

ST PAUL'S NEWS

September 2026



ONE POUND

SERVICES FOR SEPTEMBER

Sunday 6th September

Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity

- 8.00 am Holy Communion (BCP)
President & Preacher: The Vicar
- 10.00 am Parish Eucharist (CW)
President: The Vicar
Minister & Preacher: Daphne Pilcher
- 10.00 am Family Service at the Church Centre + Zoom
Lead: Susan Powley
Link: Karen Miller
- 6.30 pm Evensong (BCP)
Minister: The Vicar

Monday 7th September

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

Wednesday 9th September

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

Thursday 10th September

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

Sunday 13th September

Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity

- 8.00 am Holy Communion (BCP)
President & Preacher: The Vicar
- 10.00 am Parish Eucharist (CW) with Baptism
President & Preacher: The Vicar
Minister: Tim Harrold
- 10.00 am Family Service at the Church Centre + Zoom
Lead: Tim Harrold
Link: Rosemary Romano
- 6.30 pm Evensong (BCP)
Minister: Tim Harrold

Monday 14th September

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

Wednesday 16th September

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

Thursday 17th September

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

Sunday 20th September

Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity

- 8.00 am Holy Communion (BCP)
President & Preacher: The Vicar
- 10.00 am Parish Eucharist (CW)
President: The Vicar
Minister & Preacher: Daphne Pilcher
- 10.00 am Family Service at the Church Centre + Zoom
Lead: Wendy Anderson
Link: Chris Bassett
- 6.30 pm Evensong (BCP)
Minister & Preacher: The Vicar

Monday 21st September

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

Wednesday 23rd September

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

Thursday 24th September

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

Sunday 27th September

Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity

- 8.00 am Holy Communion (BCP)
President & Preacher: The Vicar
- 10.00 am Matins
Minister & Preacher: Rev. Nicholas Burton
- 10.00 am Family Service with Communion
at the Church Centre + Zoom
President & Preacher: The Vicar
Link: Liz Goddard
- 4.00 pm Taize Service at the Church Centre
Minister: Tim Harrold
- 6.30 pm Parish Eucharist (CW)
President & Preacher: Rev. Nicholas Burton

Monday 28th September

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

Wednesday 30th September

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

Thursday 1st October

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

Sunday 4th October

Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity Harvest Festival

- 8.00 am Holy Communion (BCP)
President & Preacher: The Vicar
- 10.00 am Joint Harvest Festival Parade Service
Ministers: The Vicar, Rev. Nicholas Burton,
Daphne Pilcher
Preacher: TBC
- 6.30 pm Parish Eucharist (CW)
Minister & Preacher: The Vicar

DIARY

Tuesday 1st September

7.30 pm Worship Committee in the Lodge

Monday 7th September

8.00 pm PCC Meeting in the Lodge

Wednesday 9th September

3.00 pm Communion to Chamberlain Court
May Graves

8.00pm Family Service Committee
at the Church Centre

Thursday 10th September

7.30 pm Living Hope group at the Sanctuary

Saturday 12th September

RIDE AND STRIDE

6.30 pm An Evening at the Musicals

Monday 14th September

All day Parish Pilgrimage (The Martyr's Way Part 2)
London

Thursday 17th September

11.00 am Communion to Mt Ephraim House
May Graves

Sunday 20th September

9.00 am – 12.30 pm Hospice in the Weald Half Marathon

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

Dates for Your Diary

Future events taking place at St Paul's Church

Saturday 12 th September	An Evening at the Musicals
Saturday 7 th November	Concert for Remembrance
Sunday 29 th November	Readings and Music for Advent
Saturday 5 th December	Sponsored Sing-a-thon
Sunday 20 th December	Nine Lessons and Carols

From the Registers



**Baptisms - We welcome as newly baptised
members of the church:**

Charles Enrique Peter Seely Weir

Marriages - We ask God to bless the marriage of:

James David Donovan and Khloe Helen Prosser

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

Malcolm George Ferguson
Joan Dorothy Lewis
John Frederick Rusbridge

Magazine Deadlines

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

October 2026 by 13th September
November 2026 by 11th October
December 2026/January 2027 by 15 November

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 OF KENT CHURCHES

Saturday 12th September
10 am – 6 pm

WALK OR CYCLE AROUND KENT CHURCHES

Last year a total of £152,674 was raised in Kent.
Let's try and beat that this year.

**SPONSORSHIP MONEY WILL BE SHARED EQUALLY
BETWEEN FRIENDS OF KENT CHURCHES AND THE
CHURCH YOU DESIGNATE TO RECEIVE IT**

The Goldsworthys and Powleys will not be taking part this year, but if you would like to, the sponsorship forms will be available from the back of each church from the end of August. There will also be a timetable for Church Welcomers to sign up for.

The aim of the event is to get to as many churches as possible between 10am and 6pm on that day, either by cycling or walking.

Maps and more information are available from Jane Goldsworthy
Jane_goldsworthy@yahoo.co.uk

FKC Registered Charity No 207021 www.kentrideandstride.co.uk

From the Vicarage

September 2026

Dear Friends,

Thank you for your continued support, prayers and hard work. Special thanks to Fiona and her team for organising the choir camp, and for the amazing choir concert, *All Creatures Great and Small* that followed. I would also like to thank all those who give of their resources so generously for the work of and ministry in this parish, especially those who volunteer to clean both churches, and those involved in the running of the Choir Café. Like the many other ways people volunteer within the church, 'Martharing', and offering hospitality to members of the community through the Café is a 'labour of love' that doesn't go unnoticed by the Lord and is very much valued by us here at St Paul's. I know that we all have gifts and therefore have something to offer. Please prayerfully consider which/what roles God might be asking you to fulfil within the life and ministry of the parish and join me in asking the 'Lord of the harvest' to send more labourers into his vineyard. Please speak to me if you think/feel God might be asking something specifically of you.

For quite some time now, we have been struggling to keep the church grounds and the New Churchyard pristine and tidy. Thankfully, the Community Payback Scheme run by His Majesty's Prisons and Probation Service (HMPPS) will resume their weekly visit to us hopefully commencing in September. The Church Wardens will co-ordinate and oversee this, and that will be a very welcome support in enabling us to fulfil our commitment to taking good care of the Church buildings and church grounds.

I mentioned in my last letter that there will be a Confirmation Service at King Charles the Martyr in October. The service will be at 4pm on Sunday 4th and will be led by Bishop Simon. Our first Confirmation Preparation session will be at 2pm at the Church Centre on Sunday 6th September. Please pray for those who might be thinking of confirming their Christian faith, that they may experience God's loving and protective presence.

Rusthall St Paul's CE Primary school had its Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) in term 6 of last academic year, and the report is very positive. I encourage you to read it on the school's website: www.rusthall-cep.org.uk. We are hoping to celebrate Education Sunday during this academic year but the date is yet to be agreed.

I have been reading St Peter's letters recently and I was struck afresh by this particular verse: *The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance* (2Peter 3:9).

It reminds me that God is loving and longsuffering, always trusting that we will make the right choices and do the right thing. The Bible amply demonstrates that God is keenly interested in our wellbeing and actively takes an interest in the things that concern us. We may not all currently be able to say 'it is well' but that doesn't mean God is not actively at work in and through us and seeking ways to make us flourish. Our narratives may perhaps be different but God is actively at work to ensure that we abide in his love and get to the 'expected end'.

May the generously gracious God enable each one of us to accept his activity within and around us and wholeheartedly embrace the outworking of the Holy Spirit within us, to God's praise and glory. Amen.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ronnie". The script is cursive and fluid, with a large initial 'R' and a trailing flourish at the end.



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

Editorial for September

It can safely be assumed that the summer of 2026 will remain in the memory alongside the summer of 1976. What a scorcher! The number of days where the temperature went above 30 degrees had exceeded the previous record by 15th July – with a month and a half of summer still to come. A hosepipe ban doesn't usually bother me too much as I have 3 water butts, but they are all empty now. A cut in my water supply was less fun than in the winter when I had a ready supply of water outside for flushing toilets. Only a day's interruption this time, thank goodness. At least the South-East has got off lightly regarding wildfires, although the Government warning message caused some disruption to choir practice. Apparently it drove people in London theatres nuts. I hope you all managed to stay reasonably cool during the summer heatwaves. I credit myself for the break in the weather – I had just given in and bought myself another fan and the temperature dropped! I hope everyone who came to the Wind in the Willows concert loved it as much as I did. Who knew that the high temperatures had allowed capybara to colonise the riverbank? (You had to be there!).

September is unfortunately a rather dull period of ordinary time in the church year. The main celebration is the Feast of St Michael and All Angels on 29th September. Michael was the chief archangel (a spiritual being created by God) who lead Heaven's forces in a great war in heaven and cast out Satan. Michaelmas coincided with the time that universities and law courts reopened after the summer holiday, hence what we now usually refer to as the autumn term was, and in some cases still is, called the Michaelmas term.

There are many celebration days during the month. We start with Hogwarts Day on 1st September, for young witches and wizards this was the start of term regardless of day of the week. This year is rather special as it marks the 25th anniversary of the release of the first film and the Back to Hogwarts events will be shown live on YouTube – see harrypotter.com/back-to-hogwarts for more details. September 4th is National Wildlife Day, when we are encouraged to consider and conserve wildlife. In this hot weather we are encouraged to create shallow pools of water for insects to drink at. September 5th is World Beard Day, which celebrates facial hair throughout history. The popularity of beards has fluctuated wildly over time, popular during the Tudor age, almost disappearing during the Georgian period despite the wearing of large powdered wigs, back in fashion in Victorian times when soldiers returned from the Crimean war sporting thick beards grown to help keep warm then losing favour again as WW1 soldiers had to keep clean shaven so that their gas masks would make a tight seal. The hippies of the 1960s brought back beards and the trend has just gone on growing until now over half of men sport some sort of facial hair. Perhaps our busy lives mean that men just don't have time to shave? Tunbridge Wells resident Richard Latter (1830-1914) grew his beard until it was long enough to plait and wind round his waist several times. When it was 16 feet long he was considered to have the longest beard in Europe and it kept on growing to an extraordinary 18 feet.

September 9th is Teddy Bear Day. Our local celebrity bear was named Winnie-the-Pooh after Winnipeg or "Winnie", a female black bear who lived at London Zoo from 1915-1934. He was brought to London by a Canadian vet, Harry Colebourn, as a mascot for the Second Canadian Infantry Brigade. When Lt Colbourn was sent to fight in France he left Winnie in the care of London Zoo, where he was visited by A A Milne and his son, Christopher Robin, who changed the name of his Edward Bear to Winnie-the-Pooh in her honour. Pooh is himself celebrating his 100th anniversary this year. He appeared briefly in a newspaper story on Christmas Eve 1925 and then in a book, Winnie-the-Pooh, published in October 1926 and the House at Pooh Corner in 1928.

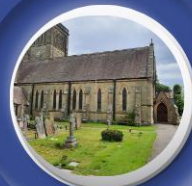
September 11th is marked each year to remember the more than 3000 victims of the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Centre and Pentagon by 4 hijacked passenger planes. Osama bin Laden had issued a fatwa on behalf of al-Qaeda declaring a jihad against US troops stationed in Arabia. The result was a prolonged 'war on terror', including invasion of Afghanistan which was being used as a base by al-Qaeda. The repercussions grumble on to this day, 25 years later.

September 12th is a musical conundrum, the choir is giving its Night at the Musicals concert and it is also the last night of the BBC Proms Season. Just remember that you can always watch the Proms on BBC iPlayer. New ways of doing things are also celebrated during Read an eBook Day on 18th September. If you belong to Kent Library get yourself the Libby and Borrowbox apps which both give you free access to thousands of the library's ebooks. Finally 25th September is National Daughters Day, sons have to wait until the 28th.

Articles for October to be submitted by 13th September please. The photograph on the cover is a corridor at Gloucester Cathedral that has been used in several Harry Potter films.

St. Paul's Parish, Rusthall

Collection in aid of the Organ Renovation Fund



CONCERT OF REMEMBRANCE

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Programme Includes

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Saturday 7th November @ 6.30pm

Adults £10
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Church**
Rusthall

All services take place at the Parish Church unless stated otherwise.

St Paul's Parish Church: Langton Road, Rusthall, Tunbridge Wells TN4 8XD.
Office and Church Centre: Rusthall Road, Rusthall, Tunbridge Wells TN4 8RE.
Telephone: 01892 521447

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Churchwardens' Notes



We hope everyone had an enjoyable summer, despite the exceptional hot weather. As students now return to school, and we prepare ourselves and our families for the new season ahead, St. Paul's continues to send its love and support to all in the community.

Our role as Churchwardens is not just to serve our congregation, but all residents in the Parish of Rusthall. As such, we hope that all parishioners feel free to contact either of us if they wish to share a concern or seek an answer related to how the church serves our local community. David can be contacted at dgoodwin1990@yahoo.com and Chris can be contacted at dgsrusthall@gmail.com.

We have been pleased to see some good progress with various aspects of the church building and grounds during the summer months. A group of volunteers from our congregations met on two Saturdays in July and tackled the worst of the early summer growth in both churchyards. From September, we have also arranged for the local Community Payback Group, organised by the Probation Service, to make weekly visits to us and help us keep the Churchyards and Church Centre grounds neat and tidy. We are grateful for their support.

Work is also underway inside the Parish Church, and we have been tidying various areas at front of house and behind the scenes. Plans are also currently in place to better the area at the front of the Nave enabling easier wheelchair access and the area more functional for any events that are held. We will further share those plans with you when they have been fully formulated. Over the summer, we also carried out some electrical upgrades, as well as took the opportunity to have our lightning conductor system checked and our clock given its annual service. The outcome of these types of activities while not being fully visible to the congregation, are of course necessary to keep your church fully functioning and safe.

All parish churches have to undergo a five-year visit from a diocesan appointed architect to inspect various aspects of the church building and its

contents. Our quinquennial visit happened at the start of August. That visit checked maintenance issues regarding the building, as well as health and safety aspects and buildings compliances. It was a very useful visit and subsequent report and we will use the advice of the visiting architect to help guide us as we embark on further building upgrades and general maintenance issues on our historic and beautiful Church.

During the early summer, our thanks were especially due to Fiona and our musicians, who kept us fed with various musical events and spiritually nourished during our church services. Both our youth and adults are extremely grateful for the passion, skill and dedication of our choir mistress, organists and musicians for their contributions to the church. There is also much that the music team have planned for us during the Autumn. All parishioners and their friends are welcome to these, regardless of whether they attend church services and we look forward to seeing you at their forthcoming events.

We thank all who serve and provide for our congregations and local community by using their God given skills. For those who work hard at the Church Centre in the weekly events that take place, as well as at our Parish Church. St Paul's is privileged in its legacy regarding the service its congregations give, where our youngest contributors are only 6 years old and our oldest are in their eighties. Everyone at St Paul's has something to contribute and it is the joy of our church to provide opportunities for that.

Chris Dobson and David Goodwin

Hospice Run 2026 20 September

Hospice Run is celebrating its 20th anniversary this year. The event timings are advertised as 8am – 12.30pm with the first race, the half marathon, commencing at 9.30am from the Lower Common Cricket Ground and heading up Church Road, along Mount Ephraim past the Spa Hotel and up the Langton Road. We have been advised that road closures may commence at 9am and remain closed until noon, but traffic around the town centre will undoubtedly be heavier than usual before and after the closures. This will likely impact people travelling to all morning services at both the Parish Church and the Church Centre. Please keep an eye out for updates in the weekly leaflets regarding this, as we try to obtain more precise information about the closures.

E. R. HICKMOTT & SON



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Who puts the bins out?

On 19th July this year I happened to be rostered for Intercessions at the morning service. It was the day of the Soccer World Cup Final and I was going to precede one of the prayers with “sixty years ago a young sports mad youngster (me) was setting off with his Father to Wembley to watch England play West Germany in the World cup final and I can only pray today.....’ Well, needless to say, I never did pray it because of course England were beaten in the semi final. There was much questioning of the manager as to why he left his attackers on the substitutes bench while cramming the team with defenders trying to preserve a one goal lead. I am running out of years to see another victory but over the years I have come to believe in that great Rudyard Kipling quote “If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster and treat those two impostors just the same...” In any sport and playing for any team you have to believe in Kipling’s quote. It may of course lead to many questions and indeed there’s an old Jewish joke where someone asks his rabbi, ‘Why do rabbis always answer a question with another question?’ to which the rabbi replies, ‘Why shouldn’t a rabbi answer a question with another question?’

Jesus was not just a consummate storyteller but also a sharp question master. In the verses mentioned below we see both of these skills at play.

Here, we have the chief priests and elders challenging Jesus in the temple. It took place during the busy and stressful week leading up to the crucifixion and the authorities were out to get him. After the triumphal entry into Jerusalem, driving the traders from the Temple, teaching and preaching, Jesus was a marked man.

It was all about authority for them. They wanted to catch him out but of course the tables were turned. Instead of some kind of admission, which is what the leaders were looking for, Jesus went on to illustrate his point with the parable of the two sons. It’s quite straightforward. The first son was asked by his father to help in the vineyard and the son said yes but didn’t do it. The second son said no but then changed his mind and went to help. On reading this my mind automatically thought about bins...!

I recently read about a survey which had been conducted with the purpose of finding out who, in the domestic household, took on more responsibilities. Basically, who did the most housework. I suspect that the answer was inevitable but it appears that women do 36 hours of household tasks per week – nine hours more than men. When asked, 72% of women say they do the

majority of household tasks, but just 18% of men agree. Pride or Prejudice I wonder? Gender is a bigger influence on household responsibilities than pay or employment status apparently, and couples who don’t share the load equally argue about it five times per month on average! And who puts the bins out seems to be a key question. Or perhaps more importantly who remembers to put them out!

Saying you are going to put the bins out but then forgetting can lead to all sorts of domestic strife. Panic ensues when the dustbin man rolls up and you, still in your pyjamas, run outside in the pouring rain, shout at the bin men to hang on a minute while you sort the rubbish out. Any light-hearted discussion on domestic bliss always seems to start with ‘Who puts the bins out?’ I remember Teresa May being asked this once on television; sadly, I can’t recall her answer!

In case you are wondering. yes I have put the bins out but the majority of time it is done, to my shame, by Pat.

This story about the two sons has a much deeper meaning for us of course. It is all about profession and performance. Here were the religious leaders – supposed to be above reproach, setting the pace in morality, teaching the people about God – but they failed miserably. They professed all kinds of things but did not fulfil their promises. They are represented by the first son in the parable.

The second son, however, said he wouldn’t but then he did! He represents those folk considered to be ‘beyond the pale’ – prostitutes, tax collectors and those who the religious leaders considered were the detritus of society.

True obedience contrasts outward profession with inward transformation and highlights that actions speak louder than words. Although the second son at first refused to help his father he then changed his mind, committed himself, and produced the goods. This is what matters the most.

I have read of a very popular minister of another era, The Rector of St Martin-in-the Fields. He used to do a lot of speaking in the open air and most of his audience were indifferent to Christianity. Some were actively hostile. After many years of this the Rector arrived at the conclusion that ‘the greatest handicap the church has is the unsatisfactory lives of professing Christians.’

To borrow from a popular phrase, we may be able to ‘talk the talk’ but what is much more important is that we ‘walk the walk’. The religious leaders here had got it all wrong. They set great store on looking good, but the tax-gatherers and prostitutes

were the ones who were being good. I could take this further but you get the drift. The ones who genuinely followed Jesus and obeyed him.

So, who puts the bins out in your house? Hopefully it's the one who says they will and domestic bliss reigns supreme!

And for those of us who claim to know Christ, may we always keep our promises and demonstrate our love for him.

Recommended Reading:

Matthew 21:23-32

Tim Cripps

Tales from The Churchyard

Slowworms and Adders

All British reptiles tend to be hugely secretive and shy away from humans. Two of our resident churchyard reptiles, the Slowworm and the European Adder, show this typical trait. Unless you go seeking them, doing so very quietly, it is very unlikely you'll spot either of them. It took me a whole month of searching until I was able to catch a glimpse of one of the Adders that I knew lived among the tombs and gravestones in our churchyard. I knew they were here because Caroline Johnson reported to me in May that her dog had drawn her over to one of the graves because it was barking at something basking on the stone capping; It turned out to be an Adder.

Reptiles are cold-blooded, unlike mammals and birds which are warm-blooded, meaning they can't maintain their own body temperature. As a reptile needs a similar internal heat to a mammal to operate its muscles and organs, a good way of spotting one is to seek out a good sunbathing spot. The top of one of our Church gravestones or tombs is perfect. To build up their internal temperature to enable them to move around with speed (necessary to catch their prey), using the sun's rays is an excellent way for them to heat up their core.

Adders are one of three snakes found in the UK, the others being Grass Snake and Smooth Snake. The Adder is grey or pale brown with a distinct dark zig-zag pattern down its back. It grows up to 60-80cm. A word of warning though, it is venomous, though its bite is very rarely serious. Bites are exceedingly rare as the Adder is so shy and non-aggressive and usually only arise from the snake being stepped on or being panicked if provoked. When we were recently cutting the churchyard grass last month, we

made sure we were noisy and any nearby snake was given time to slither off to its hidden den.

As they are carnivorous, Adders are a very important part of the natural Churchyard foodweb. Importantly to note, The UK population of European Adders is sadly in steep decline, with current national monitoring indicating that it may become extinct as soon as 2032. Only a few strongholds now exist across the country, and these will be important to maintain.



On a personal note, my lasting memory of Adders will always be when I was Deputy Head at Highfield Preparatory School in Liphook. A summer's Sunday morning always started with a team of us clearing the edge of the cricket field of basking Adders, before the children came out in their Cricket Whites and their parents arrived to watch them play. Albeit they are venomous, Adders faze me little, having once had to clear an Indian Cobra out of our downstairs bathroom when we lived in Sri-Lanka. Now that is a snake to have respect for! The eight foot Rat Snakes that we also used to chase away from our garden pond in Sri-Lanka were though thankfully non-venomous, although their size was quite spectacular. They certainly cured Kim of any snake phobia she'd previously had.

The Slowworm, although it resembles a snake in appearance, is in fact a legless lizard. Its skeleton reveals the remnant bones of four legs hidden within its body. Slowworms are superb hunters and will keep your resident slug and snail population down. Hopefully, our churchyard slowworms are ensuring our flora get a good level of protection from such critters who may be on the munch on a damp evening. Like lizards, the slowworm is apt to shed its tail if it gets picked up, leaving the end of the tail wiggling in your hand (or an owl's beak) and allowing it to make a quick escape from any predator. The sandy soil of the High Weald is excellent for slowworms and you've probably got them in your garden as well as them being found in our churchyard.

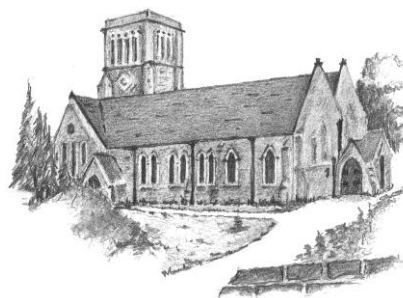


So, our two resident churchyard reptiles, while maybe being a little too wriggly for some, are both doing an excellent job of keeping the Churchyard wildlife foodweb in balance. As such, we need to cherish them and be thankful they have chosen St Paul's in which to set up residency.

For more information on both The European Adder and The Slowworm and other British reptiles and amphibians, go to: <https://www.arc-trust.org/>

David Goodwin

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47 (£100), 91 (£60) AND 80 (£40)

Resilience

Resilience is a by-product of faith. It is an ability to see beyond current pain and trouble and trust God for the future. For those without faith, it relies on an ability to fight through current burdens with only a possible hope that the future holds something better. Everyone needs resilience to enable them to move forward through hard times. Pain and troubles come to every human being at some time and often many times in their lives. How blessed are we to know as Christians that our resilience has the promise of a better future, rather than a hope. Thank you heavenly father that we know that you have a better place in the future for us and that you will always keep those gates open to enable us to walk into that promise of paradise, regardless of the burden we may currently feel.



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Why I have decided to stand for General Synod's next quinquennium

If your initial thought is something like “**he is out of his mind**” then your reaction is frighteningly similar to that of mine. It is perhaps why I can also say with some degree of confidence that this is not an off-the-cuff decision or one that has been easily reached. If I had wanted to get into politics I could have stood for election to parliament or in local elections, but like I suspect many of you I am not a fan of politics. Nevertheless, I believe we are, in many ways, at a possible tipping point with the next quinquennium of General Synod being vital if we are to ensure the Church of England as we have always known it is to survive.

I can pinpoint exactly when thoughts of standing first began to appear to events at the last General Synod held on the 10th – 14th July in York, but it is probably worth first setting out some context. Whilst going through my training, a favourite question of mine to any tutor would be something similar to “What, in your view, makes the Church of England distinctive?” If my hope had been for a range of answers, I was destined to be bitterly disappointed. Almost without exception the response came back as our Parish System. It has become increasingly apparent to many of us that the very thing that makes our faith distinctive is under serious threat of bleeding out of existence by a combination of bad choices and a conscious decision to direct funding towards central bureaucracy.

The data is truly shocking. In November 2024, the think-tank Civitas produced an 83-page report titled “**Restoring the value of Parishes**”. Civitas described England's 12,500 parish churches as:

“‘treasure houses’ of national history, containing the memories of our ancestors as well as the rich architectural and musical heritage of Anglicanism.”

It is 50 years since the Endowments and Glebe measure was passed in 1976, during which the report found that 2000 churches have been made redundant and the number of stipendiary clergy had nearly halved. The moves to cut funding to parishes has resulted in an explosion of multi-parish benefices which in one example saw 23 parishes

merge into one ‘mega-parish’ served by a single team of clergy.

What funding there was available was instead directed towards the centre. £154m is now spent on diocesan overheads - which have ballooned by 29% in three years! One diocese has grown from 69 employees in 2014 to 134 in 2025 (and only 8 of the increase were safeguarding officers).¹ Today the Church employs one administrator for every 3 and a half clergy.² One Diocese managed to achieve the absurd position of having more administrators than clergy.³ For the Charitable sector as a whole, the average is one administrator for over 8 front line staff. The authors of the report did not hold back in concluding:

“If the Church wants to be more ‘relevant’ it should stop trying to reinvent itself and instead embrace its unique position as a source of tradition, sanctity, and community solidarity in an uncertain world.”

What the data cannot tell us is the human cost that lies behind. The communities who find themselves without their own dedicated vicar. The enormous stress placed on the remaining clergy, many of whom struggle with depression. **The Living Ministry Survey in 2025** revealed 35% of incumbents exhibit symptoms of depression, and 40% of all clergy experience chronic loneliness.⁴ Nearly 50% of stipendiary priests are over the age of 55.⁵ The army of volunteers who support each Parish Church who find themselves facing an overly bureaucratic centre who seem to have little regard for their heroic efforts and contribution. Between 25% and 40% of parishes have only one Churchwarden. 21% have no warden at all. Half of all parishes can find no officers at all.⁶ The increasing length of interregnums to way beyond the recommended 6 months makes it almost impossible for Parishes to come through the experience unscathed. All the lost opportunities for Parishes up and down the country to fulfil their potential in providing welfare solutions to their local communities simply for the lack of any leadership. To further add insult to injury, the parishes that have suffered disproportionately from this destruction of the Parish System have been those in the poorest areas of the country – precisely the very areas which should have the Church's absolute focus and attention. A church in the most deprived quintile is 5 times more likely to close than a church in the wealthiest quintile. 40% of church

¹ Diocese of London Annual Accounts (2025), Note 4; and answers to London Diocesan Synod questions: Feb 2025, Question I; June 2025, Question F

² Save the Parish Finance by Diocese 2024 spreadsheet

³ Diocesan employment figures: Carlisle DBF Annual Accounts 2024, p. 48 Clergy numbers, National Ministry Statistics June 2025, Table M

⁴ ‘Lord for the years’: Clergy Wellbeing 2017-2025, Living Ministry Survey, Research and Statistics Department, Church House, Westminster (2025) pp. 24, 33-4 19.

⁵ Calculated from the Church of England Ministry statistics

⁶ Madeleine Davies, “No churchwardens and vacant PCC posts: an investigation into the church volunteering crisis” (Church Times, 15 March 2024).

closures are in the 10% most deprived parishes in the country. In 2024, the net contribution to parochial ministry from the historic endowments of the church was a mere £85m out of a possible £653m.⁷ This is all perfectly known by the church leadership. An internal Church of England report stated:

“Amalgamations of churches are more likely to decline. The larger the number of churches in the amalgamation the more likely they are to decline”⁸

Another report stated:

“...an increase in clergy is associated with the likelihood of growth in attendance, whilst a decrease in clergy is associated, on average, to a decline in attendance.”⁹

If this is how the leadership treats what makes our Church unique then it is not a surprise, we have a challenge on our hands.

Which brings us neatly up to July’s General Synod and the manifesto under which I will be standing when elections for the next 5-year term of General Synod are held in September.

Save the Parish is a grassroots movement created in 2021, which works to resource the parish system across the nation, ensuring the poorest communities are not abandoned, and that dioceses and the national church have, at their core, the call to put their parishes first. They have 6 objectives split equally between Parish, Priest and People.

Parish

1. **Restore Church Commissioners' funds to their founding purpose: stipendiary parish ministry.**
2. **Direct the parish share to mission and the cure of souls.**

Priest

3. **Adopt a Charter of Care that values our clergy and guards them from mental and physical exhaustion**
4. **Renew rich theological resourcing for theological education which is ordinand centred not budget-centred.**

People

5. **Adopt a ‘Churchgoers’ Charter’ that honours the volunteers who hold our parishes together.**
6. **Reform the Mission and Pastoral Measure.**

It is a manifesto that reflects the critical danger we face of losing our cherished Parish System. It seems extraordinary to me that it is not already met with

universal approval and acceptance but sadly not everyone in the Church of England believes that what makes us unique is worth preserving. It is why every delegate prepared to sign up to the **Save the Parish** manifesto will be vital and I hope to be able to play a very tiny role in seeing all their objectives met.

Apart from **Save the Parish** there is an additional issue which arose from the July Synod. What follows is a summary of what took place rather than a blow-by-blow account. If anyone would like to understand the details of what happened, I am happy to share them (the details are truly both shocking and outrageous). At its heart, General Synod was asked to consider a Private Members Motion (PMM) that looked to affirm the place of LGBTQIA+ people within the Church of England.

This was a purely pastoral statement about the invaluable but apparently unvalued contribution of members from that community to the Church. After lots of kerfuffle from conservative Christians about the precise wording that should be used including a particularly surreal debate about the word “intimate”, a precise wording was agreed on by all three houses that make up General Synod – the House of Bishops, the House of Clergy, and the House of Laity. When General Synod then came to vote on that pre-agreed wording, it was passed in the House of Clergy and House of Laity but failed in the House of Bishops.

One does not need to be a member of a particular community to recognise when that community is being unfairly singled out. Regardless of one’s theological position, an inability by the House of Bishops to even offer pastoral recognition puts the LGBTQIA+ people in a unique category of sinners who, to the Bishops at least, seem to be beyond forgiveness or redemption. The message that the Bishops are sending is that not all sinners are welcomed into Christ’s church. Murderers, rapists, adulterers can not only be seen but be recognised and welcomed into the body of Christ. But if you are LGBTQIA+ then in the eyes of the Bishops that recognition is no longer possible or desirable. It introduces qualifications where previously there had been none. Christ did not see a category of sinner; He did not check whether the person before him met a checklist of criterion. He saw an individual who was hurting, who was in pain, who believed and to whom he opened His arms. That was the only qualification that mattered; that the person before him truly believed. Our current

⁷ All figures are taken from the Annual Accounts of the Church Commissioners, the Archbishops’ Council, and the 42 dioceses by our team of auditors and accountants. The working can be found here:

<https://www.savetheparish.com/church-of-england-finances/>

⁸ From Anecdote to Evidence (2013)

⁹ Going Deeper (2016)

Bishops seem to think they know better. The message they are sending is that whether you believe or not no longer matters because of who you are. The vote by the Bishops was a very sad day for the Bishops, the Church and all LGBTQIA+ people.

But I think it's even worse than that. Because of the role they fill, many of our Bishops are entitled to sit in two separate legislative houses. Along with General Synod, 26 of our Bishops are members of the Bishops Bench in the House of Lords, otherwise known as the Lords Spiritual. In that house, the Bishops are perfectly happy to espouse an agenda of equality for all sorts of groups including LGBTQIA+. This is nothing more than blatant hypocrisy and smacks not of an agenda based on sincere belief but rather one of convenience where the message can be changed depending on the audience receiving it. It also demonstrates a total unawareness that holding the position they do in General Synod means their views expressed in the House of Lords become heavily discounted by the wider public at large to the point where they carry no noise in the public square. In my opinion, this makes them incapable of fulfilling their role of holding the government of the day to account and being the spiritual and moral voice of the nation.

Each time General Synod fails to pass any measure in support of LGBTQIA+ people, the depth of hurt increases and the task of reconciliation becomes ever more challenging. The longer this continues the harder it will be for any statement to carry the vital sense of sincerity that will be needed for wounds to heal.

I know our parish here at St. Paul's is a warm, welcoming, and inclusive Christian community. We hold dear and value the contribution of each individual regardless of any defining characteristic. We recognise each person to be a member of the one body of Christ. I hope and believe all of you will agree with me that the principles I have laid out in this article are ones that, at least partly, define what it means to be an Anglican Christian and that those principles are worth fighting for.

Across the country, we see a retrenchment from so many areas of worship. The closure of Cathedral Choral schools, the decimation of traditional liturgy, the range of services being offered. Our parish has become a rarity in still offering 4 services every Sunday, 5 if we include our monthly Taizé service. In Tunbridge Wells we are the sole survivor offering a BCP Evensong every Sunday. If I am elected to the General Synod, I will be looking to advocate for the very essence of what this Parish represents and holds dear.

I do not expect an equal world. I do, however, expect a world that is fair and just. I believe the tradition of a properly resourced parish grounded in its local community that extends the warm hand of welcome to everyone into the one body of Christ is worth fighting for. That is the version of our Church of England I want to leave for our future generations.

Tim Harrold

The Organ Renovation Fund reaches £25,000

A massive thank you to our Junior Choir, for raising over £800 with their wonderful concert "All Creatures Great and Small". This enables us to announce that we have reached our first 25K.

Many thanks indeed to everyone who has so generously donated.

Your friendly neighbourhood Organ Renovation Fund Committee need your continuing help to reach our next target of £50,000.

Please support *A Night at the Musicals* on the 12th September.

Watch this space for our *Sponsor A Pipe Scheme*.



All fundraising ideas welcome.

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If so, please contact St Paul's Church Rusthall Organ Renovation Fund Committee, via the church office, thank you.





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A Musical Note



We had another excellent Choir Camp week this year, with lots of singing, but also plenty of fun and games! Our theme for the week was animals, so all our activities were based around this.

One of the highlights of the week was a visit to Howletts Wild Animal Park near Canterbury, where we had a wonderful day seeing all sorts of animals. We were also very kindly treated to a swim in Angela and Chris's pool, a very welcome activity in the summer sunshine!

For the rest of the week, we were based in and around the church, putting together the music for our animal-themed concert. We sang some really exciting music this year, including Learsongs by William Mathias, which sets Edward Lear's wonderfully eccentric words to music. These pieces are musically challenging, particularly for the piano accompaniment, which is a duet. Alice and Anthony played this brilliantly for us in the concert.

We also included a new piece by Sarah Quartel, Songbird, which was performed by our older girls and conducted brilliantly by Daniel, and a couple of pieces from Bird Raptures by Lucy Walker which are absolutely beautiful.

The main focus of the concert, however, was a heavily adapted version of *The Wind in the Willows*, with roles for all the children and lots of exciting songs. Given how little time we had to put everything together, the children had to work incredibly hard to learn all the music before we even started staging it. They had just two full run-throughs before we performed it for an audience, and I thought they were absolutely amazing!

Every child had solo lines to sing, while our older children took on some particularly difficult songs and parts. We were helped enormously by our wonderful pianist, Dom, who was just incredible and played the whole thing with such energy and skill. Thank you also to the members of the adult choir who opted into this concert with exceptionally limited rehearsal. We couldn't have done it without you.

The children had a brilliant week, and a huge thank you to all our wonderful adult helpers who gave up a week of their summer to make sure that

everything ran smoothly. A particular thank you to Daniel for being our fantastic rehearsal accompanist throughout the week.

It really was a fantastic week, and I am so proud of everything the children achieved. They worked incredibly hard, but most importantly, they had fun, made music together and thoroughly enjoyed themselves, which is exactly what Choir Camp is all about!

Looking ahead, we are now very excited about our next concert on Saturday 12th September, which is called *A Night at the Musicals*.

Following our little musical soirée last October, when many of the choir performed songs from musicals, Jess who is one of our incredible teenagers, or 'Ratty' as she was in *The Wind in the Willows*, suggested that we should put on a whole concert of songs from musicals. It was a brilliant idea!

A number of our choir members are heavily involved in musical theatre, whether with TWODS, The Talents or, in some cases, as part of their jobs, so musical theatre is something that many of them absolutely love.

The teenagers have been looking forward to this concert for ages, and we are particularly excited that Nic is going to add some lights to our songs to really enhance the effect. I have a feeling that it is going to be a very entertaining evening!

Please do come along and support us if you can. The concert starts at 6.30pm, and there will be refreshments as well as the opportunity to hear some of your favourite songs from the world of musical theatre. We would love to see you there!

Fiona Johnson

Some cheerful thoughts

The late Jimmy Cricket was able to tell funny one liners without innuendo or rudeness. One lovely example: "My boy came home from school and said Dad I can't spell Armageddon" so I said "Don't worry Son it's not the end of the World." and there's more, as he would say, but here is one from The Edinburgh Fringe Festival:-

My daughter came home from the Supermarket and said "that's it, we have to save the planet and there should be no more plastic in the house" - so I shredded her credit card!

That's all folks.

Tim Cripps

Poems for September

As summer gradually draws to a close, September brings endings and maybe new beginnings, including the new academic year.

Susan Barber



Donegal (for Ellie)

Ardent on the beach at Rosstown
on the last day of summer,
you ran through the shallows
throwing off shoes, and shirt and towel
like the seasons, the city's years,
all caught in my arms
as I ploughed on behind you, guardian still
of dry clothes, of this little heart
not quite thirteen,
breasting the waves
and calling back to me
to join you, swimming in the Atlantic
on the last day of summer.
I saw a man in the shallows
with his hands full of clothes, full of
all the years;
and his daughter going
where he knew he could not follow.

Robin Robertson

I Don't Want to Go into School

I don't want to go into school today, Mum,
I don't feel like schoolwork today.
Oh, don't make me go into school today, Mum,
Oh, please let me stay home and play.

But you must go to school, my cherub, my lamb.
If you don't it will be a disaster.
How would they manage without you, my sweet,
After all, you are the headmaster!

Colin McNaughton

Walking Away

It is eighteen years ago, almost to the day -
A sunny day with the leaves just turning,
The touch-lines new-ruled - since I watched you play
Your first game of football, then, like a satellite
Wrenched from its orbit, go drifting away

Behind a scatter of boys. I can see
You walking away from me towards the school
With the pathos of a half-fledged thing set free
Into a wilderness, the gait of one
Who finds no path where the path should be.

That hesitant figure, eddying away
Like a winged seed loosened from its parent stem,
Has something I never quite grasp to convey
About nature's give-and-take - the small, the scorching
Ordeals which fire one's irresolute clay.

I have had worse partings, but none that so
Gnaws at my mind still. Perhaps it is roughly
Saying what God alone could perfectly show -
How selfhood begins with a walking away,
And love is proved in the letting go.

C. Day Lewis

The Painting Lesson

"What's THAT, dear?" asked the new teacher.
"It's Mummy," I replied.
"But mums aren't green and orange!
You really haven't TRIED.
You don't just paint in SPODGES
- You're old enough to know
You need to THINK before you work...
Now - have another go."
She helped me draw two arms and legs,
A face with sickly smile,
A rounded body, dark brown hair,
A hat - and in a while,
She stood back
(With her face bright pink):
"That's SO much better -
Don't you think?"
But she turned white
At ten to three
when an orange-green blob
Collected me.
"Hi, Mum!"

Trevor Harvey

Pray Well, Live Well

What Science is Discovering About Prayer and Human Flourishing

Canon Dr Neville J. Emslie
Head of Mission and Ministry in Canterbury Diocese

*Prayer Festival · St Benedict's Centre,
West Malling · 30 May 2026*

I. Why Are We Here, Really?

I want to begin with a confession.

I have been asked to speak at a Prayer Festival, which is a little like being invited to lecture fish about swimming. Many of you have been at this considerably longer than I have, and with rather more dedication. So let me be clear from the outset: I am not here this morning as an expert who has mastered prayer and wishes to share his wisdom from a great height. I am here as a fellow traveller; one who finds prayer endlessly fascinating, frequently elusive, and occasionally, unexpectedly, transforming.

But here is the thing. We live in a remarkable moment. For the first time in history, science is turning its instruments on prayer; and what it is finding is, I have to say, rather extraordinary. Neuroscientists, cardiologists, psychologists, and public health researchers are discovering what the mystics have always known: that prayer does something to us. That human beings who pray are, in measurable and significant ways, different from those who don't. Not better, necessarily, but different. More resilient. More integrated. In certain important respects, more well.

This morning I want to explore that evidence with you; not to reduce prayer to a wellness technique, but to take seriously the possibility that when God made us for prayer, God was also, in ways we are only now beginning to understand, making us for flourishing.

II. The Evidence: What the Research Actually Shows

When I first started reading the scientific literature on prayer and health, I expected it to be thin. A few optimistic studies, some contested methodology, and a lot of wishful thinking dressed up in academic language. What I found was quite different. The body of research is now substantial, serious, and rather exciting.

Let me take you through four dimensions of what the evidence actually shows: physical health; emotional and psychological health; a window into my own research; and what makes Christian prayer distinctive, and perhaps uniquely powerful, when set alongside secular approaches.

Physical Health

We begin where you might least expect to begin; with the body.

In 2002, researchers Harold Koenig and Harvey J. Cohen published what remains one of the most comprehensive reviews of its kind; analysing over 1,200 studies on religion, spirituality and health conducted over the previous century. Their conclusion was striking. Across a wide range of measures – mortality rates, immune function, cardiovascular health, recovery from surgery, even blood pressure – people with an active spiritual practice consistently fared better than those without one. Not marginally better. Meaningfully better.

One obvious question is whether this is simply because religious communities offer social support, and social support is independently known to benefit health. That is a fair challenge, and the researchers anticipated it. Even when you control for social factors – strip out the effect of belonging to a community, having friends who care about you – a significant portion of the health benefit remains. Something about the practice of prayer itself appears to carry weight.

What might that be? Here Herbert Benson's work is illuminating. Benson was a cardiologist at Harvard – not a theologian, not a churchman – who in the 1970s began studying what he called the relaxation response: the physiological state that occurs when a person enters deep, focused, repetitive prayer or meditation. Heart rate slows. Blood pressure drops. Cortisol – the stress hormone – decreases. The sympathetic nervous system, which manages our fight-or-flight responses, quiets, and the parasympathetic system, which governs rest and restoration, comes forward.

Benson was studying transcendental meditation, but he quickly realised that practitioners of centring prayer, of the Jesus Prayer, of the Rosary, were accessing exactly the same physiological state. The body, it seems, does not particularly mind what tradition you belong to – it responds to stillness, to rhythm, to the release of striving. What Christian prayer adds – and we will return to this – is something the body cannot measure but the whole person needs.

Emotional and Psychological Health

Across multiple large studies, regular prayer practice is associated with lower rates of depression and anxiety, greater emotional resilience, and what psychologists call post-traumatic growth – the capacity not merely to survive adversity but to be changed by it in ways that are genuinely enlarging. People who pray are not people who suffer less. They are people who, on average, suffer better. We shall return shortly to an important qualification of

this claim.

Mindfulness has, over the past two decades, moved from the fringes to the mainstream of clinical psychology. Jon Kabat-Zinn's *Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction* programme, developed at the University of Massachusetts, has an impressive evidence base for reducing anxiety, managing chronic pain, and preventing relapse into depression. It has been taken up by the NHS, by schools, by corporations. And the neuroscience behind it is genuinely compelling – regular mindfulness practice visibly changes the structure of the brain, thickening the prefrontal cortex and calming the amygdala, our brain's alarm centre.

There is significant overlap between mindfulness and contemplative Christian prayer. Both cultivate attentiveness. Both invite you to release the compulsive narrative of the anxious mind. Both create space between stimulus and response. The psychological mechanisms are, to a considerable degree, shared.

But there is a difference, and it is not a small one. Mindfulness, in its clinical form, is deliberately secular. It asks you to attend to the present moment – to your breath, your body, your experience – without judgment. That is genuinely valuable. Christian prayer asks you to attend to the present moment in the presence of God. It is not a technique for self-regulation; it is an encounter with a Person. The psychological benefits may look similar from the outside. The inner experience, and ultimately the transformative potential, is of a different order.

The clinical psychologist David Benner writes about this with great insight. Secular mindfulness, he suggests, helps you become more aware of yourself. Prayer helps you become more aware of yourself as known and loved. That distinction – between awareness and received awareness – turns out to matter enormously for long-term wellbeing.

A Window from My Own Research

Some years ago, I conducted research into Archdeacons – and I should say that researching Archdeacons is either an act of considerable scholarly dedication or a form of extended penance, and I leave you to judge which.

The focus of the research was emotional intelligence and wellbeing in clergy. One of the consistent findings was that prayer and spiritual practice were among the significant factors associated with higher emotional intelligence, greater resilience, and lower levels of burnout. Archdeacons and clergy who maintain a disciplined, varied prayer life are, on the whole, more emotionally self-aware, better able to manage relationships under pressure, and less likely to show signs of compassion fatigue or exhaustion.

What was particularly interesting was the *quality* of prayer that seemed to matter, not merely the quantity. Those who had moved beyond prayer as a duty – the obligatory Daily Office read hurriedly before the first meeting – towards prayer as genuine encounter, as spacious attentiveness, were the ones showing the most pronounced wellbeing benefits.

While this research focused on ordained people, the pattern emerges across the wider literature on lay people in demanding vocational roles. Prayer, practised with intention and authenticity, appears to build something in us that equips us for the wear and tear of life.

What Makes Christian Prayer Distinctive

The recovery of *centring prayer* in the twentieth century – associated particularly with Thomas Keating and Basil Pennington – was not an innovation. It was a retrieval. Keating reached back through the medieval mystics, through the anonymous author of *The Cloud of Unknowing*, through the Desert Fathers and Mothers, to recover a form of prayer that had been largely lost in Western Christianity: the prayer of simple, wordless consent to God's presence and action.

What strikes me about this tradition, when set alongside the neuroscience, is how well the ancient intuitions map onto what the research is now finding. The Desert Fathers spoke of *apatheia* – not apathy in our modern, negative sense, but a kind of interior freedom from compulsion, from the tyranny of reactive emotion. They were describing, in the language of fourth-century Egypt, something that neuroscientists are now mapping in functional MRI scanners.

But the tradition was not pursuing *apatheia* for its own sake. They were pursuing God. The freedom from compulsion was a by-product of surrender, not a goal in itself. And this is exactly where the research, for all its value, reaches its limit. It can measure outcomes. It cannot measure the reality of the relationship that produces them.

What the evidence tells us, taken as a whole, is this: human beings appear to be built for prayer. The body responds to it, the mind is shaped by it, the emotions are stabilised by it, and something in us – something the researchers can point to but not fully name – is deepened and enlarged by it. Augustine said it first and said it best: *our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee*. The scientists have spent fifty years confirming what he knew in the fifth century.

III. Integration: Holding It All Together

The research is in. Prayer is good for you. It calms the nervous system, lifts the mood, builds resilience, and extends life. At this point you might reasonably be thinking: why aren't we prescribing it on the NHS?

And that, in fact, is precisely where I want to pause. Because if the impression formed is that prayer is essentially a rather effective wellness intervention – a kind of holy alternative to yoga or a mindfulness app with a cross on it – then prayer, and those who pray, have been done a considerable disservice.

The research tells us something true and important. But it does not tell us the most important thing. And the gap between what the science can measure and what prayer actually is – that gap is where the real conversation begins.

The Paradox at the Centre

Here is the paradox: prayer produces profound benefits for human beings, but the moment we pray in order to produce those benefits, something essential is lost.

There is a moment in C.S. Lewis where he observes that you cannot get the second things by putting them first – you can only get them by putting the first things first. If you pursue happiness directly, it tends to elude you. If you pursue something worth doing, happiness sometimes finds you on the way. The same logic applies here with considerable force. Pray for your health, and you are using God as a means to an end – which is a form of prayer, but a rather diminished one. Pray to God – in adoration, in lament, in thanksgiving, in simple wordless presence – and health, resilience, and flourishing may well follow. But they follow as by-products of something far larger than themselves.

The mystics were admirably clear about this. Meister Eckhart, that most brilliant and occasionally alarming of the medieval Rhineland mystics, said that the person who prays for specific benefits from God is essentially treating God as a candle – something to be used for the light it provides and then set aside. Real prayer, he insisted, is not the use of God. It is the encounter with God. And encounters, by their nature, are not things we control or manage. They are things that happen to us, and change us, in ways we did not necessarily plan.

This is one of the reasons that the practice of centring prayer can feel so unsettling to people when they first encounter it. You sit in silence. You release your thoughts. You consent to God's presence and action. And then – nothing much seems to happen. There is no sense of achievement, no spiritual glow, no measurable output. For people formed by a culture that values productivity above almost everything else, this can feel uncomfortably close to failure. But the tradition says: this is the prayer. The releasing is the prayer. The consenting is the prayer. God does not need our performances; God wants our presence.

Three Integrating Ideas

1. Prayer forms us – it does not merely help us

There is a significant difference between a resource and a relationship. A resource is something you draw on when you need it and set aside when you don't. A relationship is something that, over time, changes who you are. Most of us, if we are honest, have at various points treated prayer more like a resource than a relationship – the emergency call, the last resort, the thing we return to when everything else has failed. And God, being God, meets us even there. But that is not what prayer is for.

The *Ignatian Examen* is a beautiful illustration of prayer as formation. At its heart, it is an invitation at the end of each day to ask two questions: where did I sense the presence of God today, and where did I resist or miss it? This is not a relaxation technique. It is not stress management with a theological label. It is the slow, patient cultivation of a particular kind of attentiveness – learning, over months and years, to notice God in the texture of ordinary life.

Thomas Merton argued, across various formulations in his writing, that prayer is finally not an activity we perform but a state of being we inhabit. Over a lifetime of prayer, he suggested, the boundaries between praying and living begin to dissolve – not because prayer becomes less important, but because it becomes more pervasive. The whole of life begins to be held in a kind of prayerful awareness. That is formation. And no research study can fully capture it, because it takes a lifetime to measure.

2. The body matters - and the Church has always known this

The neuroscience of embodied cognition tells us – with considerable excitement, as though this were new – that thinking, feeling, and meaning-making are not purely operations of the disembodied brain. They involve the whole body: posture, movement, breath, sensation. We do not just have bodies. We are bodies. And how we inhabit our bodies shapes how we inhabit our minds.

The Christian tradition has, of course, been saying something like this since the Incarnation. The Word became *flesh* – not the Word became a spiritual experience, not the Word became a set of propositions, but *flesh*. God took a body, and in doing so, sanctified embodied existence permanently and irreversibly. It should not surprise us, then, that prayer which engages the body – walking a labyrinth, moving through a pilgrimage, the prostrations of the Eastern tradition, the kneeling and standing of the liturgy, the breathing patterns of centring prayer – turns out to be prayer that goes deep. The body is not a vehicle for the

soul. It is not a distraction from the spiritual life. It is, in the language of St Paul, the temple of the Holy Spirit. We pray with our whole selves, or not quite fully at all.

3. Solitude and community are partners, not alternatives

The research on loneliness is among the most sobering in contemporary public health. Loneliness is now recognised as a risk factor for mortality comparable to smoking fifteen cigarettes a day. It degrades immune function, accelerates cognitive decline, and shadows mental health. And prayer communities – even small, imperfect, occasionally exasperating ones – function as a significant protective factor against all of these. The simple act of praying together, of sharing a common language of the spirit, of being known and held within a community that gathers in the name of something larger than itself, turns out to matter enormously for human flourishing.

And yet the contemplative tradition is equally insistent on the inner room. Jesus, who was hardly lacking in community, repeatedly withdrew to pray alone. The Desert tradition was built on solitude. Thomas Keating taught that there is a dimension of our relationship with God that can only be explored in silence, alone, beyond the reach of even the most beloved community. We need the gathered prayer of the Body of Christ; we also need the hidden prayer of the individual before God. Neither replaces the other. They feed each other.

An Honest Word About Suffering

The research shows health benefits. But some of the most prayerful people in history have suffered catastrophically. The Psalmists – those utterly unsentimental theologians of human experience – knew darkness, abandonment, and rage as well as joy. Jeremiah prayed from the bottom of a cistern. John of the Cross wrote his greatest poetry in a prison cell. Prayer does not inoculate us against suffering. It does not guarantee outcomes. God is not a vending machine into which we insert prayers and receive wellness.

What prayer does – what the research glimpses at the edges of its methodology, and what the tradition knows in its bones – is change our relationship to suffering. Not by removing it, but by ensuring we do not face it alone. By providing a language – the language of lament as well as praise – for the full range of human experience. By slowly, over years, forming in us a groundedness that is not the same as happiness, but is something more durable: what the New Testament calls peace that passes understanding, and what the research calls, in its more modest vocabulary, resilience.

That is not a small thing. In a world that is very

often very hard, it is, in fact, an extraordinary thing.

IV. So What Do We Do With This?

We have covered a good deal of ground. We have visited Harvard cardiologists and medieval mystics, neuroscientists and Desert Fathers, Archdeacons and – briefly – the bottom of Jeremiah's cistern. But I want to finish somewhere different. Somewhere quieter.

Because in the end, none of what has been explored in this paper is really about information. It is about invitation.

For Those Who Find Prayer Hard

I want to speak for a moment to those for whom prayer is genuinely difficult. Not because you lack faith, but because the practice itself feels dry, or dutiful, or like shouting into an empty room. The tradition has a name for it – *acedia*, or spiritual aridity – and the unanimous counsel of the mystics about it is both simple and slightly annoying: keep going.

Not because persistence earns anything. Not because God rewards effort in some transactional way. But because fidelity in the dry seasons turns out to be one of the most formative things a person can do. The research, interestingly, bears this out: it is not the intensity of spiritual experience that predicts wellbeing outcomes, but the regularity and intention of practice. The person who prays quietly and faithfully every day, feeling very little, is doing something of profound consequence. Something is happening in them that they cannot see, in the same way that a tree cannot see its own roots deepening.

The tradition of Christian prayer is not a single corridor – it is a cathedral, with chapels and cloisters and open naves and hidden gardens. If one form of prayer has felt like a locked door, that is not a verdict on your spiritual life. It may simply mean there is another door.

For Those Who Have Prayed for a Lifetime

For those for whom prayer is as natural as breathing, who have been faithful in practice for decades, I want to offer something too.

The danger for experienced pray-ers is a certain proprietorial relationship with their preferred form of prayer. We find what works, we settle into it, and after a while we can mistake the familiar for the necessary. The form we love becomes, almost without our noticing, the form we defend.

The research on neuroplasticity – the brain's remarkable capacity for change at any age – has a spiritual analogue. We do not reach a point at which growth is no longer possible, at which God has nothing new to show us. The contemplative tradition speaks of beginner's mind – the willingness to approach even the most familiar thing with fresh

eyes. Julian of Norwich was still receiving new insight from her showings decades after they occurred. The monk Thomas Merton spent twenty-seven years in a monastery and was still writing, in the last years of his life, about how much he had yet to learn about prayer.

Experience is a gift, to oneself and to those around you. But hold it lightly. Leave a little room for the possibility that God might do something that does not fit neatly into your existing categories.

What This Day Is, Really

The Christian tradition has always held that the desire to pray is itself a gift – that the very longing we feel for God is God's own longing for us, reflected back. Augustine again: *you made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you.* The restlessness that draws us to prayer is not a problem to be solved. It is a sign of life. It is the heart doing what hearts are made to do.

The research tells us that prayer is good for us. The tradition tells us something richer: that prayer is where we become most fully ourselves. Not the defended, performing, achieving self that the world mostly sees – but the true self, the self that is known and named and loved by God before we have done anything to deserve it.

That is not a technique, not a programme, not a set of skills to be acquired and added to a repertoire. It is an encounter. A deepening. A coming home.

Closing Prayer

Lord, you have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you. Draw us deeper into the prayer that forms us, the silence that holds us, and the love that will not let us go. Amen.

[If anyone is interested in exploring the above subject further, please contact the Editors at magazine@stpaulsruthall.org.uk or Tim Harrold, who can provide details of further literature recommended by Canon Emslie]

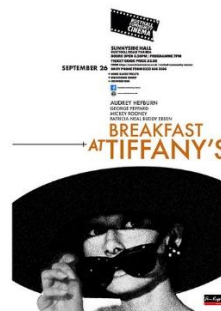


Rusthall Community Cinema



Song Sung Blue (2025) Cert 12

Doors open: 6.30pm Saturday 12th September
 Directed by: Craig Brewer
 Genre: Biography, Drama, History
 Runtime: 2 h 12 min
 Starring: Hugh Jackman, Kate Hudson, Ella Anderson



Breakfast at Tiffany's (1961) Cert PG

Doors open: 6.30pm Saturday 26th September
 Directed by: Blake Edwards
 Genre: Comedy, Drama, Romance
 Runtime: 1 h 55 min
 Starring: Audrey Hepburn, George Peppard, Patricia Neal



NT Live The Misanthrope Cert 12

Doors open: 2pm Sunday 27th September
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 Genre: Recorded live theatre
 Runtime: 2h
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Life In New Testament Times

Part 1 - Business and Administration

When we think of life in New Testament times we tend to relate it to the contents of the four Gospels, but most of the New Testament refers to the life being lived in the countries which were on the northern side of the Mediterranean Sea and were part of the Roman Empire. Palestine – of course – also came under the rule of Rome and often the Biblical references referred to town and business life rather than rural and countryside living.

The Romans from earliest times used the copper libra or pound for both weight and money. It appears that pieces of copper were cast in Italy to the weight of a pound and its various fractions. Although the standard of Roman coinage fell rapidly, the weight continued unchanged, and the Roman libra was exactly the same under the Emperor Constantine the Great as it was in the time of Christ. This must have been of great advantage in every province of the Empire. Weights and measures had to be of the correct standard

When Paul went to Rome it would have been necessary for him to have the equivalent of a ration card or identity card. It was considered to be the duty of the Roman government to secure the supply of cereals for the population. The corn market was under the control of an officer of the state. With the decline of agriculture in Italy and the increase of the urban population, prices went up. It then became necessary for people to prove their Roman citizenship to obtain their ration of corn.

Apparently a Roman Jew got extra rations of grain on a Friday to avoid complications over the Sabbath. Some Jews also objected to receiving Gentile oil, so they were allowed to claim the equivalent of the oil-ration in cash.

The reckoning of time differed from how we calculate it. The Orientals - and this included Palestine – reckoned each day as beginning at sunset and continuing until the next sunset. Even today this is still the practice among some who have not become Westernised. Noon was the sixth hour not the twelfth hour. The night was divided into three watches by the Jews, but the Romans divided it into four. Talk about total confusion. Incidentally it is thought that in the fourth gospel the days were reckoned in the Roman way while the other three Gospels were reckoned in the Jewish manner.

It is extremely unlikely that the bulk of the population had any accurate way of measuring time in small units, although the division of the hour into minutes and seconds goes back to Babylonian

times. Basically there would have been no transport timetables and no one could make precise appointments which must have been somewhat inconvenient, but on the other hands life went on in a much more leisurely way.

We do know that both the sundial and the water clock were in use in the first century AD. The most elaborate water-clock of which we have any record was one invented by a mathematician in Alexandria in 135BC based on earlier designs by Ctesibius. It could only have been used by very wealthy people, but certainly rich Jews could have afforded one, however it also needed frequent attention and regulating to keep it accurate to any great extent.



Whether you were Jew or Gentile a calendar was in existence based on the monthly phases of the moon, so the year with its four seasons was almost inevitably divided into months. The Jews followed a weekly pattern which they had inherited from the Babylonians with the seventh day as the Sabbath while for the Romans the division of a month simply related to days.

The Roman year had 355 days and of these 109 were sacred and 235 secular, while eleven were divided between gods and men. During the first century, as a result of the combination of two influences, there was a growing tendency to associate different days with the power of different heavenly bodies. These eventually evolved into the names we know today - Monday – moon's day, Tuesday belongs to Mars, Wednesday belongs to Mercury, Thursday is under the sway of Jupiter, while Friday belongs to Venus, Saturday came under the influence of Saturn, while Sunday was a festival of the Sun. This last meant that Christians were able to take over a day which was already sacred.

In Galatians chapter 4 and Colossians chapter 2 Paul is aiming to show that until people became Christians they were enslaved by a belief in astrology and perhaps it was a relief to be delivered from this. However some people might well say that people are turning to this way of thinking in the 21st century.

Daphne Pilcher



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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.

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Mixed ecology: blessing or curse?

The Church of England is under severe pressure on several fronts: attendance, recruitment of ordinands and volunteers, inclusion, financial worries in many parishes, safeguarding, merger of parishes, church closures, doctrinal, theological, ecclesiological differences. Some of the issues are not stand-alone, rather they are toxic cocktails eroding the 'unity' of the Church. The Church gives this writer the impression it is divided into camps eyeing each other with suspicion, even hostility.

Since Henry VIII replaced the Pope as head of the church to be known as the Church of England there has been disputation and dissent on a wide range of issues. What is different today is the development of social media and the glare of publicity it brings. Pressure groups are easier to establish, opinion formers have far greater and accelerated reach, groupthink replaces objectivity and analysis.

Why the CofE is losing members, why many parishes are struggling, why parishes are being merged has to be considered in the context of a range of factors that are just as relevant to other denominations in decline: it is the trend of the population to move away from, to reject, the doctrines and practices of traditional churches, to move away from regular church attendance, away from financial giving and volunteering. It is the ebb tide of the sea of faith. Will there be flood tide?

When confronted with poor election results a political ploy is to claim the electorate rejected their party, not because of the party's policies but because of poor presentation. Improve presentation and all will be well: the electorate will come flooding back.

A similar approach is to be found in the Church of England. Expand the scope of presentation with church planting, set up initiatives to contact children and young persons, hold meetings and events in locations apart from traditional venues, enthuse existing and new ordinands and lay leaders, try new forms of service. In other words, fresh expressions and a mixed ecology. Set targets for numerical growth.

Rochester Diocese has received just shy of £11m from the Church of England's Diocesan Investment Programme. The funding will be used in support of the Diocese Called Together vision and strategy. The expected outcomes by 2034 include: a 15% increase in church attendance, a 50% increase in lay missional leaders, at least 25% more people making a commitment to faith, a 50% increase in children and young people engaged with church and 25% more churches with substantive CYPF ministry.

The strategy has three guiding objectives: to grow missional churches, with missional leaders and missional disciples.

Will the population buy-in to this strategy? Will it damage the parish system? Will it undermine the work of current clergy and lay people?

Sadly I do not note in the strategy any mention of deep debate, discussion or analysis of the various theological opinions held within the Church of England. Rochester Diocese is strongly conservative evangelical and inevitably this will colour perceptions of the implementation of the strategy and how it is received.

It is the opinion of this writer that the Church of England should review the messages it is sending to a doubting population if it is to achieve the growth hankered after. Bishop John Shelby Spong put it thus:

'Unless biblical literalism is challenged overtly in the Christian church itself, it will, in my opinion kill the Christian faith. It is not just a benign nuisance that afflicts Christianity at its edges: it is a mentality that renders the Christian faith unbelievable to an increasing number of the citizens of our world.'

John Hopkinson



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Football and Faith

Those of a similar generation to myself, or older, will remember the late great Bill Shankly, who uttered possibly the most famous football quote of them all:

Somebody said that football's a matter of life and death to you, I said 'listen, it's more important than that'."

But football and faith have considerably more in common than life and death. Consider for example the singing/chanting. It is the football fans hymn. There is iconography in the form of shirts, scarfs and hats. Travelling to an opposition football ground has all the hallmarks of a pilgrimage and each team has its saviour – although that may be a different player each week. During the World Cup, how many England fans saw Jude Bellingham as being the one who could finally “bring football home”.

Something extraordinary happened time and time again after World Cup matches. After a game, you would often see players from both teams coming together in a huddle and pray. The first match it happened was after Germany beat Curaçao 7-1. When asked about it afterwards, a German player said:

"Yeah, we are just in the game, opponents against each other. And then afterwards, we are all Christians and we are all brothers. And then we just did a little prayer together because we are still very grateful. We all believe that Jesus is glorified through the game and that's why we came together and just have it together."

This post match prayer circle happened again after Curacao played Ecuador, when Austria played Argentina, after Belgium defeated the United States and after the match between England and France that saw England secure 3rd place in the tournament 6-4. Possibly the best match of the entire World Cup. It was not unusual in that tournament to see players professing their faith, whether Christian or Muslim. Mo Salah may not be a prophet, but he certainly has the eyes of many in Muslim countries. Many players will look to the sky when they score a goal. Some make the sign of the cross as they run onto the pitch. It has become much more common and acceptable for football players to wear their faith on their sleeve – including the England players; Bukayo Saka, admitted he read the Bible every day of the tournament. The message this sends around the world is that for these players, their faith is more important than football -

the sport they love, and more important than the country they play for.

Football's influence on society is simply enormous. Is it possible that these expressions of belief could be breaking down barriers and making faith culturally acceptable? That's certainly what the journalists Thomas Munson and Sam Matthews Boehmer¹ believe. A player's social media content is more about their faith than the football. Gone are the usual comments like “the boys played well”. It is much more common to see their Instagram and X (twitter) feeds talking about their faith. One Arsenal player, Jurrien Timber, before every match, tweets a biblical verse. Not the words, just the book, chapter and verse. Fans have been seen looking up the reading on the way to the match.

One interesting World Cup fact. The 26 players of the Brazilian team were predominantly Protestant. Brazil has the largest Catholic population in the world, yet nearly 80% of their squad is Evangelical Protestant. Is there something about Evangelism that helps these players conform to their strict dietary regimes and helps deliver the dedication a top player requires. Munson and Boehmer argue that Evangelism has a history of helping people with addictions and replacing negative behaviour with positive ones. In Brazil, Protestant Evangelism has forged a link, whether real or imaginary, of faith being connected to success. Not just in sport but in business. It is seen as a way out from the favela's, the impoverished neighbourhoods that dominate so many Brazilian cities.

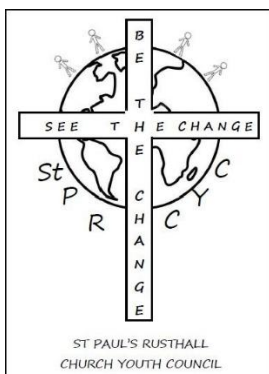
Closer to home, it does raise an interesting question. Is there an opportunity for churches here to connect themselves to this cultural zeitgeist. I couldn't help but notice that during the World Cup, the weekly newsletter from Rochester Diocese was entirely focused on warning about the connection between football and domestic violence, a connection which is arguably more about alcohol than football. This is not to diminish the terror and cruelty of domestic violence. But when Rochester Diocese has stated a desire to make the church younger and made it a targeted objective, I wonder whether the absence of a positive message about football was not the equivalent of a missed opportunity in front of an empty net.

Either way, sad to say, it will be another four years before football comes home.

Tim Harrold

¹ Munson and Boehmer were talking on the podcast “Holy Smoke”.

St Paul's Church Youth Council



SUMMER FUN!

What a summer! CYC voted to keep meeting socially throughout the summer holidays and to spend some of their hard earned 'Honey Money' on a group outing. Many ideas were explored but quickly discarded when they worked out the costs. Learning and appreciating the value of money is such an important life skill and somehow when it is your hard-earned money you suddenly develop different priorities! There is nothing quite like teenage indignation - suffice to say aquaparks and laser quest were a big no no! Instead they explored Tonbridge and on Wednesday 29th we set off; Picnics (including the essential Jean's chocolate brownies) by the castle, frisbee, rowing down the Medway - not quite the leisurely cruise Jean and I envisaged but enormous fun. Ice creams followed before heading off to Dino Golf. 18 holes later it was time to head back to Churchside for a well earned swim and more food. It was extremely hot, but the CYC were a joy. They are a terrific group who truly look out for each other.

Our next campaign is to encourage Tonbridge Borough Council to install water fountains in the park or at least taps where people can refill water bottles.

The school holidays started and ended with a swimming party and BBQ. Needless to say these were a highlight and hugely enjoyed.

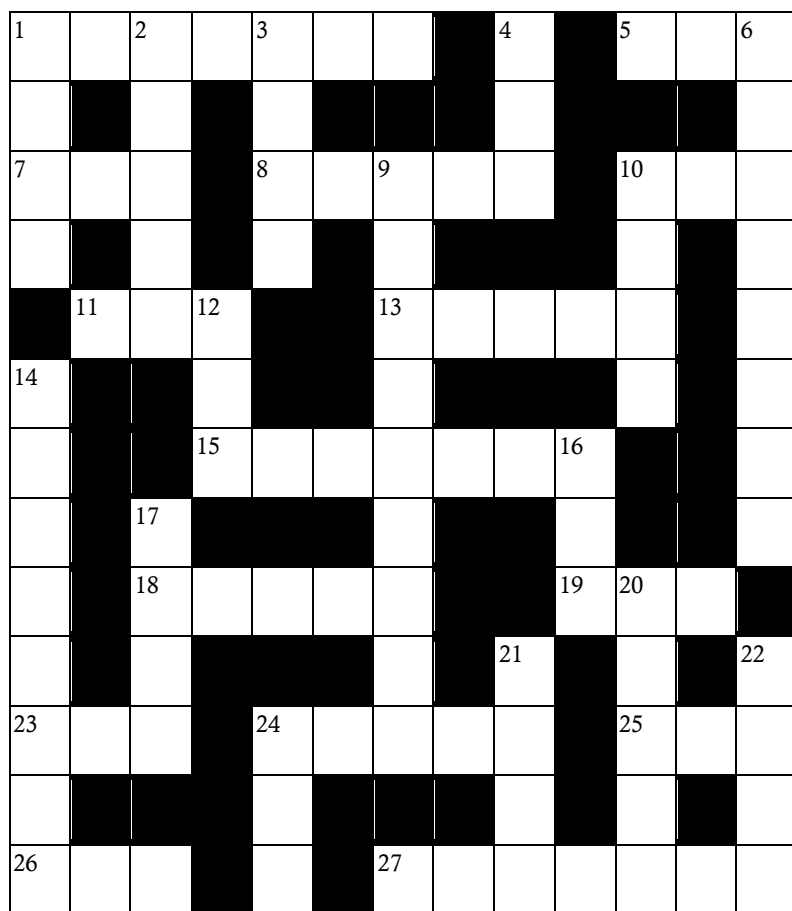
Our first meeting of the school year is on Thursday 3rd September 6 - 7.30 in The Lodge. All children of secondary school age are very welcome. For further details please contact:

Angela Culley 07779098026
Jean Kerr stpauls.cyc@gmail.com
The Church Office 01892 521447
office@stpaulsrusthall.org.uk



Activity Pages

Try this Bible based crossword



Clues Across

1. Giant defeated by David
5. Second son of Noah
7. Chief of a group of Midianite clans (Numbers 25 v 15)
8. Phoenix is the harbour of which island (Acts 27 v 12)
10. His son was the ruler of half the Jerusalem district (Nehemiah 3 v 9)
11. Where Daniel met the lions
13. The disciple who denied knowing Jesus

Jumbled places in the United Kingdom

1. H B N D R G E I U
2. D L N N O O
3. F D C I R F A
4. T F L B S E A
5. W G G A S L O
6. L T R B S O I
7. D D R R N N Y O O L E
8. E E E N D B R A
9. S S A A N W E
10. R R A A N N F E C O
11. O L L N N I C
12. L L P O O V R I E

15. Egyptian ruler
18. For seven days they were not to eat bread made from this (Exodus 12 v 15)
19. Sacrificial animal
23. In some versions of the Bible we are told that on Palm Sunday Jesus rode on the colt of this animal
24. Father of David
25. In Daniel 4 v 25 they were told to sleep in the open what
26. What did David do in the fields (1 Samuel 20 v 24)
27. The home of Mary Martha and Lazarus

Clues Down

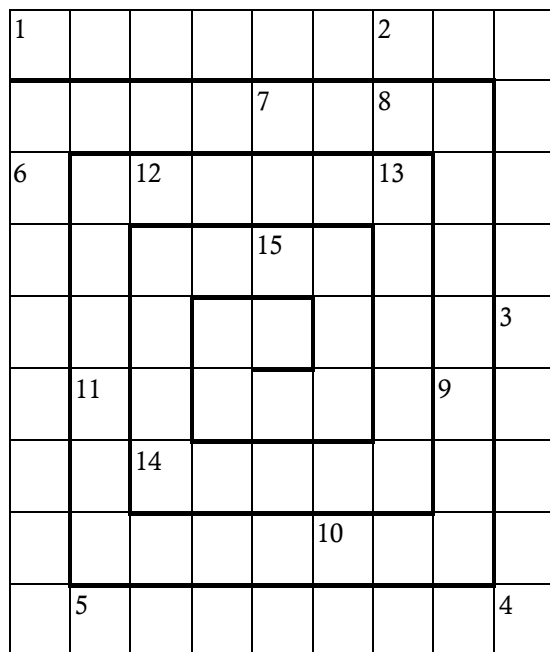
1. This area of Palestine today has the word 'strip' following it
2. What was Joshua told about the size (Joshua 7 v 3)
3. What was at the top of the doorway (1 Kings 6 v 31)
4. Adam's partner
6. Cousin of Esther
9. Large river mentioned in the Bible
10. There was a what of pigs feeding (Matthew 8 v 30)
12. Have a what (Proverbs 24 v 33)
14. One of Daniel's three companions
16. Mountain on which Aaron died
17. Leah's were lovely (Genesis 29 v 17)
20. According to Naaman this river of Damascus was much better than the River of Jordan
21. In Ephesians what part of the Armour of God stood for truth
22. What did Elijah urge the prophets of Baal to do even louder
24. Nationality of Peter

Creatures play quite a part in our language. Fit the missing creatures into the following sentences

1. It's a real white _ _ _ _ _
2. It is raining _ _ _ _ _ and _ _ _ _ _
3. She was sent away with a _ _ _ _ _ in her ear
4. He is as mad as a _ _ _ _ _
5. The trail was a complete red _ _ _ _ _
6. It was a complete wild _ _ _ _ _ chase
7. She's a _ _ _ _ _ in a china shop
8. He's a _ _ _ _ _ out of water
9. When you've come off your high _ _ _ _ _ you'll be glad you listened to us
10. She's the black _ _ _ _ _ of the family

Trail of the Animals

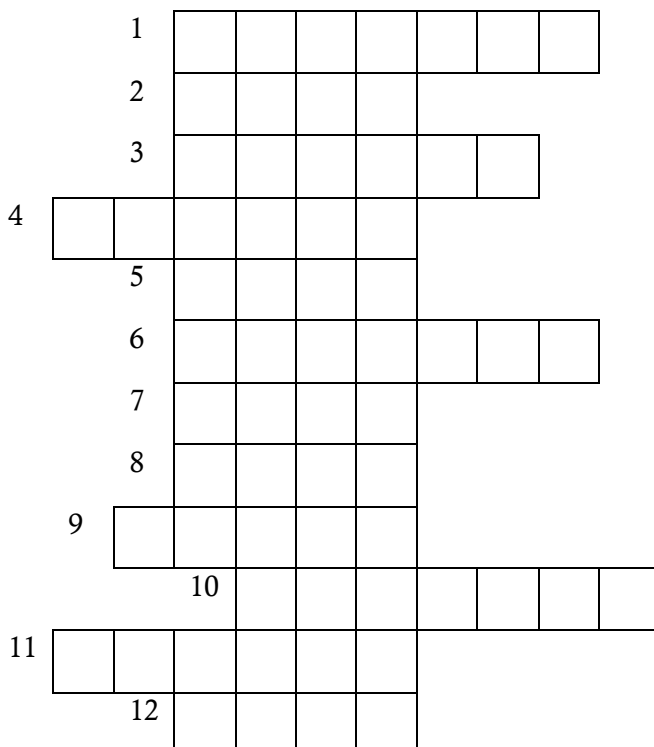
The last letter of each answer is the first letter of the next one



1. Wild cattle of Africa or Asia
2. Legend says he buried his head in the sand
3. Known for his 'wild' laugh
4. Eland. Springbok and Gazelle all belong to this family
5. He has ivory tusks
6. You might call him a water tortoise
7. Snake-like fish
8. A chameleon is this type of reptile
9. Australia wild dog
10. Sea creature known for his eight 'arms'
11. Large wading bird – the legendary bringer of babies
12. Australian bird
13. Burrowing South American mammal whose body is protected by bony plates
14. Smallest of the large 'cats', found in America
15. He is an edible version of No 6.

Surprising Ash Tree

It is surprising what the Ash can become



1. Style of dress
2. Warm food for horses
3. Thin slices of bacon
4. Scatter liquid over something
5. Clean with liquid
6. Shy and modest
7. Money
8. Long deep cut
9. Sudden burst of light
10. What one is as a result of a sense of guilt
11. Beat
12. Type of window

Try this wordsearch All About Sport

The words are written forwards, backwards and horizontally. At the end you will be left with eight letters which will give you a sport connected with mountains.

P	U	T	T	L	U	A	V	E	L	O	P
S	O	C	C	E	R	E	C	A	L	A	A
G	E	R	I	P	M	U	C	I	U	M	L
Y	G	I	B	I	W	R	Y	T	W	I	L
M	A	C	T	I	O	B	O	I	N	A	A
N	S	K	D	S	R	C	M	K	O	R	B
A	S	E	S	E	R	B	S	G	R	Y	T
S	E	T	D	O	L	U	O	O	A	A	E
T	R	I	S	E	T	L	W	X	C	L	K
I	D	S	D	N	E	L	O	K	E	E	S
C	N	O	R	I	N	Y	L	B	G	R	A
S	N	A	M	E	L	E	H	C	N	E	B

ARROW	AUTOCROSS	BASKETBALL	BENCH	BOX	BULLY	CRICKET
DERBY	DRESSAGE	GOAL	GYMNASTICS	IRON	KIT	LACROSS
LAP	LEMANS	LINKS	LOB	NET	PUTT	POLEVAULT
RELAY	RACE	SOCCER	TACKLE	TIME	UMPIRE	WIDE
WIMBLEDON						

ANSWERS

Biblical Based Crossword

Across

1	Goliath	5	Ham	7	Zur	8	Crete	10	Hur	11	Den
13	Peter	15	Pharoah	18	Yeast	19	Ram	23	Ass	24	Jesse
25	Air	26	Hid								

Down

1	Gaza	2	Large	3	Arch	4	Ewe	5	Mordecai	6	Euphrates
10	Herd	12	Nap	14	Shadrach	16	Hor	17	Eyes	20	Abana
21	Belt	22	Pray	24	Jew						

Trail of the Animals

1	Buffalo	2	Ostrich	3	Hyena	4	Antelope	5	Elephant	6	Turtle
7	Eel	8	Lizard	9	Dingo	10	Octopus	11	Stork	12	Koala
13	Armadillo	14	Ocelot	15	Terrapin						

Surprising Ash Tree

1	Fashion	2	Mash	3	Rasher	4	Splash	5	Wash	6	Bashful
7	Cash	8	Gash	9	Flash	10	Ashamed	11	Thrash	12	Sash

Jumbled Places

1	Edinburgh	2	London	3	Cardiff	4	Belfast	5	Glasgow	6	Bristol
7	Londonderry	8	Aberdeen	9	Swansea	10	Caernarfon	11	Lincoln	12	Liverpool

Creatures play quite a part in our language

1	Elephant	2	Cats	Dogs	3	Flea	4	Hare	5	Herring	6	Goose
7	Bull	8	Fish		9	Horse	10	Sheep				

All about Sport wordsearch

The remaining eight letters make up the word Climbing

Daphne Pilcher

General Information

Vicar	
Rev. Ronnie Williams,	521357
The Vicarage, Bretland Road, Rusthall	
Associate Priest	
Rev. Nicholas Burton (c/o Parish Office)	521447
Reader	
Daphne Pilcher	521691
Licenced Lay Minister	
Tim Harrold	07413 805814
Churchwardens	
Chris Dobson	539539
David Goodwin	dgoodwin1990@yahoo.com
c/o Parish Office	521447
Deputy Churchwarden	
Graeme Anderson	532922
Parochial Church Council Secretary	
Phil Vernon	07904 781827
Hon Church Treasurer	
Susan Powley	07715 459425
Youth Council	
Angela Culley	07779 098026
Treasury and Planned Giving	
PCC Finance subcommittee	
c/o the Parish Office	521447
Safeguarding Officer	
Daphne Pilcher	521691
DBS Officer	
Clive Brown	
c/o the Parish Office	521447
Bible Reading Fellowship Secretary	
Tim Cripps	07795 231420
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
Julian Group	
Pat Stevens	529187
Parish Hall Bookings	
Churchyards	
Enquiries to Parish Office	521447
Rusthall St Paul's Primary School	
Executive Headteacher – Mrs Liz Mitchell	520582
Head of School – Mrs Lyndsay Smurthwaite	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

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	
Liz Mankelow	07840 837968
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	
Roger Barton	524795
rogernbarton@gmail.com	



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 9 am and 2 pm.