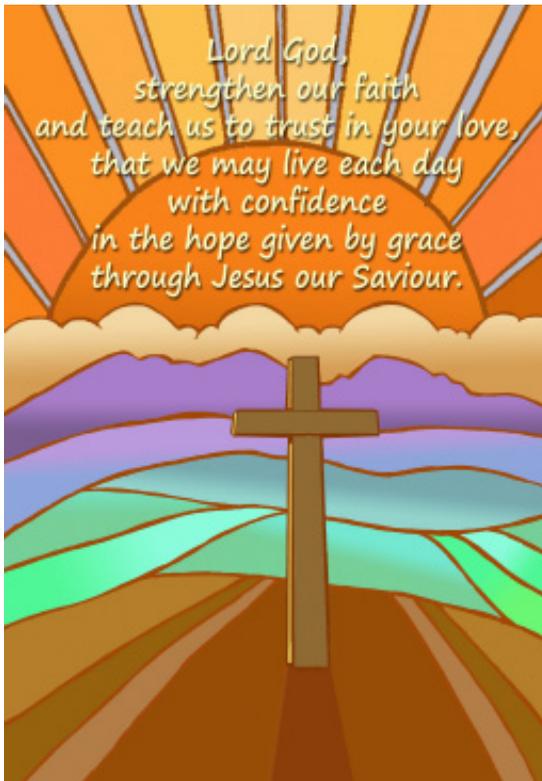


ST JAMES' CHURCH
Brownhills



Following Jesus

THE MUSTARD SEED



www.stjameschurchbrownhills.co.uk

50P
August 2022

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

Place of Welcome

Place of Welcome is an open invitation to come and join us for a cup of tea or coffee and a friendly chat. You are equally welcome if you just want to spend a few moments of quiet in church alone.

We also have our Knit & Natter group at the same time – 10-12 noon every Tuesday.

Fancy a picnic?

Book the dates now so that you're ready.

Sunday, 21st August

We are having a bring-and-share church family picnic on the green around church.

There will also be a Sunday Club/Tribe picnic across at Chasewater on

Sunday, 4th September

Make sure you tell everyone.

Both these events will be weather permitting.

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



August – Fun & Recreation



As the children and young people of our church and local communities in Brownhills and Clayhanger carry on enjoying the summer holidays, these weeks are a time for them and for all of us to pause and to have some relaxation and some fun. But I wonder, have you ever thought of what God says about having fun?

Well having a good time is definitely not a sin. God does encourage us, though, to pay attention to the principles that He has laid out for godly living when we engage in leisure activities. First and foremost is Colossians 3:17: ***“And whatever you do in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.”*** When we’re relaxing and having fun or when we’re seeking entertainment, we’re to always make sure that these activities are pleasing God.

Things like food, wine, money, etc., are morally neutral. Wine, for example, is neither good nor evil. It’s what we do with it that makes it so. Paul points out that *“...if food does not bring us near to God; we are no worse if we do not eat, and no better if we do”* (1 Corinthians 8:8). He immediately follows this, however, with an important instruction we should apply to all our activities, including fun and entertainment. *“Be careful, however, that the exercise of your freedom does not become a stumbling block to the weak”* (1 Corinthians 8:9).

Our freedom to relax and enjoy our lives shouldn't cause others to stumble in their faith. A classic example is that we shouldn't serve wine at lunch or tea if we have invited someone who is recovering from alcoholism. We're to follow Paul's lead, *"Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become **all things to all people** so that by all possible means I might save some"* (1 Corinthians 9:19, 22).

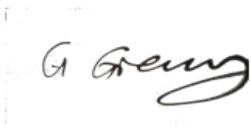
The key thing is that God doesn't want us to be under the influence of unbelievers. We may associate with them, as Jesus did when He sat at dinner with sinners and tax collectors, but we shouldn't let our thoughts and behaviour be influenced by them. Paul writes, *"Do not be yoked together with unbelievers..."* (2 Corinthians 6:14-15). For example, friends we meet through cricket, rugby or football can be influenced by Jesus living in us, but if their conversations are coarse or profane then we're not to go along with them as though we're of that kind of mindset as well.

According to Colossians 3:17, we're to give thanks to God through Jesus for the fun and entertainment that He provides. I think it's really helpful for us to notice that the word *"recreation"* means to *"re-create"* or *"renew."* God allows us this rest and recreation time to be renewed and to grow in our faith deeper into Him. James tells us, *"Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows"* (James 1:17).

Fun and entertainment, then, are gifts of God, given so that we might come closer to Him. Throughout August I pray that we'll each remember this when we are planning our recreation time and remember to thank God for such a good and perfect gift that He's given to us.

With love, prayers and many blessings in Jesus,

Gayle

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Gayle". The signature is written in black ink on a white background.

Christian YouTube channel for primary school aged children

The team who distributed nearly half a million free storybooks to schools for the Platinum Jubilee with the Church of England have now released a series of cartoons and songs for primary school aged children, on the *Fruit of the Spirit*. Thousands of families have been using them during the summer holidays!

The Cheeky Pandas is an online cartoon series created by Christian charity Swell Revolution, which has previously featured contributions from people including Archbishop Justin Welby, and CBeebies' Gemma Hunt. With catchy pop songs and prayers, the stories are on love, joy, patience, faithfulness and kindness. *God Suit* is one of their most popular action songs. The episodes are all available with British Sign Language options too.

Songwriter Pete James says: "*Cheeky Pandas* is all about helping children have fun while they grow in their faith. The free storybook that went out before the Jubilee was on the theme of faithfulness, in honour of Her Majesty the Queen's 70 years of faithful service."

Songs and episodes are created by the makers of CBBC's '*Andy and the Band*' and CBeebies' '*The Baby Club*', with voiceovers from Gemma Hunt. Previous guests on the free online show have included Nicky Gumbel, GuvnaB and the Archbishop of Canterbury.

YouTube is used by 86% of children aged 3-7, according to Ofcom. They watch for an average of a few hours a day, but this may be more during the summer holidays. Parents are often concerned about what their children are watching. The charity behind *Cheeky Pandas* wanted to create something which children will enjoy, and parents can know is helping them discover the love of God for them. Churches also use the resource, so there are free assembly plans, Sunday school downloads and activity sheets too, with recipes, crafts and games.

The Cheeky Pandas might be an answer to prayer for some young families this summer! Find out more at www.cheekypandas.com or find Cheeky Pandas TV on YouTube.

Grace – it really is amazing

Most of us will know the hymn, *Amazing Grace*, by John Newton. Grace is an essential element of our faith, but what is it, exactly?

In everyday life the word 'grace' has many uses: in the courts, a pardoned person has been 'shown grace'; in the arts, an exquisite dancer moves with beauty and grace; if someone undertakes an unpleasant task cheerfully and willingly, it is done with 'good grace' and composers sometimes add 'grace notes' to their music to enhance the playing of their music.

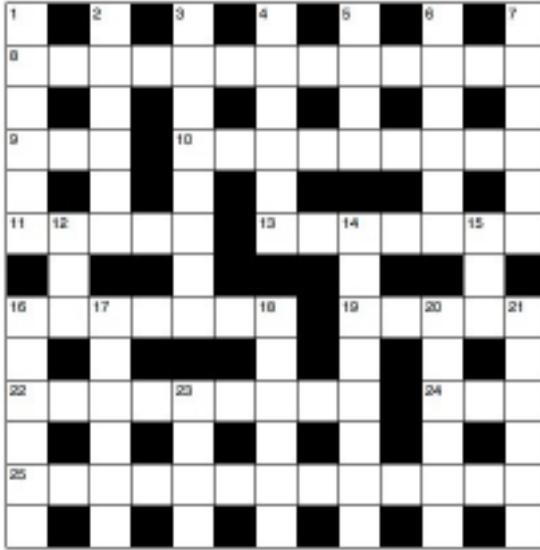
The biblical use of the word 'grace' is quite different! The New Testament describes grace as God doing something for us that we could not do for ourselves. That 'something' is the free and unearned favour of God towards us. It is God's goodness which removes human inferiority and worthlessness and which raises our status. It pays the debt of sin. Grace welcomes the wretched, the weak and the wayward. It adopts us – homeless orphans into God's family.

The story of King David and Mephibosheth is a remarkable example of grace. (see 2 Samuel 9: 1-13) When David discovered a disabled relative of a former friend, he opened the way for this person to be brought into the royal household. He was accepted into David's family and given the same status as one of his sons.

Similarly, God accepts the unacceptable into His Heavenly Family. He accepts us as we are, regardless of status, health - or any objections we may have! Our gracious God loves us even though we are unlovely, undesirable and unholy.

We must see God's love in the gift of His Son. We can only be thankful that through Christ we have a new relationship with God. It is by His grace we are saved.

In John Newton's famous hymn, he wrote '*grace will lead me home*'. Through the grace of God we can be assured of eternal life, joy, peace and security with Christ.



Across

- 8 One of the titles given to the Messiah in Isaiah's prediction (Isaiah 9:6) (6,2,5)
- 9 International Nepal Fellowship (1,1,1)
- 10 Single (1Corinthians 7:27) (9)
- 11 Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's seminal book about Soviet prison camps, The Archipelago (5)
- 13 Treachery (2Kings 11:14) (7)
- 16 Of India (anag.) (2,3,2)
- 19 'God has put us apostles on display at the end of the procession, like men condemned to die in the - ' (1 Corinthians 4:9) (5)
- 22 Follower of a theological system characterized by a strong belief in predestination (9)
- 24 'Put these old rags and worn-out clothes under your arms to - the ropes' (Jeremiah 38:12) (3)
- 25 They brought together all the elders of the Israelites in Egypt (Exodus 4:29) (5,3,5)

Down

- 1 The season when kings 'go off to war' (2 Samuel 11:1) (6)
- 2 Simon Peter's response to Jesus by the Sea of Galilee: 'Go away from me, Lord; I am a - man' (Luke 5:8) (6)
- 3 Beaten with whips (1 Kings 12:11) (8)
- 4 'You shall not - adultery' (Exodus 20:14) (6)
- 5 Encourage (Hebrews 10:24) (4)
- 6 Service of morning prayer in the Church of England (6)
- 7 'Take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for you, and - - him in your heart by faith with thanksgiving' (4,2)
- 12 Run (anag.) (3)
- 14 Member of 17th-century party that denied the right of autonomy to the Church (8)
- 15 'We will triumph with our tongues; we - our lips' (Psalm 12:4) (3)
- 16 Earnings (1Corinthians 16:2) (6)
- 17 'I rejoice greatly in the Lord that - -you have renewed your concern for me' (Philippians 4:10) (2,4)
- 18 How Paul described Philemon (Philemon 1) (6)
- 20 Multiple territories under the rule of a single state (Daniel 11:4) (6)
- 21 'You have been unfaithful; you have married foreign women, - to Israel's guilt' (Ezra 10:10) (6)
- 23 This month (abbrev.) (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 the best way to visit the homes in the parish

The Rectory
St. James the Least

My dear Nephew Darren

Your offer to bring in your team of church members, in order to make a house call on every home in our parish, was most generous. I do understand why you would need us to accommodate your team of 25 visitors, and then hold a residential training weekend for our own members of the team. I accept that we would have to produce a visiting pack listing all our church organisations, giving contact names and numbers and a short resumé of what each group did, along with our mission statement and safeguarding policy. I also understand your suggestion that we include a supplement outlining our stewardship scheme.

Your plan that we should then hold an opening Service to which all the newcomers would be invited, and to which we might fly in a world-renowned speaker for the occasion, is understandable. And then of course we would need your help us to set up a finance committee with budgets and organised fund raising. But what you seem to have

missed is that our entire parish consists of something like 70 homes. They would not feel visited, but invaded.

Instead, I feel it would be best if we attempt something a little more low-key: an invitation to sherry after Mattins, perhaps, where we could find out which of them plays golf and who may like to join the Bridge Club. Gradually, as the sherry flowed, we would also seek to discover who would be prepared to go on the brass cleaning, flower arranging and grass cutting rotas, which are the traditionally recognised signs of committed Christians, at least in this parish.

Inevitably, this means that none of our church members will be joining your team as you visit the residents of the new tower block in your parish. Most of our congregation abandoned attempting stairs some years ago and their polite enquiries about which Hunt the residents belong to, and where they stable their horses may lead to a rather stilted conversation.

You are, of course, all prepared to welcome your new residents with enthusiasm, excitement, and frenetic activity; our policy of polite indifference and brief conversations about the weather should soon help ours to settle in in no time.

Your loving uncle,

Eustace

Always remember . . .

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

Readings for August

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

7th August 2022 – Morning Service -
Revelation 21 v 1–7

7th August 2022 – Evening Service -
Genesis 15 v 1–6 & Psalm 33 v 12–end

14th August 2022 – Morning Service -
Revelation 7 & Revelation 14

14th August 2022 – Evening Service -
John 19 v 23–27 & 1 John 3

21st August 2022 – Morning Service -
Revelation 19

21st August 2022 – Evening Service -
2 Corinthians 9 & Matthew 21 v 28–32

28th August 2022 – Morning Service -
Jude & 1 John 4

28th August 2022 – Evening Service -
Hebrews 13 & Psalm 112

*There are times when God asks nothing of His children
except silence, patience and tears. - Charles Seymour
Robinson*

CROSSWORD ANSWERS
ACROSS: 8, Prince of Peace; 9, INF; 10, Unmarried; 11, Gulag; 13, Treason; 16, In aid of; 19, Arena.
22, Calvinist; 24, Pad; 25, Moses and Aaron.
DOWN: 1, Spring; 2, Sinful; 3, Scourged; 4, Commit; 5, Spur; 6, Mats; 7, Feed on; 12, Urn; 14,
Erastian; 15, Own; 16, Income; 17, At last; 18, Friend; 20, Empire; 21, Adding; 23, Inst.

Being brave?

Some time ago I was helping my grandson George into his car seat in the back of my car, when I accidentally banged his head. He started to cry. "Come on, George, be brave," I said.

"But I don't want to be brave!" he wailed.

I guess we all know that feeling. Sometimes life is hard, and we know we have a need for courage, but somehow, we just don't want to be brave. We would rather give in, surrender to the difficulties, and wallow in self-pity.

The Bible seems to constantly exhort us to be brave, to be strong, to take heart, to be courageous. And life during a pandemic and a war certainly calls for us to make a courageous response. But occasionally we may feel overwhelmed and ready to give in or give up.

Perhaps you are reading this at just such a moment. Maybe this comes as a message to you from God so that you do not lose heart. He knows you, and He sees your situation. And He speaks to encourage you, as He did to the church at Philadelphia: "I know that you have little strength" (Revelation 3:8).

He is the compassionate and understanding God who draws alongside us, to give strength to the weary and power to the weak (Isaiah 40:29). You don't have to do anything, simply turn to Him in your need and ask for help. You will discover, as the apostle Paul did, that when you are weak, then you are strong. His power will be demonstrated through your weakness. You can then do whatever is required of you, because He will give you strength.

*Learn to distinguish between trying and training. Without training I may try to win a marathon race, but I will only fail. That is because without training there will be no ingrained habits that have restructured my body for the marathon.
Training builds holy habits. - Anon*

Working from Rest

August sees many of us taking holidays to get some well-earned rest from working. But what is the biblical relationship between rest and work? The Bible shows us that **we are to work from rest, not rest from work**. How is this working out in our current experience?

When God created human beings on the 6th day, the next full day was a day of rest before the work began: *'Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it He rested from all the work of creating that He had done.'* (Genesis 2:3). Sunday is a day of rest at the beginning of the week.

Jesus lived out this rhythm of rest and work in His own ministry: *'Very early in the morning, Jesus got up and went off to a solitary place, where He prayed'* He then told His disciples: *'Let us go somewhere else so that I can preach there also. That is why I have come.'* (Mark 1:35-38).

Here is a rhythm for our own lives: *'I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in Me and I in you, you will bear much fruit'* (John 15:5). Our work/fruitfulness arises out of the time we abide/rest in Jesus. He will then show us what aspects of our lives need pruning: *'while every branch that does bear fruit He prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.'*

Let's use this month to reflect on how this pattern is working in our lives:

Are we spending enough time *'abiding'* in Jesus?

Are we putting our energies into the right *balance* of rest and work?

Are there *unproductive* areas of our lives and churches that need pruning?

Remember God created us as *human beings* not just *human doings*!!

To wish to pray is a prayer itself. - Georges Bernanos

Things you do on holiday but never at any other time

Lend your key to a neighbour and spend half an hour explaining the knack of locking the front door which entails pulling, turning, and pushing at the same time.

Worry about your hanging baskets and runner beans.

Worry about your cat.

Spend an hour looking for window lock keys which you have not seen since last year and why aren't they in THEIR SPECIAL PLACE?

Get up at 3am to drive to an airport.

Eat and sleep beside total strangers.

Climb on a bus without knowing quite where you are going, or where to get off.

Wear a swimming costume while shopping.

Miss having a proper cup of tea.

Buy postcards.

Eat chips with almost every meal.

Wonder if your cat is okay.

Have a pocketful of foreign coins which you try to spend on your last day.

Go to a quarry museum and try to convince yourself it is interesting as you never knew there was so much to know about slate and that it comes in so many colours of grey.

Get on another bus and hope it is headed back to your hotel, whose name now escapes you.

Prayer is often conceived to be little more than a technique for self-advancement, a heavenly method for achieving earthly success. - A W Tozer

Prayers & Poems

The Slide

As I watch
She climbs the steps steadily,
Holding the handrail,
Her two-year-old feet following each other
Rhythmically, unhesitatingly
To the platform at the top
Where she sits down
And freezes.
Holding tight to the sides,
Knees up, feet flat
She judders down a little way
Then looks up.
Her eyes meet my smile, my outstretched arms
And she takes her hands off the edge of the slide,
Shooting forward with a squeal of delight,
Trusting the love she knows.

Lord, I have climbed so steadily,
I have come so far, in my own strength,
Holding on, holding back,
Sometimes freezing.
But I am Your child,
Today I will lift my eyes
And meet Your smile, Your outstretched arms,
I will lift my juddering feet -
And take my hands off the edge of the slide
Released to ride, by Your Spirit,
Into the freedom of Your will,
Trusting the Love I know.

By Daphne Kitching

John Short & Son

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*Amid the confusion of bereavement we
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dignity – so that life, as it must, can go on
with hope for the future as well as
respect for the past.*

At times of bereavement we have served the local communities in and around this area since 1866. We personally know many of the families we have assisted. Whatever the time of day or night, we have given them the sympathy, advice and help they have needed.

Only an independent family firm, we believe, with its roots in the community, can offer this service with understanding and commitment.

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THE PARISH OF BROWNHILLS WITH OGLE HAY

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

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Lay Ministers:

Pete Biggs 01922 692163

Liz Corbett 01543 370162

Graham Sutherland (Reader with Permission to Officiate) 01543 671020

Community & Children's Worker:

Mel Pearce 07710 811893

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Secretary:

Brenda Stanford 01543 373063

Treasurer:

Joy Powell 01543 820513

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