

SPOTLIGHT

February 2026



Offington Park Methodist Church



In this issue

Dawn's Letter	3	Motoring - Budget Update	14
Cover Photo Explained	4	Raising the Roof	18
February Services	6	Walking with the King	20
Shout! Soup Kitchen	7	Route 66 - Luke	21
JC's Little Nuggets	9	They Changed the World	22
The Quiet Revival (part 2)	10	The Lighthouse Report	24
Great Christian Hymnwriters	12	Spotlight on Mental Wellbeing	25

CHURCH FAMILY NEWS



BIRTHDAY

Diana H

Congratulations and best wishes for your special day!



DEATHS

Shaun C

Richard B

*Our thoughts and prayers are with
their friends and family*

In December, we raised £280 through your generous donations to St Barnabas Hospice. Thank you so much!

OFFERTORIES

Month	Cash & Cheques	Standing Orders
November	£552.00	£5,428.33
December	£708.00	£5,693.33

Dear Friends,



I am delighted to report that the leadership team had a successful planning meeting in late January, and we have booked in some exciting events which will take place throughout this year. We listened to your comments in our café church service and have already booked 'Shout to the Lord,' a praise and worship evening with James Lelean, friends and Offbeat.

We will also bring the children into the last few minutes of church on the 4th Sunday of the month, (we did in January) to share what we have been doing in fun church. We will ask preachers to make the last hymn young people friendly.

There is lots more to come, which will be revealed a bit nearer the time. All of these events will involve a number of people putting in extra effort on our behalf, including advertising, planning, and ensuring things run smoothly. Without a congregation or audience these events will be opportunities wasted. Please support each event and invite people to come with you. There is nothing more powerful than personal recommendation.

We look forward to making some new members at Pentecost on 24th May which you will also recognise as Aldersgate Sunday, a day when we celebrate John Wesley's heart being "strangely warmed". We hope to make this a really joyful occasion. With the lighter evenings coming and Spring just around the corner we have so much to look forward to.

Great is God's faithfulness.

With love and prayers.

Dawn

This year's Spotlight covers are featuring illustrations by local artist Tim R, a retired Methodist minister and member of our church.



Each cover will depict an animal mentioned in the Bible that can also be found in the UK, alongside seasonal British wildflowers. It is worth remembering that familiar animal and plant names do not always refer to the same species as the ones we're used to seeing here.

February's cover features the **badger**, an animal that presents something of a mystery in the Bible. The word "badger" appears only a few times in the Old Testament, and then only in certain English translations. When scholars translated the Old Testament from the Hebrew language, they encountered the word "tahash". It appears in the book of Exodus, where detailed instructions are given for building the tabernacle, a portable, tent-like place of worship used by the Israelites during their journey from Egypt to the Promised Land.

Exodus chapter 26 describes how the tabernacle was to be covered with layers of fabric and animal skins. In verse 14 of that chapter: "You shall also make a covering of ram skins dyed red for the tent, and a covering of tahash above that."

What could "tahash" mean? From the context, it appears to describe a weather-proof material similar to ram skins, but with so few references to draw on, scholars were unable to identify it with certainty. Some older translations render it as "porpoise skins", but it is difficult to imagine how the Israelites, wandering in the Sinai desert, could have found enough porpoises to cover a large tent. The translators of the King

James Version, recognising this difficulty, opted for “badger”, though perhaps not the familiar British animal.

The truth is that nobody knows exactly what kind of animal skin “tahash” refers to. Modern Bible translations tend to preserve this uncertainty, describing it simply as fine leather or, in the words of the New International Version, “another type of durable leather”.

This month’s flowers: primrose, winter violet, and crocus.

Tuesday 10 February at 10:00am:

You’re Only Young Twice!



**If you could have your time again, what advice
would you give your 20-year-old self?**

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

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FEBRUARY

Services



Sunday 1 February 2026

8.00am	Holy Communion	Rev Dawn Carn
10.30am	Cafe Church	Rev Dawn Carn

Sunday 8 February 2026

10.30am	Holy Communion	Rev Dawn Carn
3.30pm	Messy Church	

Sunday 15 February 2026

8.00am	Breakfast Church	
10.30am	Morning Worship	Mrs Pam Frost

Sunday 22 February 2026

10.30am	Morning Worship	Mr Adam Cook
10.30am	Fun Church	Rev Dawn Carn



Shout.

Street Homeless Outreach



Worthing Soup Kitchen

A very big thank you for your kindness and generosity with your donations of food money and items for our charity shops. This year we were able to make up over eighty Christmas food hampers for needy families and especially for the children. We held two 'Santa' events in the Shout Café and had Santa's Grotto in one of our charity shops.

As well as the regular outreach services, Sunday morning breakfasts and supplying sleeping bags and tents to rough sleepers, we helped people with mental health problems. Some of these were contemplating suicide, and through counselling and guiding them to the appropriate agencies, we made a difference to them. One person recently wrote to us to say that they genuinely would not have known what they would have done if it wasn't for Shout. Since getting help, this person has, in gratitude, worked hard to raise additional funds for us.

Your donations of whatever kind go to help people such as this in many diverse needy situations. The needy and homeless need our help not just at Christmas, but all year round. Please remember Shout when you are buying food, or disposing of clothing, books, bric-a-brac, etc.

Please think about visiting our charity shops, located at:
219 Tarring Road, near Wall Bros carpets; and
147 Montague Street, next to Silverthorne's jewellers

If you have a donation but cannot get to the shop, let me know via the church office. I can arrange collection. Thank you as ever for your generous support.

John B

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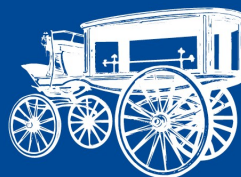


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Lancing (01903) 753 184 | **Shoreham-by-Sea** (01273) 452 169

JC's LITTLE NUGGETS

Precious Gifts (based on John 3 v16)



"For God so loved the World that he gave his one and only Son".

When I was 15 years old, my goal in life was to be an Apprentice Engineer. It seemed unlikely I would achieve such a goal, for as a family, we were materially poor (spiritually rich, mind you) and all the tools, safety kit (overalls and special boots) and other equipment for this position would cost a lot of money.

Now my Dad, who had always seemed to me to be distant and tough, was the owner of a fine watch that he had been given by his Father. He was very proud of this possession.

One day, I noticed that he no longer had the watch with him, but I suddenly had all the things I needed to be an Apprentice Engineer. My father had showed his love for me by giving up something very precious to him - his watch - to buy my stuff.

We see something similar in our reading from John. The Lord loved us so much that he was prepared to give us his most precious gift - his only son Jesus Christ.

My Dad, the apprenticeship stuff and the watch have now all gone, but God's precious gift remains with us - now and forever, giving us guidance, forgiveness and hope.

These things are so needed by us and the world today.

God bless you all.

John C

Try to be a rainbow in someone else's cloud
Maya Angelou

THE QUIET REVIVAL (part 2)

In the last issue of Spotlight, we featured an article about a survey showing that **Church attendance in England and Wales is UP**, with the most dramatic increase among young men. The survey found that there are now over **2m more** people attending church than there were six years ago. That's good news – but not, it seems, for all.



A nationwide survey by the UK charity **National Churches Trust**, which works to assist and preserve historic church buildings, has raised concerns that as many as 2,000 UK churches could close within the next five years. The charity, gathered 3,600 responses from congregations in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland in May and June 2025.

The findings reveal that while most congregations remain optimistic about the future of their buildings, a small but significant proportion fear closure is imminent. According to the survey, nearly 70% of respondents are confident their church will still be open for worship in 2030, with a further 26% saying it is “probably” secure.

However, 5% said they were unsure their church could survive, a figure which, if applied nationally, would amount to around one in every 20 congregations shutting the doors. Not surprisingly, churches in rural areas emerged as the most vulnerable, with **7% of respondents from countryside locations anticipating closure**. If borne out, this equates to around 900 rural churches closing in the next five years.

The survey also highlighted denominational differences, with Methodists being the most uncertain – 12% of respondents predicted their church may close by 2030. Next were Presbyterians, with 9% expressing doubt. Baptists and

Independents showed smaller but notable levels of concern, while Anglicans – who represent the largest share of congregations – reported a lower closure risk of 4%. Despite the smaller percentage, the sheer number of Anglican churches means this could still translate to nearly 700 closures, including around 40 in Wales.

Listed status also appears to play a role in confidence levels. Congregations of historic Grade I listed churches were more likely to believe their buildings would remain open when compared to those in unlisted properties. Cathedrals, meanwhile, expressed complete certainty that they would still be operating in 2030!

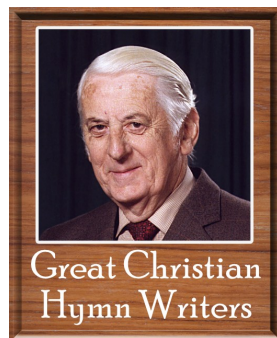
Conclusion

The findings from this survey appears at odds with the recent perceived increase across the country in church attendance., which is likely more noticeable in urban and city centre churches. Church Trustees, if they aren't already doing so, will need to review their financial resilience – the ability of the church to withstand unexpected events which could impact its ability to continue financially. Churches form a significant part of the charity sector, which is seeing increased demand for services, rising staff costs and lower access to funding.

But financial resilience isn't just about money, it's also about compliance with statutory responsibilities, evaluating opportunities to deliver the church's mission and ministry more efficiently and considering how to cope with, and recover from, shocks such as reduced income, unexpected increases in costs, or unforeseen high value expenditure requirements. It's about prayerfully preparing simple financial plans and ensuring all members of the church governing body accepts and works with them responsibly.

FRED PRATT GREEN

*God is here! As we his people
Meet to offer praise and prayer,
May we find in fuller measure
What it is in Christ we share.
Here, as in the world around us,
All our varied skills and arts
Wait the coming of his spirit
Into open minds and hearts.*



Fred Pratt Green was born in 1903 at Roby, near Liverpool. His father, Charles Green, was a leather merchant and Wesleyan local preacher, a position from which he resigned because he could not accept current teaching about eternal damnation for unbelievers. Fred was the third child of Charles and his wife Hannah. Although known by his close family as Derick, he adopted the abbreviation Fred for all his hymn writing and Pratt from a relative, also a Methodist preacher.

Green was educated at Huyton High School and later attended Wallasey Grammar School, Cheshire, after the family moved there, before moving on to Rydal, a Methodist boarding school at Colwyn Bay, North Wales. The young Fred showed quite an interest in becoming an architect, but instead went to work in his father's leather business. After hearing a sermon on John Masefield's *The Everlasting Mercy* at During the pastorate of Revd William Rushby at Claremount Road Wesleyan Chapel, Wallasey, Fred applied for the Wesleyan ministry. Around this same time, his friend Eric Thomas offered for the Anglican priesthood but Fred opted to become a Methodist, attracted by Methodism's open welcome to Holy Communion.

Fred initially served in the Severn Valley Circuit and from 1925 to 1928, he attended Didsbury Theological College. Here, he formed the view that the Bible should not be interpreted literally and strictly, but that despite the challenges, the Church should seek

Christian unity and involve itself in social concerns. He was ordained in 1928 and became chaplain at the new Methodist girls' boarding school at Hunmanby, Yorkshire, where he met and married Marjorie Dowsett who taught French at the school. After serving in the Filey Methodist circuit, Fred moved several times: to Gillingham near Bradford, and to Gants Hill, Ilford, where he combined his ministerial duties with those of an air raid warden! After Gants Hill, Fred moved to Finsbury Park, London, and the Dome Mission at Brighton. Here, in the Dome Concert Hall, he regularly preached to a congregation exceeding 2,000! In 1952 he moved to Shirley near Croydon, and in 1957 to York, ending his career in 1964 at Sutton Trinity not far from Shirley. In 1967, Green was appointed to the working party planning Hymns and Songs, a supplement to The Methodist Hymn Book, just as he retired to Norwich at the end of a distinguished itinerant ministry – and so began a new career which led to his being acclaimed as the finest Methodist hymn-writer since Charles Wesley!

Green's hymns crossed theological, denominational and national boundaries and his work is in hundreds of hymnals worldwide. It is true to say that Fred Pratt Green made an immense and unique contribution to hymnody. Throughout his life, however, he struggled with the changing face of theology, with both intellectual problems and social needs, preaching and writing, as the hymn "God is here" attests, 'in an age of change and doubt'. Yet despite this, over two decades Green wrote around 300 hymns and songs, one of which was included in the official order of service for the Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II. Fred used the royalties from his hymn writing to set up The Pratt Green Trust, a charitable body for the furtherance of hymnody and church music. In 1995, he was awarded an MBE for services to hymn writing.

Marjorie Green died in 1993 at Cromwell House Methodist Home for the Aged, Norwich, where they had lived since 1990, and Fred followed her to glory on 22 October 2000, whilst an Ecumenical Conference funded by the Pratt Green Trust, was taking place.

MOTORING

It was some time ago that the Chancellor announced a raft of new measures that seemed to be both good and bad news for car drivers, depending on what car they have and how much driving they do. Let's unpick it a bit.



Pay-per-mile for EVs

This was by far the biggest news - a levy of 3p per mile from April 2028, adding an extra £240 per year on average to the cost of driving an EV. Pay-per-mile is generally a good thing as higher road users pay more, but the government wants to encourage EV use and this idea hit sales of all EVs immediately. The announcement also seemed premature, as when questioned the government didn't know how it's going to implement this. It says that mileage will be recorded as part of the MOT test – but new cars don't have an MOT test until three years old. Apparently, the wacky idea is that motorists will self-report by going to an MOT centre for a mileage check even though they don't need an MOT. Yeah, right!

Fuel duty increase is cancelled again

Good news for petrol, diesel or hybrid car drivers, this. No inflationary fuel duty increases for the 15th year in a row! You might wonder why the government don't bin the whole schedule of increases altogether. They won't because it is seen as the Chancellor 'giving back' and to keep it would be highly unpopular.

Isn't it odd that 'encouraging EV use' results in higher charges for EVs while freezing the costs of driving a fossil-fuel car?

Luxury car tax threshold raised

This unpopular tax - which forces buyers of cars that cost over £40,000 to pay an extra £425 in road tax per year for five years - was introduced in 2017 as a tax raid on luxury vehicles, but car price increases since then mean that many ordinary and certainly not luxurious family cars are caught in the net. As EVs still tend to be more expensive than petrol cars, a disproportionately high number of EVs were falling foul of this tax. So from April 2026 this threshold will increase to £50,000. Good news in general, but it does mean that anyone buying a car priced from £40K to £50K before April will pay £2,100 more in road tax alone. Better late than never, but for the price of a little tax revenue, the increase could have been backdated to last April and new car sales would keep rolling.

However, it is what it is (as they say) and if you're looking at a car costing less than £40,000, particularly an EV, buy it now as prices will almost immediately go up by a few thousand in April once the threshold moves.

Motability changes

Motability plays an important part in helping people with disabilities to retain their independence. But about 20% of all new car sales are 'luxury' brands bought through Motability - high for a taxpayer-funded disability scheme. So, in a surprise move, the government removed these 'luxury' car brands.

Electric car grant extended

A further £1.3 billion was allocated in the budget to the EV grant. However, whilst this delighted car manufacturers, it doesn't really help lower-income households make the switch. Even with the grant, many still won't be able to afford a new car. If the government is serious about getting people out of old petrol or diesel bangers, maybe extending the scheme to used EVs and offering a scrappage scheme would help?

More money for EV public charging points

Another £200 million for more public charging points, hopefully directed at locations that are currently underserved in charging infrastructure. However, no announcements were made on help to reduce the cost of public charging, which impacts again people on lower incomes who won't have the ability to charge at home.

Longer-term impact?

The government is suggesting that there has "never been a better time to switch" to electric, and there is no doubt that the £3,750 Electric Car Grant, the additional 100,000 new local public chargers on their way and the future reforms to planning permissions to make it easier for folk without private driveways to install home chargers will all help.

But regulating that EV sales must hit certain targets whilst proposing a pay-per-mile tax (bearing in mind 3p per mile is the starting point) and keeping the cost of refuelling petrol cars doesn't sound like a coherent long-term strategy designed to encourage those 'thinking of buying one' into actually buying one.

EVs are a great option for many drivers, but they are still not perfect for everyone. And as of today, they are still relatively expensive and outside the budget of a good many people. Some things still need to change.

WHAT'S ON - FEBRUARY 2026

Sun	1	8:00am	Rev Dawn Carn	Holy Communion
		10:30am	Rev Dawn Carn	Café Church
Tue	3	12:00pm	Tuesday Lunch & Social Club	
Thu	5	11:00am	Bible Fellowship	
		1:30pm	Knit 'n' Natter	
		7:30pm	Thursday's	Social Group
Sun	8	10:30am	Rev Dawn Carn	Holy Communion
		3:30pm	Messy Church Team	Messy Church
Tue	10	10:00am	Grumpy Old Men	Advice for your younger self
		12:00pm	Tuesday Lunch & Social Club	
Thu	12	11:00am	Bible Fellowship	
Fri	13	10:30am	CAMEO	Talk on Antique Jewellery
Sun	15	8:00am	Breakfast Church Team	Breakfast Church
		10:30am	Mrs Pam Frost	Morning Worship
Tue	17	12:00pm	Tuesday Lunch & Social Club	
Wed	18	10:30am	Mid-month Communion	
Thu	19	11:00am	Bible Fellowship	
		1:30pm	Knit 'n' Natter	
Sat	21	6:00pm	Quiz Night	See poster opposite
Sun	22	10:30am	Mr Adam Cook	Morning worship
		10:30am	Rev Dawn Carn	Fun Church
Tue	24	12:00pm	Tuesday Lunch & Social Club	
Thu	26	11:00am	Bible Fellowship	
Fri	27	10:30am	CAMEO	With the Boomwhackers

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RAISING THE ROOF

We were already late. That's the part no one ever tells. They say faith is patient, measured, calm. But that morning, faith was breathless. It was sweat on my back and grit in my teeth and Eli's weight biting into my palms as we took turns gripping the corners of his mat.



By the time we reached the house, the street was choked with people. Every window, every doorway - filled. Someone said Jesus was inside. Someone else said he'd already begun to speak. I remember thinking, *"of course he has. He doesn't wait for the broken to catch up"*. But Eli didn't complain. He never did. That somehow made it worse.

We tried the door first. Then the windows. Then shouting. "Please - he can't walk!" Faces turned, frowned, turned away again. No one moved. I felt something ugly rise in my chest then - anger, sharp and hot. Not at them. At myself. At the way the world always seemed built for people who didn't need help. I don't know which of us said it. Maybe all of us at once. "The roof."

The owner of the house would not have agreed if we'd asked. I know that. But desperation has a way of making its own permission. We carried Eli up the side steps and onto the roof. The sun was high now, and the tiles were warm under our knees as we scraped away clay and branches. My hands shook - not from the effort, but from the fear that this was foolishness dressed up as faith. What if Jesus was angry? What if we were wrong about Him?

Below us, His voice stopped. That terrified me more than anything.

We tied the ropes around the mat, knotted them twice, then three times. Eli finally spoke. "Don't drop me." It was a joke. I think. But none of us laughed.

As we lowered him, the room came into view - crowded, still, faces tilted upward in confusion and irritation. And there, in the centre, stood Jesus. He looked up. I had imagined many things in that moment: surprise, annoyance, judgment. What I saw instead was something like

recognition. As if He'd been expecting us. As if this - this ridiculous hole in the roof, this man descending like a prayer with ropes - was exactly on time.

Eli touched the ground.

The ropes slackened in my hands, and suddenly I was aware of my heart pounding so hard it hurt. I leaned forward, dust falling into my hair, and listened.

"Son," Jesus said.

Not *paralyzed man*. Not *disruption*. Son. "Your sins are forgiven."

I remember thinking, *That's not what we came for*. But I also remember the way Eli's shoulders loosened, as though something heavier than his legs had just been lifted.

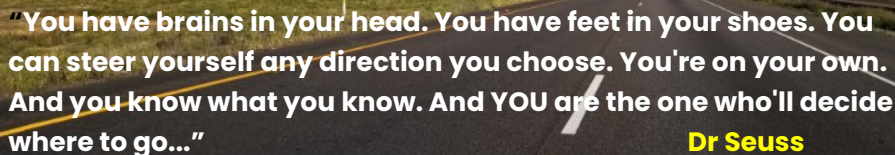
The rest happened quickly. Angry murmurs. Sharp words. And then Jesus - still calm, still steady - told Eli to stand. I swear to you, I stopped breathing.

Eli stood.

Not slowly. Not shakily. He stood like someone waking from a long, bad dream and realizing his body was his again. He rolled up the mat - the mat we had carried for years - and laughed. And laughed. And the crowd parted for him like water.

We stayed on the roof for a long time after that, staring at the hole, at the light pouring through it. Someone eventually said we should say sorry to the owner. Someone else said we should help fix it.

All I could think was this: we had come to Jesus carrying our friend's body. *We left carrying our faith*.



"You have brains in your head. You have feet in your shoes. You can steer yourself any direction you choose. You're on your own. And you know what you know. And YOU are the one who'll decide where to go..."

Dr Seuss

WALKING WITH THE KING

No time in history has ever offered everyday people such access to witness the world's leaders at work. Major fallouts, announcements, plans, debates and breaking news - from every corner of the globe - come to us as they happen! The world stage is in our homes and on our screens. We can 'be there' as the most powerful men and women make decisions that impact millions, sign trade agreements that reach into our own communities, and have arguments that reverberate halfway across the world.



Yet as much as we seem to see more of the world's leaders, they are no more accessible than in any other era of history. Hidden behind security guards and the high gates of fancy buildings, the people shaping our world and our lives remain unreachable. Perhaps this is what should make the story of Jesus coming to the earth stand out the most. It is a remarkable unveiling of a king.

This world leader wasn't born in a palace, but a barn. He wasn't raised in luxury but as a refugee, fleeing from harm. Growing up under the influence of a lowly carpenter, he wasn't well educated or trained in public speaking. And his journey through life never involved private transportation, bodyguards or rubbing elbows with the rich and powerful.

Over 2,000 years ago, Jesus was laid in a feeding trough for cattle to give us one unmistakable message: the king of the world is here - with his people. One of the names given to Jesus was "Immanuel" which literally means: "God with us".

God with us. Among us. Present. Imagine it. The ultimate world leader was born and raised in everyday places that anyone could have access to and could have found. And find it they did. Shepherds and wise men, opposite ends of the social spectrum, all found King Jesus in his early years.

It's hard to imagine about today's world leaders, but the ultimate world leader grew up to live a life where he could be encountered on any old street corner or dirt road. Travelling everywhere by foot, crowds from every town flocked to meet him - and he welcomed them, cared for them, loved them and gave them heavenly wisdom for their lives. The ultimate world leader encouraging every day people.

"I am gentle and humble in heart. I will give you rest for your souls." Gentle. Humble. A leader offering true rest for the weary, the worried and the suffering.

Jesus, as the true God of this world, displayed his kingly authority over it. He healed the sick, opened the eyes of the blind and raised the dead. He rules, yet he came to save. He has all power, yet he uses his strength to lift us up, not put us down.

"I haven't come to be served, but to serve," Jesus explained. "And to give my life

as a ransom for many.”

In his power, he even defeated death when he rose from the grave after his execution, opening the way for all who trust him to enter his eternal kingdom. Now we can all become citizens of heaven. We don't have to earn it or apply for it. It is Jesus' gift to us; anything that would have counted against us entering his perfect kingdom is paid for in his death.

Our world leaders are in sight, yet out of reach. But the true ruler was born and then lived in a way that shows he is here to be grasped by all. Jesus' kingdom is defined by the king who walks beside his people. With him, we are never alone.

A JOURNEY THROUGH THE BIBLE

Luke



How does Jesus treat outcasts, foreigners, slaves and sinners? What about women? Luke is the book for the people society often looks down on.

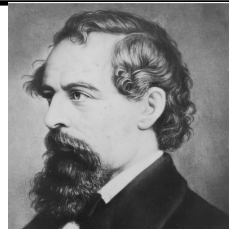
Luke is the only Bible writer who wasn't a Jew. So he tells us about Jesus as an outsider and underdog. He wants the down-and-outs to know Jesus is for them! His retelling is logical, correct and in order, so we can be completely sure about the events of Jesus' life.

Our faith is based on facts, not just nice ideas. Luke continually shows that the 'good', religious people who should 'get' Jesus really don't – and those who do understand Him are the ones you would least expect.

Many of Jesus' most amazing and famous stories are only found in this book; and the heroes are often outcasts. Each story draws us in and forces us to think differently; to think like Him! Jesus comes to turn everything upside-down. Take a close look as He seeks out the misfits and the losers and lifts them up as His own special people. In His kingdom, the poor are rich, the last are first, and the lost are found.

THEY CHANGED THE WORLD

Charles Dickens



Charles Dickens consistently used his novels as a form of social critique, exposing and attacking the oppressive systems of Victorian England. Rather than writing political theory, he told emotionally compelling stories that made injustice felt, not just understood. His power lay in turning abstract systems into human suffering.

Dickens wrote at the height of the Industrial Revolution, when rapid urbanization created extreme wealth alongside brutal poverty. *Oliver Twist* exposes the cruelty of the workhouse system created by the Poor Laws. The famous line “Please, sir, I want some more” is a direct indictment of a system designed to punish rather than relieve poverty.

Hard Times attacks industrial capitalism’s reduction of people to “hands” - units of labour stripped of imagination, emotion, and dignity. The factory town of Coketown is deliberately bleak and mechanical.

Dickens had firsthand experience with the legal system - his father was imprisoned for debt - and he repeatedly portrayed institutions as slow, dehumanizing, and indifferent to suffering. *Bleak House* centres on the fictional lawsuit Jarndyce and Jarndyce, a case so long-running it destroys everyone involved.

Clerks, lawyers, and officials are often depicted as faceless or absurd, emphasizing how bureaucracy erases moral responsibility, and the Court of Chancery becomes a symbol of a legal system that exists to sustain itself rather than deliver justice.

Dickens was especially fierce in his condemnation of child labour and the abuse of children, likely shaped by his own childhood experience working in a blacking factory. *David Copperfield* draws directly from Dickens’s life, depicting child labour as humiliating and soul-crushing, and *Nicholas Nickleby* exposes abusive boarding schools like Dotheboys Hall, where profit matters more than children’s safety or education.

In his challenges of social class and the culture of respectability, Dickens repeatedly mocked the idea that moral worth correlates with wealth, education, or social standing. Characters like Mr. Gradgrind in *Hard Times* embody a philosophy that prizes “facts” and efficiency over compassion. In *Great Expectations*, Dickens dismantles the fantasy that becoming a “gentleman” leads to happiness or virtue, revealing how class aspiration can corrupt identity.

Victorian punishment systems were designed more for deterrence than rehabilitation, and Dickens viewed prisons and the justice system as cruel and ineffective. *Little Dorrit* focuses on the Marshalsea debtors’ prison, showing how poverty becomes hereditary when families are trapped in institutionalized punishment. He was a fierce opponent of capital punishment and harsh prison conditions.

But he also used sentiment as a weapon. By deliberately making readers love characters like Tiny Tim or Joe Gargery, Dickens forced the middle and upper classes to emotionally confront the consequences of policies they might otherwise ignore. To him, reform would come not from statistics but from awakened conscience.

Dickens published most of his novels in serial form, making them affordable and widely read, which allowed him to shape public opinion over time, week by week. His stories often sparked public debate and influenced attitudes toward reform, especially regarding child welfare and legal reform.

In Short, Dickens didn’t just ask readers to see injustice - he made it impossible to look away.

A little boy went to his best friend’s house so they could walk to school together. When his friend came out he saw him saying goodbye to an elderly lady. “Who was that old lady in your house?” the boy asked. “That’s my grandma”, said the friend. She’s come to stay for a few weeks. “Where does she usually live?” asked his friend. “At the train station”, the boy replied. The friend was astonished. “She lives at the train station?”



“Yes,” the boy said, “whenever we want her, we just go along there and get her.”

THE LIGHTHOUSE @ OFFINGTON PARK

the lighthouse
@ Offington Park



SOFT PLAY AND CAFE

The Lighthouse started 2026 as it ended 2025 – with parties (including one for our hard-working staff and equally hard-working volunteers).

The year has got off to a tremendous start with many sessions, especially the 9:30am -11:00am slot, full to bursting. If this is a session you think you might want, please book early via our website as we wouldn't want to disappoint the children by turning you away. Half-term will soon be upon us and again we are featuring some of our popular extra activities - Gill's crafts, Dominic's drumming and pottery painting.

Party slots are now open to book as far ahead as Easter 2027 (we're not joking when we say they're popular and we're already getting bookings into the autumn this year) so book early and get your preferred slot.

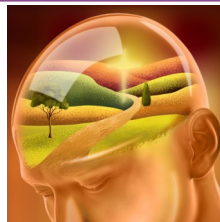
In other news, over Easter we are expanding the toddler area to make it more attractive to really young ones and to those with sensory needs. We will be extending the length a little, squaring it off and enclosing it with mesh, creating two entry gates to keep little ones in and safe! Whilst this means we will be closed in the week leading up to Easter, we hope you'll be pleased with the result.

As we continue to look for ways to enhance our community offerings, we are ever more reliant on our wonderful volunteers to make things happen. Our Saturday parties are staffed by a mix of paid staff and volunteers and many a host parent has commented how they work as a well-oiled team to ensure a stress-free occasion for everyone. Our Google reviews tell it like it is!

Could you be one of our team? There's no experience necessary, but a lot of fun and friendship to be had and we offer a loyalty scheme under which you can exchange volunteer hours for FREE soft play sessions for friends and family. We're flexible on timings that suit you, too. Interested? If so, come and see us soon!

SPOTLIGHT ON MENTAL WELLBEING

As we seemingly crawl through the winter months, many of us struggle with the dark mornings and general shortage of sunlight. With the socializing and distraction of the Christmas season well and truly behind us, some of us may also struggle with loneliness or just feeling overwhelmed with day-to-day tasks. For some, living with a mental health condition, diagnosed or not, may add a layer of challenge that seems impossible to overcome.



In our society, it sometimes takes a lot of effort to admit that we are struggling. The default answer to 'how are you?' tends to be 'I'm alright.' But are we really alright? And if we are not, do we feel we have the resources to get ourselves in a better place or do we feel that we just need to 'get on with it'? Looking after our mental health is as important as all the things we do to look after others. Here are some tips on how we can prioritise taking care of this vital part of our wellbeing:

Make time for yourself (and to do something you enjoy)

This can be a tricky one if you have others who are heavily dependent on your care. However, as I was told once, if you go under, everyone suffers. So it might mean that going by yourself to, say, get some milk might take just a bit longer than necessary. Perhaps you might have the time to do something more indulgent, such as meeting a friend for coffee, getting your hair done or having a night away.

Talk about how you are feeling!

Struggling? Have a chat with someone in your circle. Sometimes, when we voice the emotions, they seem to lose the hold they have on us. You might be surprised to find that other people are struggling as well and/or are able to offer you much needed support.

The professionals are there for a reason!

You think it might be more than just a 'bad day'? Talking to a friend about your feelings hasn't really helped? Are you feeling like you are unable to function in your day-to-day tasks? It might be time to speak to someone 'professional.' At the end of this article are a few numbers that you can call for free support to get through the doldrums.

Wishing everyone a February where they feel listened to and supported!

Tess L

Sussex Mental Health Line - 0800 030 9500/ 0300 5000 101

Support for mental health concerns including anxiety and depression

West Sussex Talking Therapy - 01903 703540

Self-referral service offering an assessment and treatment plan

West Sussex Carers Association - 0300 028 8888

If you are a carer for a family member or friend you can be supported with information and signposting services for your most pressing needs.

You are invited to a...

Gastropub Lunch

...in aid of...



Sunday 22 March 2026

in the main church

2:00pm - 4:15pm

Featuring...

Lunch: **two courses**

Team Challenge: **spot the odd one out**

Pub Praise: **led by Jubilate**

Please sign-up on the sheet in the church
foyer with names and menu choices

OFFINGTON CAMEO

Friday 13 February:

“Antique Jewellery”

An illustrated talk by Andrew Pescott

Friday 27 February:

“The Boomwhackers”

An enjoyable morning with Nicola Disney

We meet in the Allan Fletcher Hall,
10:15am for a 10:30am start

CAMEO

CHRISTIAN AID NEEDS YOU!!

Chris & Liz L and Frances B have been our reps for Christian Aid since 2003. At the age of 80, they all would like to stand down as they no longer have the energy needed to organise fundraising events.



In the past year they have held a Good Friday Soup Lunch, which raised £705, a coffee morning in Christian Aid week making £190, and a garden party in August which raised £470. In addition, £683 was raised from envelope donations during Christian Aid Week in May, making £2048 plus gift aid.

Christian Aid do magnificent work and it would be sad if the church couldn't continue this work. If you think you could take over, or you know anyone who might be willing, please contact Chris, Liz or Frances. They will all be glad to help the new people find their feet.

This is a golden opportunity for someone to take a blank canvas, really make a difference and put their stamp on our fundraising efforts. And remember, as the rep you don't have to do it all - you just have to rally people to make sure it happens. Is God calling you?
Liz, Chris and Frances



A message from Sasha at **Action for Children**.

“Thank you so much to everyone at OPMC for raising an incredible £410 towards our Secret Santa campaign. We are truly grateful for your generosity and continued support – it makes a huge difference to the children, young people and families we work with.
Best wishes, Sasha - Action for Children”.

Karen and I add our own heartfelt thanks for your amazing contribution.

Steve C

NEXT EDITION

<i>Copy Deadline</i>	<i>Publication Date</i>
<i>Sunday 22 February 2026</i>	<i>Thursday 26 February 2026</i>

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

offingtonspotlight@gmail.com

Three apprentice vampire bats were told by their teacher to get as much blood as they can find. Fifteen minutes later, the first vampire bat returned with a little bit of blood on his teeth.

'Where did you get that blood' asked the teacher. The bat pointed to a chicken and said, 'See that chicken? That's where I got it.'

Shortly after, the second vampire bat returned with blood dripping from his snout. The teacher was impressed and asked, 'Where did you get that blood?'

The bat pointed and said, 'Do you see that cow just beyond the chicken? That's where I got it.'



Some time later the third bat returned with his whole face caked in blood. The teacher was mightily impressed, as were the others.

'Where did you get all that blood!' asked the teacher. The third bat pointed to the nearby village. 'Do you see that big church tower?', he said.

Yes, they all replied. 'Well, I didn't,' said the third bat.

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