isn't just words. It's a new life, future and hope that just can't be contained.

Sure, it's dangerous to put Jesus first in this world, but Paul and the other disciples' lives prove those dangers are nothing compared to the joy of seeing more people trust in Jesus.

OFFINGTON CAMEO

Friday 10 April: "Journalism and Worthing"

Paul Holden talks about his life in journalism

This is an Open Meeting which anyone may attend

Friday 24 April: "Early Years" Members' meeting

bring something saved from your childhood or share a childhood memory

In the Allan Fletcher Hall, 10:15am for a 10:30am start

CAMEO

Margaret H

GIFT DAY 2026



A very big 'thank you' to everyone who made a gift towards our gift day. Currently, we have received almost £10,000. Gift aid on top of this should add between £2,000 and £3,000, bringing the total to £12,500, which is a commendable result.

The Gift Day money will be used to enhance our tech in the church and to improve the experience for those joining us online. A 'drop mic' in the church will improve the overall sound and enable the live stream to relay the congregational singing more clearly and with greater clarity. Unfortunately, we do also need to effect a repair to our tech. The screen halfway along the south wall isn't working and we need to replace 17m of cable from the AV desk to the screen. There is more we would like to do on the technical front to enhance worship and make greater use of our technology, but as ever this is dependent on funding. So, don't worry if you haven't yet given a gift - there's still time!

Dawn and I (Church Treasurer) will happily accept your donations of any denomination, including £50 notes! And there's still also time, if you are a taxpayer and don't already gift aid, for us to claim it on your gift. Remember, this is a freebie from the Chancellor as long as you have paid tax equivalent to 25% of the value of your gift in the current tax year, which ends on 5 April 2026.

The remaining funds will be available to our newly-appointed Pioneer to enable them to create initiatives and deliver alternative ideas of 'being church' to the many people that use the Lighthouse and Zach's café, as well as those that attend both Breakfast and Messy Church.

The enhancement of the AFH frontage, kitchen and toilets goes on as well and hopefully later this year we will have a refreshed, newly-treated and painted entranceway, a more modern kitchen and refurbished toilets. Watch this space!

Church Treasurer

April in the UK arrives on quiet feet,
not with fanfare, but with soft insistence –
a loosening of winter's grip,
a warming of the air.

Hedgerows begin to whisper green again,
buds testing their courage
against the lingering chill,
while blackbirds stitch the morning
with liquid, golden song.

There is blossom - so much blossom -
spilled like confetti in streets and parks,
pink and white against uncertain skies,
as if the trees themselves
cannot help but celebrate.

Rain comes, of course.
It taps on windows, soaks the soil,
coaxes life from reluctant ground –
and then, just as suddenly,
sunlight breaks through,
turning every raindrop into a small miracle.

Lambs scatter across fields like laughter,
uncertain on their feet,
while daffodils stand bright, unashamed,
like little suns rooted in the earth.

And everywhere, there is that feeling –
not quite warmth, not yet summer,
but hope made visible:
in longer days, softer evenings,
and the quiet promise
that the world is beginning again.

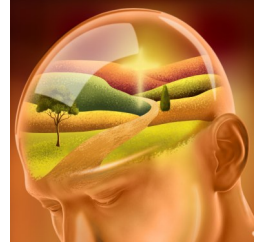
If we are fortunate enough to notice,
April does not brag about its beauty –
it simply presents it,
in petals, birdsong, and light -
and waits for us to look.



MENTAL HEALTH IN THE BIBLE

This month in our series following the men and women in Scripture who battled with their mental health, we look at

Jonah: the prophet who was angry enough to die



“Putting the world to rights” is a phrase sometimes used when people talk about the problems around the earth and how they’d like to fix them.

Jonah knew exactly how to put the world right; destroying Nineveh. They were the capital of the ghastly, ungodly and wicked Assyrian empire; sworn enemies of God’s people. So when God told Jonah to go to Nineveh, the prophet ran the other way. There was no way he’d give those nasty people an opportunity to be saved. They didn’t deserve a second chance; no sir!

One swift storm and ‘fish dinner’ later, Jonah trudged wetly (and grumpily) into Nineveh. Amazingly, the people humbled themselves before God. The Lord, in His mercy, saved them from judgement.

“I’m angry enough to die!” Jonah spat as he slammed himself on the ground outside the city walls. “Shouldn’t I care about a city full of people I created?” God asked. “Shouldn’t I have concern about the hundreds of thousands of men, women and children within its walls?”

There is plenty in the world to make us angry and unhappy. But, like Jonah, our view is too limited for us to truly know what’s best. When we rely on our own perspective, frustration wells up in the face of injustice.

Yet when we let God lead, we finally start to see the world as He does; broken, but with opportunities for mercy - even for our enemies.

CHURCH PASTORAL AID SOCIETY
MINISTRY AMONG WOMEN WORTHING



Trust, Troubles and Truth: How God Keeps Us Afloat

A day of worship and teaching for women

Speaker

Jocelyn-Anne Harvey

FRIDAY 24 APRIL 2026
9.15am - 2.30pm

Cost:£7.00

Local Contact:

Church Office

**Offington Park Methodist Church
South Farm Road, Worthing, BN14 7TN**

VISITORS TO OUR PARKS AND GARDENS

Tits and Finches are some of the more well-known birds which appear in our towns, cities and countryside. In fact, some of them, like the Blue Tit, appear almost anywhere. Here's a short guide to the calls of some of the most iconic species which sing or shout, as you head outside this spring and summer.



Blue Tit: the Blue Tit – petite fashion icon – who mixes it up with feathers of blue, yellow, white and green. Male and female are both on trend, with almost identical outfits. They emit a bright and breezy tune, often sounding like “tsee tsee chu chu chu.” It could be mistaken for a high-pitched mocking laugh, especially if you're a self-conscious Chaffinch.

Great Tit: the Great Tit is the UK's largest tit and has the confidence to go with the looks, often seen bossing smaller birds around at feeders. They make a striking entrance, with black heads, white cheeks and yellow bellies with a black stripe. Theirs is a very simple song of two syllables, sounding a little like a squeaky bike pump. Some say it sounds like they're saying “teacher, teacher” like a right tell-tale tit.

Long-tailed Tit: the Long-tailed Tit is a raspberry ripple lollipop in bird form, with a tail bigger than its body. Often seen in excitable groups nosily flitting between bushes and feeders. These birds are not fans of singing, but they do like a chat, often using high pitch shrills to communicate. They also make a “sirrut sirrut” sound when a bit nervous.

Coal Tit: if you're lucky, you may hear one of these. The Coal Tit is a small acrobatic expert who seems to never stop moving. It has a black head with white cheeks and chest, but no green like the great tit, and it's smaller. Despite the name, they are proponents of reducing fossil fuel use! The Coal Tit emits two syllables like the Great Tit, but higher, faster and more fluid in style. Less confident than his bigger cousin, as if they're a little unsure if they're singing the right words.

Goldfinch: the real glamour-puss, putting the pizazz in the park, the Goldfinch's gear is up there with the best. Bright yellow stripes spark against black wings, while its red face is offset by bright white cheeks. Their common sound is a tinkling, liquid song like the sound of a fast-flowing babbling brook, as the silky stream of high-pitched notes ripple and race into the air.

Greenfinch: the male Greenfinch looks slightly stern with his dark eyes and chunky beak, but his warm green/yellow glow softens the stare. The female is a more subtle brown/green but both retain the eye-catching yellow stripes on their wings. They emit different sounds - sometimes it's the chu chu chu, sometimes a wup, wup wup, short bright phrases which complement the Greenfinch's vivid colour. The most distinctive sound though is a nasal "weeeez", a little like they're playing a high-pitched kazoo.

Bullfinch: the Bullfinch is a plump, shy but beautiful bird who is easily spooked. The male's breast and cheeks almost glow pinkish red while the female is a dusky light brown with the same black cap and white rump. It's "pew pew" call is the easiest way to know they are in your neck of the woods. But the male does sing too, a quiet rambling warble of a song, which stitches together short but varied phrases. Often, there are rich and flute like bursts, with a slightly reserved delivery fitting of their shy nature.

Get out there and see if you can recognise who you're listening to this April.



OOPS! WE JUMPED THE GUN!

Last month we reported the Diamond Anniversary of John and Angela T. In fact, their anniversary is in May! We hope our little faux-pas didn't cause too much inconvenience.

THANK YOU

Sue and Pat K would like to say a big thank you to everyone in the church family for their prayers and messages of support during their recent illness. They are both recovering well.

OFFERTORIES		
Month	Cash & Cheques	Standing Orders
February	£492.00	£5,040

DOUBTING - OR DARING?

I was not there when it happened.

They tell me the stone was already rolled away when they arrived - that the air itself seemed changed, as if the world had inhaled and forgotten to breathe out.

Mary swore she heard her name spoken as only he could speak it. The others spoke over one another, voices trembling between terror and wonder, each certain and uncertain in the same breath.

I listened. I always listen.

But I have lived too long in the weight of things I can touch - the grain of wood beneath my fingers, the callouses of a fisherman's hands, the unmistakable finality of death. I saw him die. I saw the spear break him open. I heard the silence that followed.

Men do not return from that.

So when they told me he stood among them - alive, whole, speaking peace into their fear - I felt something colder than doubt settle inside me. Not disbelief exactly, but a refusal. Hope, once broken, does not mend easily. It cuts the hands that try to hold it again.

"Unless I see," I told them. "Unless I touch. I will not believe." They looked at me with pity, as though I were the one still entombed. Days passed. Or perhaps only hours—it is difficult to measure time when your thoughts circle the same wound.

We gathered again, doors shut tight against a world that suddenly felt unfamiliar. They spoke in quiet tones, as if afraid the miracle might overhear them and vanish. And then - he was there. No sound of door or footstep. No warning. Just presence. Like light entering a room that had forgotten what light was.

"Peace", he said.

I did not move. My breath caught somewhere between my chest and my throat. The others stared, but I could not look at them. I could only look at him.



He turned to me. Not with anger. Not with disappointment. With knowing.

"Thomas," he said, and my name - my name - was no longer just a sound. It was recognition. It was memory. It was everything I had lost, returned to me all at once.

"Put your finger here," he said gently. "See my hands. Reach out your hand and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe."

I wanted to refuse. To protect myself one last time. But my body betrayed me; or perhaps it saved me. My hand rose, trembling, as if drawn by something deeper than thought. I touched him.

The wound was real. The flesh was warm. This was no vision, no dream stitched together from longing and grief. This was him - broken, yes, but not undone.

In that moment, my doubt did not vanish. It transformed. It became something heavier. Something sharper. Faith.

Not the easy kind that floats on stories and shared excitement, but the kind that must pass through the narrow gate of disbelief and survive. The kind that knows death is real - and believes anyway that it is not the end.

"My Lord," I whispered. "My God."

He smiled - not as one proven right, but as one who had been waiting.

"Blessed are those who have not seen," he said, "and yet have believed."

I used to think that meant people unlike me. People stronger, or purer, or less afraid. Now I think he meant something else. I think he meant people like me - people who will doubt, and question, and demand to see the wounds... and who will, in the end, reach out their hands anyway.

I was not there when the tomb was opened.

But I was there when my own heart was.

THEY CHANGED THE WORLD

George Frederic Handel

German Composer



Handel was one of the greatest composers of the Baroque era. Born in Halle and later settling in London, he used his remarkable musical talent to shape culture, inspire faith, and support charitable causes during his lifetime.

Handel showed musical ability as a child, even though his father initially discouraged it because he wanted him to become a lawyer. Legend says young Handel secretly practiced on a small keyboard hidden in the attic. Eventually his talent became undeniable. He trained as a musician and quickly developed extraordinary skill in composition, organ and keyboard performance and conducting large musical works.

Yet he didn't keep these abilities private. Handel used them publicly - writing music that moved audiences emotionally and spiritually. Many of Handel's most famous works were sacred pieces based on the Bible. His best-known composition is the oratorio "Messiah", written in only about three weeks in 1741. "Messiah" tells the story of Christ through Scripture passages set to music. Its most famous section, the "Hallelujah Chorus," is still performed around the world. Through works like "Messiah", Handel used his musical gifts to help people reflect on biblical truth and worship.

Handel also used his success to help people in need. He regularly conducted charity concerts, especially for the Foundling Hospital in London, which cared for orphaned and abandoned children. Handel performed benefit concerts there many times, raising large sums of money that helped the hospital operate for years. Unsurprisingly, performances of "Messiah" became a major fundraiser for the charity.

Handel didn't travel the world as a missionary or political leader. Instead, he made a difference right where he was, by writing music that uplifted and inspired people, by sharing biblical messages through art, by using his success to support charitable work and by building community through public performances. His life shows how creative gifts - music, art, writing, or storytelling - can be used to serve others and point people toward deeper meaning and faith.

Handel used the musical ability he had been given to serve others, support good causes, and create beauty that still inspires the world today.

Offington Park Methodist Church, South Farm Road, Worthing



coffee morning

and Box
Opening



Can we beat last year's record??

Saturday 2 May

9:30am - 12:00pm



Light Refreshments available (donations welcome):

Tea / Coffee / Juice / Cakes / Scones

Stalls selling:

Cakes and Greetings cards

If you have a pre-loved item you think someone else could love, bring it along to sell!

please support this Methodist charity

Action for
Children

THE STATE OF THE PLATE

Giving in a Time of Pressure: (Church Donations in the UK Today)



In every generation, the life of the Church has been sustained not only by faith and prayer, but by the faithful generosity of its people. Yet in recent years, giving patterns have changed, shaped by rising living costs, economic uncertainty, and cultural trends.

How Much Do Churchgoers Give?

Historically, churchgoers have been among the most generous groups in society and many show a long-standing culture of regular, sacrificial giving. Recent studies suggest that the average UK Christian gives around **£116–£124 per month**, equating to roughly 5% of their income, but this figure varies significantly depending on levels of engagement - with those often described as “committed Christians” giving **10% or more of their income**.

A Shrinking Pool of Donors

While many committed Christians continue to give generously, the broader picture is more concerning. The number of people giving in the UK has been steadily declining – and not just for churches. Only **around 50% of people now donate to charity**, down from nearly 60% just a few years ago. This represents **several million fewer donors** across the country.

Even though some are giving more, fewer people are participating in regular giving. For many of our churches, this can mean a heavier reliance on a smaller core of committed givers.

The Impact of the Cost of Living Crisis

The most immediate pressure on giving has come from rising living costs. Inflation, increased energy bills, higher rents or mortgages, and food prices have all placed strain on household budgets. For many church members, giving is no longer just a question of

generosity, but of capacity. Faithful individuals who once gave regularly may now be forced to reduce or pause their contributions.

Rising Costs for Churches Themselves

At the same time, churches are facing increasing financial pressures of their own. Building maintenance, energy costs, and expanding community work all require funding, which creates a challenging situation: just as income becomes less predictable, the need for resources is growing.

A Spiritual Perspective on Giving

Despite these challenges, there are encouraging signs. Research consistently shows that those most engaged in church life are also the most generous. Trust plays a key role. Many regular churchgoers express strong confidence that their gifts are making a difference, particularly when they can see the impact within their own community, as we can with The Lighthouse and Zach's Café.

There is also evidence of *untapped potential*. Some studies suggest that if more Christians embraced practices such as proportional or tithing-based giving, overall contributions could increase significantly - even in difficult times.

Looking Ahead

The landscape of giving in the UK is undoubtedly changing. Inflation and rising living costs have made generosity more costly, and fewer people are giving overall. Yet within the Church, a deep-rooted culture of generosity remains. Even in times of financial strain, the generosity of God's people continues to sustain the life and mission of the Church.

"Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give... for God loves a cheerful giver." (2 Corinthians 9:7)

NEXT EDITION

Copy Deadline

Publication Date

Sunday 26 April 2026

Thursday 30 April 2026

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

offingtonspotlight@gmail.com

Little Johnny was concerned about his parents' financial situation, so he decided to write God a letter. He wrote:

"Dear God, My mum and dad need £500 for bills and I don't know who else to ask. Could you please help? Thanks....Johnny"

The letter was received by the local post office and put in the 'dead' letters pile. The postal clerk was curious about the letter addressed just 'God', so opened it to see what it said. He was touched by the letter and decided to help. He asked all his fellow workers to chip in to help a family in need. When all the money was collected, it came to £300. The clerk sent a money order in an official Post Office envelope. The return address said simply, "God".

Several weeks later the same clerk found another letter addressed to God in the same hand writing. The letter said: *"Dear God, Thank you for the £300, but next time don't use the Post Office, they have a £200 service charge. Johnny."*



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