

ST PAUL'S NEWS

February 2026



ONE POUND

SERVICES

Sunday 1st February

Candlemas

10.00 am Parish Eucharist (CW)
President: The Vicar
Minister & Preacher: Rev. Nicholas Burton

10.00 am Family Service at the Church Centre + Zoom
Lead: Susan Powley
Link: Rosemary Romano

6.30 pm Evensong (BCP)
Minister & Preacher: The Vicar

Sunday 8th February

Second Sunday before Lent

10.00 am Parish Eucharist (CW)
President & Preacher: The Vicar
Minister : Daphne Pilcher

10.00 am Family Service at the Church Centre + Zoom
Lead: Liz Goddard
Link: Karen Miller

6.30 pm Choral Evensong (BCP)
Minister: The Vicar

Monday 9th February

9.00 am Morning Prayer at the Parish Church
Minister: The Vicar

Wednesday 11th February

9.00 am Morning Prayer at the Church Centre
Minister: The Vicar

Thursday 12th February

11.30 am Said Holy Communion at the Church Centre
President: The Vicar

Sunday 15th February

Sunday Next before Lent

8.00 am Holy Communion (BCP)
President & Preacher: The Vicar

10.00 am Parish Eucharist (CW)
President & Preacher: The Vicar
Minister: Daphne Pilcher

10.00 am Family Service at the Church Centre + Zoom
Lead: Wendy Anderson
Link: Chris Bassett

6.30 pm Evensong (BCP)
Minister: Tim Harrold
Preacher: Daphne Pilcher

Monday 16th February

9.00 am Morning Prayer at the Parish Church
Minister: The Vicar

Wednesday 18th February

Ash Wednesday

9.00 am Morning Prayer at the Church Centre
Minister: The Vicar

8.00 pm Imposition of Ashes with Holy Communion
President & Preacher: The Vicar
Minister: Tim Harrold

Thursday 19th February

11.30 am Said Holy Communion at the Church Centre
President: The Vicar

Sunday 22nd February

First Sunday in Lent

8.00 am Holy Communion (BCP)
President & Preacher: The Vicar

10.00 am Matins
Minister & Preacher: Tim Harrold

10.00 am Family Service with Holy Communion
at the Church Centre + Zoom
President: The Vicar, Link: Viv Littlechild

4.00 pm Taize Service at the Church Centre
Minister: Tim Harrold

6.30 pm Parish Eucharist (CW)
President & Preacher: The Vicar

Monday 23rd February

9.00 am Morning Prayer at the Church Centre
Minister: The Vicar

Wednesday 25th February

9.00 am Morning Prayer at the Church Centre
Minister: The Vicar

Thursday 26th February

11.30 am Said Holy Communion at the Church Centre
President: The Vicar

P Church Parking P

With a wonderfully growing congregation, the pressure on the avenue for parking is ever increasing, particularly for our large services.

It is vital that emergency vehicles should be able to reach the church with ease at all times. The PCC are therefore actively looking for two or three people who would be interested in managing the newly devised parking plans for these occasions. This is probably only four times a year plus large weddings and funerals and will attract renumeration each time.

If you are interested please contact either Helen Reynolds or Chris Dobson via the Church Office. Applicants must be over 18.

Chris Dobson

DIARY

Tuesday 3rd February

7.30 pm Worship Committee meet in the Lodge

Thursday 5th February

6.00 pm Church Youth Council in the Lodge

Wednesday 11th February

3.00 pm Communion to Chamberlain Court
– Tim Harrold

Thursday 12th February

7.30 pm Living Hope group at 53 Southwood Road

Monday 16th February

8.00 pm PCC Meeting – in the Lodge

Thursday 19th February

11.30 am Communion to Mt Ephraim House
Tim Harrold
7.30 pm Living Hope group at 53 Southwood Road

Sunday 22nd February

TW Half Marathon – road closures 9.45 to 11.30 am

Thursday 27th Nov

7.30 pm Living Hope group at 53 Southwood Road

Wednesdays throughout the month

9.00 – 11.00 am Playtime at St Paul's at the Church Centre

Thursdays throughout the month

12 for 12.30 pm Rusthall Lunch Club
at the Church Centre



Fridays throughout the month

12.30 – 2.00 pm Community Larder
at the Church Centre

Saturdays & Sundays throughout the month

10 am – 4 pm Choristers Café in the Lodge

From the Registers



Baptism - we welcome as newly baptised members of the Church

Willow Gerri White
Ronnie Rae Silvester

At rest – the sympathy of the Parish is extended to the family and friends of:

Shirley Millicent Barter
Margaret Kathleen French

Magazine Deadlines

Please submit articles for the 2026 magazines in accordance with the following deadlines.

March 2026 by 15th February
April 2026 by 15th March
May 2026 by 12th April
June 2026 by 17th May

The time between the deadline and magazine issue is to allow for typing, formatting, proofreading, and compiling the magazine. These all take time and have to be fitted around the volunteer editorial team's other commitments. We would therefore be very grateful if you would keep to the deadlines set. Please send items for publication to magazine@stpaulsrusthall.org.uk.

Magazines are posted on the Parish website by the 1st of the month. Photocopies of the magazine can be made available to those who cannot access the magazine online. Please contact Helen Reynolds at the Church Office (TW 521447) to arrange production and collection/delivery.



Friends Together Bereavement Support Group

Rusthall URC
Last Friday of each Month
Tea, biscuits and companionship

From 1.00pm - 2:30pm

www.friendstogetherbs.org

Contact Steph Rose
Mobile - 07950 737672
or call into the Abbey Funerals Office
31 High Street, Rusthall



ST PAUL'S

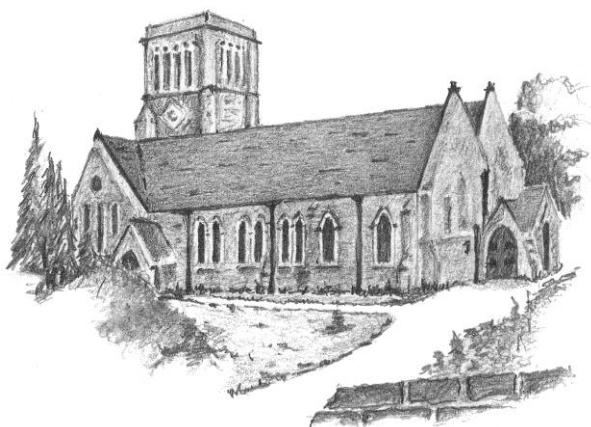
100

NUMBERS £10 PER MONTH

PRIZES £100 1ST

£60 2ND

£40 3RD



NUMBERS AVAILABLE FROM
CHRIS DOBSON ON 07757 680165

WINNING NUMBERS FOR
DECEMBER MEGADRAW: 1ST 43 (£500), 2ND 60 (£250) AND
3RD 91 (£100)

JANUARY: 1ST 93 (£100), 2ND 26 (£60) AND 3RD 29 (£40)

From the Vicarage

February 2026

Dear Friends,

Thank you very much for your continued support and hard work. I trust that things are going well and peacefully for and with you so far in 2026.



As I write, I've just returned from Freetown, Sierra Leone. As usual or as to be expected, my time there was a mixture of sadness and joys, excitement and hyperactivity. A day after my arrival, I received the shocking news of the sudden death of the sister of one of my closest friends. She was only 50 years of age. I couldn't attend her funeral as it was scheduled for the 30th of January, just after my return to the UK. May her soul rest in peace and, through the mercy of God, rise in glory.

News about my presence spread like wild fire and I lost the 'privilege' of being alone, as friends, relatives, schoolmates, and others came round to say hello and to 'keep company'. I had to wake up very early to ensure that I had time to myself. I always ensured that there was food. One morning, in my second week there, when five people had turned up by 8:00 am, I said to my nephew: 'now you see why I get up at 4:00 am'. He smiled and nodded. The question whizzing through some of your minds is probably 'what time does he go to sleep?'

Some of you may remember that last year, we raised money to buy stationery for two hundred and fifty children, some primary and some secondary pupils, in Sierra Leone. Ours was part of a bigger fundraising drive to provide two hundred and fifty children with school bags containing six exercise books, a geometry set and the stationery pack containing pencils and crayons, sharpener, rubber and ruler. During my time in Freetown, I was able to make two presentations of the school bags to twenty children of two non-Anglican Churches. Here are some photos of these activities.



I also attended the annual Clergy thanksgiving service of the Anglican Diocese of Freetown and the North which was held at St Mary's Church, Newton with my clergy friend and his family. As usual, there were refreshments afterwards but we stayed for just a brief while.

Of course, apart from being involved in all these activities, I had to get on with the mundane, including going to the market to buy ingredients for cooking. On one such occasion when I was getting some cassava leaves, I cut my scalp on a rusty nail. Thankfully, I am always up-to-date with vaccinations so I was as cool as a cucumber, to the amazement of onlookers.

As I reflect on my time in Freetown this year, I realised, again, that human relationships are very important. I was also reminded of the interconnectedness of human relations and the importance of 'social capital'. Everyone is connected to or knows someone who might be in a position to offer timely help. My time in Freetown made me reaffirm my belief that, as human beings, we are meant to live in communities that promote reciprocated respect and mutual flourishing.



As we continue to journey through life, I pray that we will regularly experience God's providential activities in our lives and recognise God's presence in others so that we may become increasingly aware of God's divine presence in our midst.

Ronnie

E. R. HICKMOTT & SON



41, GROVE HILL ROAD
TUNBRIDGE WELLS
Tel: (01892) 522462 (two lines)
Fax: (01892) 533807



FUNERAL DIRECTORS

Members of N.A.F.D and S.A.I.F.

The only long established family-owned funeral directors in Tunbridge Wells.

Golden Charter Pre-payment funeral plans available.
Owned and run by the family in Tunbridge Wells for six generations.
Twenty-four hour emergency service – Qualified Funeral Directors.



www.RusthallVets.co.uk

20 ASHLEY GARDENS,
RUSTHALL,
TUNBRIDGE WELLS,
KENT, TN4 8TU.
Telephone (01892) 511715

Monday to Friday
9.00-11.00 am 4.30-6.30 pm
Saturday
9.00-11.00 am closed

KMJ
Secretarial Services

Faxing
Photocopying
Typing
Handmade Greetings Cards
Stationery Items

1 High Street
Rusthall
TN4 8RL
01892 515188
suzanne@kmj-secretarial-services.co.uk

Editorial for February 2026

Happy New Year! We hope you all had a wonderful Christmas. We've certainly had plenty of weather during January – snow, rain and storms Goretti, Ingrid and Chandra. My garden is a squelchy mess and a tree partly blew down. Water coming from the taps has been in decidedly short supply though! Living in south Tunbridge Wells I suffered two weeks of disrupted supply before Christmas and then returned from my son's in the new year to discover that yet again I was turning on a tap with no certainty about whether there would be any water as a result. I have a garden with a couple of water butts which I can raid for water to flush toilets but it was still pretty grim. I was grateful for the free water bottles but they were quite difficult to open and manhandle and made tasks that were usually simple quite tricky. Then it spread to Sevenoaks and East Grinstead! No wonder we were featured on both local and national news – and questions were asked 'in the house'.

Now we have to see what February will have to offer us. Even though the days have started to get longer, February is still officially winter and can often see short periods of very intense cold. Sometimes it feels like the best that can be said about February is that its short – but why? Surely it would make more sense if months were more even in length? In the Roman calendar, there were only 10 months covering March to December. The rest of the year was too cold for agriculture that it was deemed too insignificant to name. The ten months were given 29 or 31 days alternatively to follow the lunar cycles for no better reason than they believed even numbers to be unlucky. Later two additional months were added – January and February - so that every part of the year was named. However, to get to 365 days of the year there needed to be one unlucky month which had an even number of days – so February got 28. It was the month when Romans celebrated their dead so perhaps they wanted to keep the bad luck as short as possible. Later the calendar would be revised by Julius Caesar and then Pope Gregory made further corrections as more accurate measurement of astronomical time was possible, yet somehow February kept its meagre 28 days, except of course in Leap Years.

In church we celebrate Candlemas on 2nd February to mark the day that Mary and Joseph presented Jesus at the Temple 40 days after his birth, as decreed by Jewish law. This fulfilled the requirement that male children should be presented to God and redeemed by offering a sacrifice. It also marks the day that the mother of a male child should be purified by making an offering to God, providing the additional name of Feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary. In the UK we tend to take down our Christmas decorations on the eve of Epiphany, but in many cultures this is left until Candlemas. It was also the tradition for families to take their candles to church for blessing at the Candlemas, so that when used at home they would serve as a symbol of Christ as the Light of the World. In Dutch folklore the weather on Candlemas was considered to predict the length of winter still to come and as they emigrated to America and Canada this evolved into Groundhog Day, when a groundhog emerging from its burrow on 2nd February to see its shadow (sunny day) predicts 6 more weeks of winter, whereas if there is no shadow (cloudy day) spring will arrive early. Studies show that this prediction is right only 40% of the time, so we'll take that with more than our daily allowance of salt! Candlemas has also been celebrated, especially in France, Belgium and the Netherlands, by eating crepes or pancakes. We tend to wait until Shrove Tuesday, which is 17th February this year.

We do have the Winter Olympics to enjoy this month (6-20th), no matter what the weather. It will be held in the dual sites of Milan and Cortina d'Ampezzo in northern Italy. From the daredevil sports of skiing and snowboarding, nail-biting precision of curling, to the grace of the ice dancers, these surely provide something for everyone to enjoy. Locally we have the Tunbridge Wells Half Marathon race on 22nd February, which is now considered one of the best half-marathon races in the country. Rather inconveniently for those of us attending services on this first Sunday of Lent, it means that we need to be at church earlier than usual as the roads surrounding church will be closed from 9.45 – 11.30 am.

I hope you like the soggy looking birds on the cover, to continue the weather theme.

If you have articles for the March magazine, please make sure that we have them by 15th February. By the time we get to this magazine your editorial team will be back from holiday, which we hope will provide plenty of winter sunshine. Fingers crossed!

Deborah Bruce and Sue Hare



MR JOLLY CHIMNEY SWEEP
27 Apsley Street, Tunbridge Wells, TN4 8NU

Tel: 01892 618324 Mobile: 07752 130577

Honest Reliable Friendly Service
Free Smoke Test, Certificate Issued
No Mess, No Fuss

**Where there's a will
There's a way to help St Paul's**

Please help us to preserve the church buildings and ministry by leaving a legacy to St Paul's Rusthall in your will.

Thank you

**Tamarix Holiday Bungalow
Winchelsea Beach**



Tamarix is a 2 bedroom bungalow situated in a no-through road, and set in a large fenced shingle and grassed garden. It is ideal for those looking for a quiet and comfortable self-catering accommodation to enjoy a tranquil break along the stunning Sussex coast. Sleeping four, the cottage can be used for a wonderful family holiday or just a cosy break for two. Pets are welcome by arrangement and Tamarix is perfectly situated for walking, bird watching, cycling, and the beach.

Holidays are on a weekly basis only in high season, but short breaks may be possible at other times.

**Weeks for 2026 (April to October) are available
from £700 - £910 per week depending on time of year**

**Please call 01892 528538 or email
karen_miller_2@hotmail.co.uk
for more information.**

KMJProperty

Your local independent Estate Agent
...contactable 7 days a week

**We are your local family run
Estate Agents
based in Rusthall High Street**

**We offer a good, personal and
professional service with
competitive fees and flexible
contract terms.**

**Call us today for a FREE Market
appraisal**

**01892 515188
sales@kmjproperty.co.uk**



Find us on
Facebook

OnTheMarket.com



**Magazine Easy Payment
Methods**

Income from magazine sales is important to us at St Paul's. If everyone paid the £1 cover charge we would raise over £900 a year, which would not only cover the cost of producing the magazine but also contribute to other costs such as leasing the photocopier.

If you often find yourself fumbling for the right change, perhaps you might like to pay in advance for a year's "subscription", 10 issues for the sum of £10, (you might even feel tempted to be more generous!) Please make cheques payable to St Paul's Church, Rusthall and send them to the Parish Office.

Alternatively you can use the card payment machines – just choose the £1 donation option.

Your contributions are much appreciated.

Churchwardens' Report



So another year is upon us. It is hard to believe we are in 2026!

Work at the church, structural, pastoral and spiritual continues and we look forward to building on the wonderful progress made last year. It was lovely to see congregation numbers rise and consequently, welcoming new people to the fold. Overall St Paul's numbers were up by one third on previous years. The 175 anniversary celebrations are behind us but moves are in progress that will hopefully leave a lasting legacy to all the hard work and effort that the committee put into the celebrations. My personal thanks go to each and every one of them. There were many highlights, the wedding dress exhibition, the cook book, the Autumn Fayre and the finale of the Christmas tree festival to name but a few. Not to mention the superb musical performances would be a total travesty, from the sponsored hymn to the unique and incredible Son et Lumière and everything in between. We are truly blessed and fortunate to have our choir under the dedicated leadership of Fiona and we must be the envy of parishes across the country.

Our next challenge will be the restoration of the organ and a committee is being formed to organise the fundraising for this essential work. Please support them in this worthwhile endeavour for we all benefit from the music at the church.

We are looking for a small team of people to organise the parking at our most attended services. This role comes with remuneration and would suit any age group above 18 years. Please contact Helen at the church office or one of the wardens for more information.

Finally, we are still searching for a new churchwarden to take over responsibilities from May after the next APCM. If you would like to be part of the team please contact either Chris or May for further information. The responsibilities are very varied but also very rewarding.

Chris Dobson and May Graves

Honesty is always the best policy

A story in 'The Times' recently reminded me with a smile of my professional life. By way of background, those in the professions such as Accountancy or the Law were subjected to completing time sheets with the idea of improving the time charged to clients upon which the bills to clients were based. I think from memory this began in the 1970's. In those days there were codes which were for non-chargeable time. Of course the system was abused in that either there was too much non-chargeable time or the hours worked were exaggerated in the hope of gaining promotion. The system applied to Partners and staff alike, with the basic principle that, as a minimum 35 hours should be accounted for each week.

In a later development my firm introduced a system that in effect made one account for every five minutes of the working day. Worse was to come when an inspiring managing partner decided to drop nearly all the non-chargeable codes including Practice Development which was the code mainly used by Partners in developing new business. It was a disaster and in fact chargeable time fell and with it profitability. The aspiring Managing Partner was replaced and eventually so was the system of time sheets, although the system of charging time persisted - but checked by line managers. Now read 'The Times' report.

"A solicitor has been struck off for claiming to have worked 7,511.7 hours over 266 working days - averaging more than 28 hours a day. The person had boosted hours worked in order to qualify for a 400 per cent bonus scheme. The firm discovered the ruse and warned the person but they persisted in falsifying the hours. Eventually, the person was dismissed for gross misconduct."

I have deliberately excluded the person's name and that of the firm.

Tim Cripps

[NB times haven't changed so much Tim – I still have to do a weekly computer timesheet allocating my working hours between various codes – Sue]



RUSTHALL'S COMMUNITY LARDER

What is it?

A community larder receives surplus short date food from supermarkets to offer to people in our community.

When and where is it?

Our community larder will be in the St Paul's Church Centre every Friday between 12:30pm and 2:15pm.

Who can use it?

Anyone can come and visit the community larder. There are no restrictions, no booking necessary, just turn up with a carrier bag to fill.

How much does it cost?

We suggest a small cash donation of £2, or as much as you can afford. For this, you can take away a bag full of quality food.

Please help us all stay safe by wearing a face mask, respecting social distancing and using the hand sanitiser provided.



WE'D LOVE TO SEE YOU!

For more information, please email contact@rusthallvillage.org
or telephone 07805 475397

A Musical Note



Following a very busy 2025, the choir was all set for a relaxing 2026. However, I imagine you all realised over Christmas that we were having many issues with the organ. Sadly, the organ needs a complete overhaul so that we can continue to use it for worship in the way we have grown accustomed. Therefore, in 2026 we will be launching our organ restoration campaign, and I hope that you will all support us and get involved to help ensure that we have a wonderful organ in our church to be enjoyed by future generations.

We will launch the fundraising campaign with a concert on Easter Saturday (4th April) at 6.30 pm, when we will sing The Messiah by Handel. Please tell all your friends and relatives about this concert and bring them along to listen. It is incredibly exciting to perform such an iconic work, and we hope you will all enjoy it. There will be further concerts throughout the year, and I have included a list of dates for your diary at the bottom of this article.

As always, the Christmas period was extremely busy for the choir, with lots of carol singing around the town and in the village, and many services to sing at. I particularly enjoyed Nine Lessons and Carols this year; there was some amazing singing, and it felt very Christmassy and joyous from start to finish. I would particularly like to thank Marcy for getting us off to such a good start by singing the first verse of Once in Royal David's City so well. Thanks also to Aidan for volunteering to read the First Lesson, so tricky for a child, but he did it brilliantly. Thanks to Jess and Stella for their solos, and to George, Alex and Fergus for being such excellent Kings (and thanks to Deborah for getting such wonderful crowns). Most of all, though, thank you to Alasdair for his amazing organ playing, despite all the troubles with the organ. It sounded wonderful. Thank you also to Brad for getting into the organ the day before Nine Lessons to remove the offending pipes and make it possible for the service to go ahead with the organ. We were devising all sorts of strategies to get around the

problems, including quickly writing out brass parts, but fortunately all was well for the service.

We are keen to recruit a few more children to the choir this year, so if you know of any children aged 6 or over who might be interested in coming along, please get in touch with me. I promise they will have lots of fun and learn a lot too. In addition to services they need to be available for Junior Choir rehearsals on Fridays from 6.30 - 8pm.

Some dates for your diaries

Saturday 4th April: 6.30 pm - Messiah - Handel
Saturday 30th May: 6.30 pm - Summer Concert
Saturday 8th August: 6.30 pm - Choir Camp Concert
Saturday 12th September: 6.30 pm - An Evening at the Musicals Concert
Saturday 7th November: 6.30 pm - Remembrance Concert
Saturday 5th December: All Day - Sponsored Sing-a-thon of 100 Carols for Choirs

Fiona Johnson

From Christmas Cards to Charity



For many years, members of the Family Service have not sent individual Christmas cards to fellow members but, instead, individuals have put communal cards up on a board and put money thereby saved into a pot to be given to a charity of our choice. In the words of Liz Goddard:

"Last year we sent it to Porchlight. In the past we have bought various 'virtual' gifts from Oxfam or Christian Aid, started an orchard in Malawi in a village my family supports, bought school uniforms for the same village and have considered any charity members suggest. The sums have usually been around the £100 mark and so this year we are sending £50 to Porchlight and I am about to send £50 to Oxfam for a virtual gift of clean water for all."

Whilst the makers of Christmas Cards may disagree, this is a wonderful idea which we can hope and pray continues to generate essential money for very worthy causes.

Tim Harrold



Chris, Jim and Jo Parker - Our award winning family business

Our award winning family service

Let our family, care for your family

Your final farewell should respect your loved one's wishes and comfort those they leave behind. Our family has provided funeral services to families and friends in the Tonbridge area and surrounding villages and towns, for 40 years, we know this is a time when a caring family can make all the difference.

Our promise to you:-

- We understand your wishes and we're here to help
- Our emergency service is 24/7 and our phone is always answered personally
- We always provide itemised estimates
- We operate our own mortuary & private chapel of rest
- We're proud members of SAIF and BIFD
- Your family, not profit, is our main priority

01732 360328

173 High St, Tonbridge TN9 1BX

01892 487144

31 High Street, Rusthall, TN4 8RL

www.abbeyfs.co.uk



Abbey Funeral Services is independently owned by Chris, Jim and Jo Parker.

Your local family Funeral Directors



Shirley Millicent Barter

17th April 1934 – 9th December 2025

It was such a shock to hear that Shirley had died so suddenly at the beginning of December. As Shirley's funeral was held between Christmas and New Year, many who would have wished to attend may not have been able to do so. The service is still available to view on YouTube by following the link from the church website. Shirley had planned her own funeral in advance, so of course it included some splendid music and readings, in addition to the full versions of the tributes given by Shirley's family and by Tim Cripps, of which only a condensed version is given here.

Deborah Bruce

Tribute by the Family



Born on 17th April 1934 in Elgar Avenue in Surbiton, Shirley was the only child of Cecil and Millicent Rhodes. She spent a very happy childhood, living most of it in and around that part of England, apart from a period when she was evacuated to Staffordshire for safety during the war - where incidentally she discovered her love of Staffordshire oatcakes!

After the war, she went to Wimbledon High school, and then on to Froebel Educational Institute where she achieved her teaching certificate (later to be recognised as a degree), and made a handful of life-long friends. Her parents were both teachers and/or headteachers which may explain why Shirley chose that as her own career path.

Her first teaching appointment was in Rosehill, in the suburb of Morden, South London, during which time, in 1957, she married Roger Cowdery. In 1961, Hugh was born, and then three years later, in 1964, Sarah.

Shirley's career took her to the position of Deputy head at Knollmead in Tolworth - which she always described as a 'country' school based in a town. The school kept some farm animals in the grounds which, from time to time Shirley would bring home in the school holidays. This included one time

when Shirley thought the best idea was to load the school sheep in to the back of the family car - before you get any visions of a nice big estate car, this was a Mini and she put the sheep in the back seat with Hugh and Sarah!!! Not a little lamb... a fully grown sheep! That promptly freaked out and trampled over Hugh and Sarah in the back while mum drove home in fits of laughter!

Although Mum's marriage to Roger wasn't to last, Mum stayed very close to her brother and sister-in-law from his family, and cherished their children, her nieces and nephews.

It was in 1970 that Shirley got together with the man who was to be her ever-present companion for the rest of her life, and in 1971 she married Paul Barter (who some of you know as Bill, and of course we know as Dad). They moved to Tunbridge Wells and Mum enjoyed a short time working in the nursery at Bishops Down making yet more lifelong friends!

A couple of years later our little family became complete when I (David) was born in 1973. Although we were by now a little too big for our bungalow in Kendal Park and so we moved to our family home at 146 St John's Road where, at this time of year, Mum would always paint a festive picture onto the large lounge window. A different scene every year, I remember a nativity scene, a snowman, a giant Christmas pudding, and - perhaps not her finest year - a mince pie that we all thought looked like some sort of alien space ship!

St John's Road has so many happy family memories for us. It was the house the three of us grew up in and that we all moved out of as we became adults. The scene of countless family meals and parties, with Mum an incredibly hospitable host, whether it was friends of hers and Dad's, or friends of her children calling round, she always wanted to chat and make sure any guests felt thoroughly welcomed.

Mum taught for a few years at St Augustine's Catholic infant school, where she was chuffed to bits to have been entrusted with preparing the children for their first holy communion.

She rounded off her career as a teacher, and later Head Teacher at St Lukes Infant School in High Brooms, where... well let's just say she made life-long friends where-ever she went!

She retired in 1992 and set about learning to fly (well, she took a short gliding course, and whether she actually flew the plane, we're not sure, but she did sit in the front seat of the cockpit!), and she finally learnt to tap-dance!

While those were a couple of fun hobbies Mum did briefly after retirement, Mum filled her time with

many other interests and voluntary roles over the years. Some of you may have joined her in some of these.

It includes time with

- The Samaritans
- Victim Support
- Kent child witness service
- Cub Scout leader
- Chair of Trustees for the Housing the Homeless Central Fund
- Chair of Trustees for the TW Counselling Centre
- Trustee of Sunnyside Hall
- And Mum was a keen member of the local Book Club and we had many lovely memories recounted to us by memories of that group. They, like us, remember Mum's ability to make a story come alive when reading it.

And of course there were many groups associated with this wonderful church, where she spent so much of her time enjoying the faith and support, the friendship and love that comes from such a special place. I know Tim will talk more about this shortly, and we know how much pleasure St Paul's brought her. Her time singing in the choir, her term as a church warden, numerous prayer groups, reading lessons or prayers, or just spending time enjoying the services and, of course, enjoying hearing the distinctive bass vocals of Dad in the church choir.

Mum and Dad, and all the family, have strong connections with St Paul's and the teachings of the church were at the foundation of how we were raised and how Mum taught us to raise our families. As well as her three children, Mum had nine godchildren, a role she was always delighted to be asked to perform. Over time her family grew as we children have brought her 8 grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. Instilled in all of us very clearly was an overwhelming sense of compassion for others. To treat people with kindness, regardless of their background.

That wasn't the only thing we learnt from our parents. They were keen to ensure we had fun during our school holidays and to experience the delights of foreign holidays. We enjoyed many family trips to Malta, France, Spain, Austria, Germany as well as many happy times aboard canal boats up and down the country (and occasionally abroad).

I remember a trip organised by the Head-Teachers Association to the former USSR in 1988, visiting Leningrad, Moscow and Kiev. A fascinating journey into this country before perestroika.

Mum and Dad continued that travel bug after they had both retired, enjoying many trips over to see

Sarah in Australia, with stops in Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Hong Kong, Fiji, San Francisco, Los Angeles and New Zealand.

The travel became less frequent in the latter years of Mum's life, as her health deteriorated. In 2012 Mum was admitted to St Thomas's Hospital after suffering a heart attack. She had stents and a pacemaker fitted, which clearly enabled her to live over a decade longer, but the experience had an impact on her.

As you'll know, in more recent years Shirley became more and more reliant on her wheelchair, particularly after she suffered a fall which resulted in a broken hip. However whilst she may have been entering a room on wheels rather than on foot, she continued to have that natural ability to fill a room with her personality and to draw people towards her for conversation and laughter.



Throughout all of this time, her ever present husband, companion and best friend was by her side, or behind her pushing her along. Hugh, Sarah and I could not have asked for better role models than the parents we were blessed with.

The world is a sadder place without Mum in our lives. However her legacy will live on through our memories of her.



Tim Cripps' Tribute to Shirley Barter

2025 has been for me, to quote the words of our late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, my annus horribilis in

terms of the number of very good friends who, having completed their earthly lives, now continue them in heaven. Not least among them was my dear friend Shirley Barter. Pat and I moved to Rusthall in 1980 and became more and more involved with St Paul's Church. I was elected to the Parish Church Council in the early 1980's and Shirley was already a member. In a scene reminiscent of the Parish Council meetings in the Vicar of Dibley, proceedings were interrupted by a gentleman sitting opposite me who said without making eye contact with me, 'On a point of order Mr Chairman does the new member know anything about drains?' Our then Vicar Norman Mantle exhibited his usual diplomatic skills and invited me to introduce myself which I did concluding with the remark that 'as far as drains were concerned the only thing I know about them is that you shove stuff down them.' At which point Shirils got a fit of the giggles. It was the start of a lifelong friendship.

In the fullness of time Shirils became Churchwarden with me. It was very much the most enjoyable time. You see Shirils knew everybody and when I say everybody I mean everybody and if anyone needed talking to off Shirils went, leaving me with the paperwork, which I was quite happy to do. During our tenure we received what, at the time, was a substantial legacy. We wanted to invest for the future and I am sure it was Shirils who came up with the idea of a Parish Office and extending the facilities of the lower hall to include a fitted kitchen.

We organised two Flower and Arts festivals and celebrations for the 150th anniversary which of course was 25 years ago. We had much fun in doing so and I remember us both dressing up in Victorian costume. What Shirils was able to bring was common sense, a sense of humour and fun. At the time when we were wardens there were four Sunday services at the Parish Church, 8,9,11 am and 6.30pm. Between us we covered them all and that included Shirils singing in the 9am choir, intercessing, and reading lessons. However, Shirils humour and charm overcame whatever difficulties arose. While Churchwarden the Men's Fellowship decided that Shirils should become an honorary member as we reckoned that knowing everyone would be to our advantage. Indeed it was and whether it was supporting our meetings or suggesting speakers Shirils attended all our meetings.

As you have heard from David, Shirils was Headmistress of St Lukes and before her retirement she was kind enough to invite me over to tour the school. I did and it was clear that Shirils was revered by the pupils and staff alike. No surprise really because the human warmth was always palpable whenever you met her.

When I was fortunate to become a Reader here I received terrific encouragement from Shirils and after receiving my licence her advice was to 'embrace everything' which I hope I did, but whether she was in the pews or seated next to the font, I always received a warm smile and a thumbs up after preaching which was really encouraging even if I didn't deserve it.

During my time working in the City I was fortunate to be able to get regular tickets to productions of the Royal Shakespeare Company at the Barbican. Bill drove Shirley up and drove us all home again after the show. We also sponsored the National Theatre for a time and saw some wonderful shows including a memorable Wind in the Willows in 1991. They were great times.

Our connection with the City of London was strong. Shirils was friendly with a Court of Common Council man named Billy Dove. Billy ran a Charity called 'Housing the Homeless' and Shirils as you have heard was a Trustee and Chairman at some point. I was able to secure funds for the Charity from other Charities. We attended many City functions together and Shirley, Bill and I were made Freemen of the City of London.

In recent times we would cheerfully reminisce on the good times and discussed the many idiosyncrasies of the Church of England at the Thursday Lunch Club and as you can guess we never ran out of material. One thing is for sure there was plenty of laughter along the way.

I do not want to impinge upon Ronnie's address except to say I have never known anyone in my life, apart from Clergy, with such a rock solid faith. I am rather shamed to say that from time to time I have doubted my faith but it was always Shirils who would set me straight and it was always worth a discussion with the Headmistress to set me on the right road based on the principle that God is with us in the darkest of times which we both had experienced. What was true that we always agreed that for both of us our God saw us all as his children irrespective of sex, sexuality or ethnicity and we thanked God that is always the ethos here at St Pauls.

So Shirils farewell. I'll see you again but in the meantime I thank you for your friendship, your sense of fun and your wise Counsel. I shall miss you terribly. You have more than earned the right to rest in peace and rise in glory. Thank you with all my heart.

Tim Cripps

01892 825505



HENRY PAUL FUNERALS

Contemporary and Traditional Services

Henry Paul Funerals is a traditional family run funeral directors purposely dedicated to providing distinct levels of service, choice, dignity and care to bereaved families in Pembury, Tunbridge Wells and surrounding areas.

24 Hour Emergency Service . Home Visits . Private Chapel of Rest . Full Fleet of Modern & Vintage Vehicles .
Floral Tributes . Catering . Memorial Masonry . Pre-paid Funeral Plans . Repatriation



10 High Street, Pembury, Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN2 4NY

www.henrypaulfunerals.co.uk



WELHAM JONES

An independent family owned company

Funeral Directors & Monumental Masons



For information or advice please contact either

Simon Welham, Pam Pines or Jackie Fullerton on

01892 300330

39 Crescent Road, Tunbridge Wells, TN1 2 LZ



www.welhamjones.co.uk

tunbridgewells@welhamjones.co.uk



Poems for February

At the core of our faith is love. At his baptism, Jesus was told by God “You are my beloved...” and that message is given, always given, if we can but hear it, to humankind.

Susan Barber

Message

Look, beloved child, into my eyes, see there
Your self, mirrored in that living water
From whose deep pools all images of earth are
born.
See, in the gaze that holds you dear
All that you were, are, and shall be for ever.
In recognition beyond time and seeming
Love knows the face that each soul turns towards
heaven.

Kathleen Raine

Keeping Watch

In the morning
When I began to wake,
It happened again –
That feeling
That you, Beloved,
Had stood over me all night
Keeping watch.
That feeling
That as soon as I began to stir,
You put your lips on my forehead
And lit a lamp
inside my heart.

Hafiz

And on the subject of unconditional love, this poem is for Valentine's Day on 14th:

Invisible Kisses

If there was ever one
Whom when you were sleeping
Would wipe your tears
When in dreams you were weeping;
Who would offer you time
When others demand;
Whose love lay more infinite
Than grains of sand.

If there was ever one
To whom you could cry;
Who would gather each tear
And blow it dry;
Who would offer help

On the mountains of time;
Who would stop to let each sunset
Soothe the jaded mind.

If there was ever one
To whom when you run
Will push back the clouds
So you are bathed in sun;
Who would open arms
If you would fall;
Who would show you everything
If you lost it all.

If there was ever one
Who when you achieve
Was there before the dream
And even then believed;
Who would clear the air
When it's full of loss;
Who would count love
Before the cost.

If there was ever one
Who when you are cold
Will summon warm air
For your hands to hold;
Who would make peace
In pouring pain,
Make laughter fall
In falling rain.

If there was ever one
Who can offer you this and more;
Who in keyless rooms
Can open doors;
Who in open doors
Can see open fields
And in open fields
See harvests yield.

Then see only my face
In the reflection of these tides
Through the clear water
Beyond the river side.
All I can send is love
In all that this is
A poem and a necklace
Of invisible kisses.

Lenn Sissay

Seeing Jesus more clearly

February provides a number of good talking points and reflections in our journey with Christ. There is the presentation of Christ in the Temple on the 1st of February and the beginning of Lent with Ash Wednesday on the 18th.

Christmas may be over except that our Crib and candles remain as visible reminders of the birth of Christ until the day on which the forty day old Jesus was brought to the Temple by his parents. That day is a contender for the feast with the largest number of different names: 'The presentation of Christ in the Temple' is one I have mentioned, another is the 'Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary' and the simple 'Meeting' as it is known in the Orthodox Church, but the name of the feast which we concentrate on at St. Paul's is Candlemas. All of these titles provide us with a different way of beholding the hope and truth revealed in the story. It brings the story of the Church's celebrations of the incarnation (the birth of Christ) to a fitting and joyful close, encouraging us as we read the story of Simeon and Anna to reflect on how and what we see in and through the lives of faith. Although we bring that story to a close, I must record how beautiful the Church looked over the festive period and Jill McAllister and her team are to be congratulated on the magnificent display of Christmas trees and twinkling lights which shone magnificently, reflecting the light of Christ, during the candlelit services so beautifully complimented by some glorious music from Fiona and the choir.

The account of Jesus' presentation in the Temple is described for us by the evangelist Luke in rich and symbolic detail, as Mary and Joseph, faithful to the teachings of the law, make the journey to Jerusalem. A humble scene perhaps but it is transformed as we encounter 'righteous' and 'devote' Simeon, a serving and aged priest, approaching the end of his earthly life and yet still patiently waiting for the revelation of the Lord's Messiah. We are not told how many years he has been waiting, but the gospel suggests he's been there for a long time, hoping that what God promised would be fulfilled. After losing so many good friends last year this story resonates with me and as I age does so each year with more poignancy.

Simeon like his contemporary Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, serves us as an icon of steady perseverance and faithful witness. These two unlikely disciples who, in the wake of Jesus' nativity, like the shepherds and the Magi, see him for who he really is. Like the prophets of the Old Testament, they entrust the future to God, with all the uncertainty and anxiety this might generate,

and anticipate his guidance and intervention. Given the events of early 2026, I think we Christians know how they feel. It is their attitude of heart and mind that enables them to look with faith and, in the arrival of the young family from Nazareth, see the new thing that the Lord is doing; with all the hope and expectation that Jesus offers not just for Israel but for the whole world and God knows how we need that hope and expectation.

A marvelous skill is one of prophetic wisdom, that is to look at the state of things as they are, however depressing, and still be willing to testify to the things of God, such as we hear in the prophecy of Malachi, that it is ultimately to be hopeful and again this is no mean ask with the state of the world in which we live. The prophet looks forward to a day when the Lord of hosts will be known and seen in the midst of his people. Yet, as can be read, this is not simply a day of rejoicing, but of refining, of God himself remaking a people in his own image, so as to be shaped by his priorities, in the fullness of time, as we read in the Letter to the Hebrews. This is the hope we see in the face of Christ, the God who chooses to 'share flesh and blood' with us so we might be free to serve him in the world. It is through Jesus' solidarity with us, the people who he makes his own, that we find hope and grace to see one another with the same eyes that he looks upon us.

For Simeon and Anna that day in the temple seeing Jesus, changed everything. Simeon was reconciled to departing in peace and Anna given cause for praise for praise and rejoicing. They both looked intently upon the little child and recognised in him the light and life of God which can never be extinguished. The light and life of Christ, which now gave fresh meaning and purpose to their lives. If only we could convey this to our world of the unbeliever.

All these many years later the same is true for us as we meet with Jesus afresh and as we seek to serve him today. In a world that demonstrates to us on a daily basis that all too conveniently beholds things, and all too often, other people at a superficial level, the Presentation of Christ reminds us that we are to look both intently and carefully if we are to discover those things that God would have us see. I have always found the words of CS Lewis inspirational. Indeed, he wrote in his book '*Mere Christianity*' 'look for Christ and you will find Him and with him everything else'. Now there's a New Year resolution for the world that would give us all a sense of purpose.

Recommended Readings:-

Malachi 3: 1-5, Hebrews 2: 14-18, Luke 2. 22-40

Mere Christianity by CS Lewis.

By way of introduction this is not a heavy tome but one of the most popular and beloved introductions to the concept of faith ever written. The book brings together C.S. Lewis's legendary radio broadcasts during the second world war years, in which he set out simply to 'explain and defend the belief that has been common to nearly all Christians at all times'. The book remains strikingly fresh for the reader today. Rejecting the boundaries that divide Christianity's many denominations, *Mere Christianity* provides an unequalled opportunity for believers and non believers alike to absorb a powerful, rational case for the Christian faith.

Tim Cripps

Commons for sale!



We had wonderful sunshine on Saturday 24th January, but that didn't stop more than 290 people from coming to meet Friends of Tunbridge Wells and Rusthall Commons at the Camden Centre. They were there to find out more about the upcoming sale of the commons, and the desire of The Friends to buy it on behalf of the community, so that it comes into public ownership for the first time and remains that way for ever. There was a brief background introduction followed by questions and comments from those present.

People were keen to ask about the funding of the commons; the robustness of the legal protections surrounding the commons for residents; the implications of the suggestions made in the sales brochure put out by the current owners, Targetfollow; whether the Friends will bid for just the commons, or will it include the car park at the bottom of Major Yorks Road (part of the existing commons); and the biggest question of all: how much will it cost us?

The audience accepted that it is currently not possible to give precise answers to all the questions

raised. For example, we do not know who else will bid for them and to what degree the extensive marketing will affect the level of interest and the price.

The Friends received unanimous support for buying the Commons, and overwhelming support for being able to bid for both the Commons and the car park at Major Yorks Road, according to the amount of money that can be raised by the time a bid is made. The car park is clearly going to be the dearer of the two lots as it generates much of the c£150,000 income of the commons. Everyone was keen to ensure the Commons is secure from future development.

The Friends asked for further help and especially in the areas of secretarial, legal, tax and accounting. Thanks were given for the pledges of financial support that have already been made.

Anyone reading this article who wishes to help towards the purchase can make a pledge by email to me at johnspbarber@gmail.com. We will only ask you to honour your pledge when our bid has been accepted. I will also be happy to answer any questions you may have about the proposed purchase. It is highly likely that other meetings will be held so look out for details of these.

Here are a couple of links to our Friends website, Targetfollow's sales brochure, a Facebook reel and BBC Kent's article about the sale.

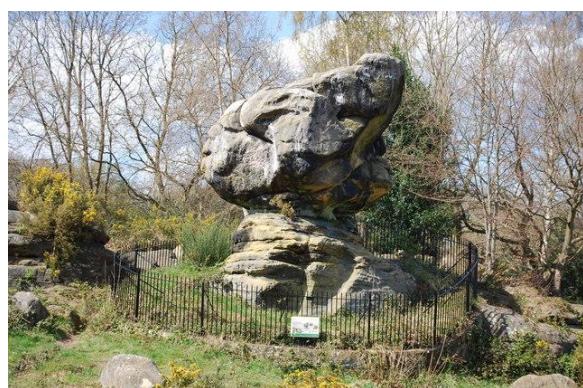
<http://www.friendsofthecommons.uk/>

<https://targetfollow.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/TW-Rusthall-Common-Sales-Brochure V2.pdf>

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=886962190389816>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/ckgl3jnwdn1o>

John Barber



A Quiet Revival at St Paul's?

Across much of the media over the last twelve months there was much talk about whether Christianity was undergoing a supposed “quiet revival” and if so why and by whom.

It is difficult to pinpoint the exact trigger for all the chatter, but the Bible Society's 2025 report “The Quiet Revival” generated much of the noise. It came under significant criticism for the methodology behind the survey it relied on to do much of the heavy lifting that went into the report. It certainly contradicted the data produced by the Church of England that showed no significant increase in attendance numbers – though of course there is no law that says the Church's data was itself accurate.

The Daily Telegraph recently reported¹ that according to the Christian Publisher, SPCK, sales of the Bible in the UK have increased by 134% since 2019. Of course, a sizeable percentage increase of a small number would still be a small number, but it is another point of evidence supporting the idea that there is indeed something happening.

Despite the conflicting data the anecdotal stories kept on coming most of which pointed to a particularly unique aspect to this revival. What attracted a lot of chatter within the media was the profile of the people reportedly coming to Christianity who seemed to be predominantly men between 18 and 30. This is backed up by booksellers who confirm that the increase in Bible Sales as reported by SPCK had indeed been coming from the young. This is not a segment of the population for whom faith had historically been of significant relevance. Forty years ago, it would have been more likely for teenage men to think of themselves as immortal and “masters of their own universe” – I and most of my friends certainly did. There are several factors why this may have changed.

There is no doubt that society has changed massively in those forty years. There is a dichotomy that as the world has become ever more connected, young people have felt more disconnected and isolated than ever. Today, it is well known that the leading cause of death amongst men under the age of 35 is suicide. Forty years ago, it would have been injury or misadventure. The influence of intellectuals such as the psychologist Jordan Peterson and the historian and podcaster Tom Holland who have written extensively about their own journey back to faith has undoubtedly played a part.

There is also a sense that young men can struggle to find their place in the world. It can, perhaps, be best described thus:

“The pathways that have historically been well laid out for young men across work, housing and relationships have been steadily eroded and this has created the environment where fundamental existential questions begin to be asked.”

Although I grew up in the midst of the Cold War, the world seems to have moved into an altogether more uncomfortable place of insecurity. It would be only natural when questions of that nature are being posed for there to be a renewed interest in Spirituality.

But what about our own parish. Has there been any evidence of anything happening at St. Paul's? Have our attendance figures changed over the last 2-3 years? Because there are a wide range of factors that can impact week-to-week attendance, trying to produce trends by looking at that data is incredibly hard and possibly meaningless. Instead, I focused on six services which are a staple every year, namely Harvest Festival, Remembrance Sunday, Readings and Music for Advent, Nine Lessons and Carols, Midnight Mass, and the service on Christmas day morning. The data from 2023, 2024 and 2025 are reflected in the table below.

Service	2023	2024	2025	% Change
Harvest	223	223	274	22.9%
Remembrance	218	270	301	38%
Advent	114	90	170	88.9%
Nine Lessons	316	350	400	26.5%
Midnight Mass	123	132	147	19.5%
Christmas Day	174	140	236	68.6%
TOTAL	1168	1205	1528	30.8%

At first sight, the data is incredibly encouraging and on a clear upward trend, though some qualification is needed. As always when dealing with raw data, the hardest part of the process is understanding why the numbers are what they are and what they mean. There are always influencing factors which need to be considered and, in this instance, the biggest undoubtedly is the impact of our 175th celebrations. All the special events from the multiple choir concerts to the flower festival to the celebration of weddings past amongst many others along with the associated marketing would have at the very least, both raised and broadened the overall awareness levels of our

¹ Daily Telegraph 14th January 2026

church. The dedication of our choir and their leader, Fiona, our flower team, and all those who volunteered was truly inspiring.

In addition, we made a concerted effort throughout last year to publicise what events were taking place at St. Paul's across a range of media channels, including Facebook and Rusthall Life amongst others. The scale of impact that approach had on our six chosen services is impossible to quantify but it undoubtedly had some. Anecdotally, when I mentioned to my gang of 5 (representing those with whom I was licensed) our 400 strong congregation for Nine Lessons and Carols and the joy of having a choir of 58 voices, one response coming back was "those are numbers we just don't recognise". Is there a church in the diocese that could come close to bettering our service?

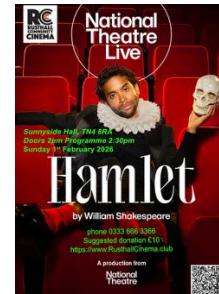
What does this all mean? At the very least, it is wonderful that more people attended those six services and hopefully they will continue to do so. It means that over 300 more people attended just those six services last year than the year before, and 360 more than in 2024. A church should be at the centre of its parish and if one of the objectives of our 175th celebrations was to introduce St. Paul's, our mission and ministry, to a wider audience, then this has clearly been achieved. That is surely a cause for celebration. The attendance of young men was particularly noticeable at our Midnight Mass, and it was also wonderful to welcome back all those members of our Choir from university. Their joy and enthusiasm at being there was tangible.

I would also suggest, however, that this is not the time for any complacency. Our challenge for 2026 will be to not squander this positive momentum. If our 175 celebrations are to have any long-term legacy, then we must ensure we learn the lessons. Whilst a concerted effort was made on improving our use of the media channels available to us, there was more that we could have done and it wasn't always as smoothly executed as it could have been. A teacher's report would have probably used that well-worn expression "room for improvement". That though is also good news. It means there is every reason to think that with a bit of effort this momentum can be maintained. It means we should be able to approach 2026 with optimism and joy that God is very much at work within the parish of St. Paul's. That in turn is a useful reminder to us all: that keeping God at the centre of everything we do remains, as it has always been, paramount.

Tim Harrold



Rusthall Community Cinema



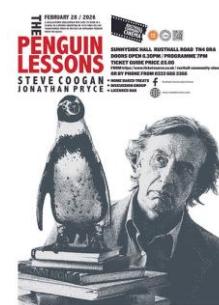
NT Live: Hamlet (1985) Cert 12

Doors open: 2pm Sunday 1st February
Written by: William Shakespeare
Directed by: Robert Hastie
Genre: Recorded Live Theatre
Runtime: 2hr + interval
Starring: Hiran Abeysekera



Young Mothers (2025) Cert 12A

Doors open: 6:30pm Saturday 14th February
Director: Jean-Pierre Dardenne, Luc Dardenne
Genre: Drama
Runtime: 1h46m
Starring: Babette Verbeek, Elsa Houben,



The Penguin Lessons (2024) Cert 12

Doors open: 6.30pm Saturday 28th February
Director: Peter Cattaneo
Genre: Drama
Runtime: 1h52m
Starring: Steve Coogan, Jonathan Pryce, Bruno Blas



Hendley Removals & Storage

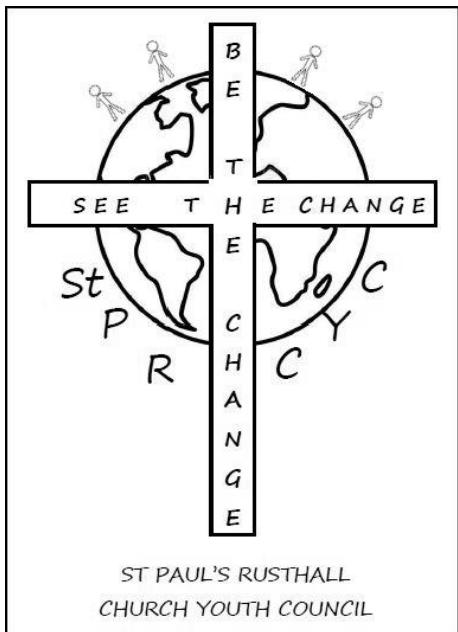
Tel: 01892 837207

Email: info@hendleyremovals.co.uk

Web: www.hendleyremovals.co.uk

“Your local family run movers & storers”

BLACKHAM
VILLAGE MARKET
SATURDAY 7TH FEBRUARY 2026
10.00AM - 12.15PM
TEA, COFFEE, AND
HOMEMADE CAKES
SERVED FROM 10AM
LOTS OF LOVELY THINGS TO BUY:
HOMEMADE PASTIES, CAKES AND
PRESERVES, LOCALLY MADE
BREAD, LOCAL HONEY, BIRD
FOOD, EGGS, CRAFT ITEMS AND
BRIC A BRAC



During our December meeting the Youth Council had an informative talk (after we decorated our Christmas Trees of course!) from the Samaritans and the important work that their volunteers do. The presentation included the history of the Samaritans, the number of bases around the country, how they connect the calls, what they are trained for and how they talk to their callers. The young people were very interested in the training and how the Samaritans approach talking to people in crisis. We asked many questions! At the end of the meeting, they handed out their call cards that had contact information on them and hoped that some of us might become Samaritans when we leave school.



Our first meeting of 2026 happened to be New Years Day so instead of a formal meeting we had a fun Games Day which included a heated game of Twister!



The day was a huge success with a lot of the youth council turning up to play a variety of board games. We played Risk, Twister, Othello, Scrabble, Frustration and Bounce the Ball for Four. As usual all our phones were in the box so it was a technology free afternoon and we actually LOVED IT!





the Lodge or in the Church and they would be greatly appreciated.



On the weekend starting the 3rd January, the Youth Council ran the Choristers Cafe. Saturday saw a slow start, probably due to the snow and ice but quickly picked up and we ran out of soup and rolls! Sunday was steadily busy with lots of dog walkers. We are learning so many new skills, too many to mention and are really enjoying our time on duty.



Our next meeting is on Thursday 5th February, 6pm in The Lodge. We are looking forward to welcoming Sandy Ellsworth who will be presenting the Earth Story, Human Story - Meet your ancestors through skulls and fossils!

Thursday March 5th will be a Beetle Drive!

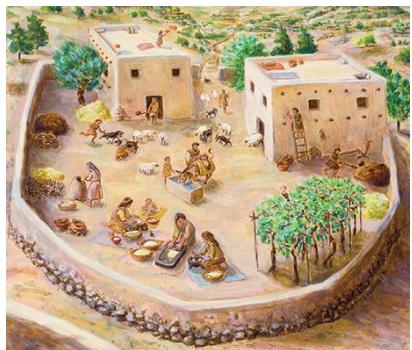
The CYC loves welcoming new members. Children may join the Summer term of Year 6. There is more information on the St Paul's website or contact Angela Culley or Jean Kerr at stpauls.cyc@gmail.com.

One of our other projects is the 'BOOK and PUZZLE SHARE' in the Lodge. One of our members has been organising the books into alphabetical order, however we are in desperate need of more donations to fill the shelves. If you have any books or puzzles that you have really enjoyed and would like to share with the community then please drop them off either in

Home Life In the New Testament

Part 1

By the time we get to New Testament times a real difference was beginning to be seen between town and country lifestyles. Certainly the houses in which people who are mentioned in the New Testament lived were still made of a very perishable material. However across the Roman Empire cities were developing an urbanised culture which was as fine as some we might see today.



The well-to-do lived in dwellings made of brick or stone. Isolated houses were unusual since it was safer to live in groups. Even today the houses of the poor are often

just one big square-like box apartment of ground floor only and divided into two by a wall. The upper part was on a higher level and had in it the beds, chests for clothes and cooking utensils, and was used by the family. The lower part could, when necessary house the livestock, but it was also used for other purposes, such as children's play area and for any trade or craft.

The flat roof was usually reached by a flight of steps up the outside of the house and could be used for sleeping, drying vegetables, ripening fruit, and saying one's prayers.

Houses of the comparatively wealthy might or might not be enlargements of this pattern but in towns and cities they would be as they are now, tall buildings some forty to sixty feet high, set in narrow streets, and with very few windows opening on to them. To such houses there would be a heavy street-gate or door opening on to a passage or courtyard, and the main part of the house might be built round one or more courtyards, probably planted with trees.

In a small house the principal rooms would be on the ground floor, but in larger houses the best rooms would be upstairs, and the guest chamber or upper chamber would be the best fitted out, and the one given to any visitor whom it was desired to honour. In most well-to-do establishments there would be a winter and summer room, roughly corresponding to downstairs and upstairs.

For the poor people beds were simply a mat or a mattress to lie on and a coverlet to spread on the top. This made carrying your bed quite easy. But we do know that the wealthier had a sort of wooden framework for the bed which raised the bedding off the ground. However, even today when some beds are not needed, the bedding is rolled up and piled away in the store-room. It seems to have been quite common for the whole family to sleep in one bed. And we can perhaps deduce that the poorer the individual, the closer to the ground they slept.

For the very rich, stuffing for pillows and mattresses came from rushes, wool and feathers and their blankets would have been dyed and embroidered.

Heating of the house was often a large, hollow depression in the middle of a room filled with charcoal. As soon as this had died down a board was laid over the glowing embers and then a carpet

kept warm for quite a long time. Sometimes uncharred wood was used instead of charcoal. However, in some cases a bronze or pottery brazier was used and people could warm themselves directly in front of the fire. Certainly rich Jews probably copied their more advanced Roman officials hence we are told that this was what they were doing in the court of the high-priest's house on the night of Christ's arrest.

There were two reasons why Palestinian houses of the well-to-do were built with so few windows outside and with a central courtyard. One was because of climate. In hot weather, shade is essential and a house built in this way also provided a shady place where people could sit outdoors in the middle of the day. But another reason was the absence of any proper police force. Thieves when caught might be handed over to the government for trial and sentence, but it was the business of the individual to look after his property. So if you could afford it you offered as little scope as possible for burglars to get in from the outside. For the really wealthy you kept a porter to lock and unlock the front door and also to act as a watchman.

In hot weather people would take their beds up on to the roof and sleep there. For shelter they would make a sort of booth or summer-house over the bed and in fact this is still done in some places even today. On the whole Eastern rooms are not much encumbered with furniture. Even the rich settle for a few mats, couches and small moveable tables, plus of course the heating brazier for winter.

Daphne Pilcher

Activity Pages

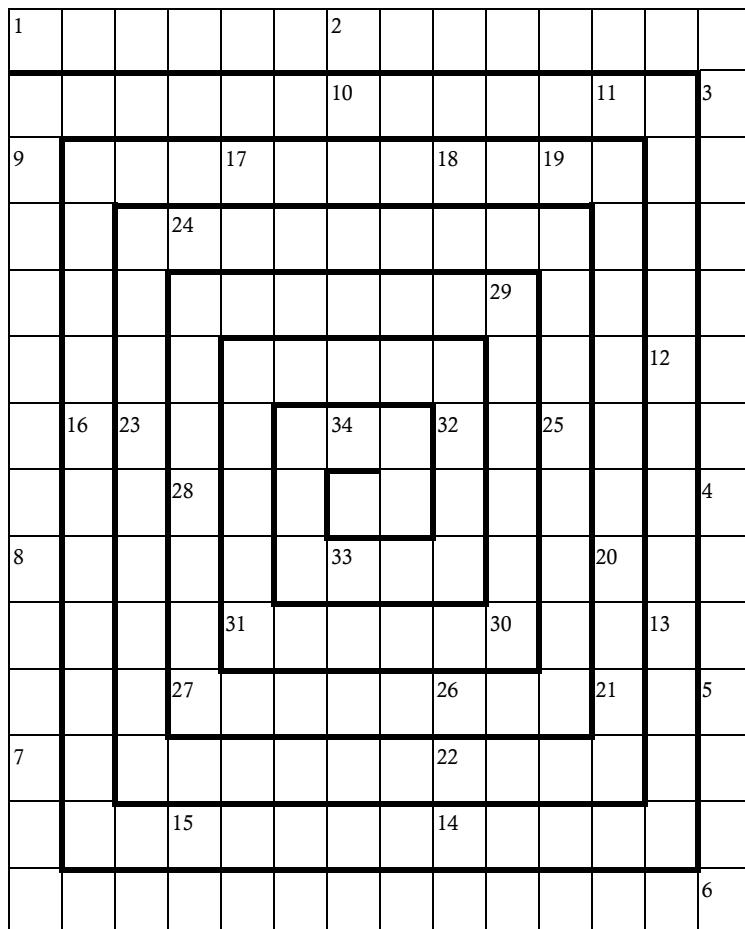
This word search is based on words reflecting items and places within the home. They may be found written diagonally, horizontally or vertically. At the end you should be left with twelve unused letters which will give you the names of two religious buildings.

E	N	I	H	C	A	M	G	N	I	H	S	A	W	BAR	BED
L	O	O	T	S	H	P	U	C	R	U	E	T	R	BIRDCAGE	BOOKCASE
M	R	V	P	R	S	E	L	A	C	S	A	A	M	BOWL	BROOM
O	I	C	E	O	E	N	A	P	I	M	C	T	O	BRUSH	CHAIRS
O	R	L	L	N	M	Z	S	D	U	K	E	T	O	CHINA	CRUET
R	E	L	K	W	I	N	E	G	L	A	S	S	R	CUP	FREEZER
E	L	T	E	B	O	B	H	E	T	U	Y	R	B	HOD	IRON
R	B	E	O	O	O	B	O	O	R	D	A	I	I	JUG	KETTLE
O	A	A	P	A	K	T	W	O	D	F	R	A	R	MAT	MOP
T	T	S	R	E	S	E	T	A	K	P	T	H	D	MILKBOTTLE	MUG
S	H	D	T	T	L	T	C	L	N	C	J	C	C	OVEN	PAN
E	E	T	O	M	O	A	E	C	E	I	A	U	A	PERCOLATOR	POT
B	L	V	A	S	E	P	B	R	U	S	H	S	G	RACK	SCALES
E	E	R	O	T	A	L	O	C	R	E	P	C	E	SIDEBOARD	STOREROOM

Twenty Questions to Test You

- 1 What did Henry Irving, Laurence Olivier and Kenneth Branagh all have in common
- 2 In what sport do teams compete for the America's Cup
- 3 Who was the 1st President of the United States
- 4 What Disney Film featured an orang-utan called King Louis
- 5 Which explorer was the first to reach the South Pole
- 6 Who created the character Dracula
- 7 Do sharks have bones
- 8 Which language was invented as a universal language
- 9 Which modern sporting event was revived in 1896
- 10 Who wrote stories about the Faraway Tree
- 11 What sport did Jack Nicklaus play
- 12 In which religion are there teachers called Rabbis
- 13 What cleaning device was invented by James M Spangler in 1908
- 14 Which county was called Cathay by Europeans
- 15 In the old nursery rhyme, who killed cock robin
- 16 Which European country has the oldest parliament
- 17 In the Babar stories, who or what is Babar
- 18 In which country would you find dingoes
- 19 Which boxer said 'I am the greatest'
- 20 Who played James Bond in Dr No in 1962

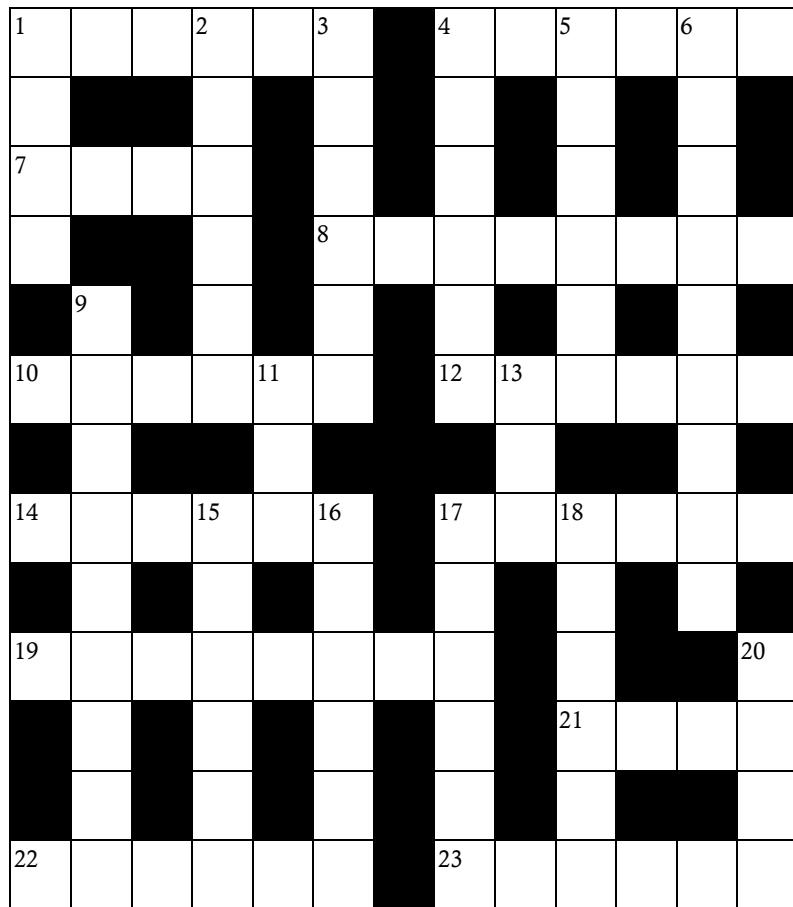
Crossword with a difference – the last letter of each answer is the first letter of the next. All the answers have a connection with the church building or service.



Clues

1	Cup used for Holy Communion	21	Church musical instrument
2	Another name for Holy Communion	22	Name often given to the Song of Simeon
3	Name for the three persons of God – as Father, Son and Holy Spirit	23	Part of a priest's vestments
4	Place linked with the second highest office in the Church of England	24	A Protestant who emphasizes personal conversion
5	Scottish name for a church	25	Church reading desk
6	Bible produced in 1611	26	One of the Creeds said in Church Worship
7	Central part of a church building	27	15 th Book in the Old Testament
8	Letter	28	The 106 th position within the Church of England to be filled in 2026
9	Service held later on a Sunday	29	From where the sermon is often preached
10	Name given to one of the first four New Testament books	30	Sung at Matins – opening words are 'We praise Thee, O God'
11	Early Harvest Festival meaning Loaf Mass	31	Song of Mary sung at Evensong
12	Seat for clergy or choir in the Chancel	32	17 th Book in the New Testament
13	Covered gateway found at the entrance to some old churches	33	National Assembly of the Church of England
14	One of the main Christian festivals	34	Bird often used in church to represent the Holy Spirit
15	St Paul's church belongs to this diocese		
16	Form of address for a member of the clergy		
17	Set of essential beliefs defined by the Christian Church		
18	Goes before Wednesday in the Church calendar		
19	Term used by Christians to describe the land of Israel and Palestinian territories		
20	Latin term for God		

General Crossword



Clues Across

- 1 Carefully planned action
- 4 Physical labour
- 7 Stove
- 8 Awful
- 10 Opposite of greater
- 12 An emerald commemorates how many years of marriage
- 14 Witch's laugh
- 17 Introduce a new topic
- 19 Final test to try and settle a dispute
- 21 Maritime fleet
- 22 Stinging plant
- 23 Make something last longer

Clues Down

- 1 Norse god of thunder
- 2 Played at Wimbledon
- 3 Partly burnt coal or wood
- 4 One who does not take any credit for ability or achievement
- 5 Sewing implement
- 6 How well a sound can be heard in a building
- 9 A device for amplifying and directing the voice
- 11 Snakelike fish
- 13 Armed conflict
- 15 Country found between Iraq and Saudi Arabia
- 16 Gradually develop
- 17 Scottish word for 'pretty'
- 18 Fruit linked with lemon in the nursery rhyme
- 20 Swedish word meaning quiet or silent

ANSWERS

Word search – the two religious buildings are Temple and Church

Crossword with a difference

1	Chalice	2	Eucharist	3	Trinity	4	York	5	Kirk	6	King James Version
7	Nave	8	Epistle	9	Evensong	10	Gospel	11	Lammas	12	Stall
13	Lychgate	14	Easter	15	Rochester	16	Reverend	17	Dogma	18	Ash
19	Holy Land	20	Deo	21	Organ	22	Nunc Dimittis	23	Stole	24	Evangelical
25	Lectern	26	Nicene	27	Ezra	28	Archbishop	29	Pulpit	30	Te Deum
31	Magnificat	32	Titus	33	Synod	34	Dove				

Twenty questions to test you

1	Acting	2	Yacht racing	3	George Washington	4	The Jungle Book
5	Ronald Amundsen	6	Bram Stoker	7	No	8	Esperanto
9	The Olympic Games	10	Enid Blyton	11	Golf	12	Judaism
13	Portable Electric Vacuum	14	China	15	Sparrow	16	Iceland
17	Elephant	18	Australia	19	Muhammad Ali	20	Sean Connery

General Crossword

Across

1	Tactic	4	Manual	7	Oven	8	Dreadful	10	Lesser	12	Twenty
14	Cackle	17	Broach	19	Showdown	21	Navy	22	Nettle	23	Eke out

Down

1	Thor	2	Tennis	3	Cinder	4	Modest	5	Needle	6	Acoustics
9	Megaphone	11	Eel	13	War	15	Kuwait	16	Evolve	17	Bonnie
18	Orange	20	Tyst								

Daphne Pilcher

TONBRIDGE
Philharmonic
SOCIETY

Dvorák
CELLO CONCERTO

Janáček
SINFONIETTA

SATURDAY 21ST
FEBRUARY 2026
AT 7:30PM

CHAPEL OF ST AUGUSTINE
TONBRIDGE SCHOOL

CONDUCTED BY NAOMI BUTCHER

Save The Date
UPCOMING 2026 CONCERTS

SAT 28 MAR SATURDAY 28TH MARCH 2026 | 7:30PM
Haydn Nelson Mass
Choral and Orchestral Concert
Chapel of St Augustine, Tonbridge School

SAT 23 MAY SATURDAY 23RD MAY 2026 | 7:30PM
Brahms Violin Concerto
Orchestral Concert
Tonbridge Parish Church

SAT 27 JUN SATURDAY 27TH JUNE 2026 | 7:30PM
Bizet Carmen in Concert
Choral and Orchestral Concert
Kent College, Pembury

Box Office:
07778 034 396 | TONPHIL.ORG.UK

TICKETS: £17 | SENIORS: £16 | STUDENTS: £8 | UNDER 18s FREE

St Valentine's Day

One of the most famous saints is surely St Valentine, celebrated each year on 14th February with a flurry of flowers, cards, chocolates and heart shaped balloons. He is the patron saint of Terni, lovers, people with epilepsy and beekeepers yet in 1969 he was removed from the General Roman Calendar because of the lack of reliable information about him.

The Church of England diary describes Valentine as a martyr at Rome circa 269, whose body was buried on the Via Flaminia on 14th February, but there are several Valentines and several accounts of what Valentine might have done to warrant being made a saint.

St Valentine was not included in the earliest list of Roman martyrs, the Chronography of 354, just 85 years after his supposed death, even though the patron of the document's completion was a wealthy Roman Christian named Valentinus. However, the Catholic Encyclopedia records three Saint Valentines in connection with the date of 14th February. One was a Roman priest and physician who was martyred during the persecution of Christians by the emperor Claudius II Gothicus about 270 ce. He was buried on the Via Flaminia, and Pope Julius I reportedly built a basilica over his grave. The second was a Roman bishop of Interamna (modern Terni, about 100 km north of Rome) and the third a saint who was martyred on the same day as a number of companions in the Roman province of Africa, of whom nothing else is known. It seems possible that the priest and bishop may in fact be the same person.

The official records of the Diocese of Terni says that Bishop Valentine was born and lived in Interamna but while on a temporary visit to Rome he was imprisoned, tortured and martyred there on 14th February 269. His body was hastily buried at the cemetery nearby but a few nights later his disciples retrieved his body and returned him home. Relics of him were kept in the Church and Catacombs of San Valentino in Rome, which was an important pilgrim site throughout the middle ages until transferred to the church of Santa Prassede during the pontificate of Nicholas IV who held that office from 1288 – 1292. Other relics of him are in Whitefriar Street Carmelite Church in Dublin and his skull, crowned with flowers, is on display in the church of Santa Maria

in Cosmedin, Rome. Many other relics attributed to Valentine in churches all around Europe.



There are several accounts of Valentine being tortured, beaten with clubs and beheaded; a city gate of the Flaminian Way and a chapel nearby are both named after him – but why?

Several stories exist. One is that the Roman Valentine was a priest who defied Emperor Claudius' order by secretly marrying couples so that the husband became exempt from enlistment. Claudius was desperate for more soldiers and was furious by this defiance. Another was that he was a priest who refused to sacrifice to pagan gods. He was imprisoned and while there gave prayers for the health of his jailer's daughter, restoring her sight and hearing. On the day of his execution he left her a note signed 'Your Valentine'.

An account of the Bishop of Terni is that he was placed under house arrest by Judge Asterius and discussed his Christian faith with him. The judge brought forward his adopted blind daughter and challenged Valentine to cure her, promising to do whatever Valentine wished if he succeeded. Valentine prayed and laid his hands on her eyes and the child's vision was restored. The judge, his family and household were all baptised. However, Valentine was later arrested again for evangelising and was sent to Emperor Claudius Gothicus, who liked him until Valentine tried to convert him too, whereupon he sentenced Valentine to death outside the Flaminian Gate on 14 February 269.

Links to beekeeping and epilepsy are very tenuous, but perhaps he did facilitate marriages to enable lovers to stay together rather than being torn apart by war. We will never know, but I'm sure plenty of cards will be sent on St Valentine's Day just the same.

Deborah Bruce

General Information

Vicar		
Rev. Ronnie Williams, The Vicarage, Bretland Road, Rusthall		521357
Associate Priest		
Rev. Nicholas Burton (c/o Parish Office)		521447
Reader		
Daphne Pilcher		521691
Licenced Lay Minister		
Tim Harrold		07413805814
Churchwardens		
May Graves	gravesmay7@gmail.com	
Chris Dobson		539539
Deputy Churchwarden		
Graeme Anderson		532922
Parochial Church Council Secretary		
Mione Palmer		667951
Youth Council		
Angela Culley		07779 098026
Treasury and Planned Giving		
PCC Finance subcommittee c/o the Parish Office		521447
Safeguarding Officers		
Daphne Pilcher		521691
DBS Officer		
Clive Brown c/o the Parish Office		521447
Bible Reading Fellowship Secretary		
Vivienne Sharp		543263
Choir Leader		
Fiona Johnson		07540 273303
Magazine Editors		
Deborah Bruce and Sue Hare c/o the Parish Office email – magazine@stpaulsrusthall.org.uk		
Flower Team		
Jill McAllister		532817
Parish Hall Bookings		
Churchyards		
Enquiries to Parish Office		521447
Rusthall St Paul's Primary School		
Executive Headteacher – Mrs Liz Mitchell Head of School – Mrs Lyndsay Smurthwaite		520582 520582

CHURCH ELECTORAL ROLL

All worshippers who are baptised members of the Church of England, and aged over 16, should have their names entered on the Electoral Roll. This entitles them to attend and vote at the Annual Parochial Meeting. Forms for enrolment will be found in the Parish Church or the Parish Office and should be sent to the Vicar.

Organisations

Julian Group		
Pat Stevens		529187
Group Scout Leader		
Gavin Cons		Email – rusthallscoutgroup@gmail.com
Scout Membership Secretary		
Juliet Waller		Email – rusthallscoutgroupwaitinglist@yahoo.co.uk
Squirrels:	rusthallsquirrels@gmail.com	
Beavers:	beaversrusthall@gmail.com	
Cubs:	rusthallcubs@hotmail.co.uk	
Scouts:	rusthallscouts@gmail.com	
Ranger Guides		
Gemma Bradley		07377 061398
Guides		
Gemma Bradley		07377 061398
Brownie Guides		
Karen Miller (Thurs)		
	rusthallbrownies@btinternet.com	
Tina Francis (Mon)		545877
Rainbows		
Mary Saunders		319872
Email – saundii@aol.com		
Playtime at St Paul's		
Liz Mankelow		07840 837968
Rusthall Lunch Club		
Helen Foster		01892 535159
Richard Brook		01892 862677
Rusthall Community Larder		
Bjorn Simpole		07900 906294
Rusthall Community & Youth Project		
Barry Edwards		680296
Rusthall Village Association		
Alex Britcher		07967 011467
Rusthall Parish Council		
Council Clerk: Alison Stevens		520161
Rusthall Bonfire and Fete Committee		
Annie Softley		548366
Friends of TW and Rusthall Common		
Joy Podbury		315549
chairman@fotcs.org.uk		



The Parish Office

Parish Administrator - **Mrs Helen Reynolds**

St Paul's Parish Office, Church Centre, Rusthall Road, Tunbridge Wells, Kent, TN4 8RE

Telephone (01892) 521447

Registered Charity in England & Wales, Number 1132681

Office email: office@stpaulsrusthall.org.uk

Magazine email: magazine@stpaulsrusthall.org.uk

Website: www.stpaulsrusthall.org.uk

The Office is open on weekday mornings (except Tuesdays) between 10 am and 1 pm.