FREE – Please take one

October & November 2026

The Messenger

Newsletter of Brightlingsea United Church
(Methodist and United Reformed Church)
Chapel Road
Sunday Service @ 10.30am



Reverend Luke Smith
Tel: 07376248147
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Minister's Letter

At the end of this month, some people celebrate Halloween. I have to be honest and let you know it's not really for me. It seems to be based on being scary and celebrate darkness. Some readers may see me as a bit of a kill joy with this, but please hear me out. For me I don't want to be involved in scaring people or celebrating darkness. I want people to feel comfortable and happy. I do know that some folk see being frightened (like on a fair ground ride) as fun, but not me. I also like things to be out in the open, to celebrate light.

Having said that if others want to do it, I'm not going to stop you (not that I can). There is often so much pressure to go along with a majority (it feels like a majority celebrate Halloween). We are individuals and we have choice and we have our own thoughts on so many issues. Our modern culture seems to celebrate diversity, some celebrate Halloween, others don't, that, for me, is part of diversity.

Luke

Rev'd. Luke Smith
Tendring Methodist Circuit

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The Gospel according to JOHN chapter 1 verses 1- 5 (The Message)
The Word was first, the Word present to God, God present to the Word.
The Word was God, in readiness for God from day one.
Everything was created through Him;
Nothing-not one thing!
came into being without Him.
What came into existence was Life,
and the Life was Light to live by.
The Life-Light blazed out of the darkness;
the darkness couldn't put it out".

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Using as a prayer, lyrics by Graham Kendrick:

"Lord, the Light of Your Love is shining
In the midst of the darkness, shining.
Jesus, Light of the world
Shine upon us.
Set us free by the Truth You now bring us"
Send forth Your Word, Lord
And let there be Light.
On a day when darkness is celebrated, we pray for Your Light. The Light from which nothing nor anyone can hide.
Shine across our world, across our nation.
Shine across Brightlingsea and Tendring.
In Jesus' Name. AMEN

BB/BUC/2026

NOTICES

Our Morning Worship is always held at 10.30am, unless otherwise stated
Steward contacts: Rosina and Barbara
Property Steward: Tony

Baptisms: Weddings: Funerals
contact Revd Luke Smith 07376248147 or email: luke.smith@methodist.org.uk

CHURCH SERVICES
OCTOBER
4th Margaret Smith
11th Barbara Huntley (H.C.)
18th Luke Smith. (HARVEST)
25th Nigel Lindsay
NOVEMBER
1st John and Jane Allison
8th Maddy Whittle (REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY)
15th Luke Smith
22nd Martin Camroux (H.C.)
29th Luke Smith MEMORIAL SERVICE

Harvest Sunday Service
OCTOBER 18th. Led by Revd. Luke
Followed by a simple lunch of soup, bread, and cheese.
Your Gifts of tinned, dried, non-perishable goods will be given to the Brightlingsea Food Bank.

"Winter Bazaar, Saturday, 21st NOVEMBER
9.30am to 2 pm.
Usual stalls. Plenty of bargains.
Cakes: Clothes: Cards: Ornaments: Refreshments.
Look out for posters nearer the time.
You are assured of a happy welcome.
Have a much-deserved sit down and chat with old and new friends!"

Simple Lunches: Every first Friday, **12.30pm - 1.30pm**, in St James'. Homemade soups, roll, butter and cheese, and tea or coffee, open to all, and are very convivial occasions. Donation for Christian Aid, £4.

Friendship Club: Every 2nd and 4th Thursday **10.30am to 12.30pm,** United Church Hall, £2.50 per session

Open House: Janet Russell holds her informal mornings for coffee and chat in her home between **10.30am -12.00**pm every 2nd Monday - all are warmly invited

Christians Together Lunches: Every 3rd Tuesday in the Victoria Café, from **12.15pm** onwards.

Weekly Wednesday Prayers: House group. You are welcome to join us or request a prayer. Contact 01206 305472

Items and information for inclusion in the Messenger are warmly welcomed.
Please send them to Carole Goodwin caroledgoodwin@hotmail.com and Babs shalom41@hotmail.co.uk

CHURCH NEWS

FAREWELL TO MAJOR DOREEN JAMES



A Thanksgiving Service was held in our Church on 30th September for the life of Doreen, an officer in the Salvation Army, and a very loved and missed affiliate member of our Church family. A buffet lunch followed.

Doreen died suddenly at Luff House, a Christian Care Home in Walton, aged 91 years.

Missed greatly by her sister, Jean, her close friend Beryl, and also by Jenty, all of whom are Salvation Army officers.

I've chosen verses from two of the hymns we sang at Doreen's Thanksgiving (Doreen requested five hymns of celebration) that remind me most of Doreen and her own faith journey:

1: IN CHRIST ALONE - written by Stuart Townend and Paul Getty (2001) copyright. Thankyou Music.

Verse 1: "In Christ alone, my hope is found
He is my light, my strength, my song.
This Cornerstone, this solid ground
Firm through the fiercest drought and storm.
What heights of love, what depths of peace
When fears are stilled, when striving cease.
My Comforter, my All in All
Here in the love of Christ I stand".

2: HOW WONDERFUL IT IS TO WALK WITH GOD - Theodore Hopkins Kitching.

Last verse: "How wonderful 'twill be to live with God
When I have crossed death's deep and swelling flood;
How wonderful to see Him face to face
When I have fought the fight and won the race!"

BB/BUC 2026

A BEAUTIFUL AND JOYOUS OCCASION



A wonderful celebration occurred on Monday 24 August when Jill, one of our church members, married David. Here they are signing the register.

A beautiful and very joyful occasion, officiated by our minister, Revd. Luke Smith.
God bless you both.

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MACMILLAN CANCER SUPPORT - A Macmillan Coffee Morning, (organised by Joyce and her family) was held in our Church on Saturday, 26 September.

It was a busy, happy and successful morning raising £400 for the Charity. Well done to all involved.

Thank you, to all the Brightlingsea folk who supported this event. It was lovely to meet with you and to remember past times.



Gratitude for Friends

Thanks for friends who keep on loving,
finding ways to help us grow,
celebrating our achievements,
sharing in our pain and woe.
God is glimpsed where love is faithful:
mirrored here in time and space.
Thanks to God for friends who love us:
Christ revealed in every face.

Other people help to shape us
when they take the time to share
words of wisdom, honest actions
through our journey in God's care.
In our faithful, honest learning
we discover things unknown.
Thanks to God for friends who teach us:
seeking talent yet ungrown.

When we find our friendships challenged
through mistakes and different views,
we discover deeper living
as the love of God renews.
For in Christ we see forgiveness;
know a strength still to embrace.
Thanks to God for friends who keep us:
making real the gift of grace.

Praise to God for this great gifting
of relationship and friend:
imaging divine relating;
found in heaven with no end.
Bless us Maker, Word and Spirit
as companions on the way.
Thanks to God for friends who help us
to fulfil our lives each day.

Gary Hopkins (b. 1984)

From 'Singing the Faith' No 619

BRIGHTLINGSEA MUSEUM

Installed a hundred years ago – but where did the centre piece go?

The Advancement Association was a very active organisation in 1926 in Brightlingsea with the aim to improve the appearance and facilities for the town and its residents, recruiting members who could 'sacrifice their money and time' to achieve their aims and objectives. The Deputy, Mr Horace Fisher was president and presided over a fund-raising event at the Royal Hotel.



The major project at this time was to improve Lower Gardens to include the installation of an ornamental pond and fountain. The expenses for the fountain was met by Mrs A.C. Adams,(wife of the owner of the yacht *Tamesis*) and all other costs were paid by the Association, so that there was no call upon the rates collected by the Urban District Council.

The pond is of course still in place, but what happened to the fountain? It was probably removed in the early days of World War II – but where to? Any suggestions?

Special event: Saturday 10th October from 10.30 to 4.30pm

A day to show case special objects the Museum has had cleaned and restored. An opportunity to acknowledge the experts who have ensured these items will be available for decades to come and to thank organisations which helped with the costs (nearly £8000). The first public display of the restored Isometric drawing of the Waterside in 1892 together with the album of watercolours painted between 1862 to 1875 of Thorrington and Frating.

Not forgetting Mr Chaplin's barber's chair although without the plank which went across the arms for younger customers to sit on while they had a short, back and sides or was it a crew cut?

Museum opening hours: Saturday 10.30am to 4.30pm and Sundays 1.30 – 4.30pm
October School Half-term holiday: Wednesday, Thursday and Friday 1.30 – 4.30pm

Prayers

Thank you My Father

To my God it makes no difference if I'm rather old.
To him it makes no difference if I'm going bald.
To my God it makes no difference if my teeth drop out,
If my hair is grey and my looks have gone and if I'm rather stout.

For God he loves the real me,
The one that no one else can see,
For he's created me and given me his life,
Loved me into sonship, made me his delight.

To him it makes no difference if I can't quite see,
To him it makes no difference if I can't think properly,
If my memories not sound and my glasses can't be found
And my purse is always empty when the rent man comes around.

When people turn away from me because I'm not their sort,
When people have forgotten me and don't give me a thought.
I wish that they would look and see the me my Father made
And delight with me in my Father's love and know that they are saved.

I give you thanks, my Father, that you're always here with me,
Training me and using me and pleased with what you see,
I give you thanks , my Father, that my purpose is not done,
You've more for me to do or learn or else you'd call me home.

written by Rev'd. Graham Edwards

HEAVENLY father,
We gather today with grateful hearts.
Thank you for bringing us safely into Your presence.
As we begin worship, quiet our hearts and focus our minds on You.
Fill this place with Your Peace and open our hearts to receive Your truths and Your love.
May our worship honour and glorify Your Holy Name. In the Name of Jesus. AMEN.

CREATOR God,
You made humankind. Each person reveals a glimpse of You in the world.
Strengthen us to break down every barrier so that all members of Your earthly family feel fully welcomed, valued and included.
May we grow together as one body with many parts, serving You with all our diverse gifts.
Help us to build a Church where everyone is welcomed, accepted and able to play their special part. In Jesus Name, we pray. AMEN

Through the Roof Charity

Road Trip to Epworth

The Revd Jenny Pathmarajah visited Epworth Old Rectory in North Lincolnshire, the childhood home of John and Charles Wesley, along with her church members from Castle Street Methodist, Cambridge.

Blessed with good company, plenty of laughter and beautiful weather, we enjoyed a fascinating journey into the life and legacy of John and Charles Wesley.



Our day began with a private tour of the Old Rectory, where we learnt so much about the Wesley family and what daily life would have been like in the eighteenth century. The house is full of stories, none more dramatic than the famous fire in 1709, which destroyed the original rectory. We stood at an upstairs bedroom window in the current house and heard how a young John Wesley was rescued. This event shaped his understanding of God's calling on his life. John would later describe himself as "a brand plucked from the burning", believing that God had spared him for a purpose.

We also explored the fascinating Physick Garden, where medicinal plants were grown based on remedies recommended by John Wesley in his book *Primitive Physick*. Some of the suggestions seemed surprisingly sensible, while others were rather more unusual. One remedy for an upset stomach involved lying with a puppy on your tummy. Sadly, there were no puppies available for us to test the effectiveness of this particular treatment, much to everyone's disappointment!

In the afternoon we explored the village itself on a guided walking tour. We stood on the steps outside the Red Lion, where John Wesley preached regularly and where he stayed. Eventually, John Wesley was refused permission to preach inside the parish church where his father, Samuel Wesley, had served faithfully as rector for almost forty years. The new rector declared that there was nowhere in Epworth under his authority he permitted Wesley to preach. The reaction? The family owned the grave of his father so, standing on his father's grave, John declared that he was taking his father's pulpit, and from there preached to the crowds who gathered in the churchyard. It was a powerful reminder that sometimes God opens unexpected doors when others close them.

Reuben Baldwin, on trial as a Local Preacher, said, “The staff at Epworth Old Rectory have done a great deal of work to turn the building into a living museum, vividly illustrating daily life for the Wesley family. Above all, they have highlighted Susanna Wesley, her personality, her ethic, and her historic contribution to the Methodist movement, along with the turbulent lives of her children. It presents a fuller portrait of John and Charles Wesley than the somewhat heroic stories we are often told on a Sunday morning. Well worth visiting!"



Days like this also strengthen the life of our churches. Away from committee meetings and Sunday routines, we have the opportunity to talk, laugh, learn and pray together, building friendships that enrich our fellowship long after the coach has brought us home. As we continue to explore our Methodist heritage, we are reminded that we are part of a much bigger story, one that inspires us to carry the same spirit of faith, courage and service into our own communities today.

We learnt so much about our Methodist heritage, but perhaps even more importantly, we spent precious time together in fellowship, conversation and laughter. I was reminded that our shared story is not just about history but about the people we journey alongside today.

If you would like to visit The Old Rectory with your own church community, please contact **vcm@epwortholdrectory.org.uk.** Or, for a uniquely designed visit, including activities for children in your group, contact Lois Albans at **olem@epwotholdrectory.org.uk**.
www.epwortholdrectory.org.uk

News from All Saints

At the end of a wonderfully hot summer, it's been lovely to see the combined efforts of the Trustees of FOAS and the All Saints' Heritage Team which have brought enjoyment and celebration to our town, as well as raising funds for the church and the restoration of the bells.



Great credit must go to Jane Mellor who, with a very small team, master-minded the whole day. She said "The day of the All Saints Summer Fete rolled around and we were blessed with glorious sunshine, which I'm sure helped encourage the many people who came along. Our lovely Brightlingsea Carnival Princesses, assisted by Tracey Barton, officially opened the fete and then the fun and games began. Gregg Weaver's reptiles were a big hit, as were the Tower Tours, with most of the half hourly trips up to the top being fully booked.

The tea tent ladies were kept very busy serving the enormous amount of cakes that had miraculously appeared on the day; Brightlingsea folk at their best once again!

Inside the church offered a cool place to sit and listen to the sounds of Fiddlers Elbow who gave us a morning of wonderful music; in the afternoon, the performance by 'The Tiles Along the Wall Project' saw quite a crowd gather to hear the emotional story play out. What would a Fete be without Morris Men? The Colchester troupe really set the perfect picture as they went about their dancing in the midday blazing sun.
As the Fete (or Fair) hadn't been run for years, lots of things were picked up in the process which could improve the day, but all in all it was a lovely event with just shy of £2000 raised after deductions. The hard work and help from many people made this possible, as did our sponsors, Town Mayor, Ric Morgan and Colin Gould of Britau Scaffold Ltd – many thanks to you all and to those who came, ate cake and enjoyed what was on offer, much appreciation to you too for the fantastic support." ***If you can help plan next year's fete, please get in touch.***

In September, we had our first textile weekend with displays, workshops and plenty to talk about, as well as raising nearly £400. Sue Wills took the lead and said "We exhibited a wide range of textile techniques including embroidery by Essex Handicrafts Association (Brightlingsea Branch), crochet by Banksea and Nicola Stephens, macramé wall hangings by Jon Wills and Seascapes by Becky Jackson. Workshops included spinning, ribbon collages, knitting and crochet for beginners. In addition, a range of hand-embroidered church vestments and kneelers were exhibited in the chancel and Lady chapel. By chance a set of patterns was found for the Saint's kneelers made for the choir stalls and displayed alongside their completed kneelers.

Coming up –
STOP PRESS: Re-installation of bells slightly delayed – WATCH THIS SPACE
October 24th & 25th *10-4pm Art exhibition 'Autumn Colours' – please deliver your art work on Wednesday & Thursday*
October 26th *Family Fun Activity morning*
December 12th & 13th *Christmas Tree Festival*

FATHER'S LOVE LETTER

An intimate message from God to you.

My Child,

You may not know me, but I know everything about you. Psalm 139:1 *I know when you sit down and when you rise up.* Psalm 139:2 *I am familiar with all your ways.* Psalm 139:3 *Even the very hairs on your head are numbered.* Matthew 10:29-31 *For you were made in my image.* Genesis 1:27 *In me you live and move and have your being.* Acts 17:28 *For you are my offspring.* Acts 17:28 *I knew you even before you were conceived.* Jeremiah 1:4-5 *I chose you when I planned creation.* Ephesians 1:11-12 *You were not a mistake, for all your days are written in my book.* Psalm 139:15-16 *I determined the exact time of your birth and where you would live.* Acts 17:26 *You are fearfully and wonderfully made.* Psalm 139:14 *I knit you together in your mother's womb.* Psalm 139:13 *And brought you forth on the day you were born.* Psalm 71:6 *I have been misrepresented by those who don't know me.* John 8:41-44 *I am not distant and angry, but am the complete expression of love.* 1 John 4:16 *And it is my desire to lavish my love on you.* 1 John 3:1 *Simply because you are my child and I am your Father.* 1 John 3:1 *I offer you more than your earthly father ever could.* Matthew 7:11 *For I am the perfect father.* Matthew 5:48 *Every good gift that you receive comes from my hand.* James 1:17 *For I am your provider and I meet all your needs.* Matthew 6:31-33 *My plan for your future has always been filled with hope.* Jeremiah 29:11 *Because I love you with an everlasting love.* Jeremiah 31:3 *My thoughts toward you are countless as the sand on the seashore.* Psalm 139:17-18 *And I rejoice over you with singing.* Zephaniah 3:17 *I will never stop doing good to you.* Jeremiah 32:40 *For you are my treasured possession.* Exodus 19:5 *I desire to establish you with all my heart and all my soul.* Jeremiah 32:41 *And I want to show you great and marvelous things.* Jeremiah 33:3 *If you seek me with all your heart,you will find me.* Deuteronomy 4:29 *Delight in me and I will give you the desires of your heart.* Psalm 37:4 *For it is I who gave you those desires.* Philippians 2:13 *I am able to do more for you than you could possibly imagine.* Ephesians 3:20 *For I am your greatest encourager.* 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17 *I am also the Father who comforts you in all your troubles.* 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 *When you are brokenhearted, I am close to you.* Psalm 34:18 *As a shepherd carries a lamb, I have carried you close to my heart.* Isaiah 40:11 *One day I will wipe away every tear from your eyes.* Revelation 21:3-4 *And I'll take away all the pain you have suffered on this earth.* Revelation 21:3-4 *I am your Father, and I love you even as I love my son, Jesus.* John 17:23 *For in Jesus, my love for you is revealed.* John 17:26 *He is the exact representation of my being.* Hebrews 1:3 *He came to demonstrate that I am for you, not against you.* Romans 8:31 *And to tell you that I am not counting your sins.* 2 Corinthians 5:18-19 *Jesus died so that you and I could be reconciled.* 2 Corinthians 5:18-19 *His death was the ultimate expression of my love for you.* 1 John 4:10 *I gave up everything I loved that I might gain your love.* Romans 8:31-32 *If you receive the gift of my son Jesus, you receive me.* 1 John 2:23 *And nothing will ever separate you from my love again.* Romans 8:38-39 *Come home and I'll throw the biggest party heaven has ever seen.* Luke 15:7 *I have always been Father, and will always be Father.* Ephesians 3:14-15

My question is... Will you be my child? John 1:12-13

I am waiting for you. Luke 15:11-32

Love, Your Dad
Almighty God



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Mighty Mysteries

I have never been instructed

So I cannot understand

How electric power's conducted,

But if I stretch out my hand

Touch a switch, at once the power

Brings light or heat I need,

Day or night at any hour,

This is mystery indeed.

But I know that insulation

Which the experts all require

Prevents any dissipation

Of the current in the wire.

And I know the power's arrested

If something gets in the way,

Or its found, when it is tested,

That some part has "had it's day".

But a far more wondrous story

In the Bible I recall

"Christ in you, the hope of glory"

Mightiest mystery of all.

Never could I understand it

But by faith I prove its true.

Put your trust in Jesus and it

Will be just the same for you.

But to have this wondrous blessing

Ida Hampson

God of Wind and Fire

God of wind and fire,
Breath moving over chaos,
Voice that still echoes through locked doors and fearful hearts,
You keep calling your people forward to a costly discipleship
when fear tells us to remain still.
You awaken your Church through prophets, poets, reformers,
and ordinary disciples who dare to strike the walls of silence
with truth, compassion, and hope.
Today we gather from many places, many languages,
many struggles and memories, yet held together by your grace.

As the hammer once echoed upon the wooden door,
may your Spirit echo among us now.
Strike against our indifference.
Strike against the fear that keeps us quiet.
Strike against every wall that divides your people,
wounds creation,
protects injustice,
or silences the vulnerable.

Reform us again, O God.
Reform our worship when it becomes performance instead of prayer,
or mere repetition without soul.
Reform our churches when comfort matters more than courage.
Reform our theology when it forgets the poor, the excluded, and the wounded.
Reform our lives until grace becomes flesh among us.
When we are perplexed, teach us not to surrender to despair.
When hope feels fragile, teach us again the stubborn hope of the Gospel.
Move us beyond nostalgia into courageous and costly discipleship.

Move us beyond institutional survival into communities where justice can breathe and communion can flourish.
And today, as we prepare to name what still needs reform in our churches, our nations, and our world, give us humble hearts, prophetic imagination, and the perseverance to pursue truth with compassion, to seek not only justice but reparation, and to keep knocking on the doors of history.
May this worship become living witness: bread shared, truth spoken, dignity defended, creation cherished, and love embodied.

In the name of the Creator, the Living Christ, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The Rev'd Andy Braunston
Minister for Digital Worship

Brightlingsea Library
Free Regular Events

Day	Activity	Time	Suitable for…
Wednesday	**Baby and Toddler Rhymetime** (with Stay and Play after second session) A fun, friendly, interactive session with songs, rhymes and stories	Weekly – 9.30-10.00am and10.30-11am	All pre-schoolchildren and their parents, grandparents, carers or childminders
Thursday	**Healthy Family Drop-in** Baby weighing, support and advice	Weekly – 9.30am-11am	Families with young babies
Friday	**Friday Singalong** Fun, informal singalong. No singing experience necessary. Followed by tea and coffee.	First Friday of the month 2.30-3.15pm	All adults
Friday	**I.T Support** Bring along any device and our volunteer will help you with I.T related issues	Weekly 5-6pm	Everyone
Saturday	**Minecraft club** Join in with other children to create a Minecraft world	Monthly – 1st Saturday of every month, 2-4pm	All children aged 5+ (children under 8 must be accompanied by an adult)
Saturday	**Coffee and Crafternoon** Come and try a new craft and meet like-minded people, all craft materials provided	Monthly – 2nd Saturday of every month, 2.30-3.30pm	Adults and young adults aged 13 years+

FREE ADULT CRAFTERNOON
Second Saturday of every month, 2.30-3.30pm

Have fun being creative in a relaxed social environment.
Different theme and craft each month.
Connect with others and make new friends.
All craft materials provided.
No need to book, just come along.
Tea and coffee provided.

Suitable for everyone aged 13+ years.

Services Available at Brightlingsea Library:
Printing, Photocopying, Computers & WiFi
Food Waste Caddy Sacks - £1.80 per roll
Battery and small electrical recycling

For more information visit: https://libraries.essex.gov.uk/events
Email– brightling.library@essex.gov.uk

Library opening hours: Tuesday 2-5.30pm, Wednesday 9-1pm, Friday 2-7pm, Saturday 9-5pm

GOD IS ALWAYS THERE

Thomas the cat

It seems that even cats experience major life events! Thomas had had several and his latest trauma involved Thomas two.

Thomas two was something of a replica of Thomas except that his moustache was different. He too was friendly and extremely vocal. One day he usurped Thomas's place completely by greeting his owner's cousin on the drive, rubbing round and talking so that even he momentarily thought it was Thomas; he actually was not as well-groomed or as beautiful.

Thomas two appeared on the scene having done the rounds further down the road. Thomas's owner hoped that he was just visiting them too. He had really made his presence noticed during the recent days of heavy rain. He was sheltering under the large evergreen near the front door. Lying comfortably exactly where Thomas lay! Thomas spent hours there, rain or shine. It was a convenient safe, sheltered spot to wait when his owner was out. From there Thomas could greet her quickly and be first in through the front door.

The problem arose, though when Thomas two was lying there. Thomas stood, ears back, warning Thomas two. who did not move or make a sound. Thomas went to fetch his owner, and they peered under the shrub together. Thomas two peered back. He was not angry or vicious nor was he going to move. There were both very vocal, but there was no movement from either of them.

As Thomas was obviously in no danger of being attacked, his owner left him to sort out his own problem. A while later, she went outside to see how things had developed. It was pouring with rain and she called gently. Thomas emerged from under the car on the hard drive. Thomas two was still snugly curled up under the evergreen. The owner began to feel sorry for Thomas. This was different from the usual situation with cats. There was no danger of attack here. He was not chased or bitten. Thomas two was simply taking over Thomas's territory and Thomas looked bewildered. He kept going round the garden marking his land but Thomas two simply shouted at him and made himself comfortable. Thomas was really being too gentle about it all!

Eventually his owner decided that she had to help Thomas. Whenever she was around when Thomas went out, she went out too. They walked round the garden together looking for Thomas two. They stood together side by side and peered under bushes and if Thomas two was found she threw some soft soil towards him, just to frighten him away. Thomas watched him go and then settled down in his garden.

The owner looked down at Thomas as they searched for Thomas two. He looked so small at her feet. His little head moving around as they walked about the garden. He stayed very close almost hiding round her ankles whenever they came to a potentially dangerous location. He looked up at her from time to time, his large eyes scrutinising her face. She felt very protective. Thomas continued to stay close where he knew it was safe.

His owner watched him and she thought of us and God. She felt a sudden surge of comfort when she realised that God does exactly that for us. He is always there for us so near keeping us safe looking after us checking the way ahead. We are so small in comparison. we make our way through life and there is God at our side dependable, secure and safe.

It is quite wonderful to have the assurance of God's presence whenever we go into a totally strange and previously completely unknown situation. She thought of a friend who was starting his Jury service that day. God would be there, very close, dispelling uncertainties and giving his assurance.

There are times when we go to hospital or the doctors, particularly if tests or treatment are involved. How wonderful it is to know that God is right there, closer than breathing strengthening and assuring.

Of course we run into problems. Things do go wrong. Some experiences are unpleasant and even alarming. God is not there to wrap us in cotton wool and make sure that none of the bumps and bangs of life affect us. He cannot prevent problems arising. What he can do and does do is make sure that he is close by as we go through them. Helping and guiding us so that we come through as whole people.

The owner helped Thomas. she was there for him whenever possible, but there had to be times when he coped with Thomas two alone. It is different with God. he is there every moment of the day wherever we are. What a wonderful thought. Do we always turn to him, very moment of every day or do we sometimes try to go it alone.

****

Your God is too small

Your God is too small
You see his handiwork
Within the world, you say –
The God of the beyond
Of stellar space,
The night-sky and the stars,
The seasons and the ages:
But unless you see his face
Your God is too small.

By Bill Hughes

Provided by Robert Taylor and presented at Brightlingsea URC Service 09/08/26

Prevention of Homelessness

Below, the Revd Canon Ian Rutherford, Chair of both the Housing Memorial Group and the Connexional Economic Justice Working Group, shares his insights on what is needed to reduce homelessness.

The overriding priority for addressing homelessness is prevention. But that wasn't the case when I arrived in the city of Manchester in 2017. In my role as the Faith Sector Lead for Andy Burnham, the then-Mayor of Greater Manchester, I worked within the Greater Manchester Homelessness Action Network to develop a rough sleeping strategy focused on reduction, respite, recovery and reconnection.

The focus had been on emergency food and clothing provision – essential, but not effective at tackling the root causes of homelessness. What was missing was the upstream work: prevention, or as we termed it, reduction.

In 2018, the freezing temperatures brought by the 'Beast from the East' meant scores of people sleeping rough spent two weeks sheltering at Methodist Central Hall. Ironically, this gave the support team the time they needed to help them start turning things around.



As a result, following a conversation with the Mayor, the A Bed Every Night scheme was born, providing a bridge from respite to recovery and enabling a shift to a "names, not numbers" approach.
We found that 54% of people on the streets were under the age of 35. This led to the creation of a youth pathfinder programme, which aims to prevent homelessness from happening in the first place.

Run by the Greater Manchester Better Outcomes Partnership (GMBOP) the Pathfinder Project is for those aged 18–25 at risk of homelessness. It helps young people with wraparound interventions, including mental health support, financial guidance, LGBTQ+ services and mentoring. Each person is treated as an individual – with choice, agency and tailored support.

A Bed Every Night taught us that this scheme and others like it couldn't be run on a purely voluntary basis. It needed to be properly funded, coordinated and supported across sectors.

Then came the pandemic, which taught us another vital lesson; the programme had to evolve, moving towards single, self-contained spaces, with dignity and safety at the core.

We continue to listen to people using our services, review the data and ask ourselves what we can do better. Crucially, the programme has also been independently evaluated by Heriot-Watt University.

The faith contribution to addressing homelessness is defined by the focus on human dignity, agency and compassion. People of faith instinctively understand that the work must be done with people, not to them. There are powerful examples across the country. Barnabus in Manchester runs a drop-in centre that radiates welcome, creating a space where people feel safe enough to imagine something more.

In Wigan, The Brick stands as a model of what a faith-inspired charity can look like. Born out of a local church project, it has grown into a comprehensive homelessness charity working across all four areas of reduction, respite, recovery and reconnection. It doesn't simply respond to crisis – it prevents it, supports recovery and helps to rebuild lives.

The Mustard Tree in Manchester isn't just a food club or drop-in centre, it's a place where people come with their story and are met with a real conversation, from someone who has time to listen and tools to help. Housing officers, mental health workers, coaches and volunteers, all work side by side. Simon Community Scotland in Glasgow is another faith-inspired charity that exemplifies this collaborative approach: a space where someone can walk in needing shelter and leave with a plan, a contact, a next step.

I'd like to think that Oasis Community Housing in Gateshead, which I helped to set up in the 1980s (originally Aquila Housing) is another example of a faith-inspired charity working hard to keep people off the streets.

It provides supported accommodation for mothers and babies, same day-emergency accommodation, one-to-one services for those escaping domestic violence, and rough sleeping outreach.

Our churches are quietly playing an essential role too. At their core, they offer a place where people can simply be. In the wake of the pandemic and amid an ongoing cost-of-living crisis, many churches have opened their doors to provide warm spaces.

These aren't just about reducing energy bills; they're about the warmth of humanity. Many have evolved into something deeper: not formal shelters, not support centres, but safe, welcoming places where anyone can come without fear of judgement.

Here, important conversations often begin: someone might mention they're struggling to pay rent, or that their temporary accommodation is being withdrawn.

These early disclosures are crucial, helping us to identify risk and signpost people to professional support before a crisis takes hold.

Listening has been vital in my work with Citizens UK, a national alliance working to achieve social change. What's been emerging as the real, often hidden, driver of homelessness is temporary accommodation.
It's where the largest numbers are trapped (including over 177,000 children) and where long-term damage – particularly to children's health, education and mental well-being – is most severe.

Through listening exercises, we've brought lived experience directly to the government, supported by expert partners like JustLife and the Shared Health Foundation, who jointly lead the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Temporary Accommodation.

The Prime Minister has called on faith organisations to help in responding to his first instruction in government – to end rough sleeping. I am part of discussions with the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government to work out how to prevent rough sleeping and how this might happen within our national churches and networks. Are we ready as Methodists to step up with our support?
The Methodist Conference has directed that a review be undertaken of the legal, procedural, practical and resourcing issues involved in enabling Methodist buildings and land to be used to meet housing need.
The Housing Memorial Group is currently pursuing this, and we really need your help.

Quiz

Alpha-links. The answers start with the next letter of the alphabet.	
1	Which aquatic mammal is known for building dams, canals and lodges? (B)
2	Which town in England was known to the Romans as Camulodunum?
3	Which European country has Copenhagen as the capital city?
4	Which country in Africa has AMHARIC as the official language?
5	Which King Henry, of England, led his troops at the battle of Agincourt?
6	Which soup originating in the Andalusian region of Spain is traditionally made from tomatoes and served cold?
7	Which metric unit of land area is made up of 100 ARES?
8	Together Leinster, Munster, Ulster and Connaught make up which Island?
9	In the play by Shakespeare what was the name of Romeo's lover?
10	In chess, which piece is allowed to move just one square in any direction?

True or False		
1	The first James Bond film to win an OSCAR was "Goldfinger"	
2	William Golding wrote "Lord of the Rings"	
3	The first reported sighting of the "Loch Ness Monster" was in the sixth century.	
4	The word CURFEW comes from French meaning to "cover the fire"	
5	In the 2015 General Election, the SNP won all the seats/constituencies in Scotland.	
6	George Osborne was "First Lord of the Treasury"	
7	Neutral corners in a boxing "ring" are traditionally white	
8	Strawberry plants belong to the rose family	
9	Venus and Serena Williams are twins.	
10	Three times Wimbledon champion Fred Perry's first international title was in Table Tennis	

Answers on 'You are wiser than you think' page

Daily Devotion

Pray Without Ceasing?

Readings

1 Thessalonians 5:17 “Pray without ceasing.”

Ephesians 6:18 “Pray at all times in the Spirit.”

1 Timothy 2:8 “I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands.”

Reflection

Pray without ceasing? Paul, have you seen my life?

There are emails to answer…meals to cook…people to care for…deadlines to meet…laundry that mysteriously multiplies when I’m not looking! And you’re suggesting I just… pray. Constantly!?

Is this meant to make me feel inspired…or guilty? Because if this is the benchmark of faithful living, then I am failing!

“Pray without ceasing.” Does that mean kneeling all day? Whispering holy words while trying to have a coherent conversation? Ignoring the world in order to talk to God?

I have heard this verse used as a measuring stick for devotion: “If you loved God more, you would pray more.” And: “If you were serious about your faith, you’d make time.”

As if prayer were another task on the to-do list. Another obligation. Another place to feel inadequate.

But surely that cannot be what Paul means.

Because life itself demands our attention.

Because God gave us bodies to move, minds to think, hands to work.

Because Jesus himself didn’t spend every waking moment in formal prayer.

So what is this “unceasing” prayer?

Maybe it isn’t about ‘speaking’ to God all the time.
Maybe it’s about living as though God is always there.

Not constant words…but constant awareness.

A quiet turning of the heart. A steady undercurrent of connection. A life lived in conversation, even when no words are spoken.

Perhaps prayer without ceasing looks like:

a sigh when things are hard;
a thank you when something goes right;
a cry for help in the middle of chaos;
a moment of stillness in the noise.

Perhaps it is less about posture…and more about presence.

Not withdrawing from life to pray, but carrying God with me into life.

Because if God is truly everywhere, then prayer can happen anywhere: in traffic. in meetings, in kitchens, in hospital corridors, and in ordinary, unremarkable moments.

Maybe, then, "pray without ceasing" is not an impossible command…but a gentle reminder that I am never alone.

Prayer

God,
I do not always know how to pray.
Life is noisy, busy, distracting.

Help me to live with an awareness of you
That runs beneath everything I do.

Turn my sighs into prayers,
My gratitude into worship,
My worries into conversation with you.

Teach me that prayer is not another burden,
But a reminder
That you are always here.

Amen

Brightlingsea Christmas Tree Festival

Get Ready for the 2026 Brightlingsea Christmas Tree Festival!

It might only be October, but it is never too early to start feeling festive! Plans are already well underway for this year's Brightlingsea Christmas Tree Festival, which will return to the beautiful All Saints' Church on Saturday 12th and Sunday 13th December 2026.

This wonderful community event brings our town together in a spectacular glow of creativity and Christmas spirit. To make this year's display our most magical yet, we are inviting individuals, families, local businesses, schools, and community groups to plant the seed of an idea now and plan your festival entry.

Entering a tree is completely free of charge and a fantastic way to have some family fun, showcase your group, promote your business, or simply share some festive joy with thousands of visitors.

Let your creativity run wild! Your entry doesn't have to be a traditional spruce. Trees can be real, artificial, or maybe handmade out of recycled materials—any shape or size is welcome! Whether your theme is traditional, funny, thought-provoking, or tied to your organisation's work, we'd love to see it.

To enter your creation, watch out for the online form soon to be on the Brightlingsea Tree Festival website **(**https://brightlingseachristmastreefestival.co.uk/about/ **).**

The Festival is entirely run by volunteers and additional helpers are always needed so if you can help, please email christmastreefestival21@gmail.com .

With thanks, the Christmas Tree Festival team

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Community Dates

Fri 9 Oct QUIZ NIGHT for the Community Allotment Association 7pm @ YMCA.
£5 per person - Max 8 people per team. Bring own drinks & snacks. Raffle.

Thurs 15 Oct Baby Loss Remembrance Service at 6.30pm, St James' Church. The service will provide an opportunity to remember babies, acknowledge the grief that follows baby loss, and come together as a community in support of those who have experienced it. All are very welcome.

Sat 24 October 7pm: BARN DANCE with Sue Last in St James'. £10/ticket with concessions.
A Light Supper of pulled pork in a bun will be served during the interval. Veggie and GF options available. Bring your own drinks. Tickets on sale in October.

24/25 Oct 'Autumn Colours' annual Art & Craft exhibition at All Saints' showcasing local artists. Open 10 am - 4pm.

Sat 7 Nov Brightlingsea In Bloom COFFEE MORNING 9.30am to 12noon at the YMCA

You are wiser than you think (Margaret Silf)

The longer we live, the more we notice how dramatically the world is changing. Young people today are facing extraordinary challenges that we never had to deal with, and an uncertain future on so many fronts. We all, whatever our age, need all the guidance we can get, and, more than ever, we need the elusive gift of wisdom.

Where does wisdom come from? A friend of mine, who had received little formal education, made an observation one day that struck all those who heard it as remarkably wise. It was suddenly clear to me that wisdom doesn't come from education. Education gives us knowledge. Wisdom, I realised, comes from experience – but only if we have reflected on it. And, generally speaking, those who have lived the longest have the most experience on which to reflect.

Jesus continually invited people to think about their ordinary everyday experience: growing crops, fishing, baking, caring for their sheep, searching for things they had lost. This personal experience, he told them, would give them a glimpse of what the kingdom of heaven is like, if they opened their eyes and hearts to recognise the connections. He invites us to do the same. Our experience holds the seeds of wisdom.

Margaret Silf is the author of a number of books for 21st century spiritual pilgrims, and a retreat and workshop leader. She works ecumenically and is passionate about making Christian spirituality accessible in everyday life. Her latest title is 'The Wisdom Years': A Spirituality of Ageing', (DLT 2025)

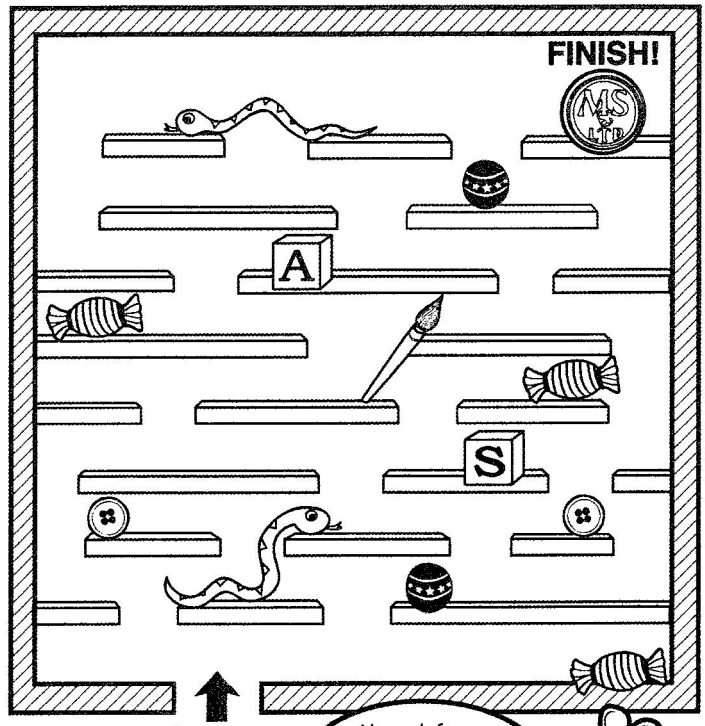
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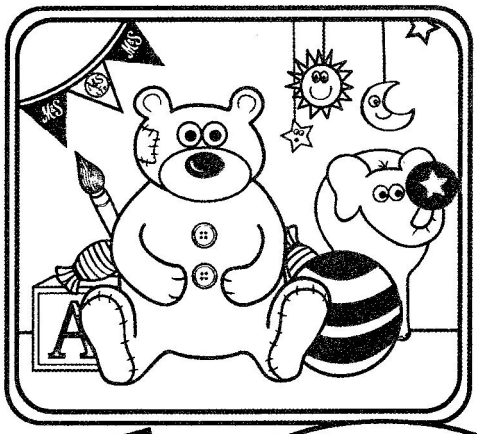
Quiz answers

True or False answers: 1B Beaver 2C Colchester 3D Denmark 4E Ethopia
5F Henry V 6G Gazpacho 7H Hectare 8I Ireland 9J Juliet 10K King

Alpha-links answers:

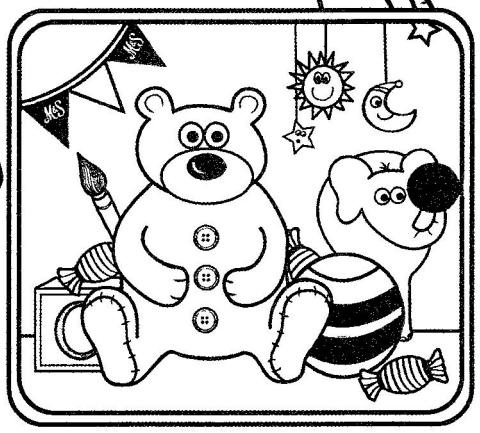
1 True. (Best sound editing: Norman Wanstall)
2 False. (William Golding wrote 'Lord of the Rings' (JRR Tolkien. Golding wrote 'Lord of the Flies'
3 True. The first reported sighting of the "Loch Ness Monster" was in the sixth century. (St Columba. Reported by St Adamnan in his biography of St Columba)
4 True. The word CURFEW comes from French meaning to "cover the fire" (couvrir feu)
5. False. In the 2015 general Election, the SNP won all the seats/constituencies in Scotland. (Libdem; Orkney and Shetland. Con; Dumfriesshire, Clydesdale and Tweeddale. Lab; Edinburgh South).
6. False. George Osborne is "First Lord of the Treasury". (Official title of the Prime Minister)
7. True. (Neutral corners in a boxing "ring" are traditionally white (although professional bouts may have sponsorship in them).
8. True. (Strawberry plants belong to the rose family.)
9. False. Venus and Serena Williams are not twins. (Venus born June 1980 and Serena born September 1981)
10. True. (Three times Wimbledon champion Fred Perry's first international title was in Table Tennis, World champion Budapest, 1929 aged 20).



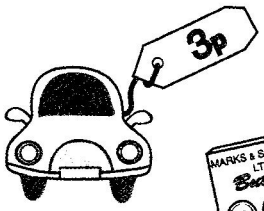


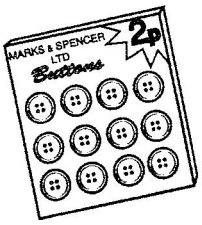
SPOT THE DIFFERENCE

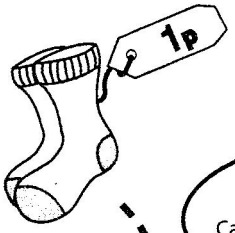
There are 8 differences, can you spot them!?



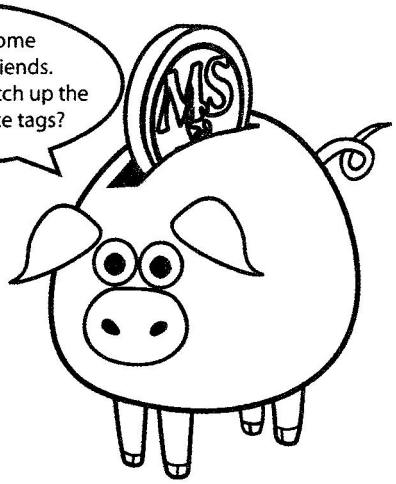
I have left my M&S penny on the top shelf! Can you help me find it??

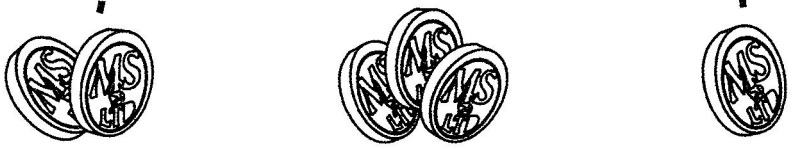






I want to buy some presents for my friends. Can you help me match up the pennies to the price tags?





PUZZLES!

M&S Café

KKA3/A4 06

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