

SPOTLIGHT

June 2026



Offington Park Methodist Church



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

COVER PICTURE

Bees appear occasionally in the Bible, but more often through their product: honey. For instance, in Exodus 3:8 God promised the enslaved Israelites that he would lead them to “a land flowing with milk and honey.”

We might picture cows' milk and dripping honeycombs, but that is not necessarily the full meaning. The Hebrew word for honey, 'debash', can mean bee honey, but also a sweet syrup made from fruits such as dates or grapes. It is a broad term for sweetness.

So the promise is deeper than simple abundance. “Milk” points to life sustained through care; flocks that flourish under faithful tending. “Honey” points to sweetness drawn out through cultivation, nurture, patience, and time.

This is no idle paradise where provision simply appears. It is a land where God's people live with him through faithful stewardship. Where tending, dwelling, and nurture bring abundance. Not merely survival, but life flourishing and overflowing with goodness.

Wildflowers this month: Poppy, Thistle, and Herb Robert.



Dear Friends,

I am delighted to tell you that we have appointed a new Children and Family worker to work alongside the Pioneer role. Both of these posts have been funded by a generous Connexional and District grant.



There will be some changes in the stewards team as some are stepping down after six years' service and others are taking up the baton. We will be asking you to accept these changes at the Annual Church Meeting (AGM) and I do hope that as many of you as possible will stay after the 10.30am church service on June 7th and bring your lunch.

In the Methodist Church, each congregation plays an important part in electing the Trustees (Church Council) to be the decision making committee responsible for ensuring the smooth running of the local church.

Here at Offington Park we use the four main categories of 'Our Calling': Worship; Service; Learning and Caring; and Evangelism as our guide for our meetings. The Church Council meet six times a year to pray and discuss the needs of the church in order for it to function effectively and responsibly as a Christian Church.

We are extremely fortunate to have such a dedicated team who are willing to carry out this work using their God-given gifts and skills to serve in this way.

The Annual Church Meeting is an opportunity to appoint office holders, to pray for them, to learn about the different groups in the church and to hear of our future plans.

It remains a joy and a privilege to serve as your minister,

Every blessing....Dawn



THANK YOU

A big thank you to all who donated to Christian Aid during their recent Special Week. We raised a total of £692 plus £100 from Gift Aid. Well done everyone.

Chris L, Liz L, Frances B

OFFERTORIES		
Month	Cash & Cheques	Standing Orders
April	£441.00	£5,708.33

EDITORIAL

The Eds recently happened on a folk festival featuring Morris dancers. At first glance, they were a tapestry of difference, with one set of dancers wearing bright ribbons and bells, whilst another appeared in much darker colours. If we didn't know better, we might have thought we were watching entirely different traditions unfolding in the same world.

But when we stopped to listen – past the colours, past the stepping of feet and the turning of sticks, there, beneath it all, was the same heartbeat: the same instruments and music style calling them forward, the same shared patterns of movement passed down through generations.

That made us think about ourselves. We too arrive in many 'colours', be they our customs, our appearances, our ways of expressing joy or grief or hope. If we only stop at the surface, we might assume that we are separate dances entirely, each isolated in our own rhythm. But beneath it all, there is a shared song. A human melody. A common pulse that calls us toward connection, celebration, and meaning.

Like Morris dancers, we may dress differently, but that does not mean we are different in spirit. The dance is bigger than any single costume we wear. When we honour the colours, the styles and the individuality of each dancer on the dancefloor of life, we find the music that binds us together. And when we do, we discover that we were never separate performances after all, but part of one great, living dance.

The Eds

CHRISTIANITY IN THAILAND TODAY



Thailand is one of the most strongly Buddhist countries in the world, with Theravada Buddhism shaping much of its culture, traditions, and national identity. Within this predominantly Buddhist society, however, Christianity has developed a small but important presence. Christians make up only around one to two percent of Thailand's population, yet Christian communities contribute significantly to education, healthcare, and humanitarian work.

Christianity first arrived in Thailand during the sixteenth century through Portuguese Catholic missionaries. Later, in the nineteenth century, Protestant missionaries from Europe and the USA established schools, hospitals, and printing presses. Although relatively few Thais converted, these institutions helped modernize education and medicine in the country.

Today, Christianity in Thailand includes Roman Catholics, Protestants, Evangelicals, and Pentecostal churches. Catholic schools and universities are highly respected, even among non-Christian families. In northern Thailand, Christianity has grown among some ethnic minority groups. Thai Christians often face the challenge of practicing a faith that many people still view as foreign or Western. Because Buddhism is closely connected to family traditions and social customs, conversion to Christianity can create tension within communities. In response, many churches are working to express Christianity in culturally Thai ways through local music, language, and worship styles.

Modern churches in Thailand are increasingly led by Thai pastors and supported by local congregations rather than foreign missionaries. Evangelical and Pentecostal churches, especially in cities such as Bangkok, have attracted younger generations through contemporary worship, social media outreach, and community programs. Christian organizations continue to play an important role in Thai society through schools, hospitals, anti-human trafficking projects, and disaster relief efforts. Interfaith relations between Buddhists and Christians are usually peaceful.

Although Christianity remains a minority religion in Thailand, it continues to adapt and grow in new ways. Its future will likely depend on how successfully Thai Christians balance their faith with the cultural traditions and social values of Thai society.

SPORTING CONNECTIONS TOUR

Saturday 6 June 2026 @ 11:00 am

Do join the Friends of Broadwater and Worthing Cemetery on their third **FREE** tour of 2026. These always fascinating tours give a real insight into late Victorian living and often provide interesting historical facts about the town and how it developed.



The June tour will take us from the days of bathing machines (those wonderfully peculiar inventions of Victorian Britain and a fascinating snapshot of Victorian life – where even a simple swim required architecture, logistics, and a strong sense of decorum) through the oddity of horse racing on the beach (who knew?) to the introduction of organised sports clubs.

We will talk about the lives and times of some of the sportsmen, now buried in Broadwater Cemetery, who were involved in developing and partaking in these activities.

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?

Membership of the Friends costs a very reasonable £5 per year, all of which helps to pay for the production of the modestly priced tour booklets and offset the cost of refreshments. Don't forget, as a Member you will be helping to keep this wonderful Victorian cemetery open for future generations.

Join us on Tuesday 9 June 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!



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You can be sure we'll have plenty to grumble about on this subject: ease of access and use, invasion of privacy, and the disappearance of human interaction to name a few.

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

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JC's LITTLE NUGGETS

Lost, but now Found (based on Luke 15, v8-10)



The Woman who Lost a Coin

As a Local Preacher, I recently had to be certified by the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS). What do you mean, "I thought he already was"?

Anyway, as part of this check, I had to show certain documents to prove who I am, such as my Driving Licence. Now, all such important and precious documents are kept by Elaine, my wife. So, naturally I asked her if I could have the document I needed. Elaine answered, "I put them in a safe place." How many times have I heard those worrying words – a safe place?

Well, unsurprisingly, she couldn't recall the safe place she'd put them in. After a few days of prompting, she prevaricated (luckily, you can get ointment for that). The next time I enquired about the documents the evasion started.

The following night in bed, Elaine woke with a start at 3:00am. "I know where they are!" We rushed to the kitchen (as best as we could at our age) and there were the precious documents, held for 'safe keeping' - in a cake tin. I did my best Victor Meldrew impression: "I don't believe it."

With pride Elaine announces, "These precious documents were never truly lost." This reminded me of the 'lost' parables in Luke: the lost sheep, lost coin and lost son. All the people involved had lost something precious, only for it to be found.

So, we can rejoice, because we are precious and are never lost with God, who walks alongside us, offering us hope, love, guidance and forgiveness.

God bless you all.

JC

IT IS WELL WITH MY SOUL



On Friday 8 May, Offington Park Methodist Church was delighted to host a moving and beautifully performed production of *It Is Well With My Soul* by the theatre group Handiwork.

From the opening scene to the final notes, the audience was captivated by the professionalism and heartfelt sincerity of the performance. The standard of singing and acting was exceptional. Every member of the cast brought depth and authenticity to their role, communicating the emotional journey of the story with remarkable skill and sensitivity. The musical numbers were delivered with clarity, warmth and power, drawing the audience deeply into both the sorrow and the hope at the heart of the production.

Particularly striking was the simplicity of the staging. Rather than relying on elaborate scenery, the production used a clean and effective set that allowed the story itself to take centre stage. This understated approach proved highly successful, creating an intimate atmosphere in which the emotions of the characters and the strength of the music could shine through.

At its core, *It Is Well With My Soul* is a story that wrestles honestly with tragedy, loss and suffering, while never losing sight of faith, grace and hope. The production handled these themes with great care and compassion, reminding all present that even in life's darkest moments, there remains the possibility of peace and restoration. It was a very moving performance and the enduring message carried in the familiar hymn from which the musical takes its name resonated throughout.

We are very grateful to Rev Steven Donnison, the West Sussex (Coast and Downs) Circuit, and of course to Handiwork for sharing this inspiring production with us. It was an evening of outstanding theatre, thoughtful reflection and uplifting hope in the face of adversity that will remain in the memories of all who attended.

The Eds

ALPHA - YOUR INVITATION

Questions of Life? Questions of Faith?

YOU ARE INVITED TO a six-week series of short videos and small-group discussions to help you explore, and then become confident on, matters of faith.



The programme is designed to help people wishing to strengthen the faith they already hold, and also for those exploring faith for the first time. The video presentations are from the Alpha course, attended worldwide by some two million people in the UK.

The programme will help you address such questions as:

Who is Jesus? There is strong evidence to support the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Why did Jesus Die? To offer us a different quality of life: life to the full, and freedom indeed.

How can I have Faith? You can be sure of the relationship you have with God through Jesus.

Why and how should I Pray? You can be confident that the power of prayer changes things.

Why and how should I read the Bible? You can know that the teachings in the Bible are both true and relevant today.

What is the Holy Spirit ? Understand the work of the Holy Spirit, and how you can be filled with the Holy Spirit.

The programme will run over six consecutive Saturday mornings.

The first day was on **Saturday 30 May** (but don't worry if you missed it, you can still attend each of the other equally valuable five sessions). Courses start **at 10:00am**, with coffee and pastries and aim to finish by **12 noon**.

There will be an opportunity, if you wish, to extend the programme by a further 4-5 weeks, exploring topics including: How Can I Resist Evil?; God's Healing Today; and How to Make the Best of the Rest of Your Life.

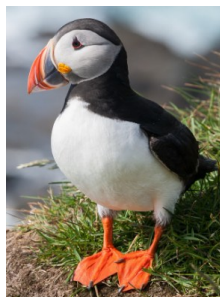
We so look forward to welcoming you on this journey of faith. It would really help our planning if you could confirm your attendance with Steve or Karen Clayton or at the church reception desk.

With love from your Offington Park family Alpha Team.

PUFFINS - ALL AT SEA?

Charming, comical and charismatic, few birds inspire such affection as the Puffin. But these unmistakable waddling birds are more than a seasonal wonder – they are a barometer of the health of our seas.

Known affectionately as ‘clowns of the sea’, Puffins combine instantly recognisable looks with endearing behaviour. Yet beneath the comic exterior lies a bird adapted to life on the edge: streamlined for diving, resilient against storms and capable of navigating thousands of miles across the North Atlantic.



Atlantic Puffins spend most of their lives far out at sea, returning each spring to burrows on grassy clifftops. They are expert divers, plunging to depths of 50m and emerging carrying their prey of sandeels – sometimes more than 60 fish in a single trip.

Puffins belong to the group ‘Auks’ and can live for over 25 years. They grow to about 30cm and weigh up to 480g. Like most seabirds, Puffins mate for life and produce just one puffling a year, hidden deep in a burrow. Puffins are also remarkable navigators and after several years at sea can locate their natal colony with uncanny precision. Pairs reunite year after year, often at the same burrow, reinforcing bonds through billing displays and mutual preening.

Despite their charm, Puffins are in trouble and their UK conservation status is Red. Globally, Puffins are listed as vulnerable, with European populations declining. Climate change is of enormous concern, but in the busy North Sea, overfishing, getting caught on nets and lines, and the risk of collision with marine windfarms also pose real threats.

The RSPB has fought tirelessly for Puffins. After 25 years of campaigning, the UK and Scottish Governments closed industrial sandeel fishing in 2024 – a monumental win for seabirds. The Puffarazzi project revealed data from 1,260 volunteers showing regional differences in diet and linking prey type to population change, enabling better understanding of the threats facing Puffins.

Monitoring remains a challenge as Puffins nest underground and their colonies are remote or inaccessible, especially at cliff-nesting sites. Conservation officers describe Puffin work as both joyous and painstaking. One method is to count them on the sea in March when they socially raft together before settling on the cliffs, but this is a brief window and subject to great variability. Still, every effort, large or small, strengthens Puffin conservation and patience remains the greatest tool.

In Shetland, Puffins are part of a wider seabird community and their fortunes are intertwined with Guillemots and Fulmars. Conservation of Puffins is not just about Puffins. By protecting sandeels, food for a host of seabirds and marine mammals is safeguarded.

Already, early signs are encouraging. Puffins have returned strongly to Bempton Cliffs and the Firth of Forth in 2025, and the sandeel fishing closure should help improve breeding success in years ahead. But long-term recovery will also depend on tackling climate change, which is causing more severe and more frequent storms – causing large numbers of Puffins to die and be washed up on beaches.

Climate change is also the biggest driver of sandeel declines – we need to ensure that other important forage fish, such as rockling, sprats and juvenile gadoids, are all properly protected. If these measures hold, Puffin and other seabird populations could stabilise, and perhaps even thrive again.

Their fate reminds us that collective action works: from government policy to volunteer surveys, every effort matters. These hopeful signs demonstrate that with continued dedication and collaboration, Puffin populations have a real chance to recover and flourish once again.

Puffins are more than ‘clowns of the sea’. They are symbols of resilience, of what can be achieved when people unite for nature. With the support of organisations like the RSPB, the story of Puffins may yet be one of recovery – a reminder that hope can be as bright as their bills in summer. Together, Puffins can have a future.

WHAT'S ON - JUNE 2026

Tue	2	12:00pm	Tuesday Lunch & Social Club	
Thu	4	11:00am	Bible Fellowship	
Sat	6	10:00am	ALPHA Course	
Sun	7	8:00am	Rev Dawn Carn	Holy Communion
		10:30am	Rev Dawn Carn	Café Church
Tue	9	10:00am	Grumpy Old Men	We've got an app for that!
		12:00pm	Tuesday Lunch & Social Club	
Thu	11	11:00am	Bible Fellowship	
Fri	12	10:30am	CAMEO	Favourite Recipes
Sat	13	10:00am	ALPHA Course	
Sun	14	10:30am	Rev Dawn Carn	Holy Communion
		3:30pm	Messy Church Team	Messy Church
Tue	16	12:00pm	Tuesday Lunch & Social Club	
Wed	17	10:30am	Mid-month Communion	
Thu	18	11:00am	Bible Fellowship	
Sat	20	10:00am	ALPHA Course	
Sun	21	8:00am	Breakfast Church Team	Breakfast Church
		10:30am	Mrs Joy Barnes	Morning Worship
Tue	23	12:00pm	Tuesday Lunch & Social Club	
Thu	25	11:00am	Bible Fellowship	
Fri	26	10:30am	CAMEO	Floristry with Joyce
Sat	27	10:00am	ALPHA Course	
Sun	28	10:30am	Mrs Pam Frost	Parade Service
Tue	30	12:00pm	Tuesday Lunch & Social Club	

A JOURNEY THROUGH THE BIBLE

1 CORINTHIANS



What is church to you? Being with like-minded people?
Sunday services? Praying? Singing uplifting songs?

The church in Corinth was super exciting . . . but for all the wrong reasons. They got over-excited about their favourite teachers, argued over whose spiritual gifts were better and got drunk at communion.

During the services everyone shouted over each other with big prayers and spiritual 'words from God'. It was chaos. Not to mention they were suing each other and sleeping around. One guy was even sleeping with his step mum!

The Corinthians were missing the point of what church is. Do you know why you go (or don't go) to church? Do you know what you should expect from a church family?

Do you realise church can be very, very exciting – but for all the right reasons? Paul wrote 1 Corinthians as a letter to the church in Corinth. But he wasn't just telling them off. He was explaining to them – and us – what church is really all about; and how it will change our lives.

OFFINGTON CAMEO

Friday 12 June:

"Favourite Recipes"

**Bring and share something home-made,
together with the recipe to share**

Friday 26 June:

"Floristry"

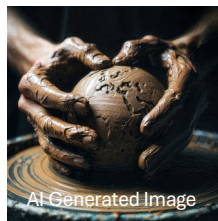
**Joyce will talk about her gift of floristry
and show us how to prepare a table posy**

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

Margaret H

THEY CHANGED THE WORLD

Mary Prince Anti-slavery Campaigner



Mary Prince was a remarkable figure in the fight against slavery – both for what she endured and for how she chose to speak about it.

She was born into slavery in Bermuda and sold multiple times as a child and young woman. Like many enslaved people in the Caribbean, her life was marked by physical punishment, forced labour, and family separation. She later described these experiences in stark, direct language – something that would become historically significant.

Her life changed when she was taken to London in 1828 by the family who enslaved her. In Britain, slavery itself was not legally recognised in the same way as in the colonies, and she left her enslavers' household. However, this left her in a difficult position—technically free, but without money, security, or the ability to return home.

In London, she connected with leading abolitionists, including Thomas Pringle, who helped her write her story – in 1831 it became the first account of a Black woman's life in slavery to be published in Britain, and it had a powerful impact. Readers were confronted not with abstract arguments about slavery, but with a personal testimony – detailing beatings, hunger, and the emotional toll of enslavement.

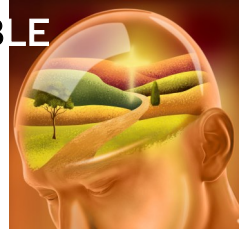
Mary Prince also became directly involved in activism. She petitioned Parliament, asking for permission either to return to the Caribbean as a free woman or to secure her legal freedom more clearly. Her case was highly unusual and significant: an enslaved Black woman speaking in her own voice to the British political system. Her petition and her narrative fed into the growing pressure that led to the 1833 Slavery Abolition Act.

There's no clear record of what happened to her after the early 1830s. But her impact is very clear: she helped shift public opinion by making the realities of slavery impossible to ignore, and she carved out a rare space for Black women's voices in political debate. In practical terms, Mary Prince changed minds not through status or power, but through testimony.

That's what makes her stand out: she forced a society that preferred to look away to listen.

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



Martha: the stressed-out hostess

Washing, cleaning, cooking, disciplining children, organising, planning . . . sometimes it feels like the to-do list only ever gets longer.

Martha was busy serving all the time – and she was good at it. She knew how to run a home and a family well. But the stress and anxiety of all the demands was warping her priorities.

Jesus invited Martha to something better. Her serving was a good thing, no doubt; but it wasn't the best thing. Or the most balanced thing for her wellbeing. Jesus wanted to elevate her from simply being a server to becoming a disciple.

It was wonderful that she had such a servant's heart; but by focusing on the 'what', her serving heart had forgotten about the 'who' stood before her.

We live in a busy, task-orientated world. We know what it is to find value and identity in the work we do and serving we provide.

So Jesus wants to do the same for us as He did for Martha: to elevate us, to make us more than what we do. He longs to make us His disciples; people with servant hearts who find rest, love and wellbeing in His refreshing presence.

GREAT CHRISTIAN HYMNWRITERS CHARLOTTE ELLIOTT

Just as I am, without one plea,
but that thy blood was shed for me,
and that thou bidd'st me come to thee,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

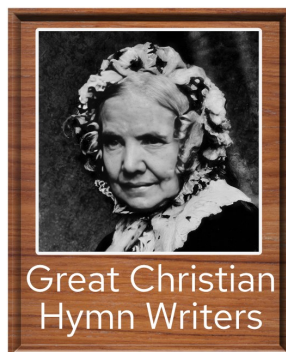
Charlotte Elliott was born on 18 March 1789 in Clapham, London, into a devout and cultured Christian family. Her father, Charles Elliott, was a silk merchant, and the family was strongly influenced by the evangelical movement within the Church of England. Her grandfather, Henry Venn, was a respected preacher associated with the Clapham Sect, the group of Christians known for their commitment to social reform, missionary work, and spiritual renewal.

The Elliott household was large and affectionate, with many siblings who later became involved in Christian ministry and education. Charlotte was intelligent, artistic, and gifted with words. In her younger years she enjoyed writing humorous poetry and was known for her lively personality.

However, Charlotte's life changed dramatically when she became seriously ill in her early thirties. The illness left her physically disabled for much of the remainder of her life. In an age when chronic illness often led to isolation, Charlotte struggled not only with physical weakness but also with discouragement and feelings of uselessness.

One of the most important moments in Charlotte's spiritual life came through a visit from the Swiss evangelist César Malan. During a conversation about faith, Charlotte confessed her frustration and uncertainty. Malan gently told her that she must come to Christ "just as you are." Those words stayed with her for years.

Later, while her family busied themselves organising a fundraising bazaar for a school for the daughters of poor clergymen, Charlotte felt painfully aware of her inability to help because of her illness. During a sleepless night filled with spiritual struggle, she reflected



again on the invitation of Christ to come without pretence or self-improvement. Out of that experience came the hymn: "Just as I am."

The hymn was first published in 1835 and quickly became widely loved throughout Britain and beyond. Its enduring power lies in its clear presentation of the gospel of grace, reminding us that salvation is not earned by good works, spiritual achievement, or moral perfection. Instead, we are welcomed by Christ through His mercy and sacrifice.

The writer comes to God "though tossed about with many a conflict, many a doubt." That line resonates strongly today in a world where many people wrestle quietly with anxiety, loneliness, disappointment, or spiritual uncertainty. Yet the hymn is not despairing. Every verse moves toward hope, the very heart of the gospel. Christ does not merely tolerate sinners who come to Him; He welcomes them.

"Just as I Am" was famously used by evangelist Billy Graham, often sung during the invitation for people to commit their lives to Christ. Because of this, millions around the world came to associate the hymn with repentance, conversion, and the assurance of God's forgiveness. Yet the hymn is more than an evangelistic appeal. It is also a comfort for lifelong Christians. The Christian life begins by grace and continues by grace. Even mature believers continue to approach God not on the basis of their own righteousness, but through Christ alone.

Despite ongoing illness, Charlotte Elliott continued to write hymns. Though confined much of the time by poor health, her writings travelled far beyond the walls of her home and encouraged countless believers. Friends and family often testified to her patience, humility, and quiet trust in God.

Charlotte Elliott died on 22 September 1871 at the age of 82. By then, her hymn had already become a treasured part of Christian worship.

More than 150 years later, "Just as I Am" still speaks with remarkable freshness. In a culture that constantly pressures people to prove themselves, improve themselves, or hide their weaknesses, Charlotte Elliott's hymn continues to proclaim the Gospel message: we come to Christ not because we are worthy, but because He is gracious.

ODE TO THE SOUTH COAST

Along the shore from Hastings
Where shingle sings beneath the feet,
The gulls wheel white through salted air,
And tide and memory softly meet.

Past Eastbourne's white Victorian pier,
And Brighton's 'Palace' bright with light,
The sea rolls under moody skies
And the coastal wind gusts really bite.

In Worthing, where the wind smells faint
Of seaweed, rain, and vinegary chips,
Old couples stroll the promenade
With folded coats and tightened grips.

The pebble beaches shine like glass
Beneath the summer sun;
Children build their castles high
Before the creeping tides outrun.

At Littlehampton's river mouth
The harbour gulls cry sharp and long,
And the gentle Arun's tidal flow
Speaks of lives the sea has known.

Through Chichester's far coastal plain,
Past Selsey Bill and tidal foam,
The sea keeps calling westward still
As if the waves themselves seek home.

In Portsmouth docks the grey ships rest,
Their shadows deep with years of war;
Yet yachts at anchor dance and bob,
And ferries hum from shore to shore.



Southampton waters gleam at dusk
With masts that clink like chapel bells,
While rainclouds gather over Cowes
And darken expectant Solent swells.

Onward where the New Forest leans
Toward Bournemouth gardens,
warm with sun,
Where summer lingers in the air
And golden evenings run and run.

The cliffs grow soft, the beaches broad,
The deckchairs fade, the arcades close,
And in the fading amber light
The final western sea wind blows.

O English coast of chalk and storm,
Of rusted groynes and battered piers,
You hold the footsteps of the lost
And all the tides of passing years.

And walking there from east to west,
Through shifting cloud and salted
breeze,
One hears beneath the crying gulls
The ancient heartbeat of the seas.



Life becomes lighter when you learn to value peace over pride, patience over haste, and growth over perfection. Listen carefully, speak kindly, and do not let temporary struggles and challenges shape your view.

The way you think, act, and treat others builds and strengthens the life you live each day.

AND PIGS MIGHT FLY.....



On the shore of the Sea of Galilee there lived a pig farmer named Ezra, whose pigs were famous throughout the district for being unusually clever and extremely difficult to manage.

"These pigs," Ezra would say proudly, "understand every word I say." The pigs would immediately prove him wrong by escaping through a fence, stealing figs, or sitting in the neighbour's bath.

Now everyone in the district also knew about the wild man living among the tombs nearby. He shouted at rocks, frightened tourists, and had a habit of snapping chains like bits of dry spaghetti. Parents warned their children: "Eat your lentils or the tomb man will come roaring through the village again."

One morning, Jesus arrived by boat with His disciples. The disciples were already nervous because the storm on the lake had nearly sunk them the night before. Peter climbed out of the boat, looked at the gloomy hillside cemetery and muttered, "Lovely place. Very cheerful."

Then came the screaming.

Down the hill charged the wild man, hair flying everywhere like an explosion in a broom factory. Several disciples immediately hid behind Jesus. Thomas whispered, "Perhaps we should come back another day." The man fell before Jesus shouting, "What have you to do with me?"

At this point, Ezra the pig farmer was nearby counting his herd. "One hundred and thirty-seven... one hundred and thirty-eight..." He glanced up nervously. "Oh no," he sighed. "Not near my pigs."

Jesus calmly commanded the demons to leave the man. The demons, apparently unwilling to wander homeless through the countryside, noticed the herd of pigs nearby and begged, "Send us into the pigs!" Peter leaned toward Matthew and whispered, "This feels like a bad idea." Jesus permitted it.

What happened next was remembered for years.

Now pigs are naturally curious animals. Unfortunately, they are also terrible decision-makers. Suddenly, as though sharing one terrible thought, the entire herd squealed at once and bolted toward the cliff edge. Ezra dropped his counting stick. "No! Not the expensive ones!"

The pigs thundered past like a pink avalanche. One launched itself through a vegetable cart. Another stole a loaf of bread mid-stride. A particularly round pig bounced off a rock and overtook the others. The disciples scattered in every direction. "How are they so fast?!" shouted Andrew.

And then – over the cliff they went. Splash. Splash. Splash.

Silence fell across the hillside except for gentle waves below. Ezra stared at the empty field in horror. "My pigs," he weakly whispered. Peter patted him awkwardly on the shoulder.

"Well... on the positive side, your fencing problem is solved."

Meanwhile the man who had been tormented sat peacefully at Jesus' feet, calm and sane for the first time in years.

Soon the whole district buzzed with rumours. "Did you hear about Ezra's flying pigs?" "They didn't fly." "Well, they did briefly."

And for years afterward, whenever anyone suggested an obviously unlikely situation, people in that region would sigh and say: "yeah, and pigs might fly."

MYTHBUSTERS

There have been many scare stories about electric vehicles (EVs). Concerns about range are fading with better batteries, and charging infrastructure is widespread, with more charging points now than petrol stations. However, one persistent myth is that EVs are more likely to catch fire than petrol or diesel cars. **This is simply not true.**

Data from UK fire services shows that of the 19,000 vehicle fires recorded in 2022/23, only 239 (0.24%) involved EVs, making them far less likely to combust than a petrol car. The UK Energy Saving Trust estimates EV fire risk at just 0.0012%, compared to around 1% for petrol or diesel vehicles.

EVs are less prone to fire because they have fewer moving parts, no flammable fuel, and no exhaust system. While they use lithium-ion batteries - the same technology found in phones and laptops - these are supported by advanced cooling systems that regulate temperature during use and charging.

Although rare, EV fires are taken just as seriously. They can be harder to extinguish, as they do not rely on oxygen to burn, and are sometimes best allowed to burn out under controlled conditions. Water remains the most effective extinguishing method.

As the EV industry evolves, battery technology and safety continue to improve. Rather than avoiding EVs, the focus is on understanding and managing the small risks involved. Lithium-ion batteries are a key part of reducing carbon emissions and are central to a more sustainable future.

There are valid reasons someone might hesitate to buy an EV, such as cost, journey planning, or access to charging points. However, fear of fire should not be one of them - EVs are significantly less likely to catch fire than petrol or diesel cars.

TRUSTEESHIP AND THE BIBLE

If you are a Trustee of any organisation, you will appreciate that it is an important stewardship role to be taken seriously. A church trustee occupies a similar position – one that is deeply rooted in biblical principles of responsibility, integrity, and service. While the word “trustee” does not appear in scripture, the role reflects a pattern of care for communal resources and leadership that runs throughout the Bible.

In the Old Testament, we see early examples of individuals entrusted with the management of sacred resources. The Levites, for instance, were assigned responsibility for the care of the tabernacle (Numbers 3–4), ensuring that the physical space of worship was maintained according to God’s instructions. Similarly, in the construction of the temple, leaders were appointed to oversee materials, finances, and labour. These roles required honesty, accountability, and reverence – qualities still expected of those handling church property and finances today.

The New Testament reinforces these principles through teachings on stewardship. In the Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14–30), Jesus emphasizes that those entrusted with resources must manage them wisely and faithfully. This parable underscores a key responsibility of a trustee: to act not as an owner, but as a caretaker accountable to God. Likewise, 1 Corinthians 4:2 states, “Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful,” directly linking trust with faithfulness.

The early church also provides a structural model which stresses the importance of administrative roles within the church’s mission. In Acts 6:1–6, the apostles appoint individuals to oversee the distribution of resources to widows, ensuring fairness and efficiency. Their role parallels that of today’s trustees – managing practical affairs, freeing spiritual leaders to focus on teaching and prayer.

Traits such as integrity, humility and diligence are essential and just as important as the duties undertaken. Trustees are expected to handle finances transparently, safeguard property responsibly, and make decisions that align with the church’s spiritual mission. The role of Trustee combines practical oversight with spiritual accountability, requiring individuals to manage resources faithfully, serve the community selflessly, and honour God in every decision.

The Eds

SUMMERTIME QUIZ

You might need to go back some time to remember the answers to these. They're not really all that challenging, so have a go without automatically resorting to the web!

1. Songwriter Bernie Taupin wrote songs for which well know musician?
2. How many sides does a dodecahedron have?
3. What colour jersey does the leader of the "Tour de France" cycling race wear?
4. What is the scientific term for the study of poisons?
5. Who was the main character in J.R.R Tolkien's "The Hobbit"?
6. Who or what is the Pink Panther, in the film of the same name?
7. Which was the first city to open a length of underground railway?
8. What do the initials V.S.O.P stand for on a bottle of brandy?
9. What is Sting's real name?
10. Who had a face that "launched a thousand ships"?
11. Who played James Bond in the 1966 film "Casino Royale"?
12. What colour were ET's eyes?
13. With which sport was the Argentine Juan Fangio associated?
14. What was the job of Mellors in "Lady Chatterley's Lover"?
15. In which film does Robert De Niro ask "Are you talkin' to me"?
16. How many gold medals did Mark Spitz win at the Munich Olympics in 1972?
17. On which side of the road do the Japanese drive?
18. Who was the first man in outer space?

19. Which horror movie actor's real name was William Pratt?
20. Which English actor starred in "The Muppet Christmas Carol"?
21. With which sport was Alberto Tomba associated?
22. What is added to brandy to make a sidecar?
23. What type of plant is tequila made from?
24. Who anonymously entered a contest in Monaco to find his lookalike and came third?
25. Which Beatles song is the most covered song of all time?
26. In "Star Trek", what colour was Mr Spock's blood?
27. Which silent film actor was known as "The Great Stone Face"?
28. Who was the first unseeded man to win Wimbledon?
29. What was the first talking film?
30. Which creatures sang "We all stand together"?
31. How many strings are there on a Spanish Guitar?
32. In which US city is the Willis (formerly Sears) tower?
33. In which novel is Winston Smith the main character?
34. Jonquil is a shade of which colour?
35. How many housing property squares are there on a monopoly board?
36. Which martial art has a name that originates from the Japanese word for "gentle"?
37. In which athletics event would you perform a "Fosbury flop"?
38. In darts, what is the maximum checkout score?
39. Which group did Don Henley and Glen Frey form in 1972?
40. To satisfy the adult daily nutritional requirement, it would be possible to drink 1 glass of orange juice, 2 glasses of milk and how many pints of Guinness?

NEXT EDITION

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

offingtonspotlight@gmail.com

A man was walking through town when he saw a sign at a local restaurant advertising lobster tails for just £1:00.

The man walked in and went up to the waitress thinking this must be too good to be true.

"Are you really only charging one pound for lobster tails?"

"That's correct", she replied. Would you like a long one or a short one? They're the same price – just one pound.

"I'll have the longest one you've got!", said the man and handed over a pound coin. The waitress thanked him and told him to sit in a nearby chair. She then disappeared into the kitchen. The man sat down, happily awaiting his lobster tail.

After a minute, the waitress reappeared with a large book, which she opened at the front page. She cleared her throat and began to read: "Once upon a time, there was a big, red lobster..."

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