



St Mary's Parish Church, Portchester

St Mary's News

No 130 October 2026



From the Vicar

The truth is out there somewhere.

“What is truth?” asked Pontius Pilate during Jesus’ trial. We will never know exactly what he meant, as we don’t know what tone of voice he used. Was it a genuine question of a humble seeker after truth, or was it the cynical sarcasm of a man who had heard enough ‘truths’ during the various trials he conducted, to be wary of such claims?

So, even my opening sentence betrays a lack of certainty.

Truth is becoming the casualty in today’s world where many are keen to ensnare you, frighten you, convert you, or get hold of your money! The BBC now uses ‘Verify’ where experts study videos and photos to determine whether they have been tampered with in order to show a different image – the one they want you to believe. Yes, and some even don’t trust the honesty of the BBC, or at least some of its reporters, as they have their prejudices (as we all have).

We know that governments are not always truthful, neither is MI5. Fake news is something we have come to expect, and AI can now generate not only photos and videos but voices to produce a scene or a speech which is totally fictitious.

Getting to the truth is not as easy as it sounds.

It should, but it doesn’t get any more honest when it comes to Christians. Online sermons and courses have been a tremendous blessing to Christians who want to explore their faith more deeply, and I commend these to you but with a note of caution. In these days when not so much serious theology is read in books, it is far easier to do our ‘research’ on YouTube.



Sad to say, some Christians who put these videos out there are obsessed about knocking others down. There is a great deal of negative anti-Alpha, anti-modern worship songs, anti-Church of England and anti-everything you hold dear, and which has helped you come closer to Jesus. What’s more, you’ll find that hundreds of these videos are appearing to the right of your screen, so you think it must be true. The reality is that ‘Big Brother’ knows what you are into and will keep you supplied through a YouTube algorithm. These help steer you in the way *you want to go*, rather than supplying you with a more balanced diet.

Many of these religious YouTube videos are intellectually dishonest. Richard Dawkins’ book and TV series *The God Delusion* was made up by selecting the worst possible atrocities done in the name of Christianity like the Crusades, the Spanish Inquisition, pro-Nazi Pope, paedophile priests, sectarian conflict, etc. All true, but only a very small part of a much bigger and better picture. Missing is Christianity’s positive side: its influence on music, literature, art, culture, laws, transformation of societies and individuals, charities, care, hope, etc, which comprises most of what we recognise. But even otherwise intelligent people have been taken in by selective editing. I read that the media professor, Alice Roberts, said that she abandoned her faith after reading *The God Delusion*.



The same goes for Conspiracy Theories. Many of these theories are obtained from videos rather than any real scientific or political research. I've lost count of the amount of people who have sat in my front room or sent me videos 'proving' that groups like the Illuminati, the Freemasons, Fabian Society, Lizard People and various other aliens are running our world and that every world leader is a member of that group. My wearied reply is firstly, that I can't prove whether that's true or not true; and secondly, if it is true – what can I do about it? (Apart from pray!)



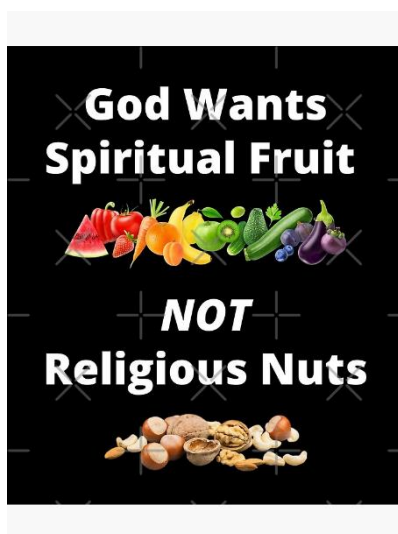
The New Testament teaches that towards the end of the age there will be a lot of deception (thinking you are right when you are wrong), and some Christians will succumb. We need a great deal of discernment.

I'm not saying I am beyond being deceived (to say that would mean I am deceived!). But I think that I am able to smell a heresy or fake from a hundred yards. Firstly, I am grateful for the research skills taught to me while doing a PhD. I had to learn to distrust 'secondary' sources such as books written about the subject (YouTube videos were definitely out!). We had to go back to the primary sources and produce a thesis. The next stage was that we had to defend our thesis in a trial called a Viva, in which two experts in the field would try and demolish our arguments. If they won, the degree was not granted, but if we won – it was. I won mine! I apply these tools to many churches, religious organisations and ideas I come across, and reach my own conclusions.

But what of those who didn't do a research degree, and that's most of you. Well, another way of getting a nose for error is simply having been around for a while. Hebrews 5:14 (ESV) speaks of 'those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil'.

I've been in ministry in various contexts and churches for about 50 years, and this gives me a sense of perspective and knowledge of the Church.

Another weapon in the armoury is having the supernatural gift to 'discern between spirits' (1 Cor 12:10). That can either mean evil spirits or the spirit, or inner disposition of the one speaking or writing.



St Paul in his Letter to the Galatians (5:19-23) also gives us a good 'check-list'. These lists, known as 'the works of the flesh', contrasted with 'the fruit of the Spirit' to work out whether what we are watching or listening to comes from the dark side or from the light. Listen to the tone of voice, look into the eyes, weigh up the contents: is the speaker full of anger, and does the content produce enmity, strife, quarrels, dissensions, factions? Or does the speaker exude love, joy, peace, kindness, gentleness, generosity, etc?

So, where is truth?

At the end of the day, our faith is not in books, pastors, priests, Popes, videos, the Church of England or any other Church, but in Jesus Christ. It is he who said, "I am the way, the TRUTH and the life." Everything he said about life, choices, ethics, consequences and eternity is true. Now follow HIM.

PS. Sorry that this month's Vicar's letter is a bit longer, but the issue is important and relevant right now.
Your friend and Vicar, Ian

OCTOBER SERVICES & EVENTS

Morning Services

8.00am Holy Communion. We have one of the best-attended in the diocese with numbers sometimes reaching 30 and beyond. It's not just for older people, as some young people also enjoy the peaceful, unhurried and reflective pace. This month, we welcome Rev Celia Jones who has recently come onto our ministry team. She will give the sermon about once a month starting on 11th October.

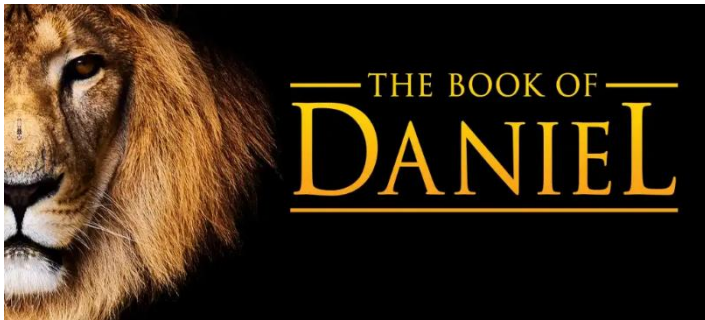


9.30am Parish Eucharist. This continues to be our best-attended service. Although not so many children come to this, we are able to make provision for any who do come. This month, Rev Ian will do a four-part sermon series on Discipleship: 'Being with Jesus', hearing his call to:

- 18th Oct - A journey of transformation (St Luke's Day)
- 25th Oct - Listening and learning (Bible Sunday)
- 1st Nov - Prayer and presence
- 8th Nov - **REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY**
(No Communion)
- 15th Nov - Taking up your cross.



Evening Services



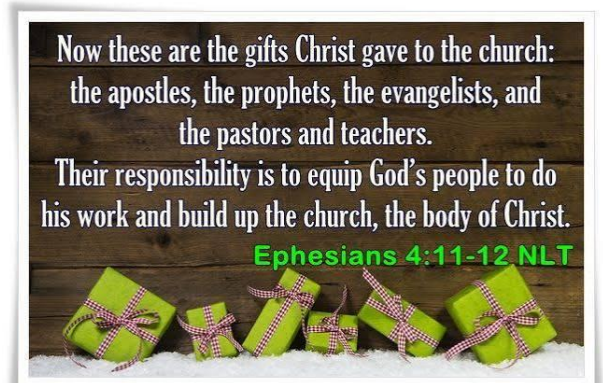
We've had a good start to our autumn series on the Old Testament Book of Daniel, where the pressures Daniel and his friends faced while exiles in Babylon have a contemporary ring. We've met other characters along the way, the kings Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar and the jealous courtier who all have their modern equivalents. Even if you've missed some, please come along as each one is also a stand-alone

sermon. Kathy Snowden provides the music and other people lead the worship.

The first 6 chapters of Daniel are narrative, and from chapter 7 it changes into prophecy, where the waters get a bit deeper. We'll be sounding out the congregation to see if they want to venture forward or have a change.

Course: Discovering your spiritual gift course

Have you ever felt you have some sort of ministry to serve the church with, but are not sure what your basic gift is? Starting on 8th October, Andy Economides will lead a four-week course. Knowing what our calling is, helps us to find our right place. Ephesians 4:11 lists five of these ministries: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. However, if you feel these sound a bit grand, how about putting them in today's context: starters and pioneers; truth-tellers; sharing good news; carers and explainers. Please sign up on the notice board or through the Parish Office.



The Alpha Course

(Starting Tuesday 6th October)

This course is designated primarily for those:

- Beginning to explore what it means to be a Christian
- Coming back to church or faith.
- Thinking about baptism or confirmation
- Or just going over the foundations again.

It normally lasts for longer, but this year we are shortening it, at least initially, to just 6 weeks.

However, why not come along to the **first session**

as a 'taster' and if you think you'll like it, you can continue, but if you think it's not for you, then, perhaps another time or something else.

We start on **Tuesday 6th October at 6.45pm** with a meal, we then watch a video and then have a discussion. It's held at the church.

On a couple of occasions, Rev Ian will be doing the talk, or doing a shorter one along with a video.

The course leaders are Jeff and Pauline Gennings and you could register by confirming with them jeffgennings@gmail.com 07887 536811

or through the parish office office@stmary-portchester.org.uk 02392 321380.

This is also a great way to get to know a few folk better at St Mary's.

If at the end of the course you still have questions not answered, and if there are others who would like to know more, we may put on some additional sessions for those interested.

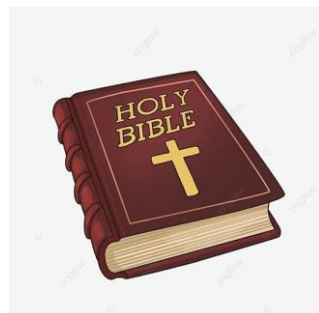
Hoping you'll join us as we discover more.

Rev Celia's art exhibition

Rev Celia Jones is a talented artist who uses visual forms to express her faith and spirituality. For one week from **12th – 18th October**, each day from 10am – 4.00pm, she will be exhibiting some her work in the north transept of the church under theme of 'An Extraordinary Love Story'. This will include collage, artwork, textiles, calligraphy, nature and photographs. It will include a 'Heart' competition where entries will be exhibited alongside the main exhibition.



Bible Sunday (25th October)– please bring along any unwanted bibles



The last Sunday of the Trinity season is also known as 'Bible Sunday' with an emphasis on God speaking through scripture. This year, it fits in with our preaching them of 'Being with Jesus' and hearing from him in his word. We have lots of new people coming along to church many of whom do not have a bible, or a modern version of one. If you have any spare bibles (and most of us have several!) please bring them along to church any time. It would be great to put something on Facebook inviting anyone to come down to the church and take a free bible.

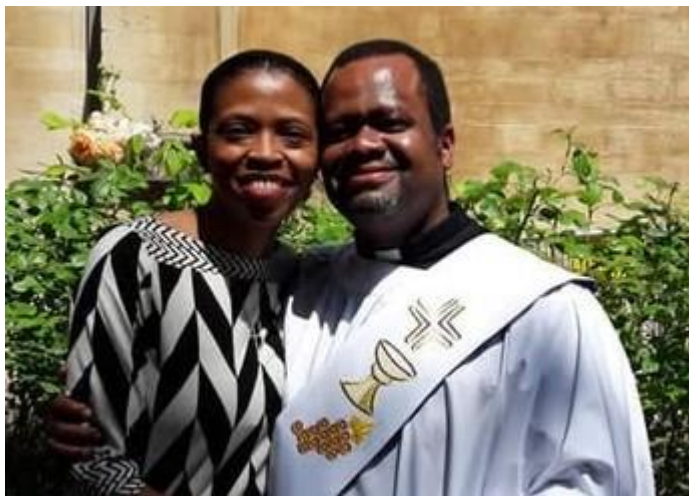




Sunday 11th October 10.30am

(9.30 & 11.30 congregations combined)

This month is Black History Month, and, for the first time, we'll be celebrating this at St Mary's. We have a great service planned for 11th October which will include a Caribbean Steel Band (although coming from Slough!). The Deputy Mayor of Fareham, Cllr Susan Bayford, will be in attendance along with other special guests. Our guest preacher, Rev Reginald Grant is coming from Reigate in the Diocese of Southwark. Samantha Holder is providing some Caribbean nibbles at the close of the service, while you continue to listen to the steel band.



The event which gave rise to this is a special event at the castle on Friday 9th October when there will be an exhibition and talks at the church organised by Cultural Connections and English Heritage. A blue plaque will be placed near the Sea Gate to commemorate the black prisoners who were imprisoned in Portchester Castle in 1796.

The Black Prisoners at the castle

In October 1796, a fleet of ships from the Caribbean carrying over 2,500 prisoners of war, who were mostly black or mixed-race, began to dock in Portsmouth Harbour. By the end of that month, almost all of them were living at Portchester Castle.



Across the Caribbean, men of both African and European descent served in racially integrated military French units that fought against Britain.

On 26 May 1796, the French garrison holding Fort Charlotte on St Lucia surrendered to British forces. They laid down their weapons and marched out of the fort and onto British ships. The terms of their surrender ensured that they would all be treated as prisoners of war, rather than as slaves, as Sir John Moore recorded:

“... a flag was sent from them to know what way they might ... be treated ... The answer ... was, that men regimented ... of whatever colour, should be treated as prisoners of war.”



The garrison consisted of mainly local black soldiers, with a smaller number of European French soldiers. There were also women and children among them.

Life at Portchester for the prisoners from the Caribbean was extremely challenging, because of the cold, damp weather. For many of them, this was their first encounter with a British winter. What is perhaps surprising is that they were treated with some care and consideration.

The prisoners who were transported thousands of miles across the Atlantic to Portchester in 1796 are an important and, until now, untold part of the castle's history, as well as the history of race and diversity in Britain. But they have international significance too, because of the role they played in the struggle against slavery in the Caribbean, where they had taken up the ideals of the French Revolution and fought for their freedom. Their cause was too radical for the powers governing the Caribbean at the time. But it could be argued that in some small way their imprisonment at Portchester Castle, where they were treated

as prisoners, not slaves, allowed them to continue their struggle for equality and recognition.

You can read the full article on English Heritage's website:

<https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/portchester-castle/history-and-stories/black-prisoners-at-portchester/>

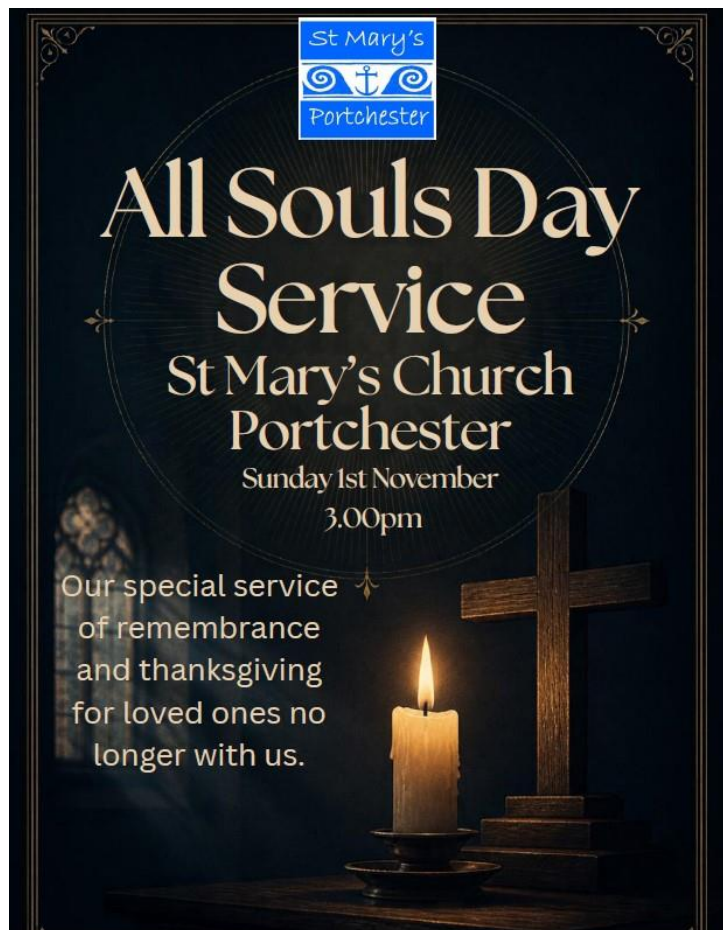
International Food Evening



Friday 30th October 6.30pm at the Parish Hall

We are holding this year's International Food evening on **Friday 30th October**. Samia Hubble and Aline Williams are helping to organise this event. We are inviting all those who are part of St Mary's, and our wider family whose (or their partner's) ethnic origin is outside of the UK to come along – in national dress, if you like. At the last count, we had 18 nationalities represented at St Mary's. We have invited as many people as we know, but please use this opportunity to invite others from outside the church as a way of extending our outreach. If you are able to bring a dish of food of your country that would be great! There is no cost, but we need indications of numbers, so please contact the Parish Office or

Sue Oliver on steve.sueoliver@yahoo.co.uk



NOVEMBER SERVICES & EVENTS

All Souls Day - Service to Remember

Sunday 1st November 3.00pm.

This is our annual service where we invite the families of those whose funerals we have conducted in the past 12 months to come to a special service to remember them. It will be led this year by Rev Elizabeth and Rev Anne. It's a service which is always appreciated, and at a poignant moment, the names of those who have died is read out and a candle is lit in their memory. Anyone is welcome to attend, and you may also light a candle at the end for a friend or relative. Tea will be served at the end, and we are grateful to Taylor & Wallis who are providing the order of service booklets.

No fireworks this year

In the past few years, we have held this around this time but are not able to do so this year. We hope to hold one next year.

Remembrance Sunday – 8th November

Our annual service of Remembrance will be on 8th November at 9.30am. There will also be an act of remembrance at the 8.00am and 11.30am services. “**Portchester Remembers**” our community service at the precinct will be on Saturday 7th at 10.15am.



Confirmation

Saturday 14th November 5.45pm at Portsmouth Cathedral.

Two of our members, James Burgess and Samantha Holder, are being confirmed. We hope that several from St Mary's will come along and support them. On Saturday 9th January, Ruth Westmorland will be confirmed at All Saints Church, Denmead, as she can't manage the November service. Any others who would like to be confirmed then, or at the cathedral on Easter Eve, please let Rev Ian know.

OTHER NEWS

Well-Being Fayre at Parish Hall



On Saturday September 19th September we hosted a Well-Being Day held at the Parish Hall. This was a joint venture between the St Mary's Pastoral Team, Home Instead and HILS (Health & Independent Living Support). The Mayor of Fareham, Councillor Tina Ellis opened the event. This was a first such event for Portchester.

Other care-related organisations were also represented at the event and a taster lunch provided; everything was free on the day, with donations to the cover the costs.

Home Instead & HILS kindly agreed that any remaining monies after costs will go to St Mary's Building fund.

Christian Aid Representative wanted

Rachel Hicks from the Fareham branch of Christian Aid visited the meeting of Christians Together in Portchester to pay tribute to the great work done by the late Valerie Agar as Portchester's representative, and to ask if we knew anyone who could now take on this role. The Fareham and Portchester branch raises around £4,000 per year. The main responsibilities:

- Committee meeting 4x per year.
- Christian Aid Week in May
- Quiz in the autumn – to arrange team of 8 held at St John's Fareham. £5 each.
- St Mary's Tea Room collection box
- Lent lunches: one third to CAFOD two thirds to Christian Aid.
- Collections in the precinct.
- Take money to Fareham Treasurer who pays into CA Account.

Further details from Rachel Hicks at

rachel.hicks@stjohnsfareham.org.uk

Please also let Rev Ian or Steve Oliver know.



All Together Service with J John



Nearly 200 people gathered together on 27th September for our All-Together Service at Portchester Community School. We were delighted to welcome our special guest speaker, J John, accompanied by his wife, Killy.

It was a wonderful morning of worship, fellowship, encouragement, and inspiration as we came together as a church community. Four of our members, John, Samantha, Ann and Ben, shared a brief testimony of their journey to faith in Christ and some of the changes which have happened in their lives. It was such a encouraging moment.

We are so grateful to everyone who joined us and helped make the service such a special occasion.

Members of St Mary's were quite surprised that their Vicar Rev Ian and J John go back a long way, 'before they were famous'! (Or at least before J John was). Both worked almost 50 years ago as psychiatric nurses in Hertfordshire, and Rev Ian baptised J John who was also part of his Saturday morning discipleship group.

We gave a **donation of £500** from our 10% Mission & Charity Fund to the Philo Trust, which is the charity which supports J

John's ministry enabling him to preach the gospel throughout the world, provide training and sell his books at cost price.

House (Small) Groups

To grow in our faith often involves not just attending a Sunday service, but being part of a small mid-week group for teaching, fellowship, prayer and mutual encouragement. These are commonly called 'house groups' because most of them meet in people's homes, although some meet in other venues such as the church, the Parish Hall and the Hub.

Groups plan their own study courses using some excellent resources available.

Currently, we have almost 100 people in such groups which is so encouraging, as that's almost one third of the church. But what about the other two thirds?

We are looking to set up new groups (day and evening) and we need firstly, the offer of homes to meet in (usually once a fortnight), and secondly for people to lead (or really just to facilitate). If you are not already involved and would like to be part of a group or offer your home, please see Carol Gay or Rev Ian.

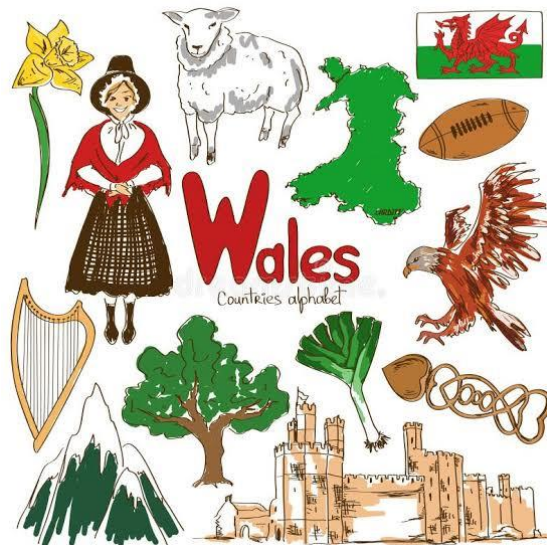


Summer Pilgrimage 2: South Wales

By Rev Ian

For the past few years, Rob Rolfe from the Methodist Church and myself have trekked the hills of England and Wales, and this year decided on South Wales. With a surname like Meredith, you would expect some Welsh ancestry, and so it transpired: my 8x great grandfather, Rice Meredith moved from Wales to Ireland in the 1640s; family legends say as part of Cromwell's army, but as to what part of Wales he came from, I don't know, so for one ancestral line, Wales is 'The land of my fathers'.

The very hot weather stopped us from being too ambitious in hill climbing this time, so we spent alternative days exploring something of the spiritual heritage of Wales. Here are some of the places we visited.



Llantwit Major where St Illtud founded a monastery in the 6th century, the present church being built on its site. Illtud may be regarded as the father of Celtic Christianity in Britain, as it is believed that both St Patrick and St David were among his 1,000 students. Other famous Celtic saints, such as Samson and Gildas, also trained here.

St David's Cathedral, a large and beautiful edifice in the UK's smallest city founded by St David himself, brought back memories of my ministry in Ayr. While there, we had an associate priest who had been ordained at St David's Cathedral and spoke Welsh. Each year on St David's Day (1st March), he led a Eucharist in Welsh attended by Welsh speakers from around the Glasgow area. This must have been quite a unique service in Scotland.

Tintern Abbey on the banks of the River Wye bordering Hereford is one of the best ruined abbeys in Wales. I



was reminded of one of my favourite poems by Wordsworth, *Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey*, where the writer reminisces about rural experiences which sustain him in a more industrial context. However, for me, the poem is more metaphysical, as when at Tintern he became more aware of his soul (as distinct from just thoughts and emotions), and began to 'see into the life of things'.

Having a nose for **heresy**, I found one. I don't mean the sermon, but on the table of a little country church was a copy of the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures* – the bible of the Jehovah's Witnesses. As you would expect, I confiscated it

(rescued them from it!), but admitted to my theft in a letter to the Vicar on returning. (I offered to replace it with a proper bible.) I pointed out that this trash was written by four men, none of whom had any scholarly learning as a Hebrew or New Testament Greek scholars, and that their names were not mentioned in order to avoid scrutiny of their credentials (although the official reason for their anonymity is so that God alone gets the glory!). The Vicar wrote back very generously, thanking me for my diligence and saying that the JW's had

‘planted’ it there. (I thought they only did that at St Mary’s, Portchester, but it seems now to be a national strategy.) The Vicar asked me to burn it at the stake as a heretic!

On the Sunday we attended the service at **Moriah Chapel, Loughor**, where the Welsh Revival broke out in

October 1904 under the ministry of Evan Roberts. I spoke on the Welsh Revival at an evening service last year. Over 100,000 people were converted during that Revival, the Church was revived, society was transformed, and the ripples were felt across the world. In some ways the modern Pentecostal movement traces its roots to the Welsh Revival. It was a very moving spiritual experience to be there. Perhaps it was the power of my imagination in knowing the story, or is there something still in the very walls.

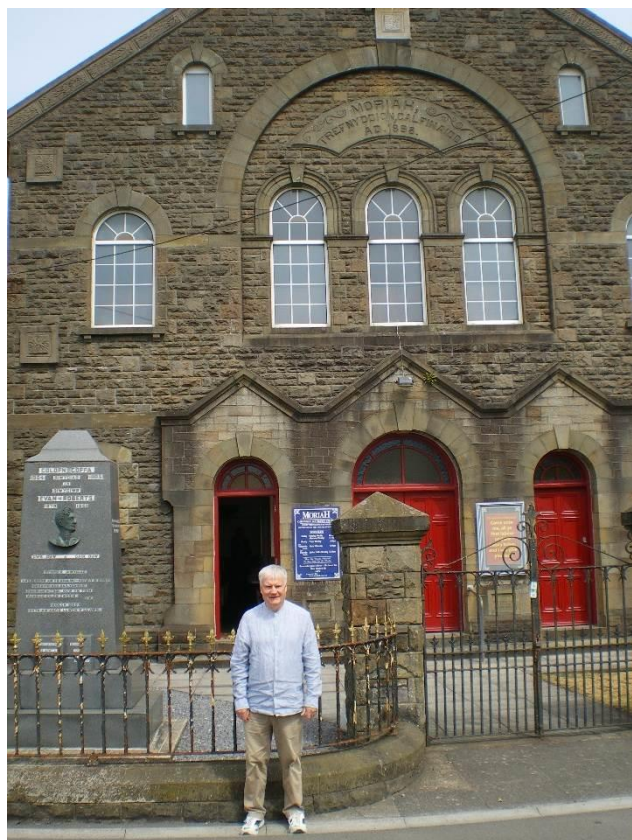
On the final day, we had a lovely visit to **Tim and Penny McIlroy** at Newcastle Emlyn. Tim and Penny miss St Mary’s, but watch the services on YouTube each week. However, they are very settled and love Wales. They are both learning the Welsh language, which goes down well with the natives, especially as Tim is now a Lay Reader in the Church in Wales, and leads services in the small country churches. He can begin the service in Welsh!

Tim and Penny admitted that church life is hard in Wales. They have not had much encouragement (and even some

opposition to mission), but have found a great outlet in the schools with *Open the Book*.

From conversation with them and other things I have read and heard, it sounds as if the Anglican Church is in a bad way in Wales: declining congregations, church closures, lack of mission, and problems in a few of their cathedrals. However, the nonconformists (always historically strong in Wales) are little better: most of the chapels have closed and are now being used for other purposes or left derelict. It reminds me of the poem *The Chapel* by RS Thomas. When we visited Moriah Chapel, the congregation of 30 had doubled due to the presence of visitors (usual congregation, 16). Wales is certainly in need of another revival (as we all are).

Tim and Penny have not lost touch as they pop in every so often to worship with us as Tim’s mum still lives in Portchester. It was lovely seeing them at the J. John service on 27th September.



This month's unsung hero: Leroy Osborne



Leroy Osborne is one of St Mary's most loved members and, with October being Black History Month, this seemed a good time to honour him. Leroy is chair of the Portsmouth Black History group.

He was the first black Chief Petty Officer in his branch of the Royal Navy – but it wasn't easy. Leroy was thankful for his Christian faith which helped him cope with many difficult challenges.

He joined the Navy at 18 and served for 22 years on a number of warships, ranging from destroyers to frigates. His specialism was Electronic Warfare, Communications and Intelligence, and he worked for a while at HMS Mercury, near Clanfield.

He grew up in Wembley, in London, and his mother was a devoted worshipper at a Pentecostal church. Her faith grew out of her roots in Jamaica. Leroy was her first child and therefore expected to comply with

churchgoing.

But then something miraculous happened. He wrote in our diocesan magazine, "I used to see people joyfully praising God, full of the Holy Spirit, and I wondered why I didn't feel that. Someone prayed for me and a strong, warm feeling went through me. I realised what others felt, as I suddenly fell in love with Jesus and couldn't wait to go to church. It felt like a big adventure, and I wanted to discover as much about Jesus's life as possible."

Leroy joined St Mary's in 2014 soon after his wife Sue died. Her funeral was held at St Mary's, and her remains are interred in the churchyard. That began a relationship with our church which has seen Leroy contribute to so much of our life.

Leroy tried the PCC for a while, but got frustrated at the slow pace of change (Change! Who said anything about change!). Rather than talking about things, he is practical and would rather just get on and do things.

In church services, he leads prayers of intercession (he likes background music or us singing the response) and



has preached on a couple of occasions, and is part of the sound team. As part of the fabric team, he is often seen clearing up, doing maintenance work, moving furniture and whatever else needs to be done. He has taken an interest in the Vicarage paddock and would love to see it developed more for church and community use.

It is in work with young people that he is such a blessing. One of the leaders of the former Connect and Momentum, he continued when we

moved over to a more church-based youth group. He has been involved in the diocesan-wide High Tide monthly events and also each year helps out at the SU Summer Camp where he is a great favourite and a good sport, as you can see from these photos.

Leroy, we salute your loving and faithful service to us, and the blessing you are.



Pastoral/Anna Chaplaincy – “Keep persevering”

By Sue Oliver



On Friday 24th July, I was invited to the annual garden party at Cams Ridge Care Home. It was a lovely sunny day, with craft stalls and great food. It was a wonderful atmosphere with over 100 people, young and old, in attendance.

At the garden party, I met Ian Machin who provides singing and instrument playing at Cams Ridge, assisted by teenagers and young adults with special needs.

Ian runs an organisation called LOVE 4 LIFE which involves him providing similar musical events to over a dozen other care homes in the area. I asked if he would come and speak at the Ladies' breakfast next year, which he agreed to do on Saturday February 6th 2027.

I first started visiting Cams Ridge in 2023, initially to visit Audrey Gautrey, who some of you may still remember as a member of St Mary's along with her husband Don and family. After visiting for a good few months, I was asked by the care home manager if it would be possible to conduct services in the care home, to which I agreed. So, along with Eric Standen, Marilyn Nash and Margaret Chappell of St Peters & St Paul in Fareham, we held a mini-Harvest Festival, which was successful and the residents enjoyed it.

A carol service was planned along with Easter and Remembrance services; however, after the initial success of the Harvest Festival, numbers of residents attending the subsequent services was low, as were other events that were arranged/held in the care home.

The home recognised the need to take on an Activities Manager and they appointed Fiona. She has brought commitment and enthusiasm to the role and has been a great success with both residents and their families.

I am now invited to all the events at the home and visit others on request, where needed. I have also been asked to do end of life by the family of one lady.

Looking back, there were times when attendance numbers at the Cams Ridge services were low and at times this was discouraging, but I kept going because, as disciples of Jesus, we are called to perseverance.

Along with Fiona's input, I am pleased to report that there has been an increase in the number of residents attending the services and I am now preparing services for Harvest, Remembrance and Christmas.

I wonder how many times the disciples in first century AD wanted to give up and go back to their homes?

A question for all of us today is how many of us feel like giving up, when things don't just go right straight away?

Galatians Chapter 6: 9 encourages us *'Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up'* A lesson for us all is we must trust in God and let the Holy Spirit do the work and our efforts will be rewarded. Amen



Obituary: Cathy Richardson



Cathy died on 14th September at Bristol where she had moved to be closer to her family. For several months, she had suffered from motor neurone disease. This can sometimes be a slow and uncomfortable death but, thankfully, Cathy was ‘taken home’ before things got really difficult. Right up to the end she maintained her Christian faith and heart-warming smile.

Her father was a Baptist minister, and Cathy was one of five sisters – which must have doubled the Sunday School in small churches! One of her sisters also went into the Baptist ministry. Cathy herself chose a nursing career where her caring gifts brought much comfort and healing.

She lost her husband at a relatively young age and continued to bring up her two sons Tom and Sam on her own.

On moving to Portchester in 2016, she joined St Mary’s. A trained classical singer, she was part of the worship group and also chose videos when the music could not be live. Her great passion was the environment, and she planted our wild-flower garden in the Churchyard.

Appropriately, she was buried in a woodland natural burial plot. Her memorial service will be held at Westbury on Trym Baptist Church near Bristol on Saturday 7th November 2.30pm where she served as Church Secretary for 10 years before moving to Portchester. All are welcome to that service. We wonder if someone is able to go and represent St Mary’s.

We miss her very much and are grateful for the years we had together.

Church Garden

David and Jan Palmer have looked after our church garden for many years, but now feel it is time to hang up the gardening gloves. The garden is a real pleasure to pass on the way to church: neatly kept, its roses and aromas give pleasure to many who comment on it. We thank them very much for their work. Jan continues to volunteer in our Tea Room.



We are looking for a volunteer or volunteers to take over from them. If you can help, please let Rev Ian or Steve Oliver (Operations Manager) know. Dave and Jan will gladly give you a handover explaining what they have done, and what needs to happen for the future.



Mission & Charity 10%

Bryan Jerrard writes,

‘DID YOU KNOW?’

You may recall at the Annual Parochial Church Meeting that the charities we give our tithed income to were listed. This list is published on the church’s TV in the Tea Room. The total for 2026 was some £13,000.

I have been in touch with several of the charities and they have all given us permission to re-publish news of their work throughout the world in the mission field in our monthly Newsletter, some good news for a change.

This is a double benefit, first it gives them another outlet for their mission news, and second, it gives us an insight into how our gifts contribute to their overall spreading the news of the kingdom of God and an opportunity to pray for their work. Should you wish to make a gift yourself their details are held in a special file in the Parish Office.

We hope to publish the first ‘Did You Know?’ in November’s Newsletter and this is from a Bible reading from ‘Word for Today’, a wonderfully interesting theme on a mustard seed. You will be moved to astonishment!

One of the charities we have supported for the past two years is

the Humphries Family who lead Mission Guatemala



On Tuesday 22nd September we had a great evening of praise and worship when the Humphries family shared something of their work. Russell and Linda Humphries were associated with the former Portchester Free Church who supported them in prayer and finances when in 2005 with their children Sophie and Luke they moved to Guatemala at the Spirit’s leading.

They established a work in Santiago Sacatepequez with a very small church and teaching the illiterate to read and write. The children got married and had families of their own which has

grown to a team of 13.

The mission now comprises a growing church, an outreach programme, social care, educational programme and sport.

Santiago Sacatepequez is a Mayan indigenous town with a population of 40,000. It is a ‘Red Zone’ – marked by high rates of gang activity, drug trafficking, and violent crime with daily shootings. It is also steeped in witchcraft and the occult, which have been practiced here for generations.

The Mission has brought the knowledge of salvation through Jesus and has seen many lives changed and set free from the power of the occult, giving extremely poor children a future and a hope. It was our joy to present them with a £1,000 from our 10% Mission and Charity Fund.

You can find out more through their website: www.missionguatemala.info



Are you planning an event at the church or Parish Hall?

Organisation check list

We encourage members to take initiative and to plan social and fund-raising events at either the church or Parish Hall. However, from our experience there needs to be a lot of planning done well in advance, and it is best if a small team can be got together to arrange this rather than just one individual.

Steve Oliver, as Operations Manager and Health & Safety Officer, has compiled a very full document giving a list of everything you need to consider and implement for a successful event. This can be obtained from Steve, Rev Ian or the Parish Office. It includes:

- Planning a social event
- Bringing a team together
- Choosing the venue
- Food and drink
- Safety and comfort
- On the day/evening check list
- After the event.



Parish Hall security

New security arrangements have been introduced at the Parish Hall which are now in place. It will no longer be possible simply to enter the building as before.

- Entry and exist can only now be by the front door. The kitchen door stays locked and is an emergency exit only.
- Entrance is by a key code, and each leader of each group will have been given a code number.
- The Vicar, Parish Administrator and Churchwardens have been given a separate code to allow them entry at any time.
- Each event is timed to allow set up and clearing away. Entry cannot be before this time nor exist after it.
- A door person will need to be appointed by each group to admit members of the group.
- Exit is easier – place your hand close to the exit button and the door will open.
- A doorbell system will operate for late-comers with separate bells for the large hall, small hall and parish office.

We realise that this new system will have its teething problems, and will prove inconvenient for some, but we are asked to go along with it.



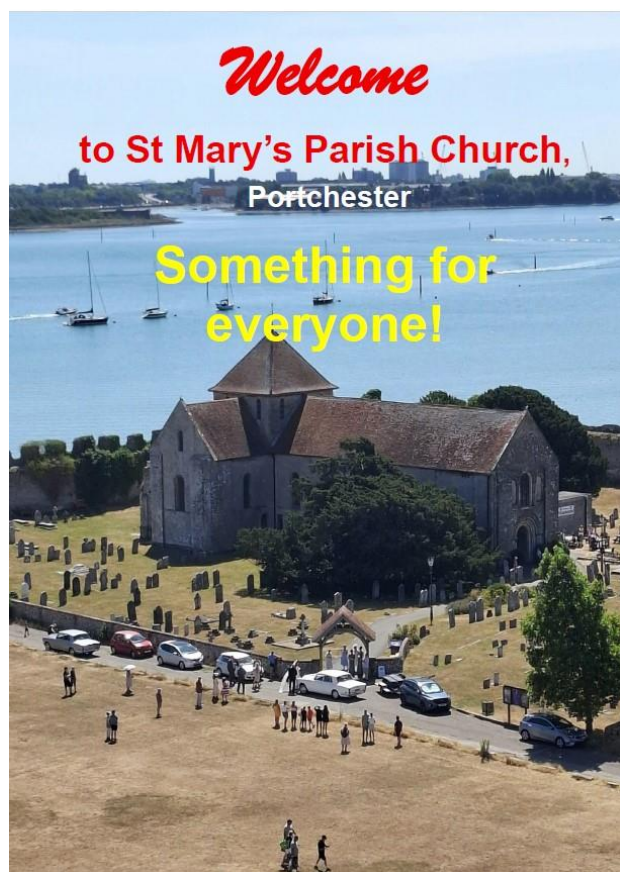
These are the regular events we hold at the Parish Hall:

- Sunday evening service (weekly)
- Friday morning service (weekly)
- Saturday morning ladies breakfast (monthly)
- Saturday morning young men's bible study (fortnightly)
- Tea & Company (monthly)
- Slow Stitch – Wednesdays (monthly)

Directory updated

All those who are on the church Electoral Roll or who are not on the Roll but attend, will be sent by e-mail next week an updated copy of the Church Directory. This includes the names of all those responsible for any ministry in the church along with their contact details. You are asked to keep this fairly confidential and use for church purposes only. A limited number of paper copies will be available for those not on e-mail, or who would prefer this.

Parish Outreach



The last time we distributed leaflets around the parish was in 2021, and so we have produced a new information card to go round all 7,500 homes in the parish of Portchester with Port Solent. It is a postcard with a nice picture of the church on the front and details of our activities on the other side. We hope to attract a few more people to our church through this means.

We need volunteer help:

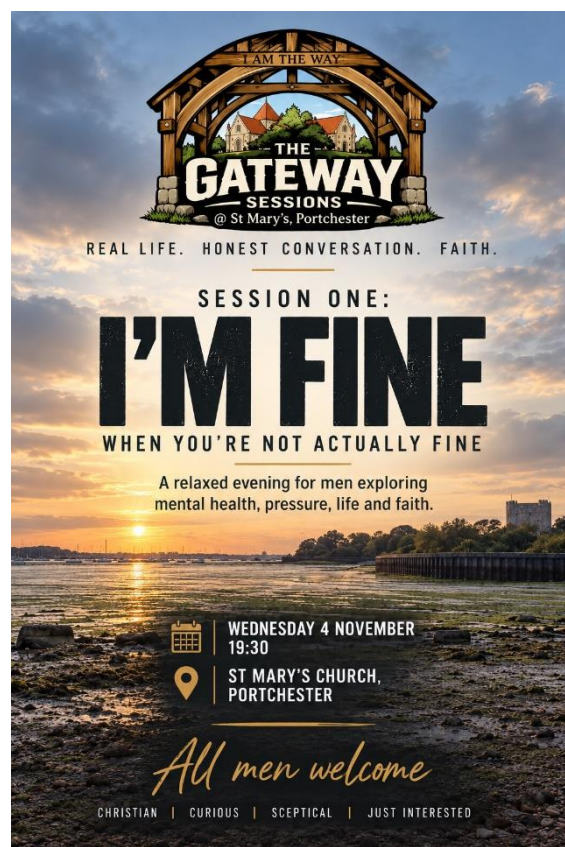
- To count the cards into street bundles
- To put them through letter boxes, hopefully during October.

If you can help put them into bundles, please see Chris at the Parish Office. We will then bring them down to the church and hope that many of you will distribute - even just one street would be helpful.

Gateway Project

Leigh Williams has initiated a new ministry for men to explore mental health, pressure, life and faith. Men face a lot of pressure, and their mental health can go through some challenging times. Often, they don't know who to turn to, and are not keen to involve professional help. The best forum is for men to get together just to chat openly and honestly in a safe context.

Leigh is hoping a group will be formed which will meet monthly on a Wednesday evening and the first one is planned for 4th November 7.30pm at St Mary's under the title: "I'm fine – when you're not actually fine." Contact Leigh on leighwilliams1984@icloud.com





Please start to put aside goods we could sell: bric-a-brac, books, crafts, baking, sweets, bottles, tombola and bring to the church whenever you can.

That awkward moment at church
when you go for a handshake...



... and they go for a hug.



"Welcome to our church—even though
you're sitting in our family pew . . ."

Last word from Rev Elizabeth



A few of you have noticed that I haven't been around so much recently and wondered if everything is ok. The answer is "yes", everything is fine! Part of my training was to spend several weeks in another parish, and my assignment was St Nicholas', Wickham and St John the Baptist, Shedfield. I got on very well with the congregations and clergy and, during the summer, I was asked to help holiday cover (with Rev Ian's agreement). There have also been a few family events which have taken me away. All behind me now, and the diary is clear to be at St Mary's every Sunday from now on. I'm looking forward to renewing old friendships and making new ones.

My curacy here at St Mary's ends in June. I have several options to consider, so please pray that the Lord will guide me. Myself and my husband Pip really love being at St Mary's. Thanks for your love, friendship and encouragement.

**Sunday Services: 8.00am; 9.30am & 11.30am (church in the castle)
& 6.00pm (Parish Hall)**

Wednesdays 6.30pm at the church and Fridays 10am at the Parish Hall.

Parish Office: Portchester Parish Hall, Assheton Court, Portchester, PO16 9PY

Tel: 02392 321380; E-mail: office@stmary-portchester.org.uk

Office hours: Tuesday – Thursday 9am – 4pm; Friday 9am – 1.00pm

Website: www.stmary-portchester.org.uk

Vicar: Rev Canon Dr Ian Meredith, Tel: 02392 375422; E-mail: irev@ymail.com