

August 2026

FOCUS

Issue 306



Parish Magazine of St Stephen's, Hightown



**The Lord supports those that stumble,
and lifts up those who are down. Ps 145:14**

Magazine part-sponsored by John Gibson - notary services

Editor's Note

As I write, my grandsons have just broken up for the school summer holidays and the family are heading off next week to Europe. I was reminded of simpler times, when one school summer holiday I took my daughter and her friend to stay with my cousins in Wales, whose home is half way up a mountain side with splendid views. Of course, no holiday was complete without their ponies, Penny and Rudy, in tow. Both being Welsh section ponies, it was in the girls' opinion that they should, by right, have an opportunity to visit the 'Land of their Fathers.' As my cousin had stables, it was actually easier to do this than to find someone to look after them whilst we were away.



It was a long haul in the Land Rover, pulling the trailer, but the children, who fortunately didn't suffer from motion sickness, had space in the back where they had made a table each of a suitcase to play games and draw. As many parents know, keeping young children quiet and happy in cars is an art. If one is the only grown up and therefore driving, let alone pulling a trailer containing precious cargo, it is bad for the concentration to have to invent and partake in games and resolve disputes. Fortunately, I didn't have to worry, because before long, they had created their own game of reading the road signs and declaring where they were. With glee, there were shouts of e.g, 'Now we're in Cheshire', followed two seconds later by 'Now Penny and Rudy are in Cheshire', followed by a fit of excited giggles. This may have lasted continuously until we arrived at our destination, but for the fact that, once over the border, the pronunciation of many of the Welsh names got the better of their English phonics knowledge and they decided that it was easier to sing to the ponies. The last part of the journey, over a mountain road, was slightly nerve -racking, but we arrived safely to a great welcome from my cousins.

There were no theme parks, ski jets, banana boats or any of the other, no doubt popular, entertainments that my grandsons will enjoy next week, and for me there was no housework!

Apart from one small hiccup, when Penny stopped dead at a small jump, sending my cousin's youngest child flying over, both ponies and children were well behaved. Penny, Rudy and the girls loved cantering over the Cardiganshire mountains, and we all enjoyed our stay hugely. The simple pleasures are often the best!

Enjoy your summer holidays wherever they may be!

Dear Friends,

The holiday season is upon us once again and as I write at the beginning of July, we are having another very sunny and very warm spell. It certainly feels like summer!

Holidays are important. They are an opportunity for rest or doing something completely different from your usual routine.

Churches Together in Altcar, Formby and Hightown are having a “Holiday at Home” again this August and St Stephen’s is hosting an event here. It too is an opportunity to do something different if you are unable to get away for a break.

In this season of summer, with all that it brings, I am reminded of how God’s creation speaks to us in every season. The long days and golden evenings invite us to slow down, breathe deeply, and notice the blessings that surround us. From the vicarage garden I can hear the laughter of children on summer holidays, enjoying time playing outside... the hum of bees in the garden, the rustle of the leaves in the breeze, the silence of the tumble drier!

This month, many of us will be travelling, hosting friends at home, or simply enjoying a quieter pace. Yet, even in these moments of rest, God is at work — restoring our strength, refreshing our spirits, renewing our hope, and drawing us closer to Him.

Let’s take a moment or two to pray for those who cannot take a break, for farmers working in the fields around our village, for those in hospital, those who are housebound, and for anyone feeling lonely during these summer weeks, longing for the usual routines to return.

As we look ahead to the autumn season, may we carry with us the light and warmth of these summer days, sharing kindness and encouragement, which is the love of Christ, wherever we go. And may we remember that, whether we are at home or on holiday, near or far, we remain united in Christ’s love.

God Bless,

Keith



Ah! Seaside smells from sandy caves
And thyme and mist in whiffs,
Incoming tide, Atlantis waves
Slapping the sunny cliffs

Lark song and sea sounds in the air
And splendour, splendour everywhere.

From John Betjeman’s ‘Seaside Golf’

Church Services at St Stephen's in August

Sunday 2 nd Trinity 9	10:30	All-Age Eucharist,
	18:00	Evensong
Wednesday 5 th	10:30	Eucharist
Friday 7 th	09:30	Morning Prayer
Sunday 9 th Trinity 10	10:30	Eucharist with Healing
	16:00	No Toddler Church
	18:00	Evensong
Wednesday 12 th	10:30	Eucharist
	19:00	Sanctuary @ Seven
Friday 14 th	09:30	Morning Prayer
Sunday 16 th Trinity 11	10:30	Eucharist. No Sunday School.
	18:00	Evensong
Wednesday 19 th	10:30	Eucharist
Friday 21 st	09:30	Morning Prayer
Sunday 23 rd Trinity 12	10:30	Eucharist
	18:00	BCP Holy Communion
Wednesday 26 th	10:30	Eucharist
Friday 28 th	09:30	Morning Prayer
Sunday 30 th Trinity 13	10:30	Eucharist
	18:00	Evensong

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Can you help us?...

We have a successful Youth Club, which meets on Friday evenings from 6pm until 7:15pm, term time, in our Church Hall. It's a popular club, but we need more help in terms of leadership and helpers. It's a great gathering of youngsters from the village and it provides a safe space for them to meet with friends, play sports and games, share in crafts etc. Can you help us?



Recruitment is in accordance with Church of England Safer Recruitment practices and a full Enhanced DBS check would be required. For more information, please contact Youth Club Leader Jane Bessant on 07776305660 or Revd. Keith Thornborough on 0151 929 3097.

Thank you!



St Stephen's Church

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'Souper Troopers Summer Season'

Over the summer we are offering a sandwich/buffet lunch and a cold dessert. All are still most welcome and there's still a 'pay-as-you-can' donation basket. Prayer Ministry is always available. (No meeting on 31 August.)

Who's Who at St Stephen's

Vicar	Revd. Keith Thornborough
Associate Priest	Revd. John Reed
Warden	Judith Welch Judith.Churchwarden@StStephensHightown.org.uk
Warden	Jane Copeland Jane.Churchwarden@StStephensHightown.org.uk
PCC Secretary	Beryl Howard
PCC Treasurer	Kate Holmes Kateellis1983@gmail.com
Gift Aid Secretary	Brian Taylor
Safeguarding	Cath Marshall cathmarshall47@yahoo.co.uk
Electoral Roll	Beth Cresswell
Sacristan Team	Hazel Roberts
Health and Safety	TBA
Flower Rota	Sue Taylor
CMS Secretary	Berenice Gibson
St Stephen's Youth Club	Jane Bessant
Church Hall Bookings	Sally Fraser
Focus Editor	Colette Hudson: Focus.Mag.2023@StStephensHightown.org.uk
Focus Adverts	Colette Hudson Adverts@StStephensHightown.org.uk
Focus Distribution	Mr. and Mrs. K. Bradshaw
St Stephen's Church Website	StStephensHightown.org.uk



Sanctuary @ Seven *by Pauline Goodchild*

What is Sanctuary @ Seven? What does it even mean? An obscure website, a real-ale pub, even an animal refuge? Focus clarifies:

In 2014, Graham Goodchild described, in a Focus article, some historical and legal implications of sanctuary. Graham explained that the word 'sanctuary' derives from the Latin *sanctus*, meaning holy;

seven is seven o'clock in the evening. So, the clue to this service is in its title.

Are you, like many people today, rushing from one thing to another in your daily life? Would you like something more meaningful to hold on to - even a pause, a brief respite? Would you like a change? To move forwards - or would you prefer backwards? To mend relationships, or create new ones? Are you disappointed in leaders who can't meet our expectations? Some people feel isolated or lonely, even in a crowd. Of course, a single church service cannot provide all the answers. But ...

Sanctuary @ Seven at St Stephen's is a short, gentle and contemplative service of Holy Communion. It is led by Rev. Keith on the second Wednesday of every month. He reads the Bible pieces set for the day; he plays a piece of music for reflection and then he invites the congregation to share in the Eucharist together. You can choose whether to participate or to sit quietly. There is no sermon, no hymn singing, but time for private thought or prayer. Though, unlike any of the other services, it can, (and does), give solace and comfort to people from a wide spectrum of spiritual values, who may be bereaved, sick, or otherwise troubled – that is most of us, at some time or other. For some it offers a mid-week opportunity to attend church and partake of Communion after work; for others it provides an escape from worldly woes for half an hour; potentially it engenders a more sustainable feeling of calm or peace. The reflective atmosphere is enhanced by candlelight in winter and sunlight (sometimes) beaming through the windows on summer evenings. Each season provides a different experience. Let a few congregation members speak:

Hilary, of Riverside, a longstanding faithful member of St Stephen's, begins:

"I enjoy the peace and quiet contemplation. I come to Sanctuary @ Seven whenever I can as I have found it particularly helpful in times of trouble and grief. It is a short time when I can be still and meditative. I particularly like the music."

Linda, from Crosby, who has become a regular at St Stephen's, says Sanctuary @ Seven is her favourite service::

"It reminds me of a peaceful convent where I stayed in Warminster many years ago

when my son was about to join the army. The nuns were of a silent order, and there was beautiful music at the Sunday services. The music at Sanctuary @ Seven brings back those feelings of peace and a happy time of my life.”

Margaret also comes regularly from Crosby:

“You get a feeling of peace as you walk in - the music just washes over you and soothes you. When I was looking after my elderly, sick father, it became the only half hour when I wouldn’t be disturbed. I left with this feeling of peace and calm.”

Michael, from Thornton, currently attends no other services:

“I was brought up as a Christian, but I didn’t get on with church services. I prefer to meditate by myself. Sanctuary @ Seven is different. There’s no pressure to do anything. The whole service is set out on a single sheet; there’s time to think and I leave feeling peaceful.”

However busy you are, perhaps you could give Sanctuary @ Seven a try next month. Just half an hour to lose, and untold gains. Let Rev Keith have the last word:

“Everybody from Hightown or elsewhere is welcome at all our services. Visitors would certainly be welcome at this special Sanctuary @ Seven service. It's held at 7pm on the second Wednesday of each month.”

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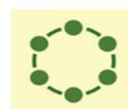
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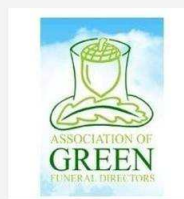
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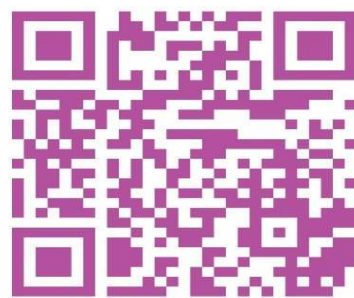
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Tuesday Group, St Stephen's Hall Tuesday morning 10:30am	Beryl Howard Jan Branigan
Hightown Friendship Group 1st Wednesday at 8pm St Stephen's Hall	Marjorie Walker
Gardening Club 2nd Monday 8pm St Stephen's Hall	Hilary Munro
Bowling Club, Sandy Lane	Diana Killen
Hightown Club	Chris Scrine
Blundellsands Sailing Club	Rohan Pickard— RohanPickard@gmail.com Deryk Johnson— DerykJ@gmail.com
Yoga Classes, Hightown Club	Rose Billinge
Flower Show	Debbie Underhill underhillsathome@aol.com
Open Mic Poetry Group 3rd Thursday 7.30pm St Stephen's Church hall	Sally Anne— tapiabowes@gmail.com Alex
Craft Group, Every Thursdays 1.30-3.30pm, St Stephen's Hall	Sue Taylor
Hightown Parish Council	Jenny Farrar clerk@hightownparishcouncil.uk www.hightownparishcouncil.uk
Community Library, Alt Centre, Lower Alt Rd. Mon 12-2, Weds 11.30-12.30, Fri 10-12	Linda Munro lindamunro@hotmail.com
Zumba Gold, Dance for all aged 55 plus, Mondays 9.45-10.30, St Stephen's Hall	Nicky Garsforth
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Prayer Prompts for August

Week 1. Hope lets us literally see the presence and action of the holy in our everyday lives. This is not an imaginary desire viewed through rose coloured glasses. It is the solid evidence of the power of love made visible in abundance.

(Steven Charlston)

Week 2. Hope is a quality of aliveness. It does not come at the end, as the feeling that results from a happy outcome. Rather it lies at the beginning, as a pulse of truth that sends us forth. *(Cynthia Bourgeault)*

Week 3. Hope is the language of the invisible. It transcends circumstances because it transcends physicality. It's spiritual. It's the language of the invisible realm, which is just as real, if not more so, than the things we can see and touch. *(Jon Batiste)*

Week 4. Hope is a participation in the very life of God. It has nothing to do with circumstances or events going well. It can even thrive in the midst of adversity and trial. *(Richard Rohr)*

Let us pray for the people of:

Alt Rd, Village Way, The Roundway, Lower Alt Rd and Thistledown Drive

Smile Lines for Holidays

An airliner flew into a violent thunderstorm and was soon bumping round in the sky.

One very nervous lady happened to be sitting next to a clergyman.

"Can't you do anything about this?" she demanded.

"I'm sorry ma'am," he replied, "I'm in sales, not management."



The scientific theory that I like best is that the rings of Saturn are composed entirely of lost airline luggage.

Entries for future issues of Focus to be sent to
Focus.Mag.2023@StStephensHightown.org.uk
Please submit before last day of month

GOD IN THE SCIENCES

This series is written by Dr Ruth M Bancewicz, who is Church Engagement Director at The Faraday Institute for Science and Religion in Cambridge.

Parable: The Strength of a Seed

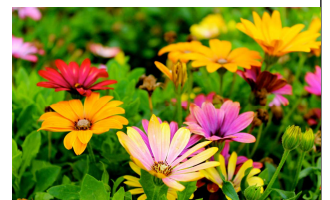


At this time of year, we enjoy the fruits of our gardens, fields and hedgerows: vegetables ripen, crops are harvested, and berries begin to show bright among the leaves. Much of this growth started with a few seeds in spring: the miracle of life coming from small dead-looking things. There is a league table of long-lived seeds. The winners so far are from the narrow-leaved campion, buried by squirrels in the Siberian permafrost over 30,000 years ago. When those seeds finally germinated, they became healthy plants that flowered and produced seeds of their own.

The Bible contains many links between seeds and spiritual growth, and the parable of the sower is the most famous (in Matthew 13). A person may hear or experience something of God which has the potential to germinate into a life of following Him, resulting in the fruit of others coming to know God too. But things can happen that snatch that seed away, killing it before it has finished germinating, or choking its growth.

What about the knowledge of God that gets trampled, churned too deep in the mire of life to receive the warmth and light it needs to develop into faith? Buried seeds don't always die, but they can lie dormant, remaining alive but inactive until the earth is turned over. The possibility of that moment of connecting with something divine, scrap of knowledge, or snatch of conversation resulting in a changed life may seem infinitesimally small, but it's not zero. The seed may be incredibly tough, just waiting for a chance to grow.

The Gospel narrative plays on the fact that it took a long time for the disciples to understand the full implications of Jesus' teaching: a germination process that took many of them three or more years. They could have been discouraged, but Jesus was not. I don't think it's too much of stretch to draw out of the parable of the sower to include the observation that it can take a long time, sometimes decades, for people to work their way through the various barriers, sticking points, and phases of forgetfulness that may keep them from following through on their spiritual experience. When we finally receive – or are open to – the encouragement, challenge, or experience that helps our faith in Christ grow, we can experience the rich fruit of a transformed life.



From Beth's Kitchen

CHILLED LEMON AND CUCUMBER SOUP

This soup, like gazpacho, is served chilled to offset the hot days of summer. Hopefully, we will have more of them and a meal can be started with this cooling, crunchy soup.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 litre chicken or vegetable stock made from stock cubes and cooked to room temperature
- 2-3 unwaxed lemons – zest and juice
- 1 cucumber, coarsely grated
- Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

METHOD

- Place the cooled stock into a large bowl.
- Finely zest the lemons and squeeze the juice from the flesh. Mix into the stock.
- Wash the cucumber and grate into a separate bowl. Add to the liquid and stir well.
- Season to taste.
- Thoroughly chill in the fridge for 2-3 hours.
- Ladle into individual bowls, garnished with freshly chopped mint.
- Serve with crusty rolls or sliced baguette and butter.

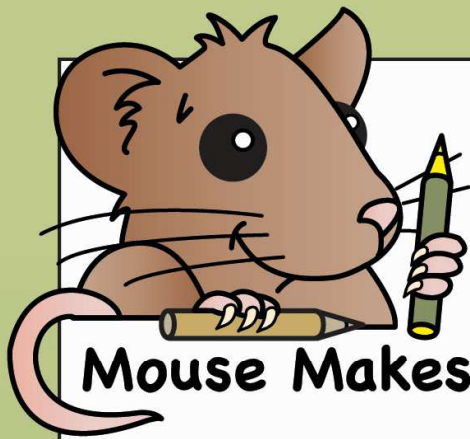
Serves 4



Quotes

Music is given us with our existence. Above other arts it can be possessed without knowledge.—Yeheudi Menuhin

After silence, that which comes nearest to expressing the inexpressable is music.
Aldous Huxley



Mouse Makes

1. To which city did God send Jonah?

Jonah 1:1-2



2. Where did Paul travel to after seeing a vision?

Acts 16:9-10

MOAB

3. Which sea did Jesus walk beside before he went up on the mountain?

Matthew 15:29

5. Which town did Naomi and Ruth travel to after leaving Moab?

Ruth 1:22



4 across

After Paul was stoned, where did he travel to with Barnabas?

Acts 14:19-20

LYSTRA

4 down

Where was Saul travelling to when Jesus appeared to him?

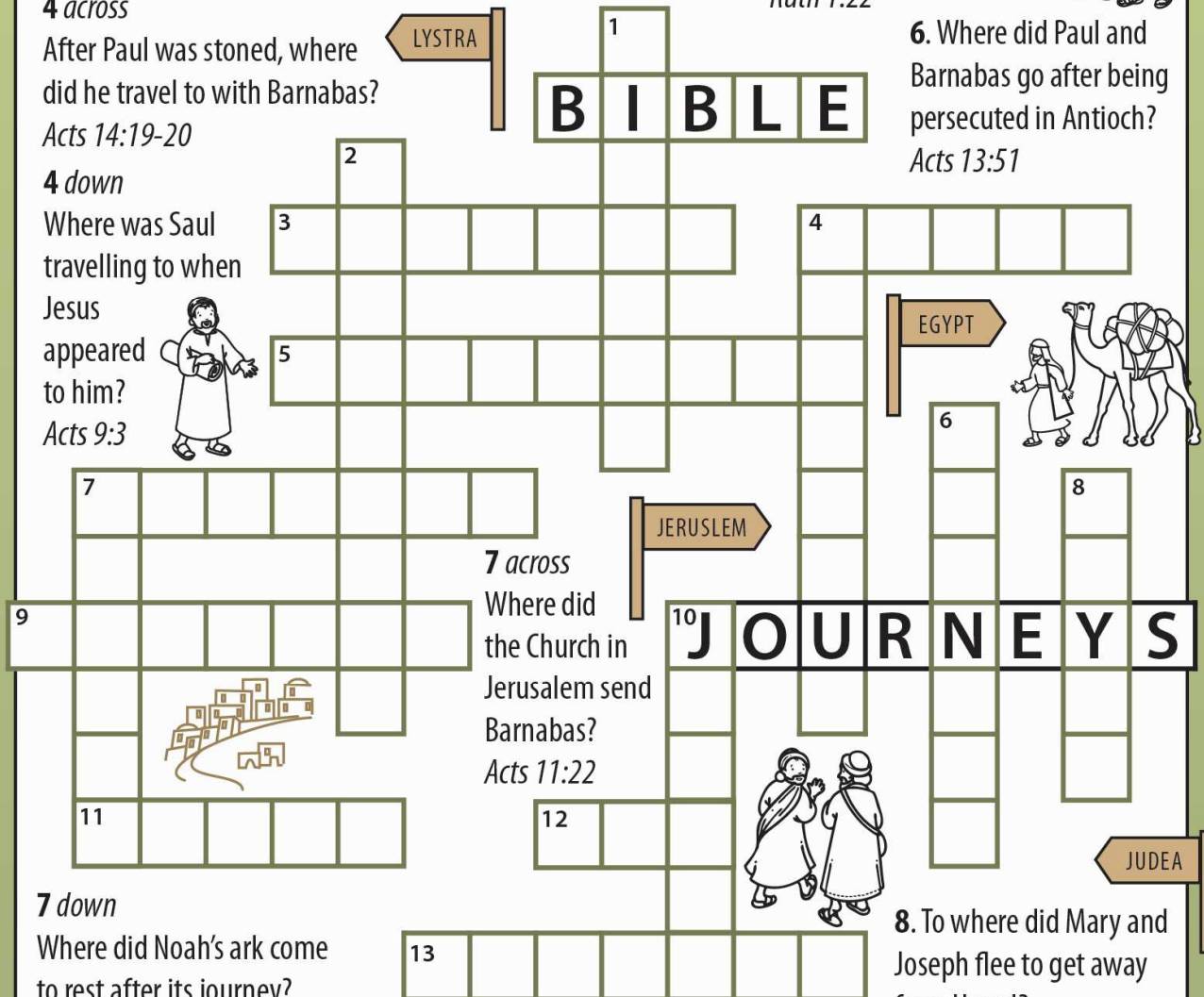
Acts 9:3



6. Where did Paul and Barnabas go after being persecuted in Antioch?

Acts 13:51

EGYPT



7 across

Where did the Church in Jerusalem send Barnabas?

Acts 11:22

10 JOURNEYS

7 down

Where did Noah's ark come to rest after its journey?

Genesis 8:4

9. To which city did Philip travel to proclaim Christ?

Acts 8:5

10. To which river did people travel out to to be baptised?

Mark 1:5

11. After a five day journey where did Paul arrive?

Acts 20:6

GALILEE

12. Which sea did Moses walk through to get away from the Egyptians?

Exodus 15:4



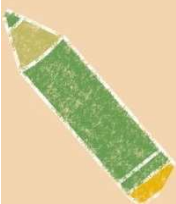
8. To where did Mary and Joseph flee to get away from Herod?

Matthew 2:13

13. Where did Paul travel to after he left Athens?

Acts 18:1





ST STEPHEN'S CHURCH SUNDAY SCHOOL



EVERY 3RD SUNDAY @ 10:30AM



Please note— no Sunday School in August



Toddler Time

A new fun group for Toddlers 0-4yr and their carers!

St. Stephen's Church Hall

Fridays 10:00am-11:30am term time

Play- Craft- Snack- Story- Songs- Fun!

£2 PER CHILD. ALL WELCOME!

Toddler Church

St Stephen's Church

2nd Sunday of each month 4:00pm, No Toddler Church in August

A service for pre-schoolers and their families

Fun songs, a bible story, craft and refreshments

We look forward to meeting you!

Youth Club

From age 7

Friday Evening Term Time

6pm until 7:15pm

£2.00 includes snacks and drinks

Contact: Jane Bessant 07776 305 660

Please note that there will be no youth club during school holidays