

The Mustard Seed

The Parish magazine of the church of St James, Brownhills

A Family Following Jesus



See how the wild flowers grow! They don't work to earn, or craft their own clothes, but even King Solomon with all his wealth was not dressed as well as they are. Lk 12:27-28

www.stjameschurchbrownhills.co.uk

August 2025

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



Under your feet

By August, areas of long, flowery grassland should have been cut (unless you have late flowering species such as scabious or betony present, in which case these areas can be left a little longer). With the cutting and raking of long grass there is often an opportunity to spy onto the world of small rodents such as mice, shrews and

voles who may have made routes through the sward that are revealed by the cut.

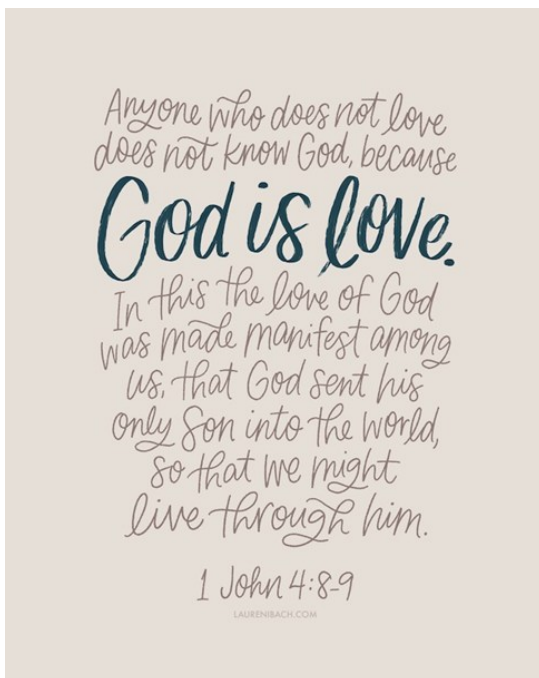
Small rodents are short lived and highly reproductive, wood mice for example tend to live for about a year, during which time they may have up to six litters of between four and eight young. In a churchyard you may have several species of mice, shrews and voles, the most likely being wood mice, field vole and common shrew. Wood mice have large ears and eyes, useful for their largely nocturnal life whilst field voles have blunter noses and smaller ears and eyes, they can be active during the day and night. Shrews are distinctive with a long, pointed nose and tiny eyes. All of these animals need to feed frequently and are always on the move seeking food, with shrews eating 80 to 90% of their body weight each day. They feed on insects and other invertebrates but will also tackle quite large earthworms, far bigger than they are! Mice and voles seek out seeds, berries and fruits, some of which they may stash for later. Whilst mice can be agile climbers, voles tend to stick to the ground, following the trails they make through grassland that you can see after a cut.

Unfortunately for voles and mice, they are important prey items for a range of other species. Tawny owls, also often found in churchyards, hunt silently for small rodents as do kestrels, weasels, foxes and of course cats. If you are interested to find out more, look for owl pellets beneath a nest or roosting place, these are regurgitated bundles of the inedible parts of their food and often contain bones which can be teased out of the pellet and then identified, giving information on what they have been eating. Shrews by contrast are not such a staple food item, you may find a bitten and dead shrew lying on a path suggesting that it has been hunted but was not very tasty.

Churchyards and other burial grounds are havens for rodents, containing a mosaic of grassland, shrubs, woodland and lots of places to make burrows or use existing cracks, nooks and crannies. Free of herbicides and pesticides they are full of food, both invertebrates and plant material whilst areas of long meadow and tussocky coarse grass provide perfect cover. See if you can spot their burrows and runways and imagine their busy lives in the fast lane!

Harriet Carty, *Diocesan Churchyard Environmental Advisor*, harriet@cnga.org.uk,

Know you are loved



Until it happens to a parent, they often say that they would not have believed it was possible. But the moment they see their child, they experience an overwhelming love. This tiny baby, who to others must have looked like any other baby, is their son or daughter. The moment a parent first sees their own child is unforgettable. The love a parent feels for a child is almost indescribable. **Yet this is the analogy God uses of his love for you. You are a child of God.** The love he has for you is even greater than that which parents feel for their own children.

Knowing who you are will have a big impact on your life. Know that you are a deeply loved child of God. This should be the basis of your confidence, security and hope. In **Proverbs 17:25–18:6** we learn a lot about God's heart towards us.

The Bible generally has a lot to say about human parenting and the relationship between parents and their children. The love parents have for their children is instinctive and powerful. Good parents want the very best for their children. Children have a high capacity to bring great joy to their parents. But, of course, they can also bring grief.

In Proverbs 17: 25 we read: 'Foolish children bring grief to their fathers and bitterness to those who bore them'. The writer goes on to expand on the difference between the foolish and the wise in different aspects of life. For example, 'fools... delight in airing their own opinions' (18:2), whereas the wise use words with restraint. In fact, 'Even fools

are thought wise if they keep silent, and discerning if they hold their tongues' (17:28). As American historian Will Durant (1885–1981) once said, 'One of the lessons of history is that nothing is often a good thing to do and always a clever thing to say.' The writer then touches on other characteristics of the wise: friendliness (18:1), listening (v.2) and justice (v.5).

In addition, in **Romans** that we have just gone through as a church family, and **chapter 8**, we are encouraged to see ourselves how God sees us. But how, I wonder, do you see yourself in relation to God? Do you go around always feeling, at least slightly, guilty? Do you 'live under a continuous, low-lying black cloud'? (v.1, MSG).

This is not how you are meant to live as a Christian. You are a child of God, deeply loved, accepted and empowered by his unconditional love for you. He wants you to enjoy freedom from guilt and condemnation and to experience an intimacy of relationship with him, even closer than the best parent/child relationship.

The moment you receive Jesus the past is dealt with. You receive complete forgiveness. The barrier between you and God has been removed. Paul writes, 'There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus' (v.1). You are set free from the law of sin and death (v.2). Although the law was good, it was powerless to save us because of our sinful nature (v.3a). So, God sent Jesus to die for us as a sin offering (v.3b). Jesus took away all your sins – past, present and future.

Now, in the present, you can enjoy life in the Spirit. You no longer live 'according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit' (v.4). The Holy Spirit leads you to stop setting your mind on 'what that [sinful] nature desires' but rather to set your mind on 'what the Spirit desires' (v.5). This leads to 'life and peace' (v.6). Paul is not saying that you will be perfect, but rather that 'even though you still experience all the limitations of sin – you yourself will experience life on God's terms' (v.10, MSG). This is possible because right now the Spirit of God lives in you (v.9).

Furthermore, you can look forward to a future resurrection of your body. The same Holy Spirit who lived in Jesus and raised him from the dead dwells in you. Therefore your body, like Jesus', will be raised: 'He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you' (v.11).

It is to those who receive Jesus, to those who believe in his name, that he gives 'the right to become children of God' (John 1:12). You become a child of God not by being born, but by being born again by the Spirit.

If Romans is the 'Himalayas' of the New Testament, then Romans 8 is definitely its Mount Everest and its summit is these verses where Paul describes how those who are led by the Spirit are the children of God (Romans 8:14–17).

Reflect in these aspects of our identity as God's children: -

1. Highest status: There is no higher status than to be a child of God (v.14). Under Roman law, if an adult wanted an heir he could either choose one of his own sons or adopt a son who would take his name. God has only one begotten Son – Jesus – but he

has many adopted sons and daughters. You have been adopted into God's family. There is no status in the world that compares with the privilege of being a child of the Creator of the universe.

2. *Closest intimacy:* You have the closest possible intimacy with God. Paul says that by the Spirit we cry 'Abba, Father' (v.15). This Aramaic word may well have been the first word that Paul ever spoke, and the way in which he addressed his earthly father. Jesus used 'Abba' in speaking to God in a distinctive way. It expresses both profound respect and close intimacy, and is perhaps best thought of as 'Daddy' or 'Papa'. In large parts of the Middle East it is still the first word children are taught.

As God's child, you are no longer a slave of fear but an adopted child of God (v.15). You can enjoy the closest possible intimacy with your Father in heaven.

3. *Deepest experience:* The Spirit gives you the deepest possible experience of God. 'The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children' (v.16). In the same way that I want my children to know and experience my love for them and my relationship with them, so God wants his children to be assured of that love and of that relationship. 'God's Spirit touches our spirits and confirms who we really are' (v.16, MSG).

4. *Greatest security:* To be a son or daughter of God is the greatest security. For if we are children of God we are also 'heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ' (v.17a). Under Roman law an adopted son would inherit his estate.

As children of God we are heirs. The only difference is that we inherit, not on the death of our father, but on our own death. You will enjoy an eternity of love with Jesus: 'And we know we are going to get what's coming to us – an unbelievable inheritance!' (v.17, MSG).

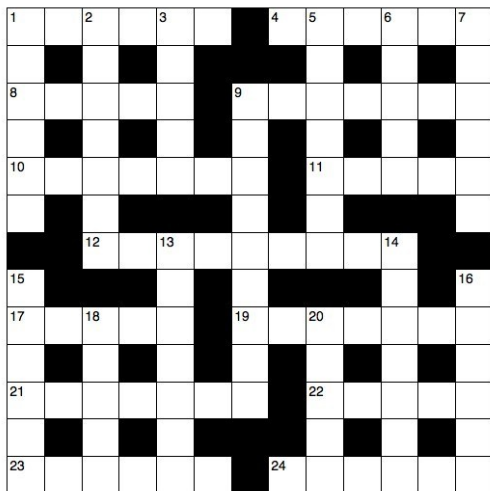
Paul adds, 'if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory' (v.17b). In the Christian life, glory comes through suffering: 'We go through exactly what Christ goes through. If we go through the hard times with him, then we're certainly going to go through the good times with him!' (v.17, MSG). Christians identify with Jesus Christ. This means severe persecution for many Christians today around the world. You may well face some opposition, but your inheritance as child of God surpasses all these troubles.

This summer, then I pray for each of our members here at St James, that in our hearts we will sincerely pray this prayer, or one similar: 'Abba Father, thank you for the amazing privilege of being your child. Thank you that your Spirit living within me testifies with my spirit that I am your child. Thank you that my future is secure – that I am your heir and co-heir with Christ. Amen'.

With love and prayers,

Rev'd Gayle

August



Crossword

Across

- 1 'The people were — at his teaching' (Mark 1:22) (6)
 4 'He saved —; let him save himself' (Luke 23:35) (6)
 8 He addressed the crowd in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:14) (5)
 9 Father of James and John (Matthew 4:21) (7)
 10 One who charges another with an offence (Job 31:35) (7)
 11 '— thy ministers with righteousness' (Book of Common Prayer) (5)
 12 and 15 Down 'All — is God-breathed and is — for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness' (2 Timothy 3:16) (9,6)
 17 'No — of the field had yet appeared on the earth and no plant of the field had yet sprung up' (Genesis 2:5) (5)
 19 Made to feel embarrassed (Isaiah 24:23) (7)
 21 This man built his house on sand (Matthew 7:26) (7)
 22 David's hypocritical message to Joab on the death in battle of Uriah: 'Don't let this — you' (2 Samuel 11:25) (5)
 23 Detest (Job 10:1) (6)
 24 'God made two great lights, the greater light to govern the day and the — light to govern the night' (Genesis 1:16) (6)

Down

- 1 To make a serious request (1 Corinthians 1:10) (6)
 2 Launches an assault against (Genesis 32:8) (7)
 3 'The wicked man — deceptive wages' (Proverbs 11:18) (5)
 5 Tuba ale (anag.) (7)
 6 'The day thou gavest, Lord, is — ' (5)
 7 Old Testament measure of weight, equivalent to about 12 grammes (Exodus 30:13) (6)
 9 Where Elijah restored life to the son of a widow with whom he lodged (1 Kings 17:10) (9)
 13 Paul said of whatever was to his profit, 'I consider them — , that I may gain Christ and be found in him' (Philippians 3:8) (7)
 14 City visited by Paul, described by the city clerk as 'the guardian of the temple of the great Artemis' (Acts 19:35) (7)
 15 See 12 Across
 16 Rioted (anag.) (6)
 18 She had a surprise when she answered the door and found 8 Across outside (Acts 12:13) (5)
 20 Maltreat (1 Chronicles 10:4) (5)

Give Him a call!

The phone was a great invention. How easy, to press a few numbers on our small devices and speak to someone the other side of the world. Once a phone was a luxury item; now we take it for granted that this gadget in our pocket enables us to contact anyone, at any time, in any place.

However, how many times have you rung someone, only to be given a recorded message giving a variety of options? Then you must wait in a queue for ages before your call is answered. A voice informs you that 'your call is important to us' ... but meanwhile you are left waiting, listening to endless music.

Yes, a phone may be useful in all kinds of circumstances, but they can also be very frustrating! So, it's good to know that God can be contacted immediately we need Him.

There is no celestial call centre where our messages are delayed or referred. With prayer we can call on God directly. This service is free, with no charges. He hears our every call, and we can be confident that our Creator will answer us in ways which are only for our good.

'When you pray, I will answer you. When you call to me, I will respond.' (Isaiah 58:9)

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2				6		1	
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				4	5		

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So Doku

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

Enjoy.

Solution elsewhere!

On the annual war of pumpkin-growing

The Rectory
St James the Least

My dear Nephew Darren

Anyone who thinks that the English are a peaceful race has obviously never organised the annual pumpkin growing competition. Very regrettably, one of the Pilgrim Fathers sent a handful of pumpkin seeds to a relation in this parish in the 17th century and ever since, the church has been obliged to hold an annual competition to see who can grow the largest. I suspect some of the original recipients of those seeds still compete. There is a certain irony that the church, which is supposed to promote peace and harmony, sponsors the most war-like activity in the annual calendar.

Mobilisation starts at the beginning of the year when seeds are planted. From that moment on, every other potential entrant is regarded as the Enemy. Once seedlings are planted out, then heavy armaments are placed at boundaries to deter possible invasion. By late Spring, paranoia has taken over and rumours begin to circulate of espionage and sinister undetectable herbicides. Anyone in the village with a beard is looked on with deep suspicion.

In the weeks before the competition, homes, partners and children are abandoned, as contestants talk to their pumpkins by day and snuggle up with them at night. Should bad weather arrive at this point, then I am blamed for not having prayed sufficiently fervently for sunshine and light rain. If only I had such influence.

On the day before the show, tables are put out and woe betide anyone who places their cake stand where Mrs Cholmondeley has put her tea urn for the past 25 years; she now believes she has squatters' rights to that place, and any

challenge to her claim would probably result in litigation.

I find this competitive spirit a little bemusing, as for the last 25 years, the Earl of Stowe has always won first prize. That his mother, the Dowager Countess, is the judge, is, I am sure, pure coincidence. That she has arrived for the past three years with a white stick and accompanied by a golden Labrador does, however, raise doubts.

To award the Earl any prize at all does seem a little unfair, when the only time he ever gets mud on his boots is when he falls off his horse while hunting. I suspect he would be hard pressed to find where the kitchen garden is on his estate. But to give any credit to his gardening staff would be seen as bad form, so we all keep quiet.

It has been tentatively suggested that another judge should be appointed, but no one has so far had the courage to step forward. They may have the privilege of nominating the winner, but they would also have to face a 12 month period of hatred from all those who were not successful. Christmas card lists will be amended. Families may have sat next to them in church for generations, but would suddenly find it more congenial to worship in another part of the church. Letters would be strangely mis-delivered, and the butcher's boy would suddenly deliver lamb when pork had been ordered. Who could dare to take on such a poisoned chalice?

Your loving uncle,

Eustace

So Doku solution

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

Leaning into the power of prayer

Thank you for being a God who is present.

Help us to acknowledge you throughout the day.

We are grateful that we can look to you when things get hard,

Or praise you when we need to see your hand in things.

Help us to keep praying when things get mundane,

When we get stuck in the routines of our busy lives.

Thank you that you have a purpose for every day,

And we ask you to open our eyes to the situations where we can be your hands and feet.

Give us a burden for the things you have a burden for.

Help us to pray for our leaders, our brothers and sisters in Christ and those who don't yet know you.

Help us to continue to intercede in situations which seem hopeless,

And help us to believe that you have the power to change all things for good through prayer.

We don't pray that our will be done, but yours,

As your ways are higher than our ways and your thoughts are higher than our thoughts.

Thank you for another day to get to know you better. We're expectant to hear you speak and see you move, and we trust that you are in control.

In Jesus' name we pray,

Amen.

Thank you to Carol Glass, who found this prayer in a magazine produced by the Evangelical Alliance. If anyone else finds interesting prayers or articles, please pass them on to Dennis Powell who will do his best to include them in our magazine.

What does the modern persecution of Christians look like?

In the Acts of the Apostles we read, at different times, of disciples being threatened; of disciples being imprisoned. We see disciples, on occasions, fleeing. We read of disciples paying the ultimate price—martyrdom.

To talk of Christians suffering persecution for Christ and the gospel is to realise that this is something that takes different forms in different places. And that means the way we respond—in order to love and care for persecuted Christians—will vary, too.

On-going oppression, for example, may leave the Church bereft of resources and needing help to equip its pastors. By contrast, where Christians have been forced to flee in the face of violence or the threat of violence there may be immediate life-sustaining needs that must be met. Martyrdom or imprisonment throws up the need to care pastorally for widows or for families struggling to cope.

The one constant is all of this is the call to pray for those who suffer because of their faith in Christ—which is always the first thing persecuted Christians ask for. If possible, that prayer ought to be *specific*: for real people in real places, who are really suffering because of their Christian faith.

Release International is a UK-based ministry, called to love and serve those who suffer persecution for Christ and the gospel. Release International works through Christian partners on the ground; partners who understand the needs of those who are suffering, and who have a calling to respond to those needs. We can help those who help the suffering.

And so here in the UK Release International calls Christians to express fellowship with those who suffer—and to do so prayerfully, pastorally and practically. To find out more about how you and your church can be involved in caring for persecuted Christians, go to: releaseinternational.org.

Lord's Prayer tops Shakespeare, Dickens, Churchill and National Anthem in public recognition poll

People in the UK are more likely to identify correctly a short extract from the Lord's Prayer – also known as the Our Father – than one from the National Anthem and other sources chosen for their deep cultural resonance, a new poll has found.

The polling, carried out for the Church of England, also found the reference in the prayer to being forgiven and forgiving others was the element people found most meaningful to them.

Pollsters Savanta surveyed more than 2,000 people across the UK. They asked them to match seven famous lines - spanning areas ranging from literature and history to popular culture – with their source, from a list of correct answers.

Overall, the phrase from the Lord's Prayer was recognised correctly by the largest number of people (80.3 per cent), just ahead of Star Wars (79.9 per cent).

They were followed by Hamlet's "To be or not to be" (73 per cent) the extract from the National Anthem (63 per cent); the line from Churchill's 'The Few' speech (61 per cent); and You'll Never Walk Alone (58 per cent).

Overall, 89 per cent of those surveyed said that they had previously heard of the Lord's Prayer or the Our Father. This was highest among those who described themselves as Christian (95 per cent), but also by 88 per cent of those who said they had no religion.

The Archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell, is currently leading a 'Lord's Prayer Tour' of events at churches and cathedrals across the north of England attended by thousands of people, as part of his *Faith In The North* initiative.

He said: "In a world of shifting cultures and changing circumstances, the Lord's Prayer remains a steady guide - perhaps never more so than now.

"Lines like 'Give us this day our daily bread' speak powerfully to today's challenges, reminding us to seek sufficiency, not excess, and to consider what 'enough' truly means."

The great of this world are those who simply loved God more than others did. - A. W. Tozer

“An unsafe and unworkable bill” – Bishop Sarah urged MPs to say no to assisted suicide

The Bishop of London, Sarah Mullally, recently urged MPs to halt the passage of a bill to legalise assisted suicide in England and Wales.

Bishop Sarah – the former Chief Nursing Officer and the Church's Lead Bishop for Health and Social Care – called instead on parliamentarians to ask themselves some searching questions “about the kind of society we want to live in”, before the Third Reading vote in the Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill in the Commons took place.

She said: “MPs have the power to stop the passage of this Bill, in the face of serious concerns from the medical profession, palliative care specialists, and those facing the end of life.

“If enacted, this Bill would arrive amidst hugely inequitable access to palliative care and an NHS on life support. The potential for abuse and uninformed or coerced decisions is enormous.

“This is not about so-called progressivism v conservatism, or atheism v religion. This is about the kind of society we want to live in.

“The vision that this Bill presents is one in which the disabled and vulnerable are made to feel like they are a burden, as if their lives are worth less.

“This is, and has always been, an unsafe and unworkable bill. The promise that Committee stage would ‘iron out’ major concerns with the Bill has not been forthcoming. Instead, it has presented more unanswered questions, left more doubts, and seen so-called protections crumble away before even coming into law.

“I implore every Member of Parliament to ask themselves whether they truly believe assisted suicide is right for the society in which we want to live.”

If God forgives us, we must forgive others. Otherwise, it is almost like setting up ourselves as a higher tribunal than Him. - C. S. Lewis

Readings for August

Sunday 3rd August

10am	Summer in the Psalms	Psalms 19	
6.15pm	Born of God, to live for Him	Psalms 150	1 John 3 v 1-10

Sunday 10th August

10am	Summer in the Psalms	Psalms 84	Matthew 4 v 1-11
6.15pm	A sign of Immanuel for us	Psalms 138	Isaiah 7 v 1-15

Sunday 17th August

10am	Summer in the Psalms	Psalms 67	Luke 2 v 25-35
6.15pm	Jacob's dream at Bethel	Genesis 28 v 10-17	Psalms 86

Sunday 24th August

10am	Summer in the Psalms	Psalms 42	Matthew 4 v 18-25
6.15pm	Christ, the Power of God	Psalms 110	1 Corinthians 1 v 18-25

Sunday 31st August

10am	Summer in the Psalms	Psalms 2	Luke 22 v 39-46
6.15pm	With God all things are possible	Proverbs 3 v 13-18	Matthew 19 v 16-30

Why can I see the moon in the day?

It's holiday time, and you may be spending more time than usual with your children. That will give them ample opportunity to ask you those questions for which you have no answer. A survey has found the top ten questions that most stump parents are:

Why is the moon sometimes out in the day? Why is the sky blue? Will we ever discover aliens? How much does the Earth weigh? How do aeroplanes stay in the air? Why is water wet? How do I do long division? Where do birds and bees go in the winter? What makes a rainbow? Why are there different times on earth?

Research by the British Science Association found that two thirds of parents most dread those questions that have to do with maths or science. Prof Brian Cox, the scientist and broadcaster, has suggested that "the best thing parents can do is work with their children to find the answers – not only can it be fun, but you'll both learn something new along the way."

Prayer for August 2025

Heavenly Father,

August – summer holidays and sunny skies. All should be well and yet, around the world all is *not* well!

Every day, it seems, new wars begin, catastrophes occur, world politicians play power games - and people suffer.

It can feel overwhelming and we want to bury our heads in the sand, rather than build sandcastles on the beach.

Help us Lord, to look up; to see things with Your perspective; to remember that Jesus warned us that in this world we will have trouble. Then help us to remember that He told us to take heart, because He has overcome the world.

Father, help us to savor the summer, as we put our trust in You - our strength, our hope, our ultimate and unfailing security.

In Jesus name,

Amen.

By Daphne Kitching



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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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