

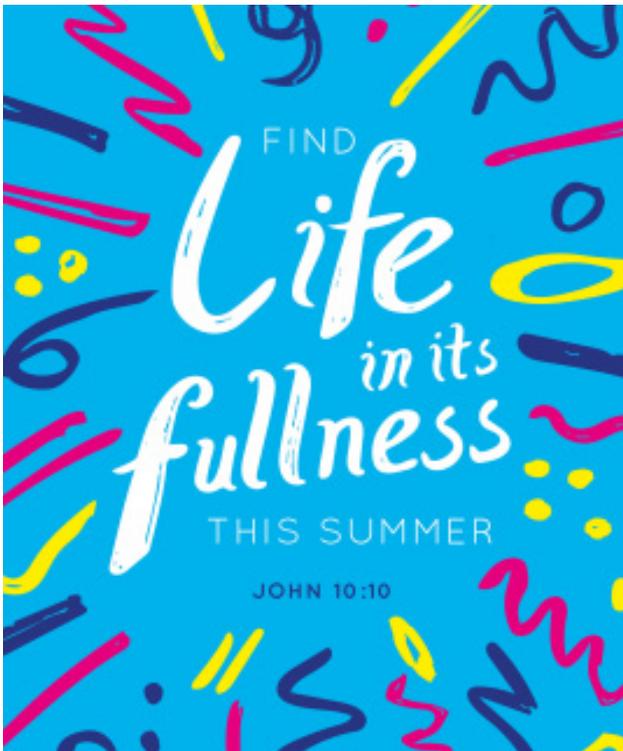
ST JAMES' CHURCH
Brownhills



Following Jesus

THE MUSTARD SEED

www.stjameschurchbrownhills.co.uk



July 2021 **50P**

*Our mission is to worship God
and to serve the community by sharing the love of Jesus*

Upstairs Downstairs

Cleaning Services

Proprietor: Helen Downes

Household Cleaning of the Highest Standard

Daytime: 07855 253562 – Evening: 01543 452501



Grace, Truth & Life Groups

There are now five GTL Groups which are now meeting on a regular basis. It would be good to think we could increase the number meeting, so if you would like to be involved, please speak to Revd Gayle in the first instance.

Telephone Prayer

If you would like any prayer ministry via the telephone, please contact Gayle on 07545 657 636, or Liz Corbett on 01543 370162.

Magazine Articles

If, in your reading, you find an article that you think bears repeating in the parish magazine, please let us know and we will try our best to include it in a future issue.

Do more, learn more and be more.

Girls & boys aged 6 to 18.

Based at Group HQ, Barnetts Lane, WS8 6HZ

For info: www.brownhills-scouts.org.uk

Call: Sue 01543 276953 or Mary 01543 453293



What is Prayer-Walking All About?



Reflecting on the Church of England traditions, there has, in years gone by, been an annual tradition of 'Beating the Bounds' or 'perambulations' that has been carried out for many centuries in our parishes in England, Scotland and Wales. In Scotland, the tradition was known as 'Riding the Marshes'; a method of reaffirming the parish boundaries from way before the introduction of maps.

In some parishes, this annual ritual is still very much part of village or town life. It is believed that this practice was first introduced in Vienne, France, around AD 470 by the Holy bishop Mamertus. There were many reasons for the ceremony but the parishioners believed that it would 'avert great calamities'. It would affirm their devotion to God; ask him for forgiveness from sins and for protection from evil and to bless the congregation and the fruits of their labour.

With this history of prayer walking in mind, I want to encourage us to understand our prayer walks over the summer period as opportunities to become immersed in what Brownhills and Clayhanger are like. Also, let's see our prayer walks as an opportunity to have contrite hearts and pray for the Lord's mighty protection to be present within the local areas.

Additionally, as we prayer walk, I'd encourage us all to see it as such a natural thing to do to take our intercession out of our church services and small groups, and into our local areas. Through taking prayer out with us, may we all gain deep joy whilst we discover for ourselves how this process will help us to engage with God's heart towards people here in Brownhills and Clayhanger.

Our main aim it to be present in the different areas on the Thursday evenings we go out, asking the Holy Spirit to reveal to us what He is saying. Inspired by the Spirit, we can praise Jesus too, on the roads

that we walk. Praising Jesus for who He is and worshipping Him because He is worthy helps us become more open to sensing and responding to what He may be saying to us.

Being on the roads and avenues, we'll find ourselves connecting more with the communities where we live because we'll be out of our own regular environments and so have a more tangible and hands-on experience in which to pray more effectively for others.

In Psalms 48:12-14 we read: "Go, inspect the city of Jerusalem. Walk around and count the many towers. Take notes of the fortified walls, and tour all the citadels, that you may describe them to future generations. For that is what God is like, He is our God forever and ever and He will guide us until we die." Those few verses illustrate for us the principle of going out into our communities and methodically observing and discerning what is in the environment for us to respond to.

In the book of Nehemiah, we read another example of this: We read that Nehemiah heard of the state of the walls in Jerusalem, and responded with fasting and praying: "So it was, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned for many days; I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven." (Nehemiah 1:4).

Nehemiah's burden caused Him to take action, and He went to Jerusalem to inspect the broken walls and burned gates during the night (Nehemiah 2:11-18). He then got the people to come together in united purpose and action, and to repair the breaches in the wall.

That wonderful example shows us what can happen when we embrace the burden that God would give to us for our local communities of Brownhills and Clayhanger. Prayer walks give us a heart commitment to our communities, and stir up prayers that are guided by Spirit-led compassion and love.

For the glory of God, that His amazing love, joy and peace will become increasingly known in the places where He has put us, may we each come together in action, faithfulness and unity. In all of this, may our ultimate prayer be for our Perfect Heavenly Father's Kingdom to come on earth as it is in heaven.

With love, prayers and many blessings, Gayle



Can comedy point the way to faith?

Truth can come from a range of places. In Shakespeare, it's the fool who often has the insight that the main characters lack. In the Old Testament, it's the prophets that proclaim the truth from God's perspective.

Maybe today, we should be listening more to the comedians – to the people who stand back from our day-to-day happenings and see the world from different angles. They can make us laugh, but they can also teach us truths about ourselves that can be distinctly uncomfortable.

Take the new book by comedian, and Catholic, Frank Skinner. It's called 'A Comedian's Prayer Book' (Hodder & Stoughton) and runs to just over a hundred pages. Yet in that thin volume, Skinner who is very open about his devout Christian faith poses serious questions for both believers and atheists.

It's far from being a comfortable read, though it never ceases to be amusing and thoughtful.

Setting the scene for the book, Skinner, an award-winning comedian, television and radio host, explains: "Imagine someone on a pilgrimage, stopping at churches, martyr-related tourist spots and sacred wells, while dressed in a medieval jester outfit.

"The intention is serious and completely devout, but the pilgrim just feels more at home in the motley than in sackcloth and ashes. He feels jest is an integral part of who he is, and it seems wrong to deny that part."

Skinner sees his role as a comic as integral to this faith, although some 'fellow pilgrims' may be uncomfortable with someone who seems to see humour all around him and can easily make others laugh.

Yet Frank Skinner raises deep issues in the chapters of this slim volume, including questions that will connect with people both within the Christian faith, and those standing outside.

He describes his prayer life as "a telepathic dip into a long, ongoing conversation with thousands of tabs left open and no helpful 'new readers start here' summaries or simplifications for the neutral observer."

Skinner's 'prayer book' is on my bookshelf alongside '10 Second Sermons,' (Darton, Longman & Todd) written by fellow comedian Milton Jones in

Continued on next page

2011. Again, the comedian's quirky view on life brings fresh insights and challenges.

Jones, a master of one-line jokes, describes gossip as "bullying people who are not there," lust as "rehearsing for a play in which you shouldn't have a part" and salvation as "like being returned to the factory settings – but you have to admit there is a factory, and that there could be some settings."

One of my favourites is Jones's description of the Holy Spirit as "a real person you can invite in. But watch out in time He will go over, pull the fridge from the wall and say 'What's all this mess under here?' But at least He helps clear up."

Both Milton Jones and Frank Skinner are comedians of faith – comedic commentators with a gift of making us see the world with fresh insight. And, as importantly, making us laugh.

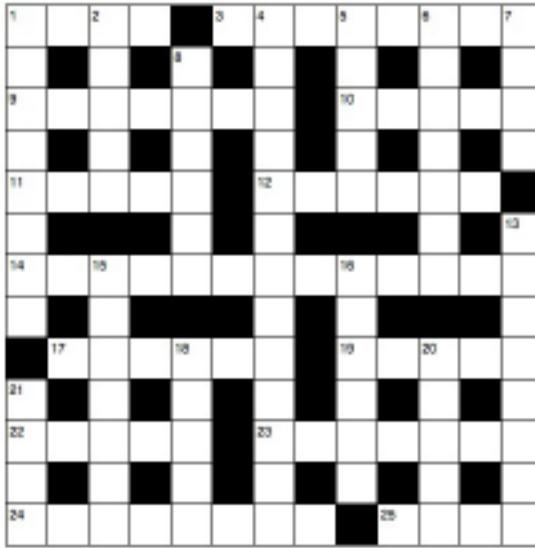
Honesty is our best policy

Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbour, for we are all members of one body. (Ephesians 4:25)

The church service has just finished, and you are about to go home to read the latest edition of the parish magazine. You parked a bit carelessly because you were in a hurry and as you drive off you feel a slight bump. You stop and see a small scratch on the car parked next to you. It is the vicar's pride and joy! What do you do? Do you drive off and hope no-one saw. Then, when you get home you have a look round your car and see a bump on the other side where someone hit you.

As Christians we are told to be honest and admit our mistakes. When it happens to us, we feel outraged that someone could damage our property and not own up to it. When we do it to others, the right thing would be to leave a note and take care when parking next time. Honesty is the best policy. We should do to others as we expect others to do to us. If you hit another car, you can feel it and often hear an ominous noise. Sometimes it is difficult to know if you have caused any damage.

People do not, of course, always act honestly. Admitting mistakes is not common in our world. A small scratch or bump can be costly to repair and who wants to lose their no claim's bonus? Sometimes it is costly to admit a mistake, but as Christians we should be as open and honest as we expect others to be. We should stand out as different to other people and have a good conscience.



ACROSS

- 1 Sent out three times on a reconnaissance mission from Noah's ark (Genesis 8:12) (4)
- 3 'The vilest – who truly believes, that moment from Jesus a pardon receives' (8)
- 9 Described by the 19th-century MP Sir Wilfred Lawson as 'the Devil in solution' (7)
- 10 'Whoever – his life for my sake will find it' (Matthew 10:39) (5)
- 11 King of Gezer (Joshua 10:33) (5)
- 12 Gideon's home town (Judges 6:11) (6)
- 14 The area under the jurisdiction of a primate, for example, Canterbury, York (13)
- 17 To him God promised that David would be king (1 Chronicles 11:3) (6)
- 19 A descendant of Aaron who was not allowed to offer food to God (Leviticus 21:20) (5)
- 22 'If any of you – wisdom, he should ask God' (James 1:5) (5)
- 23 I gain me (anag.) (7)
- 24 Relating to the armed forces (1 Chronicles 5:18) (8)
- 25 Title given to 2 Down (abbrev.) (4)

DOWN

- 1 Greek coins (Acts 19:19) (8)
- 2 Church of England incumbent (5)
- 4 What Epaphroditus was to Paul (Philippians 2:25) (6-7)
- 5 Mother of David's sixth son (2 Samuel 3:5) (5)
- 6 'We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in – ' (2 Corinthians 4:8) (7)
- 7 It destroys treasures on earth (Matthew 6:19) (4)
- 8 It threatened Paul in Jerusalem (Acts 21:35) (3,3)
- 13 Well-known Reference Bible that espoused dispensationalism (8)
- 15 Where the choir sits in a parish church (7)
- 16 Real do (anag.) (6)
- 18 'Martha, Martha... you are worried and – about many things' (Luke 10:41) (5)
- 20 'One man considers one day more sacred than another; another man considers every day – ' (Romans 14:5) (5)
- 21 A place with twelve springs and 70 palm trees where the Israelites camped (Exodus 15:27) (4)

Historically, the Church of England has had its share of eccentric clergy. Even nowadays, hiding away in remote parishes, there are still some colourful clergy about. Clergy such as the elderly, Anglo-Catholic Uncle Eustace, who is incumbent in the small parish of St James-the-Least-of-All, somewhere in Very Rural England. Eustace despairs of his nephew, Darren, who has become an Evangelical curate in a busy urban parish... and so he writes letters, to try and properly 'educate' Darren in parish life.

On why the clergy should avoid computers

The Rectory
St. James the Least

My dear Nephew Darren

Thank you for the kind offer of your old computer, but I do not want it. I know you find it a fundamental basic of daily life, but I do not, and I intend to keep things that way.

This is despite the fact that our diocesan office now takes it for granted that all of us clergy have a computer. Indeed, the diocesan secretary and I have had several awkward phone calls upon this very subject. He can't believe that I really don't have one, and suspects that I am simply hiding my email address from him so that he cannot send me the daily diocesan briefings, weekly questionnaires, and constant notification of all sorts of meetings and training days. But I remain firm: I have survived in ministry for nearly 50 years without a computer, and I don't intend to change now. When he gets tetchy with me, I take the high moral ground and remind him that St Paul did not have a computer.

Besides, it would not end with just a computer. Next, I would be obliged to get a printer and then ink cartridges and then maybe some sort of virus would attack me. As I have no idea about any of this, I might have to allow someone into the vicarage to sort it out, and even worse, I might even have to pay them. My money can be far more usefully spent on good claret.

Being without a computer also saves me much aggravation. From what I can gather, most computer owners spend significant parts of their lives either trying to get their machine to do something that it refuses to do, or else getting help from someone in a remote part of the world who speaks a jargon only distantly related to English, who assures you that whatever you did, it would have been better if you hadn't.

So I have decided that should I ever REALLY need to use a computer for something, I will visit our local primary school and get a six year-old to do the job for me, which they do with effortless efficiency, speed and accuracy.

Your loving uncle,

Eustace

Always remember . . .

There are no strangers in our church –
just friends you haven't met

Readings for July

The readings are the ones we will use in church and online.

4th July 2021 – Morning Service -
2 Corinthians 12 v 9–10

4th July 2021 – Evening Service -
2 Corinthians 12 v 2–10 & Mark 6 v 1–13

11th July 2021 – Morning Service -
Psalm 66 & Luke 10 v 25–37

11th July 2021 – Evening Service -
2 Samuel 6 v 1–5, 12b–19 & Ephesians 1 v 3–14

18th July 2021 – Morning Service -
Jeremiah 23 v 1–6 & Mark 6 v 30–34, 53–end

18th July 2021 – Evening Service -
Job 19 v 23–27 & John 14 v 1–14

25th July 2021 – Morning Service -
Isaiah 58 v 6–11 & Matthew 25 v 31–end

25th July 2021 – Evening Service -
Ephesians 3 v 14–end & Luke 11 v 1–13

*Make the least ado about your greatest gifts. Be content to act
and leave the talking to others. - Baltasar Gracian*

ACROSS: 1, Dove, 3, Offender, 9, Alcohol, 10, Loses, 11, Horam, 12, Oprah, 14, Archbishopric,
17, Samuel, 19, Dwarf, 22, Lacks, 23, Imagine, 24, Military, 25, Revd.

DOWN: 1, Drachmas, 2, Vicar, 4, Fellow-soldier, 5, Eglah, 6, Despair, 7, Rust, 8, The mob, 13,
Scottid, 15, Chancel, 16, Ordeal, 18, Upset, 20, Althe, 21, Elin.

What's your next step?

Does this month spell the end of school, college, or even a job, for you? Then congratulations are in order: you have completed a significant step!

Now it's time to decide your next step. The dictionary defines 'step' as a physical movement that advances you in a desired direction. You 'step' forward in order to get somewhere specific. Each 'step', however small, will make a difference to your life.

The Bible reflects this. It is filled with the metaphors of stepping, walking, running and goals, pilgrimages, journeys, all to describe the years of our lives.

So, choosing your next step in life this year is important. The good news is that you need not do it on your own. In God, you have a divine 'life coach'. He knows you perfectly and He has a plan for your life. Most of all, His plan is to have a close personal relationship with you.

We've all seen toddlers staggering towards danger, ignoring their parents' cries of warning. We've all seen adults making a mess of their lives. They are ignoring their personal divine Shepherd, Guide, Teacher and Helper.

A baby learns to walk safely by listening to its parents. We learn what God's will is for us through daily reading of His word, in the Bible, and in obeying what we read.

For when God guides us, He does not hand down a divine map of our lives for us to follow on our own. His guidance is more like that of a torch a little advance light, day by day, for our immediate daily path.

Remember, the Lord wants you to succeed in the earthly goals that He has for you! So, trust Him to be your guide and helper as you step into your future.

I can take my telescope and look millions of miles into space; but I can go away to my room and in prayer get nearer to God and heaven than I can when assisted by all the telescopes of earth. - Isaac Newton

Prayers & Poems

The Difference

So often
I can't wear the right clothes,
Speak the right words,
Fit the right mould,
Be the shape people want me to be,
Expect me to be,
Demand that I am,
To conform.

But you Lord
Accept me,
Release me,
Make it possible to be me,
Perfectly free
In Your service,
Open for You
To transform.

By Daphne Kitching

When we feel shaken

(Lk 10:42)

Faithful Father,

When we feel shaken by the events of the past; when we don't know quite how to go forward; when our confidence in what we thought we could control is undermined; remind us that one thing is needed to sit at your feet and listen to You.

You are our security. You will never fail those who belong to You through faith in Your Son, Jesus.

As we take time to listen to You, Lord, and to meditate on Your Holy Spirit-inspired Word, may we know Your peace and Your good plans for us. In Jesus' name, Amen.

By Daphne Kitching

Fortnightly July-September 2021

PARISH PRAYER WALKS

Thursdays during the Summer 7.15 - 8.45 pm

Each of the following dates we will meet in the entrance area of church, be briefed about where we'll park in the vicinity of the area being focussed on that evening, and open the evening with a short prayer before reaching each location...

1. 1st July
2. 15th July
3. 29th July
4. 19th August
5. 2nd September
6. 16th September



SO I SAY TO YOU, ASK, AND IT
WILL BE GIVEN TO YOU; SEEK,
AND YOU WILL FIND; KNOCK,
AND IT WILL BE OPENED TO YOU.

Slim down

Two out of three adults in the UK are now overweight. That means that the Government has made tackling obesity as the 'priority' for recovering from the pandemic. (80 per cent of our health problems are caused by unhealthy lifestyles.)

Boris Johnson recently announced an Office for Health Promotion (OHP) to boost our activity and to slim our waistlines. Experts say that the Covid-19 death toll has been fuelled by the obesity epidemic.

Why not use the Prayer Walks mentioned above to help lose weight and increase your physical wellbeing?

The spaces between

Most of us have been in situations where we are not in control, and we don't know how to feel or how to react to our situation. We need help.

The most valuable gift you can have at those times – is time itself. Time to be 'listened to'. Really listened to. But it is not easy to find someone who will 'actively listen' to you.

Think of the last time you were in the reverse position with a friend or a colleague, and they were talking to you. How easily do you recall what they actually said? Most of us are so busy getting our replies ready for when the person has finished speaking, that we don't clearly hear their punch line.

With God it is different. We can take everything to Him; all our worries and cares and failures and faults. And He listens.

He doesn't necessarily jump in with an instant, easy solution, but rather He promises to always guide us, if we ask Him, through life's challenges, and He promises to never leave us. He often speaks to us through his written word, the Bible.

This last year, when many of us have been communicating with others by phone or Zoom, we get nervous if it all goes quiet. We feel the need to 'nudge' the other person, to make sure they are still there. Silence is not a natural state for many of us and yet it is in the quiet we can hear ourselves and God most clearly.

So, when we talk with God, our conversation should not be rushed and one-sided. We need to give space to our silence before Him, to wait and listen for Him to speak to us.

This month:

Next time you worship in church, listen to the silences: the spaces between the words, the music and the actions. Listen to all the prayers that are spoken.

Look at your surroundings and reflect that they have absorbed thousands of prayers and holy silence down the centuries of their existence.

Look out the window and see the vastness of the sky above you – and let your prayers join with those that have gone before you. May the knowledge that you are not alone encourage and strengthen you.

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THE PARISH OF BROWNHILLS WITH OGLE HAY

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by sharing the love of Jesus

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