

The Mustard Seed

The Parish magazine of the church of St James, Brownhills

A Family Following Jesus



Taste and see that the Lord is good.

The Lord's words are sweeter to me than honey.

Ps 34:8, Ps 119:103

www.stjameschurchbrownhills.co.uk

September 2026

*Called by name & empowered by the Holy Spirit to share
God's love with words and actions*



Nightwatch

As the sun sets over our churchyards and burial grounds, a whole other world comes alive. Using some nifty technology, we can listen in on this hidden world to find out just what kind of wildlife is thriving there.

At Caring for God's Acre, we've recently acquired a fantastic bit of kit called a passive acoustic monitor. These little devices can be set up to record and monitor a whole range of sounds in environments that would otherwise be difficult to survey, helping you discover what species are about. For instance, we've been using our acoustic monitor to survey bats in local churchyards.

The devices can be left out for a few hours, days or even weeks. They utilise a small microphone, to detect and convert incoming sound waves into a signal which can be recorded and stored for later analysis. Once back at home, you can then download the data to analyse and see what species you've heard. Some models will do this for you, some won't; it entirely depends on the model.

Bats use echolocation to hunt for insects at high frequencies that we humans can't hear. Individual species emit calls that correspond to their size, flight, behaviour, environment and prey types. Each will produce a distinctive call that can be recognised on the acoustic monitor or during sound analysis.

It can be difficult to navigate these tools for a first timer. Never fear; our friends at Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) have made surveying for bats accessible and easy for everyone.

BCT has been running the National Bat Monitoring Programme since 1996. Through its various mediums, all the recorded data helps inform bat conservation across the UK. One part of the programme is the NightWatch survey. Taking place between July and October, NightWatch is a community science project helping you discover the hidden world of nighttime nature living in your neighbourhood. No experience or previous knowledge is needed to take part, just for you to be over 16 and have a windowsill, garden, churchyard or urban space you have permission to survey. They greatly encourage people in towns and cities to get involved, so we can monitor how bats are faring in urban areas.

The process is simple. Choose a date and book your kit via the survey portal. Next, a free kit arrives in the post including an "AudioMoth". This is your mini passive acoustic monitoring device! Switch it on, secure in place and you're ready to go. At the same time, you'll sit with the detector watching and listening for any night wildlife. Whatever you spot, you make a record of. Once you're done, post the kit back in the post and wait to hear back from BCT with your personalised report of the bats you discovered during the survey.

More information on how to sign up and book your kit is linked here: <https://www.bats.org.uk/our-work/science-research/passive-acoustic-surveys/nightwatch>

Café Church

***Psalm 34 v 8 : Taste and see that the Lord is good;
blessed is the one who takes refuge in him.***

The café church has been running for around 12 months now. In fact there have been six café church days in total and it is generally very well attended and enjoyed by all.

Café church day begins very early for the members of the hospitality team who are up cooking sausages and bacon, buttering baps and generally ensuring that everyone's dietary needs are catered for. In addition to the bacon and sausage baps, there are vegetarian sausages, pastries and a selection of cereals for the younger members of our church. There is also tea, coffee and hot chocolate to wash it all down.

The church is transformed into a very relaxed area with tables and chairs in a "café style" design, encouraging everyone to mix and talk with each other over breakfast. In addition, there are usually activities on the tables which tie into the theme of the relaxed service.

It is the intention of St James that the café church is extended to the local community and everyone is encouraged to invite family and friends to enjoy this very relaxed and informal service. There is wonderful communal singing, prayers, a bible reading and a short talk.

In order for the café church not to take funds from the work they are already doing in the community, a voluntary donation box is on display for anyone who feels they would like to contribute to this event. We would stress that this is completely voluntary and no pressure whatsoever is ever put on anyone to contribute.

So far, the café church has not had to draw on any of the church funds and is completely self-funding. We have been very fortunate that for the last café church, held on 31st August, there was a very generous donation of bacon and sausage from Dan the butcher at Poxons, for which we were very grateful.

In conclusion, the café church, held every 5th Sunday, has become a fixture in the church calendar and is an opportunity for us to “reach out” to anyone who would like to come and join us to see what we, at St James church, are about. If you or anyone you know would like to join us, just turn up on any 5th Sunday at 10am, and we will be delighted to see you. There are always extras cooked.

Remembering Buddy Holly

Ninety years ago, on 7th September 1936, Buddy Holly, the American rock and roll singer, was born Charles Hardin Holley in Lubbock, Texas. His career was cut short when he was killed in a plane crash in 1959 – an event remembered as “the day the music died”.

Holly was raised by a devout Southern Baptist family and was baptised at the Tabernacle Baptist Church in his hometown. His widely recognised talent as a musician and singer led him into the emerging country rock scene, where performers were often exploited by those working behind the scenes.

His influence has been acknowledged by many top singers and guitarists, including Bob Dylan, the Beatles, the Rolling Stones and Eric Clapton.

The plane crash happened during a poorly organised winter tour of the Mid West where the buses supplied were hopelessly inadequate in terms of reliability and heating. Temperatures well below freezing led Holly to hire a small private plane to take three of them to the next venue. The inexperienced pilot crashed the plane shortly after take-off near Clear Lake, Iowa, killing everyone on board: himself, Holly, J P “The Big Bopper” Richardson, who was given his seat because he was suffering from flu, and Ritchie Valens, who won it on a coin toss.

Holly’s pregnant wife Elena heard of his death on the radio, and the shock of it led to a miscarriage. This resulted in the convention of not broadcasting the sudden death of anyone without close relatives being informed.

The disaster was immortalised by singer/songwriter Don McLean, who said he had idolised Holly and felt his death marked a watershed between the innocence of the 1950s and the changes brought about by the Vietnam generation. His song, *The Day the Music Died*, was a long and brilliant solo performance.

THE
SONGS
OF
MICHAEL
BUBLÉ

AS PERFORMED BY
ROB SMITH

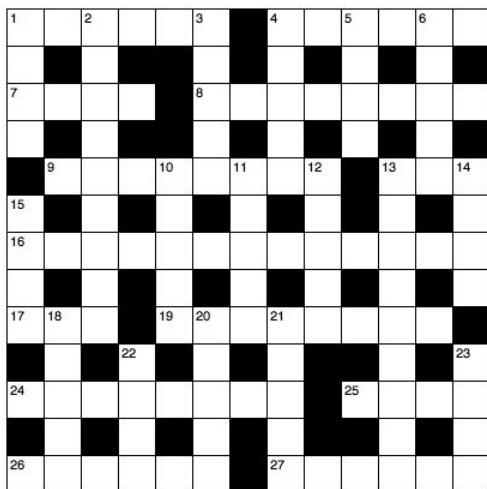
AT ST JAMES CHURCH,
BROWNHILLS

ON
SATURDAY 19TH SEPTEMBER

STARTING AT 6.00PM

ADMISSION £2
CHILDREN UNDER 12 FREE

September



Crossword

Across

- 1 'Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders — in vain' (Psalm 127:1) (6)
- 4 Season of the year (Psalm 84:6) (6)
- 7 'My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. — here and keep watch with me' (Matthew 26:38) (4)
- 8 It came over the whole land from the sixth to the ninth hour on the first Good Friday (Luke 23:44) (8)
- 9 Paul invariably did this in the synagogues he visited on his missionary journeys (Acts 17:2) (8)
- 13 'It is God who works in you to will and to — according to his good purpose' (Philippians 2:13) (3)
- 16 Members of the Church of Scotland (13)
- 17 'Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountain side and — down' (Matthew 5:1) (3)
- 19 Mock (Luke 14:29) (8)
- 24 Disgrace (Psalm 44:13) (8)
- 25 First month of the Hebrew calendar (Exodus 13:4) (4)
- 26 Christianity of the Britons before Augustine arrived from Rome (6)
- 27 Mean (Numbers 35:23) (6)

Down

- 1 'Whoever finds his life will — it' (Matthew 10:39) (4)
- 2 'My lord the king, let the — — on me and on

- my father's family, and let the king and his throne be without guilt' (2 Samuel 14:9) (5,4)
- 3 O raid (anag.) (5)
- 4 'If two of you on earth — about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven' (Matthew 18:19) (5)
- 5 Take care of (1 Samuel 17:15) (4)
- 6 What the older son heard as he came near the house the day his prodigal brother came home (Luke 15:25) (5)
- 10 'Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with — judgment' (Romans 12:3) (5)
- 11 Do ten (anag.) (5)
- 12 Architectural style first used in Greek temples in the sixth century BC (5)
- 13 Capable of being used (1 Kings 7:36) (9)
- 14 'Each one should — his own actions' (Galatians 6:4) (4)
- 15 Among the items imported by Solomon's fleet of trading ships (1 Kings 10:22) (4)
- 18 'But I am afraid that just — — was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray' (2 Corinthians 11:3) (2,3)
- 20 Outstanding 18th-century hymn writer, — Watts (5)
- 21 One of the four sons of Asher (Genesis 46:17) (5)
- 22 Be distressed (Proverbs 24:19) (4)
- 23 He was the father of Gaal, who threatened rebellion against Abimelech (Judges 9:28) (4)

What God won't ask

God won't ask what kind of car you drove, He'll ask how many people you drove who didn't have transportation.

God won't ask how big your house was, He'll ask how many people you welcomed into your home.

God won't ask about the clothes you had in your wardrobe, He'll ask how many you helped to clothe.

God won't ask what your highest salary was, He'll ask if you compromised your character to obtain it.

God won't ask what your job title was, He'll ask if you performed your job to the best of your ability.

God won't ask how many friends you had, He'll ask how many people to whom you were a friend.

God won't ask in what neighbourhood you lived, He'll ask how you treated your neighbours.

The shortest distance between a problem and a solution is the distance between your knees and the floor. - Anon

	3			2			6
7	9			8		2	
8							
		5					2
		8	2		3	9	
	6					7	
							9
		1		4		6	8
6			1			5	

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So Doku

Nobody's said they don't like it, so here's another.

Enjoy.

Solution elsewhere!

On what clergy should wear on their feet

The Rectory
St James the Least

My dear Nephew Darren

Thank you for sending me the photograph of you having your face painted at your parish's 'Fun Day' - although I can't help feeling that to label an event 'fun' is the most effective way of draining it of all amusement whatsoever. Why on earth can't parishes continue with the traditional title of 'Crowning of the Rose Queen and Fete', equally traditionally grimly enjoyed to the accompaniment of thunder and torrential rain.

However, the one thing that caused me the greatest concern in your photo was the fact that you were wearing sandals. Sandals are only to be worn by Franciscan monks (without socks) and holidaymakers on Blackpool promenade (regrettably, generally with socks). I know that you will argue that Jesus wore sandals. This was mainly because reliable pairs of brogues had yet to be invented, but also because He lived in a hot, dry country. We live in a cold, wet one.

The only appropriate colour for footwear for a parish priest is black, and the only appropriate material is leather - although I will concede that can create difficulties. Wet leather shoes and

polished marble sanctuary floors are a potentially lethal combination.

I well remember as a curate when old Canon Griffith entered the Sanctuary, having just got drenched coming from the Rectory. His feet moved across the marble floor some miles per hour faster than the rest of his body. Had he landed face down, the congregation may have assumed he was reverently prostrating himself before the altar. But lying in a supine position, staring in a dazed state at the rafters, only conveyed inappropriate indolence, when he should be at work.

However, do not take the alternative of wearing crepe soles. I suspect your present church will be fully carpeted - it seems to go with your sort of theology - and there will be no problem. But crepe soles and any sort of polished stone floor are a truly disastrous mixture. The slightest movement will make it sound as if you are being followed by a swarm of demented frogs.

Your loving uncle,

Eustace

So Doku solution

5	3	4	7	1	2	8	9	6
7	9	6	3	8	5	2	1	4
8	1	2	6	9	4	5	3	7
3	4	5	9	7	8	6	2	1
1	7	8	2	6	3	9	4	5
2	6	9	4	5	1	7	8	3
4	5	3	8	2	6	1	7	9
9	2	1	5	4	7	3	6	8
6	8	7	1	3	9	4	5	2

Practical help for churches in learning how they can best use AI

AI is seeping into church life all over the country. But it is happening without informed conversation about how best to use it, when to avoid it, and where it could lead.

With this danger in mind, a new resource has been launched, in order to “help churches of all denominations use AI thoughtfully, faithfully, and well” amid the “silent adoption” of AI in church life.

AI Guidelines for Christian Ministry has been produced by the AI Christian Partnership (AICP), a not-for-profit organisation made up of Christian groups, theologians, technologists, and academics.

Its founder, Chris Goswami, says it is important to stop AI just “gradually seeping into church life without proper discussion.” Instead, AICP wants to help churches understand the long-term impact on congregations. And so the *AI Guidelines* are “aimed at church ministers, leaders, and volunteers, but also contain principles, ethics, and practical tips that all Christians can apply and use.”

Chris Goswami explains: “AI can be a great asset for ministry, or it can leave us with a fast-food version of ministry. As with social media, it may only be much later, with hindsight, that we understand the impact of AI — therefore, we encourage churches with *foresight* to give serious consideration to this now.”

The Guidelines help you to use AI to enhance all aspects of your church life; from sermons, prayers, liturgy, and worship songs to wider ministry in pastoral care, small groups, and church meetings. AI can also work in a church’s back office, in its communications, data, and policy creation.

The guide also warns of the costs of AI: for example, the risk of hallucination, bias, addiction, and job displacement.

Mr Goswami says: “Our guidelines steer a careful middle-path between being overly bureaucratic (policy-led), overly theoretical (ethics-led), and merely superficial. We hope this makes them easily relatable and usable.”

Download *AI Guidelines for Christian Ministry* free at www.aichristian.org/guidelines.

Clothed with Christ

Georg Philip Telemann, the 18th Century German composer, was an early collector of folk music, long before the vogue for collecting folk tunes in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, which in England drew in Ralph Vaughan Williams, Cecil Sharp and George Butterworth.

Telemann would travel to Poland and note down the folk tunes he heard there, which then re-appeared in his music and played for the sophisticated audiences at his concerts. He described the transformation of folk tunes to *concerti* as 'clothing the tunes in an Italian coat'- the Italian style being all the rage at the time.

The phrase 'clothed in an Italian coat' is rich in allusions. Peasant fustian becomes elegant and rich velvet or silk, in gorgeous hues which bring distinction to the wearer. From workaday to refined, the image speaks of transformation. It's possibly also a covering over of the ragged with something altogether more presentable.

Clothing is an image used by St. Paul at least three times in his letters. Writing to the believers in Rome, (ch 13 v14) he urges his readers to 'put on the Lord Jesus Christ'. He's urging an active participation in all that Jesus was and did, a daily mental decision to be as Christ. To the Galatians (ch3v27) he says 'for all of you who were baptised into Christ have clothed yourself with Christ.' As it were, your old clothes won't do any more- you need the fresh clean linen which Christ offers. And to the Colossians Paul writes (ch3v12ff) 'clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience... And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.'

Clothes are important. They make a statement, say something about how we wish to present ourselves- smart or casual, formal or informal, conservative or outlandish. We make judgements about people (often wrongly) from how they dress. St Paul is taking these themes to a deeper level, asking that our character as Christians reflects and brings honour to the one who has invited us into his kingdom of justice, peace and love. I was invited some years ago to a Garden Party at Buckingham Palace. Should I wear crocs, yellow shorts and a Hawaiian shirt? No contest! That would not honour the Queen and the occasion. A formal suit or nothing.

How does your character reflect Jesus? What have you asked to be clothed in as you have prayed? God bless you as your daily life reflects all that Jesus would have it be; may we all be 'clothed with Christ'.

Samuel - the exceptional man who put the crown on David's head

The Bible contains descriptions of many kinds of leaders. These men (and sometimes women) were responsible for the well-being of groups of people. Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt. Joshua led the wilderness wanderers into the Promised Land. Gideon, Ezra and Nehemiah led people to fight against their enemies and improved their moral and spiritual lives.

While these people may be familiar to us, the Bible also mentions other individuals who had different leadership responsibilities. Some fulfilled their positions readily while others, like Joseph and Esther, gradually became aware of their roles and achieved the purposes God had for them.

As a baby, Samuel was dedicated to the service of God. While a young boy, God spoke directly to him. Samuel grew up gaining favour with both God and men. At an early age, God was with Samuel and made everything that Samuel said come true.

Samuel became the ruler of Israel. His style of leadership was based on godliness, fairness and good organisation. He settled disputes, served as a judge and banned pagan gods from the land.

When Samuel became old, the people became restless. They demanded to have a king to rule over them. God reluctantly agreed. Under God's guidance, Samuel chose Saul. Unfortunately, Saul failed to lead the people in the way of God. So, Samuel was directed by God to anoint David - to be the next king of Israel.

Samuel, it appears, was acutely aware of his responsibility to be a good leader. He was a man of good reputation but his obedience to God brought about difficulty, uncertainty and hardship. He wanted Saul to be a good leader, but Saul failed to live up to his high calling. Samuel was deeply upset and departed from the king's presence. He knew that a bad leader would bring about the nation's downfall.

Nevertheless, Samuel treated Saul with respect and courtesy. He understood the principle of submission to God-ordained authority. He was loyal to Saul, even though he turned out to be a bad leader.

Samuel's grief over Saul's failure is a reminder for us to pray for our leaders on a regular basis (whether or not they fall short in their official capacity!) We need God to provide us with leaders who are trustworthy and honourable. Let's pray for good leaders that they may enhance truth, peace and justice throughout the world.

New report explores young adult journeys to faith in the Church of England

Young adults are coming to faith in a range of different ways, some very different from previous generations, according to a new report.

New research commissioned by the Church of England uncovers how growing spiritual curiosity among young adults has led to a range of unexpected routes by which they are discovering Christian faith and finding community in Church of England churches.

‘Understanding Young Adult Journeys to Faith in the Church of England’ draws on in-depth interviews with 30 young adults aged 18 to 30 who began attending Church of England churches for the first time within the five years following the Covid-19 pandemic.

Conducted by Theos think tank and recently published, the research explores how Generation Z is engaging with Christianity in new ways amongst a changing cultural context.

The report identifies several recurring themes in their paths to interaction with faith and the Church of England.

Social media often served as an initial point of contact, introducing young adults to Christian ideas through podcasts, testimonies, debates, influencers and online content.

For many, this led to deeper exploration through reading the Bible, engaging with theology and asking wider questions about meaning, purpose and truth, often before attending church for the first time.

Personal relationships were consistently found to play a significant role, with encouragement, invitations or stories from teachers, chaplains, friends, partners, clergy and church members often helping young people move from curiosity to attending church.

Community and a sense of belonging also emerged as a common experience of church, with many participants citing this as one of the reasons they continued attending and became more involved.

Young people interviewed as part of the research were drawn to a wide range of Anglican traditions, including cathedrals, Anglo-Catholic and contemporary evangelical churches.

Across traditions, they reported being engaged by the “authenticity” and “seriousness” of worship, and valuing “confidence, consistency and depth” in the churches they had chosen to attend.

**MAMA
MIA**
Sing-along-a-
ABBA

.....
SATURDAY 17TH OCTOBER

AT

**ST JAMES CHURCH,
BROWNHILLS**

.....
STARTING AT 7 PM

★ **REFRESHMENTS AVAILABLE** ★

Come and let your hair down as we show the film 'Mama Mia' complete with the words so we can all sing along and enjoy ourselves.

Prayer for September 2026

Dear Lord, September – the month of new starts!

New terms, new groups, new friends, new hopes, every year.

Lord, be with us!

Lord, thank you for the new start you offer us when we put our trust in Jesus. A new start that we make once – and then can renew every day.

Every time we falter, you pick us up. Every time we come back to you, you forgive us and accept us.

Thank you, Lord, for never letting us down, for never leaving or forsaking us, that new starts with you are always possible, not just in September.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

By Daphne Kitching



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oven, hob, extractor or
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THE PARISH OF BROWNHILLS WITH OGLEY HAY

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God's love with words and actions

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Lay Ministers:

Pete Biggs

Liz Corbett 01543 370162

Graham Sutherland (Reader with Permission to Officiate) 01543 671020

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