

# CORNERSTONE

The Magazine of  
**WITNEY CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH**



Christ Jesus is the chief cornerstone.  
In Him the whole fabric is bound together, as it grows into a temple,  
dedicated to the Lord (Ephesians 2:21)



**2025**

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 or, just plainly written on paper, which can  
 be typed up

The next 2-monthly edition, covering  
 December 2025 & January 2026 is due on  
**Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> December**

Your Editor

Continuing in the same theme as the last edition; The weather has been more than reasonable, and, showing my age now, more like I used to remember summers used to be! However, we do need the water, so the showers over the last few days of this week have been most welcomed, and the grass is certainly looking more green

Whatever your circumstances, hopefully, most people will have the chance to have already had a holiday, or have a break of some kind – to relax and unwind from those everyday activities, and now also getting ready for the children to return to school

On 1<sup>st</sup> September we, the church, had a big celebration as Theo Howells, one of our members, was 100, and she did have a card from the king



I now turn to some of this month's contents: along with the standard contributions, Tony Houghton has written about Luke 9; Lesley Barter writes about the rain; Nanna Blackman gives us an update on the World Day of Prayer, and some articles have been extracted from Parish Pump, to name but a few

Many thanks for those who have contributed for this edition, but would encourage anyone to consider submitting article(s) for the next edition by either:



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# September, October & November 2025

**Services:** 10.30am weekly & 6.00pm on first Sunday of the month

## Sep

6 <sup>th</sup>	11.00am	Saturday Praise	
7 <sup>th</sup>	am	Rev Judi Holloway	
	pm	Nanna Blackman	Communion
14 <sup>th</sup>	am	Rev Nigel Appleton	Harvest
21 <sup>st</sup>	am	Rev Nigel Lindsay	Communion
28 <sup>th</sup>	am	Nanna Blackman	

## Oct

4 <sup>th</sup>	11.00am	Saturday Praise	
5 <sup>th</sup>	am	Rev Elaine Kinchin	Hi 5's Café Church
	pm	Rev Elaine Kinchin	Communion
12 <sup>th</sup>	am	Joy Howell	Congregational Federation SWMA
19 <sup>th</sup>	am	Rev Andrew Williams-Tarling – Chair of SWMA	Communion
26 <sup>th</sup>	am	Rev Oliver Kinchin	

## Nov

1 <sup>st</sup>	11.00am	Saturday Praise	
2 <sup>nd</sup>	am	tbc	
	pm	Tony Houghton	Communion
9 <sup>th</sup>	am	David Kinchin	Remembrance Sunday
16 <sup>th</sup>	am	Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF)	Communion
23 <sup>rd</sup>	am	Rev Elaine Kinchin	
30 <sup>th</sup>	am	Rev Judi Holloway	
	pm	Madley Park Residential Home	3.00pm

## Dec

6 <sup>th</sup>	11.00am	Saturday Praise	
7 <sup>th</sup>	am	tbc	
	pm	tbc	Communion

The following events are given for your particular attention:

## Sep

9 <sup>th</sup>	Drop-in Prayer Time & repeated on 16 <sup>th</sup> /23 <sup>rd</sup> & 30 <sup>th</sup>	12.30 – 1.30
	Exercise Group and repeated on 23 <sup>rd</sup> & 30 <sup>th</sup>	10.45 – 11.45
27 <sup>th</sup>	Witney Book Circle	10.30am
28 <sup>th</sup>	Church AGM	12.00 noon

## Oct

5 <sup>th</sup>	Hi 5's Café Church	Sunday morning
7 <sup>th</sup>	Drop-in Prayer Time & repeated on 14 <sup>th</sup> /21 <sup>st</sup> & 28 <sup>th</sup>	12.30 – 1.30
25 <sup>th</sup>	Witney Book Circle	10.30am

## Nov

4 <sup>th</sup>	Drop-in Prayer Time & repeated on 11 <sup>th</sup> /18 <sup>th</sup> & 25 <sup>th</sup>	12.30 – 1.30
5 <sup>th</sup>	Hi 5's Remember, Remember	Wednesday 6.00pm
11 <sup>th</sup>	Exercise Group and repeated on 18 <sup>th</sup>	10.45 – 11.45
14 <sup>th</sup>	Food Bank Quiz	Friday 6.00pm
29 <sup>th</sup>	Witney Book Circle	10.30am

## Dec

2 <sup>nd</sup>	Drop-in Prayer Time & repeated on 9 <sup>th</sup>	12.30 – 1.30
5 <sup>th</sup>	Hi 5's Hobbies	Friday 6.00pm

## Rotas

### WELCOMING TEAM

<b>Sep</b>	07	Jean Hodgson
	14	Pat Smith
	21	Jacqui Powlesland
	28	Janet Hayes
<b>Oct</b>	05	Lesley Barter
	12	Jean Hodgson
	19	Pat Smith
	26	Jacqui Powlesland
<b>Nov</b>	02	Janet Hayes
	09	Lesley Barter
	16	Jean Hodgson
	23	Pat Smith
	30	Jacqui Powlesland
<b>Dec</b>	07	Janet Hayes
	14	Lesley Barter



### FLOWERS

<b>Sep</b>	07	Jacqui Powlesland
	14	Rita Hayes
	21	Janet Hayes
	28	Judi Holloway
<b>Oct</b>	05	Jacqui Powlesland
	12	Rita Hayes
	19	Janet Hayes
	26	Judi Holloway
<b>Nov</b>	02	Jacqui Powlesland
	09	Rita Hayes
	16	Janet Hayes
	23	Judi Holloway
	30	Jacqui Powlesland
<b>Dec</b>	07	Rita Hayes
	14	Janet Hayes



### SUNDAY COFFEE

<b>Sep</b>	07	Jacqui & Terry Powlesland
	14	Harvest Lunch
	21	Sue Birdseye & Claire Woodward
	28	Pat Smith & Janet Hayes
<b>Oct</b>	05	Café Church
	12	Jean Hodgson & Ann Clack
	19	Jacqui & Terry Powlesland
	26	Sue Birdseye & Claire Woodward
<b>Nov</b>	02	Pat Smith & Janet Hayes
	09	Elaine Kinchin & Heather Houghton
	16	Jacqui & Terry Powlesland
	23	Jean Hodgson & Ann Clack
	30	Sue Birdseye & Claire Woodward
<b>Dec</b>	07	Jacqui & Terry Powlesland
	14	Pat Smith & Janet Hayes



## THURSDAY COFFEE (10 – 12)

<b>Sep</b>	04	David Kinchin
	11	Judi Holloway
	18	Ann Clack
	25	Jean Hodgson
<b>Oct</b>	02	Elaine Kinchin
	09	Pat Smith
	16	Judi Holloway
	23	Ann Clack
	30	Jean Hodgson
<b>Nov</b>	06	Elaine Kinchin
	13	Pat Smith
	20	David Kinchin
	27	Judi Holloway
<b>Dec</b>	04	Ann Clack
	11	Jean Hodgson



Start of Soup Lunch (12.00 – 13.00)

**Nanna Blackman as standby - We would be extremely grateful for other people to join**

## SOUND SYSTEM

<b>Sep</b>	07	Terry Powlesland
	14	Nanna Blackman
	21	Terry Powlesland
	28	Tony Houghton
<b>Oct</b>	05	Terry Powlesland
	12	Nanna Blackman
	19	Terry Powlesland
	26	Nanna Blackman
<b>Nov</b>	02	Terry Powlesland
	09	Tony Houghton
	16	Terry Powlesland
	23	Nanna Blackman
<b>Dec</b>	30	Tony Houghton
	07	Terry Powlesland
	14	Nanna Blackman



**For ALL the Rotas, every effort has been made to meet individual circumstances.**

However, if the dates are not convenient for you, please change with someone else

<b>Sep</b>	08	joy Dawe
	09	Judith Bungey
	12	Jean Hodgson
	18	Julia Hutchings
	19	Ann Clack
	23	Clare Ryan
	28	John Garrett
		Lucy Grey



<b>Nov</b>	17	Olaug Uaher-Witz
	18	Fleur Faith de Fraine
	19	Nanna Blackman
	20	Mavis Younger
	26	Ellie-Rose Esapa
		David Grey
		Elaine Kinchin
		Hilary Pratley

<b>Oct</b>	08	Rita Hayes
	13	Luke Lau
	15	Chris Esapa
	19	Emma Wallace

<b>Dec</b>	06	Sue Birdseye
	09	Joan White





## 1<sup>st</sup> September 2025 - Theo Howells 100<sup>th</sup> Birthday

The following article, written by Canon Paul Hardingham, has been extracted from Parish Pump, and is entitled:

### New Beginnings

September is the time of year when we get back to our routines after the summer break. As whole-life disciples (lit: learners) we are all called to learn from Jesus and live like Him. God wants us to make a difference in our workplaces and schools, and with family and friends. As Paul writes: 'And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.' (Colossians 3:17).

'WHATEVER you do': God is at work in every aspect of our lives. He can use whatever we do to make a difference to those around. Do we believe this? Our lives shouldn't be like an orange, segmented into the sacred and secular, but more like an apple, in which all of our lives are available to Him.

'Whatever YOU do': God wants to use us to share God's love as we serve others around us, wherever we spend time. We can trust Him for the resources we need hour by hour, day by day, year by year. What do we need from Him?

'Whatever you DO': We work for God alone, in responding to God's love for us. How does this perspective make a difference when what we do is hard, unrewarding, or even unappreciated by others?

A man standing on a train platform was asked one day: 'Who are you?' He replied, 'I am a Christian thinly disguised as an accountant.' If we were asked the same question ourselves, how would we respond? As disciples of Jesus Christ, our identity is rooted in God and His call upon our lives. For each of us, September means learning from Jesus about how we might live for Him in the different places we find ourselves.



## PRAYER LETTER No 219

If you have a TV and film career which spanned more than seventy years, different people will remember you in different roles. Thora Hird was a household name, appearing in over 100 films (my husband remembers her in *The Winslow Boy*). She acted in many TV drama programmes including *Dixon of Dock Green*, *Z cars* and *Softly Softly*. But it is as a comedy actress that most remember her: in *Meet the Wife*, *In Loving Memory*, *Last of the Summer Wine* and a cameo in *Dinnerladies*, the year she died. She played Capt. Emily Ridley in *Hallelujah*, which was about the Salvation Army, the 'denomination' Thora Hird worshipped with. She was a committed Christian, hosting *Praise Be!* from 1984-93.

James Whitborne interviewed her for *Thought for the Day* towards the end of her life. She chose this prayer, attributed to a seventeenth-century nun:

Lord, thou knowest better than I know myself  
that I am growing older and will someday be old.  
Keep me from the fatal habit of thinking I must say something  
on every subject and on every occasion.  
Release me from craving to straighten out everybody's affairs.  
Make me thoughtful but not moody; helpful but not bossy.  
With my vast store of wisdom it seems a pity not to use it all,  
but Thou knowest Lord, that I want a few friends at the end.  
Keep my mind free from the recital of endless details;  
give me wings to get to the point.  
Seal my lips on my aches and pains: they are increasing and love of repeating them is  
becoming sweeter as the years go by.  
I dare not ask for grace enough to enjoy the tales of other's pains  
but help me to endure them with patience.  
I dare not ask for improved memory  
but for a growing humility and a lessening cocksureness  
when my memory seems to clash with the memories of others.  
Teach me the glorious lesson that occasionally I may be mistaken.  
Keep me reasonably sweet;  
I do not want to be a saint – some of them are so hard to live with –  
but a sour old person is one of the crowning works of the Devil.  
Give me the ability to see good things in unexpected places and talents in unexpected  
people.  
And give me, O Lord, the grace to tell them so. Amen.

Every Blessing,  
Elaine

*Please note that for up-to-date prayer requests contact Elaine 07534 879449)*

The following article, with a Harvest theme, written by Lester Amann, has been extracted from Parish Pump, and is entitled:

## Abiding in Jesus

This is the time of year for many churches to hold their Harvest Festival services. No doubt, there will be displays of food, some bought with others grown in gardens and allotments. While gardeners can have pleasure growing fruit and vegetables it can be hard work tending to them and dealing with pests.

Jesus knew about the care given to vines. In John 15:1-8 Jesus compared Himself to a vine and referred to God as the gardener. These verses are both challenging and reassuring. In this parable, God is responsible for pruning the vine.

He sees what parts are useful and what parts are useless. The unproductive parts are cut away, so that growth is encouraged. Jesus is telling us that God will prune our lives, not to harm us, but to encourage our spiritual growth.

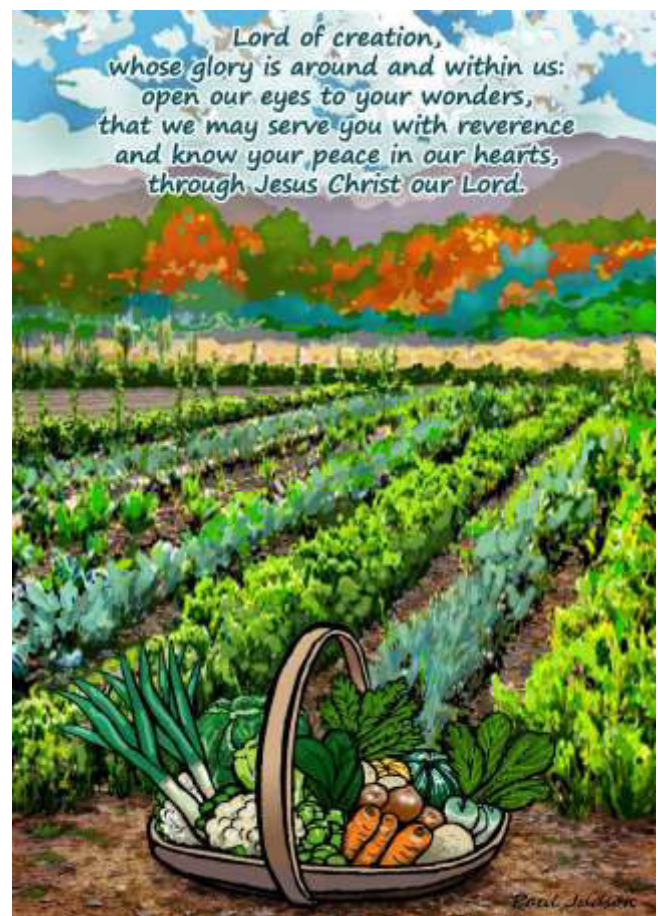
God's pruning cuts away wrong attitudes and wasteful behaviour, all of which serve no useful purpose in our lives. This pruning is required so that we become more fruitful. And the fruit God wants is love, joy, patience etc. (see Galatians 5:22-23) These holy qualities are intended to influence the world to change it from the bad to all that is good.

To encourage its growth, a vine has to be regularly cut back. The effect looks drastic, but essential. When God cuts away the dead wood in our lives He does it because He knows how our lives can grow. The pruning knives are in the hands of our Father God who only desires the best for us. This pruning process can be painful, but Jesus says that it is vital if the Holy

Spirit is to flow through us to produce the fruit that God wants.

Also in this parable, Jesus said He was the vine, and we are the branches. We have no existence apart from Jesus. We can do nothing for God on our own and must be joined to Jesus. In the same way a vine utilises the life-giving sap to flow into the branches, so we need the Holy Spirit to flow His life into us. It is only by remaining in Jesus can He give us the inner resources for an effective fruit-producing life.

Jesus said '*Abide in Me*' (John 15:4 King James Version). Abiding speaks of sustenance, being upheld and supported, enduring and withstanding. So, if we are to reap a harvest of holiness, may we be prepared for God's pruning, and continue to abide in Jesus, our Lord and Saviour.





The following article has been submitted by Nanna Blackman, and is entitled:



## World Day of Prayer – Background and Dates

The World Day of Prayer (WDP) came about by the merger of two separate prayer movements.

Mary Ellen James was the wife of a Presbyterian minister in New York and the mother of seven children. She was acutely aware of the problems faced by many women, particularly new immigrants to America. There were awful slums with poverty, unemployment, poor housing and lack of health or educational facilities. In 1887, Mary Ellen called for the women of her church to come together for a day of prayer. A day **“where there shall be confession of individual and national sins with offerings that fitly express the contrition”**.

In 1891 two Baptist missionaries, appalled by the deprivation of the women in many other parts of the world called for a day of prayer for overseas missions. Eventually in 1919, these two separated days were united as the Women’s World Day of Prayer.

In 1980 the word ‘Women’s’ was dropped and the movement became the World Day of Prayer to become more inclusive. The new logo was developed in 1982 by the women in Ireland and adopted by the international committee. The centre of the logo is the cross, formed by stylised praying figures, their kneeling position forming arrows coming together from the four corners of the earth. All are joined together within the circle of the world and enfolded in God’s love.

Today more than 180 countries celebrate the WDP and the services are held in more than 1000 languages.

The 2026 WDP service has been prepared by an ecumenical group of Christian women from Nigeria. On Friday 6<sup>th</sup> March, a great wave of prayer will start in Samoa and, as the earth rolls through the day, it will end in American Samoa, the other side of the International Date Line. Each gathering will be using the same service entitled "I will give you rest, come", based on Matthew 11:28-30. The service shares the stories of four Nigerian women who inspire us to work towards a world without injustice, insecurity, marginalisation, religious persecution, poverty and despair. As we trust in God, our Burden Bearer, we become one body in Christ, receiving and bringing rest to the world.

On Saturday October 18<sup>th</sup> 2025, Witney Congregational church is privileged to host the regional preparation day for WDP. The programme starts at 10:30 with a call to worship. Two members from the National committee, Nesta Davies and Jenny Haggard, who is the CF representative, will join us, to share WDP news and the background to Nigeria. There will be a Bible study and we will run through the songs used in the service. We will end at 14:30 with a closing worship. Last year over 30 people attended the preparation day in High Street Methodist Church, some from as far away as Great Malvern.

As we are hosting we are obviously looking for volunteers to assist on the day, be it stewarding or leading prayers, setting up the sanctuary or leading the prepared Bible Study. If you are able and willing to help, please let me know.

### Summary of Dates, all at Witney Congregational Church:

Regional Preparation day: Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> October 2025, 10:30 -14:30

WDP services: Friday 6<sup>th</sup> March 2026 at 10:30 and 7:00

The following article has been written & submitted by Tony Houghton, and is entitled:

## **Following Jesus without looking back – Reflections on Luke 9:57–62**

In Luke 9:57–62, Jesus meets three would-be followers along the road. Each receives a surprising and challenging reply, revealing that discipleship is never casual—it's a wholehearted commitment.

### **1. "I will follow you wherever you go" (v.57–58)**

The first man enthusiastically pledges his loyalty, but Jesus responds: *"Foxes have holes and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head."*

This is not a rejection—it's a reality check. Following Jesus is not a path to comfort or stability. The man must understand that Jesus' mission involves sacrifice, movement, and often the loss of earthly securities. The challenge here is to count the cost before committing. Discipleship may mean letting go of comfort zones and embracing a life of trust in God's provision.

### **2. "Lord, first let me go and bury my father" (v.59–60)**

The second person doesn't volunteer; Jesus calls him directly. The man's reply sounds reasonable—who wouldn't attend to a parent's burial? Yet Jesus says: *"Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God."*

This seems harsh until we grasp the deeper meaning. In Jewish custom, "burying one's father" could also mean waiting until a parent's death before leaving home. Jesus is challenging him to put the kingdom's urgency first. The call to follow Jesus takes precedence over even strong cultural and family obligations. Christ is not dismissing family love but emphasising that proclaiming God's kingdom is the most urgent and life-giving task. How can the 'dead bury their own dead'? Surely Jesus means that these are all people who are spiritually dead, far from knowing Jesus.

### **3. "I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say goodbye to my family" (v.61–62)**

The third man's request is reminiscent of Elisha's farewell to his family before following Elijah (1 Kings 19:19–21). Yet Jesus' answer is different: *"No one who puts a hand to the plough and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God."*

Here, the image of ploughing is key: if a farmer looks back, the furrow becomes crooked. Looking back signals divided loyalty and hesitation. Jesus' challenge is to move forward without regret or second-guessing. Once we commit to him, our eyes and hearts must be fixed ahead, not on what we've left behind.

### **Living these challenges today**

In these encounters, Jesus confronts three common obstacles to wholehearted discipleship:

**Comfort:** We may be tempted to follow Jesus only when it's easy or convenient.

**Delay:** We may think we'll commit fully "after" certain life stages or obligations are done.

**Divided loyalty:** We may start well but keep looking back longingly at our old life.



**Tankard for winning the six universities ploughing match, team member.**

Following Jesus today still demands courage to prioritise his kingdom over security, cultural expectations, and lingering attachments. This doesn't mean neglecting family or responsibilities—but it does mean letting the call of Christ set the direction for our choices.

If we take his words seriously, discipleship is not a hobby, nor a side project—it's a reorientation of our whole lives. Jesus walks ahead of us on a road that may be uncomfortable and costly, but it leads to life, joy, and eternal reward. Like those on the road to Jerusalem, we are invited to follow without delay and without looking back.

### **Lyrics of a song**

A couple of months ago Heather joined a group of Christian worship composers for a ten day challenge of writing a song every day from the stimulus of a bible study and reflection for each day. One day was to write a 'tent' song for your family. I provided the lyrics from one of my favourite verses from this passage – as I do understand the art of ploughing from practical experience. Heather has since written the melody.

### **No looking back – lyrics**

#### **Verse 1**

I set my hands upon the plough,  
No turning back, not then, not now.  
The road is steep with rain filled skies,  
But forward still, I lift my eyes.

#### **Chorus**

A rolling stone gathers no moss!  
No looking back, I'm pressing through,  
My heart is set, my aim is true.  
I fix my eyes on Jesus Christ  
Who for the joy, endured the Cross  
Who for the joy, endured the Cross

#### **Verse 2**

The past once called but no retreat,  
I will not stray, nor face defeat.  
The kingdom waits, the harvest wide,  
With Christ my strength, He's by my side.

#### **Verse 3**

Though shadows fall and trials rise,  
I walk by faith, for God is wise.  
The narrow path is marked with grace,  
And I will run to win the race.

The following article has been written & submitted by Lesley Barter, and is entitled:

### **A little rain must fall**

The sun makes such a difference to one's mood. This summer seems to me to have been full of joy, despite the constant chore of watering the garden! Even if we found the heat a little oppressive at times it was such a relief from the greyness and low cloud that has been a feature of the winter months lately. Getting out into the country gave many of us an opportunity to thank God for his bounty and all our blessings.

It has made me reflect upon the parallel with our own lives. Many of us – the lucky ones – go along for extended periods of time enjoying our lives with few dark clouds on the horizon. Until, inevitably, a storm brews. It might be a troubled family relationship, serious health issues, financial worries.....it stops us in our tracks and forces us to take stock of our values and priorities. What is really important in our lives and what is just cosmetic? When I was younger and none of these dark clouds had appeared on my horizon I believed that I lived a charmed life – until I didn't. I then looked around at my friends and noticed that some of them had everything : good health, happy marriages, brilliant children and a comfortable life. How was this fair, I thought. But as life went on I realised that no one gets away scot-free. Everybody faces a testing time in their life and it is how they deal with it that counts. Our faith is often tested, but it is a crutch in times of trouble if we lean on it. Do we not pray 'deliver us from evil' ? We should not let the dark clouds overwhelm us.

However, life is full of inequalities and clearly for some it is NOT fair. Some are simply born in parts of the world where life is destined to be a struggle from the

word go. For them we can only pray and remember that 'many that are first shall be last, and the last shall be first' (Matthew 19 v30). We have to cling to God's promises to us. Remember poor, unfortunate Job? I do wonder at times why this catalogue of trouble is in the Bible, but it has a valuable lesson when we wonder why things have gone badly wrong for us.

So let us thank God for the sunny summer months and remember that spring will always follow winter, both in our calendar and in our lives – if we let it.

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The following article has been extracted from Parish Pump, and is entitled:

### **Edith Cavell, nurse**

Edith Cavell is a good saint for NHS workers: she cared for the sick despite the danger to her own safety.

Edith was a vicar's daughter from Swardeston in Norfolk, where she was born in 1865. She became a governess, but her heart was for nursing, so she went on to train at the London Hospital, before nursing in various hospitals such as St Pancras and Manchester.

When Edith was 42, she decided to go abroad, and was appointed matron of a large training centre for nurses in Brussels. She was still there seven years later, when the First World War broke out and German troops invaded Belgium on their way to Paris and the Channel Ports

Edith's nursing school became a Red Cross hospital, and she turned down the opportunity to return to the safety of England. Instead, her nurses tended wounded soldiers from both German and Allied armies.



Sadly, in 1915, when the Germans began their occupation of Brussels, they took a dim view of Edith's work. But they would have been even more unhappy had they known she was helping to smuggle 200 British soldiers across the border into the Netherlands!

Finally, the Germans arrested Edith in August 1915, and put her into solitary confinement. They tricked her into confessing to a charge which carried the death penalty. But Edith refused to show either regret at what she had done, or any fear or bitterness towards her captors.

On 11<sup>th</sup> October 1915, the night before her execution, Edith was visited by the Anglican chaplain to Brussels, the Revd Stirling Gahan. Together they said the words of *Abide with Me*, and Edith received her last Holy Communion.

She told Gahan: "I am thankful to have had these ten weeks of quiet to get ready. Now I have had them and have been kindly treated here. I expected my sentence and I believe it was just. Standing, as I do, in view of God and eternity, I realise that patriotism is not enough. I must have no hatred or bitterness to anyone."

Edith was shot by a firing squad next day, on 12<sup>th</sup> October 1915.

After the war her body was exhumed and buried in Norwich Cathedral. Her memorial service in Westminster Abbey attracted thousands. A commemorative statue of her stands near Trafalgar Square.



The following article, written by Tony Collins, who is a Green councillor on Hastings Borough Council, has been extracted from Parish Pump, and is entitled:

## Why not become a councillor?

This morning, I alerted the Hastings parks and gardens team to a giant hogweed in a patch of waste ground: it's an invasive species and can cause serious skin damage.

A communal bin on one of the streets in my ward was missing its lid. Two days ago, I asked the waste services folk to replace it. They did so within 24 hours.

This afternoon's emails included a thank-you note from a resident who has been living with black mould for years. She has a vulnerable son, and had been trying to get action from her social housing provider. A neighbour alerted me to her situation. Councillors have privileged access to housing associations, and it took a single message to secure an inspection. What their mould specialist discovered in her flat required a follow-up visit from a property surveyor, and the whole property is now in line for a new roof.

This afternoon I spent reviewing the council's housing strategy. Like many councils we are constantly on the verge of being overwhelmed by the need for temporary accommodation. It costs nearly 50% of our entire budget. Meanwhile the government's rental reforms are accelerating a trend of private landlords leaving the market.

For over 40 years I was a publisher of Christian books. It was a privilege, and a rewarding occupation – not financially, but in terms of job satisfaction. When I

retired, I joined Hastings Green Party, as an expression of my reverence for the world God made, and to my surprise was elected to Hastings Borough Council on my first attempt. I became treasurer of the local party, and have helped to secure further electoral successes which led to the Greens running the council.

One of the challenges has been to get quality candidates to stand. I visited most of the town's churches, seeking to recruit Christians, but was met with silence or indifference. Our local mosque was a different matter. I met a young man (a white guy, an English convert to Islam) who was eager to learn more. A year later he was elected as the first Muslim councillor in Hastings, and many of his friends in the mosque have become Green supporters. He and I are good friends, and I have been his mentor on the council. He's hardworking and effective.

Why is it so hard to get Christians involved in civic affairs? To be a councillor is to play a vital role in your local community. The job is immensely varied, and can be demanding, but you are making a lasting difference to people's lives. Politicians do not always command respect, and you need to guard your boundaries, but I receive more thanks than brickbats.

Whatever your own political allegiance, please consider getting involved. Your local party will be delighted to hear from you.

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The following article, written by Canon Paul Hardingham, has been extracted from Parish Pump, and is an introduction

to the Books of the New Testament, and is entitled:

## **What's the Big Idea? 2 Corinthians**

*'For anyone operating under the naïve presumption that joining a Christian church is a good way to meet all the best people and cultivate smooth social relations, a reading of Paul's Corinthian correspondence is the prescribed cure' (Eugene Peterson).*

Paul sent four letters to the Corinthian church: one mentioned in 1 Cor. 5:9; 1 Corinthians; a 'severe' letter mentioned in 2 Cor. 2:3-4; and 2 Corinthians sent around AD 55 around a year after 1 Corinthians.

Paul had a number of reasons for writing this letter:

To express the joy he felt at their response to his painful letter (1:3-4; 7:8-9,12-13).

To share his troubles in Asia (1:8-11) and why he changed his travel plans (1:12-2:4).

To ask them to forgive those who had offended him (2:5-11).

To warn them not to be "yoked together with unbelievers" (6:14-7:1).

To explain the true nature of Christian ministry (2:14-7:4).

To encourage them in giving and completing the collection for the Jerusalem Christians (chs. 8-9).

To deal with the opposition (chs. 10-13) and prepare for his coming visit (12:14; 13:1-3,10).

In this very personal letter Paul defends his leadership against accusations of inconsistencies in motives and credentials.

A major theme concerns the relationship between suffering and the power of the Spirit. His opponents argued that Paul *suffered too much* to be a Spirit-filled apostle.

Paul responds by saying that his sufferings embody Christ's death and his endurance reveals God's glory: *'He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.'* (2 Cor 12:9).

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The following article, written by Dr Ruth M Bancewicz, who is Church Engagement Director at The Faraday Institute for Science and Religion in Cambridge, has been extracted from Parish Pump, and Ruth writes on the positive relationship between Science and Christian faith, and is entitled:

## **Big perspective, big questions**

It was three years ago this summer that the first operational images from the James Webb Space Telescope astonished and delighted astronomers, as well as the rest of us.

Those of us who have grown up in an age when 'astronaut' is a career option (albeit a pretty specialist one) might struggle to identify with the wonder of these events, and the true scale of the challenge. Human beings developed the technology to send first a probe, then living people, out of Earth's atmosphere, and cross the 252,000-mile gap to the moon. It was in 1959 that the Luna 3 probe managed to send back grainy images of the far side of the Moon, and in 1969 Apollo 11 managed to actually land on it, take off again, and arrive back in one piece. It's the

safe arrival home that gets me – like hitting the bullseye twice in a row.

For some space-travellers, seeing Earth from a distance is a life-changing experience; a shift in thinking dubbed 'the overview effect'. The observer feels a sense of awe at seeing the whole planet as a single entity rather than a fragmented collection of countries, and at getting a sense of the fragility of the whole system. It brings people out of themselves – something psychologists call a 'self-transcendent experience'.

Some people claim to have a 'nothing but science' approach to life that trusts only in things for which we can produce very concrete, measurable, evidence. Is it perhaps ironic, then, that this overview of the whole globe – which is made possible by science – can trigger such a deep sense of meaning?

Science can bring us to the big questions of meaning and purpose, but it doesn't answer them. It's important to recognise that science, wonderful though it is, has limits. Beyond those boundaries we step into other ways of knowing, such as philosophy or theology. At the interface between science and theology we can have some fascinating conversations.

The discussions about science and religion that I enjoy most happen when people share what really matters to them. What do you find beautiful? Which scientific discoveries changed the course of your life? How do you see yourself in relation to the cosmos?

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<https://www.licc.org.uk/ourresources/connectingwithculture/>

The following article has been extracted from Parish Pump, and is entitled:

## **All in the months of .....**

### **September**

1,100 years ago, on 4<sup>th</sup> Sept 925 that England gained her first ever king. He was Aethelstan, King of the Anglo-Saxons (924-927) and then King of England (927-939). Aethelstan was grandson of Alfred the Great, and 30<sup>th</sup> great-grand uncle to Queen Elizabeth II.

300 years ago, on 29<sup>th</sup> Sept 1725 that Robert Clive, 1<sup>st</sup> Baron Clive (Clive of India) was born. This British general helped to found the British Empire in India.

200 years ago, on 27<sup>th</sup> Sept 1825 that the world's first public railway opened. It was the Stockton and Darlington Railway in north-east England.

150 years ago, on 3<sup>rd</sup> Sept 1875 that Ferdinand Porsche, Austrian-born German automotive engineer was born. He designed the Volkswagen Beetle and Tiger tank, and founded the Porsche sports car company.

Also 100 years ago, on 8<sup>th</sup> Sept that Peter Sellers, actor and comedian was born. Best known for the Goon Show, and as Inspector Clouseau in the Pink Panther film series. (Died 1980.)

90 years ago, on 3<sup>rd</sup> Sept 1935 that British driver Malcolm Campbell set a new world land speed record of 301.13 mph in *Bluebird* at Bonneville Salt Flats, Utah. First person to break the 300mph barrier.

Also 90 years ago, on 15<sup>th</sup> Sept 1935 that the Nuremberg Laws were passed in Germany. Jews were no longer classed as German citizens, and the Nazi flag was adopted as the national flag of Germany.

Also 80 years ago, on 19<sup>th</sup> Sept 1945 that the Nazi propaganda broadcaster William Joyce (Lord Haw-Haw) was sentenced to death by a British court after being convicted of treason. He was executed on 3<sup>rd</sup> January 1946.

75 years ago, on 3<sup>rd</sup> Sept 1950 that Italian racing driver Giuseppe (Nino) Farina became the first-ever Formula One World Champion after winning the 1950 Italian Grand Prix.

70 years ago, on 4<sup>th</sup> Sept 1955 that Kenneth Kendall became the first newsreader to appear on screen in the UK, reading the *BBC Television News*.

Also 70 years ago, on 22<sup>nd</sup> Sept 1955 that Britain's first independent TV channel was launched. ITV ended the BBC's monopoly.

Also 70 years ago, 26<sup>th</sup> Sept 1955 that Bird's Eye frozen fish fingers went on sale in the UK.

60 years ago, on 4<sup>th</sup> Sept 1965 that Albert Schweitzer, German-born French theologian, philosopher, organist, physician and missionary doctor to Africa, died. Winner of the 1952 Nobel Peace Prize.

50 years ago, on 24<sup>th</sup> Sept 1975 that Dougal Haston and Doug Scott became the first Britons to reach the summit of Mount Everest. They were also the first climbers from any nation to conquer the south-west face.

40 years ago, on 9<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> Sept 1985 that the Handsworth Riots took place in Birmingham. Unemployment and racial tensions fuelled a mass riot following the arrest of a man in a café



and a police raid on a public house. 45 shops were looted and burned, and at least two people killed. Several more riots occurred across England that autumn.

30 years ago, on 3<sup>rd</sup> Sept 1995 that the online auction site eBay was founded (as Auction Web). The first item sold was a broken laser pointer.

20 years ago, on 12<sup>th</sup> Sept 2005 that the evacuation of all Israeli security forces and Israeli civilian settlements from the Gaza Strip was completed. Israel had occupied the Gaza Strip for 38 years.

15 years ago, on 19<sup>th</sup> Sept 2010 that the *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico was finally sealed after gushing oil for almost five months. It was the biggest marine oil spill in history. In 2016 BP agreed to pay fines of \$20.8 billion – the largest corporate settlement in US history. BP also paid more than \$65 billion in clean-up costs.

10 years ago, on 24<sup>th</sup> Sept 2015 that the Mina stampede took place. More than 2,000 people were killed in a crush and stampede during the annual Hajj pilgrimage in Mecca, Saudi Arabia.

## October

750 years ago, on 27<sup>th</sup> Oct 1275 that the city of Amsterdam in the Netherlands is traditionally considered to have been founded.

125 years ago, on 20<sup>th</sup> Oct 1900 that the American aviation pioneers the Wright Brothers made their first untethered glider flight at Kill Devil Hills, in North Carolina.

70 years ago, on 20<sup>th</sup> Oct 1955 that *The Return of the King*, the third and final part of J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, was published.

60 years ago, on 8<sup>th</sup> Oct 1965 that the Post Office Tower (now the BT Tower) in London was officially opened. It was the tallest building in the UK until 1980.

50 years ago, on 9<sup>th</sup> Oct 1975 that the IRA detonated a bomb near the Ritz Hotel in Piccadilly. One person was killed and at least 20 injured.

40 years ago, on 1<sup>st</sup> Oct 1985 that riots broke out in Toxteth in Liverpool and Peckham in London. Five days later (6<sup>th</sup> Oct) Met Police Constable Keith Blacklock was killed in the Broadwater Farm housing estate riot in Tottenham. He was the first British constable to be killed in a riot since 1833.

20 years ago, on 18<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> Oct 2005 that Hurricane Wilma, the most intense Atlantic hurricane ever recorded, hit the Caribbean, Central America and the eastern USA. 63 people died. The storm caused £18.1 billion worth of damage.

15 years ago, on 13<sup>th</sup> Oct 2010 that 33 Chilean miners who had been trapped underground for 69 days following the collapse of the San Jose copper-gold mine were rescued. Around one billion TV viewers around the world watched them being pulled to the surface one-by-one, in a specially designed capsule.

10 years ago, on 26<sup>th</sup> Oct 2015 that the Hindu Kush earthquake hit Afghanistan, India and Pakistan. At least 399 people were killed, and 2,536 more injured.