

# SPOTLIGHT

Offington Park Methodist Church Magazine



December 2025 - January 2026

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### The Missing Baby Jesus - A Story for Christmas

The children's nativity play was going perfectly - until it wasn't.

Mary and Joseph were standing proudly by the manger, the shepherds were watching their flocks (mostly behaving), and the angels were looking suitably angelic.

Then came the moment when Mary was to lift the blanket and reveal the baby Jesus. She smiled sweetly, pulled back the cloth... and gasped. The manger was empty!

The audience held its breath. Joseph looked alarmed. The shepherds started whispering.

Finally, little Mary looked out at the crowd and declared, *"Don't worry - He's around here somewhere! He was just born, so He can't crawl far!"*

The Minister later found the baby Jesus - still smiling - tucked safely into the donkey's hay.

Apparently, even toy Saviours need a nap!



**The Editors would like to wish all our readers,  
advertisers and contributors  
a very happy Christmas  
and a peaceful and blessed New Year.**

## ***Dear Friends,***

The run up to Christmas is often intense, and more so if you're involved in church activities! In our full diaries and calendars, we juggle shopping trips, school and church events, travel plans, decorating the house, preparing menus, and gatherings of every kind. Before we know it, the days blur together - and the quiet wonder of Christ's birth can feel surprisingly distant.

But in the middle of the hurry, there is an invitation. Jesus gently calls us to pause, breathe, and remember why we celebrate in the first place.

### **“Be still, and know that I am God.” Psalm 46:10**

Stillness is not something that happens by accident in December. It is something we choose. And when we choose it - even for a few minutes - we create space for Christ to speak peace into our cluttered hearts.

So, here are a few simple ways to make time for Jesus this Christmas:

1. **Start the day with a moment of worship.** Before reaching for your phone or to-do list, whisper a prayer of gratitude. Read a short passage from Luke 1–2 or meditate on a favourite Christmas hymn.
2. **Keep the manger in focus.** Place a nativity scene somewhere you see it often — on the mantelpiece, by the front door, or near the tree. Let it be a visual reminder that Christ is the centre of this season.
3. **Build in “prayer pauses.”** Whether queueing in the shops, wrapping gifts, or driving through busy streets, take small pauses to breathe and say, “Lord Jesus, thank You for coming.”
4. **Choose presence over perfection.** The world view puts immense pressure on us to create the “perfect Christmas,” but this can easily overshadow who we are celebrating. This Christmas, give yourself permission to simplify and let peace, not perfection, guide your decisions.
5. **Serve quietly.** At Offington, we have a lot of activities where we want to witness to the community we are in. These will need people. Consider how you can help – often with a simple act – and let that service become an act of worship as it is all done in His name.

This year, may we not only celebrate Christmas but experience Christ. In the midst of all that fills our busy lives, may our hearts make room for Him.

Our prayer this festive season is that the peace of Jesus - the Prince of Peace — will fill your homes and your days. Merry Christmas!

**The Eds**

# CHURCH FAMILY NEWS



## DEATHS

Yvonne H

Shaun C

*Our thoughts and prayers are with their families  
and friends at this sad time*

## OFFERTORIES

| Month   | Cash & Cheques | Standing Orders  |
|---------|----------------|------------------|
| October | <b>£421.50</b> | <b>£5,738.15</b> |

**Tuesday 9 December at 10:00am:**

**Are our civil liberties in jeopardy?**



We'll be meeting in the Quiet Room (after coffee and cake in Zach's Café). Do come and join us at this event.

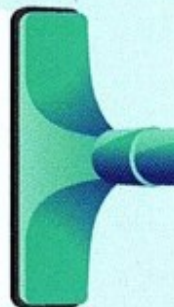
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## WE NEED FEWER M(EAT-INGS)!

As an Eco church we encourage the cutting down of the amount of meat and dairy in our diets. Why?

Because if we want to keep the temperature increase of our planet to below an average temperature of 1.5 degrees above pre-industrial levels, we need to reduce the amount of meat and dairy we are eating by 2030. This is the threshold agreed at the Paris accord in 2025, in order to reduce the impacts of climate change on our planet.



But why specifically meat and dairy? Well, it's because according to the United Nations, almost a quarter of greenhouse gases come from agriculture and other land use related to agriculture.

Looking at carbon emissions, the main contributor to the amount of CO<sup>2</sup> in our atmosphere is beef, then lamb.

However, CO<sup>2</sup> isn't the only gas responsible for climate change and neither is it the most harmful. According to the UN, methane is over 34 times more harmful to our planet over a century, compared to CO<sup>2</sup>. Therefore agriculture is like a giant landmine for our planet and we're going to step on it soon enough if we carry on as we are.

Luckily the average daily amount of meat consumed per person is falling; it's currently at 3oz per person per day. However the consumption of chicken has doubled in the last 35 years as people are switching from red meat to white meat. So instead of switching to white meat, we

encourage you to consider a more plant-based diet.

Personally I'm vegetarian, choosing to forgo meat and fish entirely in my diet. But that doesn't mean I can't have good food. What people tend to forget is the amount of plant-based foods we already have in our kitchens.

Foods such as vegetables, grains, nuts, lentils and seeds can all be found in the average kitchen, and made into a tasty meat-free and dairy-free meal. Tofu, Quorn and other meat substitutes



can also be added if you would like to imitate meat in your food, but many people forget about the thousands of meals that can be enjoyed without meat and dairy or their substitute counterparts.

The important thing to remember is to set realistic goals and not to be too hard on yourself. It is not realistic to suddenly just switch to 100% plant-based meals. Instead, slowly transitioning over, or even just cutting back on the amount of meat and dairy you consume, is a more achievable yet still eco-friendly approach.

If you and your family switched to plant-based meals on two days a week, that's a good step in the right direction. It's a lot easier and cheaper if you get the whole family on board due to not needing to make variations of the same meal.

In conclusion, a reduction in the consumption of meat and dairy is needed now more than ever and it's now much easier than ever with a bit of determination and teamwork. So why don't you try and give it a go?

Thank you.

*Charlotte*

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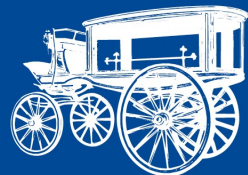


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## JC's LITTLE NUGGETS

### Joy with the Lord (based on Philippians 1 v12-30)



As I write this, it's a cold, grey November Monday. My touch of arthritis in the hand makes it more difficult to write, especially on a cold day.

I pause to watch the news, but that does nothing to cheer me up, with the devil clearly at work again: news of stabbings on a train near Huntingdon.

Then the post arrives – maybe some good news here? But no. It's a letter from the hospital saying that due to my age, weight, heart and complications my pending kidney operation is under review. What a cheek! OK, I admit I'm mature, but chubby?

There's a knock at the door - my nephew arrives with his Christmas List – in November! In true Scrooge fashion, I say "you're too early", and muttering "bah! humbug", I go in search of a nice cup of tea.

Alas! No milk, so no tea. For solace, I turn to my reading in the Daily Bread, and to the comfort of the Bible. Would you believe it, the reading was about St. Paul telling the Philippians of his personal pain (we are never told what it is and the Lord never did remove it) and all his trials and hardships.

What a great message - even when Paul was in jail, he found joy in the Lord. Yes, joy!! My day and my grumbling over it suddenly pales into insignificance.

Yes, I'm alive, I have my wife, food, shelter, friends within and outside the church family and, greatest of all, I know the Lord is with me every day of my life, giving me hope, love, and forgiveness.

And real joy at last - the wife borrowed some milk from next door, so we all had tea!!

God bless you all.

John C

Regular readers of Spotlight will know of the Smiles Foundation in northwest Romania and the great work they are doing. The Eds receive regular news updates from them and in one recent one, their Director of Enterprise, Simona, wrote about being relevant and talked about the similarities between people (particularly the elderly) and flowers, and how both worlds speak about cycles and relevance.



Flowers are defined by seasons: they grow, bloom with a spectacular beauty and then they dry and die. People have their own seasons, too: spring with planning, summer with activity, autumn with accountability and winter with peace.

We appreciate flowers at many special occasions, but once the occasion has passed, nobody is interested anymore. Millions of flowers are then consigned to the compost bin. Why? Because they are no longer relevant. The way society views people is similar – while we are producing, leading, visible, we are an asset, but once we get to the age of slowing down, we are added to the ‘invisible list’ – we are no longer relevant.

But flowers have value beyond their blooming time and even when they fade, their roots are deep in the earth working for the season. So with the elderly: even if invisible to society, their roots are the rock that holds the whole world together. We benefit today from their work of yesterday.

If society wants to know about relevance, it should look at the heart. As long as someone can offer a smile, a piece of advice, a hug, a lesson learned – where there is still life, in whatever shape or form, there is relevance. Relevance should not be measured by how popular we are, but by what we leave behind – our legacy.

Just as flowers bloom as a result of our care, so will people. We can all bloom and thrive in places where we are loved and cared for, and with this love and care we can all fulfil our potential. **The Eds**

## THE QUIET REVIVAL

We're all used to seeing bad news across the world on our TV's, and we may feel the same about our churches. We're all used to the idea that fewer people are going to church in the UK and we've, albeit reluctantly, accepted the idea that the church is in decline. Well, have we got news for you!



### **Church attendance in England and Wales is UP.**

That's right - it's rising. Far from the bleak picture of declining congregations, a survey commissioned by Bible Society found the exact opposite.

The most dramatic increase is among young adults, young men in particular. In 2018, just 4% of 18-24 year olds said that they went to church at least monthly. Today, this figure stands at 16%. The attendance by young men rose from 4% to 21% and by young women it rose from 3% to 12%.

There are now over **2m more** people attending church than there were six years ago, with men (at 13%) more likely to attend than women (10%).

Today, almost 20% of churchgoers come from an ethnic minority background and close to half of young black people aged 18-34 are now attending church at least monthly. The old stereotype of the church as white, ageing and female is dead. Church today is more likely to be ethnically mixed, young and male.

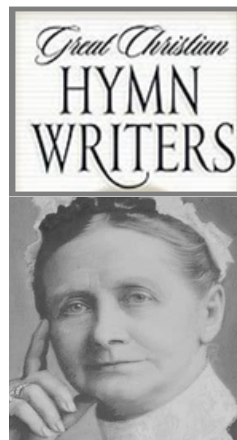
All this has an impact on society, of course. Churchgoers are more likely to engage in things that benefit the local community, such as donating to foodbanks, volunteering or giving to charity. Christians also report a higher life satisfaction than those who don't go to church, with a greater connection to the community and less stress and anxiety.

So, why not come to church and witness this for yourself?

## CECIL FRANCES ALEXANDER

*Once in royal David's city  
Stood a lowly cattle shed  
Where a mother laid her baby  
In a manger for his bed  
Mary was that mother mild  
Jesus Christ, her little child*

Cecil Frances Alexander was born in Dublin in 1818, the third child and second daughter of John Humphreys of Norfolk and his wife Elizabeth. Her family had strong military ties: her father had been a major in the Royal Marines and her uncle had been a General during the 'Indian Mutiny'. She was known by family and friends as Fanny.



When Fanny was seven, the family moved to Ballykeane House, County Wicklow, in order that her father could take up an appointment as agent to the 2nd marquess of Abercorn. They moved again when she was fifteen, to Milltown House, Strabane (later Strabane Grammar School).

She began writing verse in her childhood and was influenced by the Oxford movement. She collaborated with Lady Harriet Howard, daughter of Lord Wicklow, in writing tracts.

In 1850, Fanny married William Alexander, rector of Termonamongan, County Tyrone, and later Church of Ireland bishop of Derry and Raphoe. He was six years younger than her, which caused the family some consternation!

She was involved in charitable work for much of her life and continued to work diligently for charitable causes after her marriage, especially in the impoverished communities around her. She helped to found, for instance, the Derry and Raphoe Diocesan Institution for the Education of the Deaf and Dumb in Strabane. The profits from her book "Hymns for Little Children" were also donated to the school. She was involved with the Derry Home for Fallen Women, and worked to develop a district nurse service. She was an "indefatigable visitor to poor and sick".

The marriage produced several children, but was marred by tragedy. Her elder son Robert Jocelyn Alexander, was drowned when the RMS *Leinster* was torpedoed in the Irish Sea.

By the 1840s she was already well known as a hymn writer having published

several volumes of religious verse, including the hymns ‘Once in royal David’s city’, ‘There is a green hill far away’ and, ‘All things bright and beautiful’, all of which have stood the test of time and continue to enjoy a lasting popularity, over 200 years after her birth!

However, few know of the part both great and small that “All Things” played in transforming the education of deaf children in 19th century northern Ireland. And fewer still know the tragedy that befell its writer’s dream.

With her sister Anne, Fanny was very involved in local church activities in Strabane, including visits to local families. On one of these visits they encountered a small deaf boy from a poor home. They were concerned about the barrenness of his existence and the fact he was cut off from knowledge of the love of God and the Christian way of life, and persuaded their father to allow them to set up in their home a tiny school for four or five deaf children.

Over the following five years, it welcomed almost 50 children, teaching them the skills that would help them live in a hearing world. But tragedy was not far away. On 7 May 1856, a fire started in the kitchen and quickly took hold. Despite the best efforts of rescuers, six children died. Frances and William were naturally both devastated by the fire and the children’s deaths, and made great efforts following the fire to raise funding to keep a temporary school open. It’s said that any trace of light-heartedness in Frances’ writing was finally quenched in the year of the fire. But her leading role in deaf education will never be forgotten.

Her husband also wrote several books of poetry, and her daughter, Eleanor Jane Alexander, was also a poet. Fanny of course wrote other verse, one of which impressed Lord Tennyson and another of which was utilised by Mark Twain during his encore performances.

Cecil Frances Alexander died on 12 October 1895 at the palace in Derry, and is buried in the lower section of the City Cemetery in Derry. The grave is marked by a plain white cross, although her residence at the former Bishop’s palace is now commemorated with a blue plaque.

A posthumous collection of her poems was published in 1896 by William Alexander, titled “Poems of the late Mrs Alexander”.

There is no doubt that Alexander’s contributions to hymnody and her dedication to her faith and community have left a lasting legacy in both literature and Christian practices.

## **A CHRISTMAS GIFT**

**We think of Christmas gifts with pleasure,  
choosing things our friends will treasure**

**We tie them up with string and bows;  
carefully wrapping what we chose**

**So our loved ones know we care.  
Our gifts will show the love we share.**

**Just as we, a gift, were given;  
a precious little babe from heaven.**

**God's one and only begotten child.  
A gift so pure and undefiled.**

**A child that grew in peace and grace;  
a gentle child with kindly face**

**Who grew in wisdom, love and care,  
his only thought: that love to share.**

**He lived among us, shared this life,  
so we'd be free from sin and strife.**

**How precious was that gift from Heaven.  
With such love so freely given**

**God sacrificed his only son,  
so that with God we could be one.**

## WHAT'S ON - DECEMBER 2025

|     |    |         |                                       |                                      |
|-----|----|---------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Tue | 2  | 12:00pm | Tuesday Lunch<br>& Social Club        |                                      |
| Thu | 4  | 11:00am | Bible Fellowship                      |                                      |
|     |    | 7:30pm  | Thursday's                            | Social Group                         |
| Sun | 7  | 8:00am  | Rev Dawn Carn                         | Holy Communion                       |
|     |    | 10:30am | Rev Dawn Carn                         | Café Church                          |
| Tue | 9  | 10:00am | Grumpy Old Men                        | Are our civil liberties in jeopardy? |
|     |    | 12:00pm | Tuesday Lunch<br>& Social Club        |                                      |
| Thu | 11 | 11:00am | Bible Fellowship                      |                                      |
|     |    | 1:30pm  | Knit 'n' Natter                       |                                      |
| Fri | 12 | 10:00am | Nativity Festival                     | Ends 4:00pm. See poster              |
|     |    | 10:30am | CAMEO                                 | Christmas Celebration                |
|     |    | 6:30pm  | Carol Concert                         | With the Salvation Army band         |
| Sat | 13 | 10:00am | Nativity Festival                     | Ends 4:00pm. See poster              |
| Sun | 14 | 10:30am | Rev Dawn Carn                         | Holy Communion                       |
|     |    | 12:00pm | Nativity Festival                     | Ends 2:30pm. See poster              |
|     |    | 12:30pm | Christmas Lunch                       | See Poster                           |
|     |    | 2:30pm  | Rev Dawn Carn                         | Carol Service                        |
| Tue | 16 | 12:00pm | Tuesday Lunch<br>& Social Club        |                                      |
| Wed | 17 | 10:30am | Mid-month Communion                   |                                      |
| Thu | 18 | 11:00am | Bible Fellowship                      |                                      |
| Sun | 21 | 10:30am | Rev Janet Tanner                      | Morning Worship                      |
| Wed | 24 | 3:30pm  | <b>CHRISTMAS EVE</b><br>Rev Dawn Carn | Christingle Service                  |
|     |    | 5:00pm  | Rev Dawn Carn                         | Christingle Service                  |
|     |    | 11:15pm | Rev Dawn Carn                         | Midnight Communion                   |

## WHAT'S ON - DECEMBER 2025 (continued)

|     |    |         |                                       |                  |
|-----|----|---------|---------------------------------------|------------------|
| Thu | 25 | 10:00am | <b>CHRISTMAS DAY</b><br>Rev Dawn Carn | Christmas Praise |
| Sun | 28 | 10:30am | Rev Dawn Carn                         | Morning Worship  |

## WHAT'S ON - JANUARY 2026

|     |    |         |                             |                                  |
|-----|----|---------|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Sun | 4  | 8:00am  | Rev Dawn Carn               | Holy Communion                   |
|     |    | 10:30am | Rev Dawn Carn               | Covenant Service                 |
| Tue | 6  | 12:00pm | Tuesday Lunch & Social Club |                                  |
| Thu | 8  | 11:00am | Bible Fellowship            |                                  |
|     |    | 1:30pm  | Knit 'n' Natter             |                                  |
|     |    | 7:30pm  | Thursday's                  | Social Group                     |
| Fri | 9  | 9:30am  | CAMEO                       | Games Morning                    |
| Sun | 11 | 10:30am | Mrs Joy Barnes              | Morning Worship                  |
|     |    | 3:30pm  | Messy Church Team           | Messy Church                     |
| Tue | 13 | 12:00pm | Tuesday Lunch & Social Club |                                  |
|     |    | 12:30pm | Grumpy Old Men              | Christmas Lunch - Olde House Pub |
| Thu | 15 | 11:00am | Bible Fellowship            |                                  |
| Sun | 18 | 10:30am | Breakfast Church Team       | Breakfast Church                 |
|     |    | 10:30am | Rev Dawn Carn               | Morning Worship                  |
| Tue | 20 | 12:00pm | Tuesday Lunch & Social Club |                                  |
| Wed | 21 | 10:30am | Mid-month Communion         |                                  |
| Thu | 22 | 11:00am | Bible Fellowship            |                                  |
| Fri | 23 | 10:30am | CAMEO                       | Reminiscing with Joyce           |

## WHAT'S ON - JANUARY 2026 (continued)

|     |    |         |                                |                 |
|-----|----|---------|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| Sun | 25 | 10:30am | Rev Geoff Bell                 | Morning Worship |
|     |    | 10:30am | Rev Dawn Carn                  | Fun Church      |
| Tue | 27 | 12:00pm | Tuesday Lunch<br>& Social Club |                 |
| Thu | 29 | 11:00am | Bible Fellowship               |                 |

## A JOURNEY THROUGH THE BIBLE

### Mark



Mark is an action-packed whirlwind of a book!

It jumps straight into the story of Jesus and bounces from miracle to miracle; showing Jesus' power over death, sickness, evil spirits and even nature. Nothing wasted; each bit is written to show that Jesus has the power of God.

Mark most likely drew from the first-hand experiences of Peter; a close and dynamic follower of Jesus. This book has echoes of his big personality and punchy style. Mark's main audience, the Romans, knew that the best leaders are also good servants; so He shows that Jesus is the perfect example of humble leadership.

Mark is a master storyteller, often sandwiching one story within another. He takes us on a whistle-stop tour of God's promised hero, recalling Jesus' miracles and teaching and the very mixed reactions of those watching. His aim is to show that Jesus has all power and authority - yet is also the humblest of servants.

If you want a quick and lively look at the power, authority and servanthood of Jesus, read the book of Mark!

## THE SHEPHERD'S TALE

The night the star came was the first time I ever stayed awake longer than the fire. I was only ten — too young, the older shepherds said, to stand watch without nodding off - but Father had nudged me with his elbow and said, “Tonight you try.” So I sat on the hill with the sheep curled like stones in the grass, the cold nibbling at my fingertips, and the sky wide and black as a well.



I remember thinking the stars looked unusually bright, as if someone had polished them while we weren't looking. Then one of them began to grow.

I rubbed my eyes, hard. Stars do not grow. But this one swelled like a lantern being carried closer, until the hillside glowed silver-blue. The sheep stirred; I clutched my staff and whispered, “Easy, now. Easy.”

And then the light touched the ground. I thought it was lightning at first. Or fire. But it wasn't hot and it didn't crack. A sound like wind through harp strings filled the air, gentle but rising, filling my chest so much I forgot how to breathe. When I dared to look up, there was someone standing in front of us. Someone far too bright to be human.

The older shepherds dropped to their knees. I dropped too - mostly because my shaking legs couldn't hold me up - but the figure only smiled. A voice, soft as wool yet stronger than thunder, spoke and said: “Do not be afraid.” I thought, “That's easy for him to say”. The figure continued, “I bring you good news of great joy...today in the city of David a Saviour has been born.”

A baby? All this for a baby? I peeked up, confused, but the light had already expanded, and suddenly the entire sky was alive - filled with beings like the one before, singing words that felt like warmth and hope and home all at once. I didn't understand any of it. All I knew was I wanted to see this child.

We ran - oh, how we ran! Shepherds aren't supposed to leave their flocks like that, but somehow we knew the sheep would be safe. The star led us like a torch, hanging low over Bethlehem until it hovered above a small stable tucked between houses. I hesitated at the door. What if the angel had made a mistake? What if they sent the message to the wrong shepherds?

But when I stepped inside, everything felt right. There, on a bed of straw, was the baby. Just a tiny thing, wrapped in cloth. His mother smiled at us, not startled at all by a pack of breathless, dirt-covered shepherds filing in.

His father nodded, as if he'd been expecting visitors.

I crept forward, my heart thudding so loudly I thought I might frighten the child - but he just blinked up at me with eyes that seemed impossibly calm for someone so new to the world. "Hello," I whispered, because I didn't know what else to say to a king.

For a moment, the stable was quiet. No angels, no singing, no shining - just warm hay, a lantern's glow, and the soft breaths of a newborn. And somehow, that simple quiet was the most extraordinary thing of all.

When we finally turned to leave, I felt different. I knew I'd never forget that night, not even when I was old and grey and telling the story to children who wouldn't believe me.

But that's all right. Because I will always remember the night the sky came down to meet us - and the tiny child who made the whole world feel new.

### CHRISTMAS "WHAT AM I?"

1. I enter uninvited but no law is broken.  
I leave without footprints, no greeting spoken.  
I'm heavier with gifts, yet lighter when done—  
I ride on the back of a red-suited one.
2. I hide what is shown and show what is hid.  
You'll tear through my skin for what I forbid.  
I am beautiful only until I'm undone—  
I'm utterly ruined the moment you've won.
3. I stand in your warmth though I'm born in the cold.  
I shimmer with treasures that aren't mine to hold.  
My life is cut short though my death is delayed -  
O'er 12 days I'm honoured yet slowly decayed.
4. I'm built to be eaten yet crafted with care;  
A shelter for none, though I mimic a lair.  
Your feasting destroys me from chimney to floor -  
You leave me devoured. Are you hungry for more?
5. I roam through your halls though I never have feet.  
I rise from the breath of the many who meet.  
I vanish at once when the breathers depart -  
What am I, lingering only in heart?



*Answers on page 27*

## EMBRACING EVERYONE (EDI AT THE HEART OF OUR CHURCH)

Here at Offington Park, we believe that every person is wonderfully made in the image of God. As a community rooted in love, compassion and justice, we are committed to making our church a place where everyone feels welcome, valued and heard.



**Why EDI Matters:** Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) isn't just a policy - it's a way of living out our faith. It means:

- ♦ Equality: Treating everyone fairly, with dignity and respect.
- ♦ Diversity: Celebrating the richness of our differences - age, race, gender, ability, sexuality, or background.
- ♦ Inclusion: Ensuring that all voices are invited to the table and no one is left behind.

In a world that can feel divided, our church has a unique opportunity to be a beacon of unity and hope. So, here's the steps we're taking to embed EDI into all aspects of church life:

- ♦ Reviewing our worship practices to ensure they reflect a range of experiences and cultures
- ♦ Making our buildings and services more accessible to those with disabilities.
- ♦ Creating safe spaces for open conversations about race, gender, and identity.
- ♦ Supporting local initiatives that promote justice and inclusion
- ♦ Putting on events that foster inclusion – we had a Caribbean Day in July and EDI Bingo at our Harvest Lunch

EDI is a shared journey. Here's how you can **get involved**:

- ♦ Listen: Take time to hear stories different from your own.
- ♦ Learn: Join one of our upcoming EDI discussion groups or workshops.
- ♦ Lead: Be an advocate for inclusion in your ministry, group or team.
- ♦ Love: Show radical hospitality to anyone who walks through our doors.

So, as we grow together, here are some questions we would ask you to consider:

- ♦ Who might feel excluded from our church - and how can we change that?

- ♦ Are our activities and worship accessible to all?
- ♦ How do we ensure that leadership reflects the diversity of our congregation?
- ♦ What does it mean to be a truly inclusive church in today's world?

Let's continue to build a church where everyone belongs, and where the love of Christ is made visible through our welcome, our worship, and our witness.

If you'd like to get involved in our EDI work or you just want to share your thoughts, please speak to a member of the leadership team or email us via the church office.

## Wider News on EDI

### *Disability*

Fewer than 3% of long-term sick and people with disabilities who are out of work make it back into employment each year, according to new research and this includes community work and volunteering. Work can offer purpose, security and connection with others. Yet for far too many disabled people and those living with long-term health conditions in their 50s and 60s, unnecessary barriers keep these benefits out of reach.

### *Neurodiversity*

Neurodivergent persons – such as those with dyslexia, dyspraxia, and dyscalculia – often face unique challenges when accessing digital content, products, and services. We need to try harder to understand some of the barriers they encounter and explore practical ways to create more inclusive experiences in church.

*Tanya*

Thank you to everyone for your support for the children of Moldova. Please pray for the safe passage of the Mustard Seed mission lorries as



they cross many borders to get the boxes to the children. Thanks also to those who donated knitted items, stationery, toiletries and of course the boxes. Bless you all, **Margaret.**



# Offington Park Methodist Church

## December Services

### Sunday 7 December

8:00am Rev Dawn Carn      Holy Communion  
10:30am Rev Dawn Carn      Cafe Church

### Sunday 14 December

10:30am Rev Dawn Carn  
2:30pm Rev Dawn Carn      Carol Service

### Sunday 21 December

10:30am Rev Janet Tanner

### Christmas Eve

3.30pm Christingle  
5:00pm Christingle  
11.15pm Christmas Communion

### Christmas Day

10.00am Christmas Praise

### Sunday 28 December

10:30am Rev Dawn Carn





# VPA

VOGUE PERFORMING ARTS



## TUESDAYS

FOR 2 - 4 YEARS

Offington Park Methodist Church, Worthing  
BN14 7TN



9:30AM - 10AM - Ballet and Tap

## BOOK A FREE TRIAL NOW!



vogueperformingarts@hotmail.com

## THE LIGHTHOUSE @ OFFINGTON PARK

the lighthouse  
@ Offington Park



SOFT PLAY AND CAFE

As the first full calendar year of operating the Lighthouse comes to an end, we will be closing our doors over the Christmas and New Year period to give our hard-working staff and equally hard-working volunteers a bit of a break.

We are tremendously grateful to everyone (paid and unpaid) for all their efforts in serving our customers during daily sessions, parties and the ever-popular and ever-busy school holiday periods. Thank you too to those who offered their services with special activities such as crafts, drumming, dancing, pottery painting and artistry. We couldn't offer the varied range of extra activities without you.

Our party offering remains as popular as ever. So popular, in fact, that during 2025 we added an extra party slot on Saturdays and took on two more staff (including a Deputy Manager) to manage the sheer numbers of people wanting our value-for-money, stress free party service. We have slots available for April onwards.

On the community side, we hosted a family cooking event this year with Home Start and we are continuing to expand our offerings of sponsored places to disadvantaged children and to children linked with other charities focused on community services. This has been possible thanks to the generous contributions from members of the church and others who can see the difference we are making.

The Lighthouse has been a resounding success and we hope and pray that it continues to be a true beacon of light to the community, offering a safe haven for children and a welcome relaxation centre for busy parents and carers. We rely on our volunteers to make things happen and - be in no doubt, it couldn't happen without them.

Could you be one of our team? There's no experience necessary, but a lot of fun and friendship to be had. We'd be grateful for just an hour or two and we're very flexible on timings that suit you. Why not come and see us in the New Year? We'd love to see you!

Offington Park Methodist Church



# Nativity Festival



Friday 12 December

to Sunday 14 December

Admire beautiful nativity scenes  
set among the Christmas trees

FRI: 10:00am - 4:00pm

SAT: 10:00am - 4:00pm

SUN: 12:30pm - 2:30pm

Light  
refreshments

Children's  
Crafts

ADMISSION FREE



## 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

### **Job**, *the man who kept hold of God when he lost everything else*

No matter how balanced our mental wellbeing is generally, we all suffer in our hearts and minds when we face loss and heartache. Poor Job lost absolutely everything—his children, servants, money, position and reputation. Then, Job began to lose his health too.

Job's mental health, understandably, took a massive hit. He wished he'd never been born; after losing everything, he said, "Sighing is my food. My groans pour out of me like water." Job's world fell apart, and so did he.

In such circumstances, we might be tempted to give up on God. But here's the thing – Job walked his whole journey of grief and loss with God. He worshipped, even as he sat in ashes. He kept directing his big questions at God, without turning his back on the Lord. He trusted God's goodness and faithfulness, even though he couldn't see any of it. And when God finally did speak, Job didn't fight or argue – once again he surrendered his life.

We will all face suffering of one sort or another. The question is, will we handle it with God or without Him?

Job shows us something of what it looks like to keep God at the centre of our pain. That is where hope and comfort are found.

That is where we learn to cling to God in our tears, saying with Job: "I know You can do all things."

## THEY CHANGED THE WORLD

### Florence Nightingale

Social reformer, statistician and nurse

Florence Nightingale (1820 -1910) was the founder of modern nursing, a pioneering statistician, a public-health reformer, and a deeply spiritual Christian whose faith shaped almost all she accomplished.



She was born into a wealthy English family but felt from a young age that God was calling her to a life of service. In her own diary, she described receiving a “calling” from God at age 17, leading her on a ‘sacred mission’ from God to serve the suffering and improve human health. This religious conviction led her into nursing - at that time shocking for a woman of her social class.

She believed that the role of the nurse was to “cooperate with God” in bringing health and order to human life and her emphasis on compassion, dignity, and respect for every patient came directly from her understanding of Christian love and service.

In Victorian society, the poor, the sick, and wounded soldiers were often regarded as expendable. Nightingale’s reforms in military hospitals during the Crimean War drastically reduced death rates and she fought tirelessly for better sanitation, ventilation, nutrition, and better hospital design. Outside of health, she also campaigned for sanitation systems, clean water and improved housing.

Before Nightingale, nursing had a poor reputation. Her vision - grounded in her belief in Christian morality - insisted that nurses must be trained, disciplined, and ethical. Not because it was fashionable, but because she believed each human was made in God’s image. She herself once wrote: “The object and colour of my life is to obey God.”

To her, obedience did not mean passivity - it meant action, responsibility, and tireless effort to relieve suffering. Her Christian worldview gave her both the motivation and the moral courage to challenge entrenched systems, reshape healthcare, and leave a legacy that still defines nursing today.

1. Santa's Sack
2. Wrapping Paper
3. Christmas tree
4. Gingerbread house
5. Christmas Carol

## WHAT AM I - ANSWERS

**Offington Park Methodist Church**



# **Christmas Carol Concert**

**with  
The Salvation  
Army Band**

**Friday  
12 December 2025  
6.30pm**

**Doors open 6.00 pm**

**Retiring Collection  
in support of  
The Salvation Army  
and  
Offington Park**

**FREE  
ADMISSION**

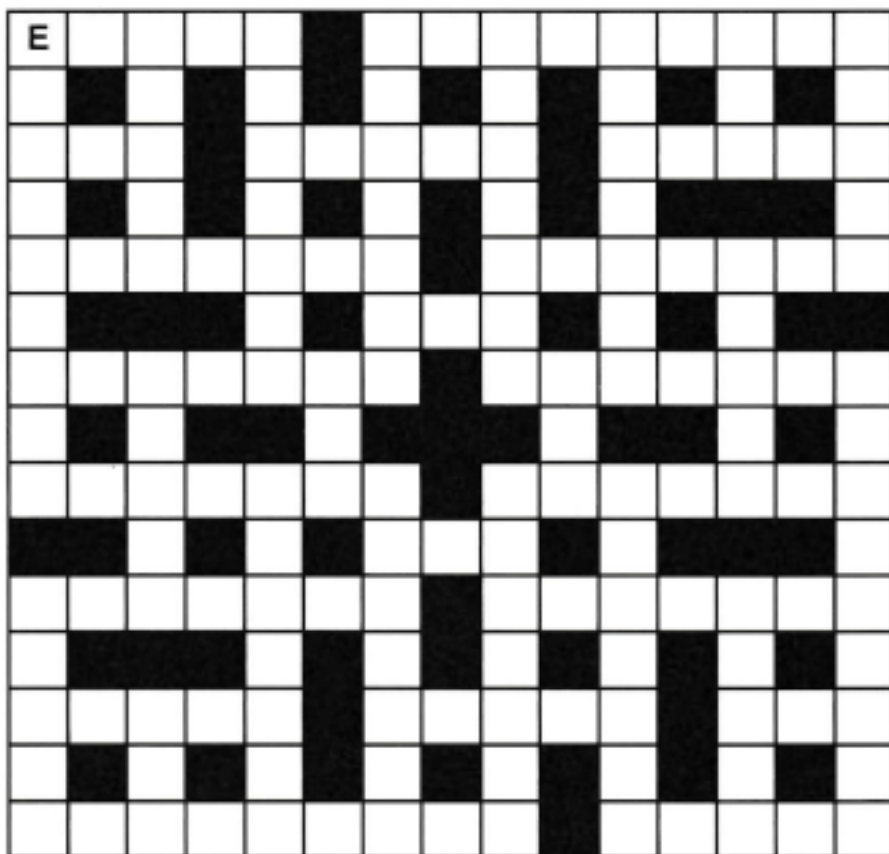
**Refreshments  
available**



**OFFINGTON PARK  
METHODIST CHURCH**

## WORD GRID

Grab a drink and a snack and have a go at filling out our tricky word grid. The letter at the top left will help you to get started.



**3-Letter words:** axe; ban; emu; era; inn; odd; peg; use

**5-Letter words:** adage; aisle; argue; avoid; binge; chase; ethos; exact; habit; image; nadir; niece

**7-Letter words:** amateur; arbiter; chemist; cistern; emerald; lattice; message; nemesis; nuclear; overlap; perhaps; plaster; prattle; radiate; tactile; trapper

**9-Letter words:** expectant; probation; senseless; surrender

## IS PRAYER ANSWERED? OH, YES

In 2004, businessman Richard Gamble had an idea he believed was from God. The idea was to build a wall made of a million bricks where every single brick would represent a story of answered prayer.



It would be a monument to Christianity: almost three times the size of the Angel of the North, taller than Christ the Redeemer in Rio de Janeiro and towering over the Warwickshire town of Coleshill. A monument that would 'make hope visible' it is designed in the shape of a continuous loop with a half-twist, known in mathematics as a mobius strip.

Crowdfunding for the Eternal Wall of Answered Prayer began in 2018 and the charity that Gamble had set up began collecting stories of answered prayer.

But, as with many construction projects, costs spiralled out of control and the original £10m cost soared to £45m. Then God stepped in, in the form of Conservative peer and billionaire philanthropist Robert, Lord Edmiston, who has given what is believed to be one of the biggest donations in Christian history - **thirty million pounds!**

Work has now begun on the ambitious project, which will include a learning centre. It is expected to complete in 2028 and welcome up to 250,000 visitors annually.

Richard Gamble is, unsurprisingly, blown away by the generosity and excited about his idea becoming a reality. He says, *'this monument will ensure the preservation of the Christian heritage of the nation. We're capturing stories not only from the modern day, but from William Wilberforce and WWII - stories that aren't being taught in schools any more. Tolkien was a Christian and a believer: there are all these people who have impacted history, but those parts of the story have been etched out over time. In 100 years' time, we'll have a monument that declares that Jesus is alive and answers prayers.'*

Lord Edmiston said, *"It is my prayer that when people pass by this place, or visit, something of the Spirit of God will touch their spirit and they may draw strength and encouragement from the witness of the numerous prayers that God has already answered".*

So, if any of our readers have a spare £30m knocking about, I'm sure that the Lighthouse and Zach's Café teams could make good use of it!

## OFFINGTON CAMEO

Friday 12 December:

"A Christmas Celebration"

Join us for food, fun and festive fellowship!

Friday 9 January:

"Games Morning"

Something to cheer us up in dreary January

Friday 23 January:

"Reminiscing with Joyce"

A bit of a chat, and your chance to join in

We meet in the Allan Fletcher Hall,

10:15am for a 10:30am start

*Margaret H*



## ALLEY MARVELS

Last month, a group of socialites from Offington got together for a skittles evening at the Black Horse in Findon. There was food, great fun and (we're told) some very dodgy bowling! We were sent this picture which clearly

shows that a great time was had by all. In fact, it was such a laugh that they're keen to be doing it again some time in 2026.

Max secretly followed a store Santa to the changing room. When the man reappeared in ordinary clothes, Max jumped out and shouted "I knew it." Nervously, the man looked around and asked, "Knew what?" Smiling, Max leaned in and whispered, "I knew that Santa wouldn't be able to keep an eye on all the little girls and boys without a secret identity." "That's right", said the man, "just don't tell anyone". Max nodded enthusiastically, "I won't, San..." then he paused, looked around cautiously and added, "I mean Mr Kringle."

## NEXT EDITION

Copy Deadline

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Publication Date

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

**offingtonspotlight@gmail.com**



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