

# Link

**July 2026**

The Magazine of the United Reformed Church  
Stratford-upon-Avon



***Worship, Witness and love for others through Jesus Christ***

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Stratford-upon-Avon**

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# Thoughts for the Month

## Dear Mr President

I write this message to you from 'the other side of the pond' - the United Kingdom - from a country that used to have a special relationship with the United States of America. I am an ordinary citizen of the UK. I am not a politician, I am not an influencer, I am not a journalist, and I am not a powerful executive in any corporation. My only qualification in writing this letter is that I am a Christian. My Christian beliefs have driven me to write to you to ask you to consider how you should change your modus operandi, or even to realise that it is time for you to step down from the Presidency.



Jesus gave us two commandments, namely: that we love the Lord our God and that we love our neighbour as ourselves. The latter is one of history's most profound moral principles. It expects that we treat people with the same dignity, kindness and grace that we would expect for ourselves.

*"Love your neighbour as yourself".*

I understand that you profess to be a Christian - I have seen pictures of you brandishing a Bible and a picture of your being blessed by American Pastors. In addition, on the White House 'Contact Us' page you state: "We will not forget our country, we will not forget our constitution, we will not forget our God". However, I see no evidence that you stick to, or believe in, the second of Jesus's commandments. First off, if you were to love all your neighbours as much as you love yourself, then many Americans would also be millionaires. You don't appear to show any love or compassion to the people you meet: you constantly berate journalists, especially if they are women, or black, and you don't tolerate anybody who has different views to yours. You have taken away healthcare benefits from ordinary Americans, leaving them worse off. You don't show any love or compassion to immigrants - people who are much worse off than you. I cannot ever see you, yourself, living in the awful conditions that many have experienced in their own countries. They came to the US, and they come to Europe, to find a more peaceful existence and to protect their families. You are denying them that because of the way you treat them and your wish to deport them. A loving person would share the

resources of the US with the less fortunate. Even the American Declaration of Independence states that: "all men are created equal".

*"Love your neighbour as yourself".*

Bombing Iran is, also, not a sign of loving your neighbours. It is motivated by greed and a wish to dominate those who have a different view from you. Killing thousands of people (including children) is not a loving gesture. Have you not heard of the



word 'negotiation'? A strong leader would try negotiating with people whom they don't agree with, would try to see their point of view and treat them as equal human beings. We were ALL made in the image of God - it doesn't matter where we come from - the USA or Iran. Using force is a last resort - for instance in a country's defence. I cannot understand why a person who strongly wishes to be awarded a Nobel Peace Prize can think that starting a war, a war that nobody else wanted in the first place, can ever be regarded as a candidate for a Peace Prize! Also, you, apparently, can't understand why European leaders are not backing you and supporting your war effort. Did you invite them to join in BEFORE you started bombing? I think not! It is not surprising to see that nobody wants to join with you in a failed war. A 'Special Relationship' is a two-way process - you have to treat others as equals if you want them to treat you likewise.

*"Love your neighbour as yourself"*

You profess to be the strongest world leader, and in some respects, I guess you are: you have a lot of money and a lot of armaments backing that up. But leadership comes with responsibilities - responsibilities to the people you govern and responsibilities to the people you would like to influence. Leadership is not defined as the ability to shout at everybody, or the ability to threaten them if they don't agree with your point of view, or the ability to bomb them into submission, or the ability to tell endless lies, so often, that some people start to believe you.

*"Love your neighbour as yourself".*

As Christians we attempt to follow the example of Jesus (admittedly, we don't always succeed - that's human nature). One of his greatest attributes was humility. He never put himself first; he was a servant of all. I don't see any form of humility in your character; in fact, I see quite the opposite! You NEVER seem to put other

people before yourself.

My worry, along with that of many other people, is that if you carry on in the fashion that you have been doing, then you are likely to start World War III. In addition, the very democracy of the US is at risk through the machinations of your corrupt administration.

Last Sunday, in our Church Service, we used a piece of music by a well-known modern hymn writer called Margaret Rizza. It is a chant that you would do well to listen to and to heed:

*“Calm me Lord as you calmed the storm,  
Still me Lord, keep me from harm,  
Let all the tumult within me cease,  
enfold me Lord in your peace”*

In addition, we sang a hymn by Graham Kendrick called “God of the Poor”. The chorus goes like this:

*“God of the poor, friend of the weak,  
give us compassion we pray.  
Melt our cold hearts, let tears fall like rain.  
Come change our love from a spark to a flame”*

Perhaps you might try to show some compassion and some love for your fellow men?

Some people say that Religion and Politics should not co-exist, but if you profess to being a Christian, if you profess never to forget God, then your faith should guide and instruct you about how you live your life. It should instruct you about how you interact with others, how you show love to those around you, how you govern a country and how you interact with the world. Jesus treated everyone as equals, even those shunned by the society in which they lived. Try doing all these things for a change - they are non-negotiable for a Christian.

*“Love your neighbour as yourself”, Mr President.*

**Peter**

## Family News

Ashley has not been at all well recently and is currently back in Warwick Hospital where we trust he will receive positive treatment to ease his problems.

Adrian continues to receive treatment for eye problems and is due to have cataract operations at Warwick shortly.

Rob is back home after a hospital stay and we wish him well.

Fran is undergoing radiotherapy and her husband is also suffering health problems. We trust treatment will improve their situation and that they can enjoy their daughter's wedding on 4th July.

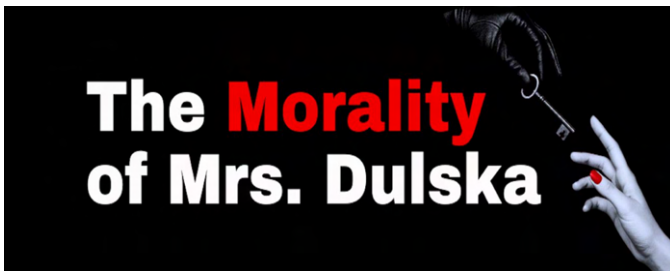
Sue is still undergoing further investigations relating to her symptoms but has at last got an appointment with the relevant consultant on 6th July.

Linda is progressing well following her broken ankle. She has recently had a cataract operation and is dealing with irritation in her eye.

We wish Natasha good luck and success with her English Oral and Maths exams.

## What's on at the Bear Pit

**The Morality of Mrs Dulska: 8th to 11th July at 7.30pm**  
**Matinee on 11th July at 2.30pm**

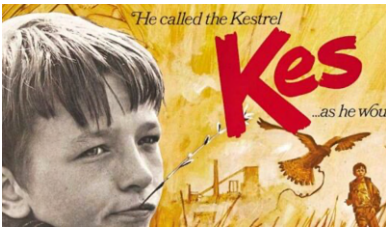


A Copernica and FirstLight production. The Morality of Mrs. Dulska is a razor-sharp comedy about respectability, reputation, and keeping things “nice.” Mrs. Dulska prides herself on strong morals — as long as no one examines them too closely. Her household runs on thrift, silence, and carefully managed appearances, where problems aren’t solved, just discreetly tidied away.

**Tickets: £15 (Under 25's £10)**

**KES (1969): 12th July at 4pm**

A Bear Pit Community Cinema event supported by Stratford Town Trust. In a Yorkshire mining town in the late 1960s, 15 year old Billy Casper struggles at home and at school, dismissed as a troublemaker and offered little hope for his



future. Everything changes when he finds a young kestrel and begins to train it. Through patience and instinct, Billy discovers a rare sense of purpose and pride, forging a bond that lifts him, briefly, above the harshness of his daily life.

**Tickets: £6**

## **‘H’ is for Hawk: 12th July at 7pm**

A Bear Pit Community Cinema event, supported by Stratford Town Trust.

Helen Macdonald, reeling from the loss of her father, withdraws from her academic life in Cambridge and becomes fixated on training a goshawk, one of the most challenging birds of prey to handle. Bringing Mabel into her home, she immerses herself in the demanding routines of falconry: feeding, conditioning, and learning to read the hawk’s fierce instincts. As Helen struggles to tame Mabel, she confronts the rawness of her own grief, discovering that the process of training the hawk is inseparable from the emotional untaming she must undergo.



**Tickets: £6**

## **Les Liaisons Dangereuses: 18th July at 7pm**



National Theatre Screening. Among the glittering salons of the super-rich, reputation is everything and for women, one misstep can mean ruin. The Marquise de Merteuil, a master in the art of survival and manipulation, joins forces with the dangerously charming Vicomte de Valmont to turn seduction into strategy and desire into a weapon. Their cruel games target the innocent Cécile de Volanges and the virtuous

Madame de Tourvel, but when their alliance collapses into rivalry, the fallout is devastating.

**Tickets: £14 - 4 for 3 discount.**

# Erratum

The article about Rob Fradley, in the June edition of Link, contained an error. He did not move to Wiltshire as a Chief Inspector - he had been promoted to Superintendent!

Apologies to Rob.

## SPOILER ALERT!

From my chats in church I have learned that book group membership is a keen interest of a number of us. A couple of years ago I joined one in Wellesbourne and was soon organising it. To me the most interesting facet of belonging to such a group is that you will read books you would normally avoid. I have little interest in travel books but Carole and I were fascinated by Rory Stewart's "The Places In Between". The events took place a decade before he became a politician and describe a walk across central Afghanistan in the middle of winter which would be my idea of hell!

The two thoughts which we wanted to share are nothing to do with icy conditions or blisters or even spectacular mountain scenery.

The first is that one of principle tenets of Islam is that strangers must be given shelter. Arriving at villages where some of the poorest people on this Earth live, Rory was always given shelter. Admittedly there were varying degrees of

warmth in the hospitality but he always had a roof over his head. Often his sustenance was naan bread and tea but that was frequently the sustenance of his hosts. To make matters worse Rory had rescued a ten stone dog which would fight off wolves and that he called Babur, after the first Mughal Emperor who had made the same journey in the 16th century. As Rory insisted on the dog being sheltered too and generally Muslims are more positive about cats, this became an additional challenge but one that his hosts met.

Towards the end of the book Rory considered the second more general issue of



other countries interfering politically in Afghanistan, specifically the Russians and then the Americans and the British. He reflects on their general ignorance of the languages spoken in Afghanistan, the tribal nature of local government and the multitudinous sects and denominations found in Islam. More even than in Christianity and no sign of being united or reformed! No wonder that each interference ended in disaster and now the Taliban are back in control.

There is much food for thought in the book and as for the spoiler, don't get as attached to Babur the dog as us. He doesn't end up eating shepherd's pie in the borders of Scotland although Rory does everything he can to give us that happy ending.

*David Sampson*

## Out of turmoil comes beauty and remembrance

Seeing the lovely red poppies which have sprung up around the front of the church due to the soil disturbances, I am reminded of the poppies we now wear with pride to show our remembrance of the terrible times the world has gone through.

The picture shows a swathe of poppies which have popped up on some unused land in the centre of Alcester where I live and the sight is stopping passersby in their tracks.



As many of you will already know Katie has inspired many of the congregation and users of the church to take part in a huge knitting and crocheting project to create a display on the front of the church in November.

There have been enquiries about what shade of red the volunteers should use and I

thought it was lovely to see that poppies come in many shades and colours.

Thank you Katie, for your inspiration and I, for one, am really enjoying spending my evenings knitting while my husband flicks through the TV channels between the cricket, tennis, golf and of course, football.

Happy creating - we still need lots more.

*Lesley*

## 10th Anniversary of Eco-Church



The Eco-Church programme was launched at St Paul’s Cathedral, London, in January 2016. It replaced the Eco- Congregation programme and our church joined the Eco-Church programme that year. To celebrate this anniversary, I’d like to honour the late Revd Canon Kenyon Wright who was a great supporter of our church’s green journey. He addressed our Eco-Fair in 2007 with the title ‘Our Future – Green or Grim’?

We then discovered he was a Methodist minister and an Honorary Canon of Coventry Cathedral and he became a regular preacher. He also led a Bible study and I’d like to share some of his thoughts from that.

He reminded us that throughout the Old and New Testaments God shows concern for Creation and entrusts humanity with stewardship of the earth. The story of Noah tells us of God’s renewed Covenant with us, all creatures and the earth. The rainbow is a sign of the Covenant between God and the earth. By the time of the prophet Isaiah God’s people were in disobedience and were reminded of the need to “beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks.”

In John 1 v1-5 we read of Christ's role in Creation and in Jesus' teaching about the 'Kingdom of God' there is emphasis on our need to do God's will. In the Lord's Prayer we pray "Your kingdom come, your will be done" but what is God's will for the earth? We read in 2 Corinthians 5 v19 that "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself...and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation."

"Reconciliation is the restoration of broken Covenant relationships with God, with our fellow humans and with the earth itself. It is the healing of the wounds caused by the destruction of the harmony which is God's gift and will in Christ."

In the Book of Revelation, we have a vision of the fulfilment of all things. "On either side of the river is the tree of life, with its 12 kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations."

The Covenant was established with Abraham with the promise that by Abraham all the families of earth would be blessed. The Jewish people inherited the task of being a holy nation, a light to the nations. They failed in their mission, but the Covenant was renewed in Christ and committed to the Church. In 1 Peter 2v9-10 we read "You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people." Has the church failed in its mission too?

Canon Wright reminded us the Church is not a building, but God's people called to serve a world that is in peril. "It is not the layperson's job to help the minister run the Church; it is the minister's job to equip the lay person to change the world." It is important for Christians to be recognised for doing God's work in their professions and activities outside our church buildings. Our buildings should still be "fit for our mission and vision in doing God's work in our community",

but we also need to take on a prophetic role in society so that God's Peace Process may be realised.

*Evelyn Ho*

## Interfaith Forum

Some years ago there used to be an Interfaith Forum in Stratford but it fizzled out and there have been no meetings recently. We have discussed this issue in the Stratford Churches Together Leaders' Meetings in recent months. It is especially relevant in these times, given the agitation and demonisation of immigrant communities.

Patrick Taylor from Holy Trinity has met with Hobbs Bashir and Ahmed. As a result

of this meeting a revived Interfaith Forum is about to be formed. There will be an open meeting on Monday 7th September at 7.30pm at 50, Orchard Way, Stratford-upon-Avon, CV37 9QE. Those present on that date will be asked to approve a new constitution. They have suggested that the proposed constitution will be slightly amended to include people of no faith or other world views. The aim of the Forum will be “Respect and compassion through dialogue and co-operation”.



Any members of Stratford Churches Together are invited to attend.

**Peter**

## The Well of Life

I stepped up onto the low wall surrounding the well I suppose it had been a working well for most of the time the cathedral had stood there, providing fresh water first for the builders and then for the clergy.

Now it sits in a lawn, surrounded by walkways and cycle paths. At some point it was decommissioned and a heavy iron grille was placed over the top to stop people falling in.



More recently a green plastic mesh was added to stop people throwing things in there. Neither grille nor mesh could stop seeds, though, and the well seemed clogged with weeds.

Swaying atop the stonework, I squinted down into the darkness. There, deep down, I saw a small reflection of the sky. There was still water in the well!

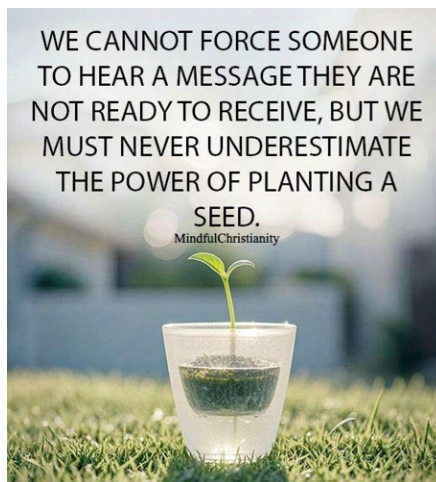
Sometimes we lose sight of our faith and of God! So many things get in the way and obscure our view.

Lift yourself up and look deeply into your life. You will find, when you search, that the well still has water, and God is always there.

*From the Friendship Book - submitted by Fran Maddy*

## Does this make you feel old?

1. Fish and chips wrapped in newspaper.
2. Glass bottles with a refundable deposit.
3. 78 RPM records.
4. Milk delivered in glass bottles.
5. Television in black and white only.
6. Beat bobbies both day and night.
7. The coal man delivering.
8. Shilling-in-the-slot utility meters.
9. Your GP making house calls.
10. Television rental services.
11. Scouts and Guides bob-a-job week.
12. Two films shown per sitting.
13. Conductors on buses.
14. Usherettes at the cinemas.

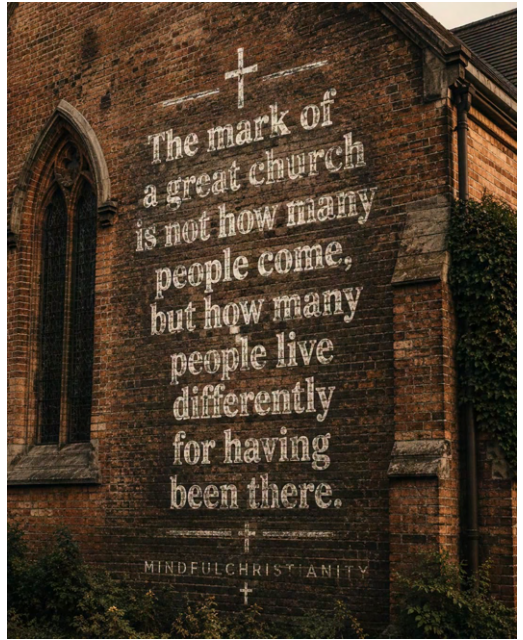


# A Healthy Church

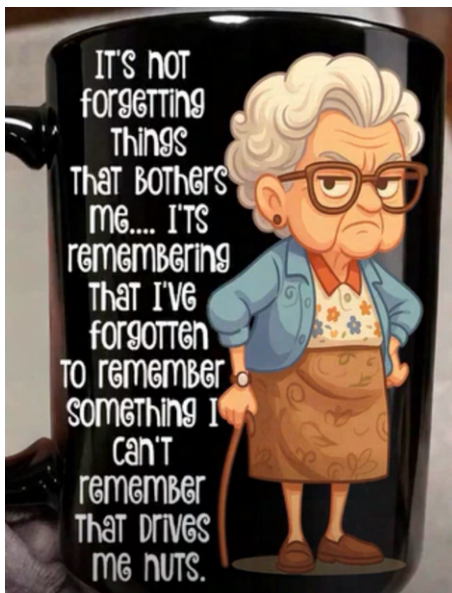
A church is more than a building. More than attendance numbers. More than programs. More than what happens for an hour on Sunday morning. The true impact of a church is seen in the lives of the people who leave its doors.

Do they love more deeply?  
Show more grace?  
Serve more generously?  
Reflect Christ more faithfully?

A healthy church doesn't simply gather people. It helps people become more like Jesus. May we all be part of communities that encourage faith, inspire growth, and remind people they are deeply loved by God.



## *Mindful Christianity*



# Wellesbourne Sings!



**Anybody recognise this chap in the middle?**



**He's obviously enjoying himself!!**

# Foodbank Requirements

## Items needed:

Coffee - small jars  
Handwash  
Tinned hot dogs  
Tinned vegetables

Tinned Chicken meals  
Instant Mashed Potato  
Cleaning spray

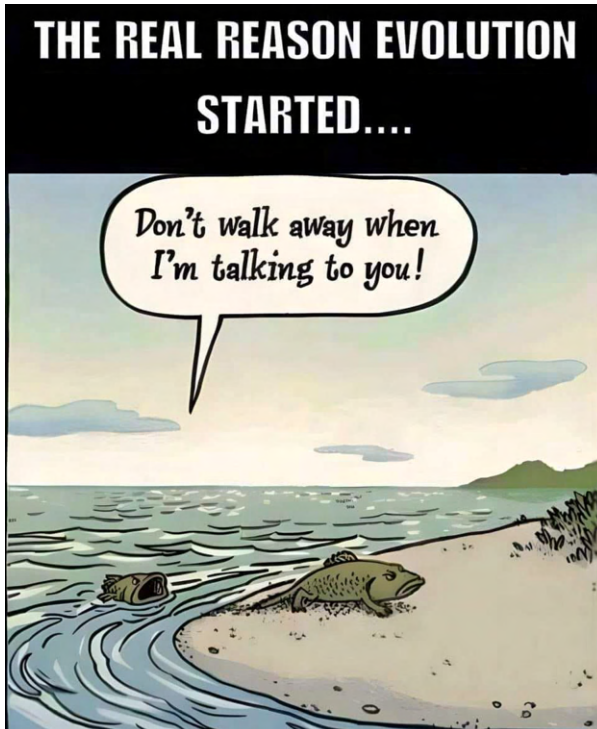
Long-life fruit juice  
Shampoo  
Shower gel

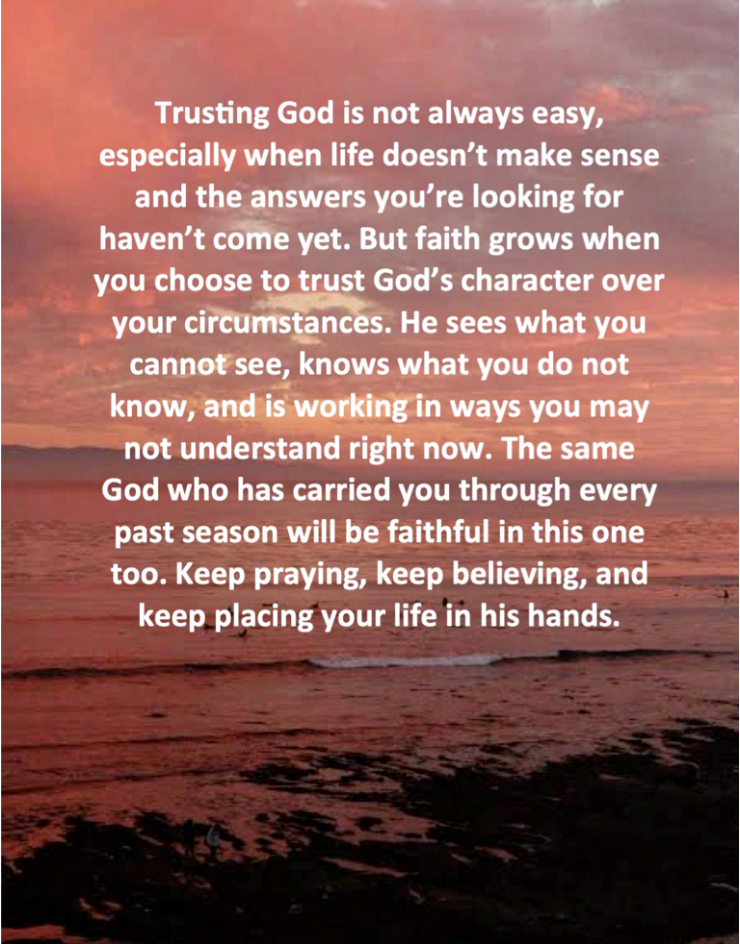
## Items NOT needed:

Adult toothpaste  
Conditioner  
Razors  
Fabric conditioner  
Sanitary towels

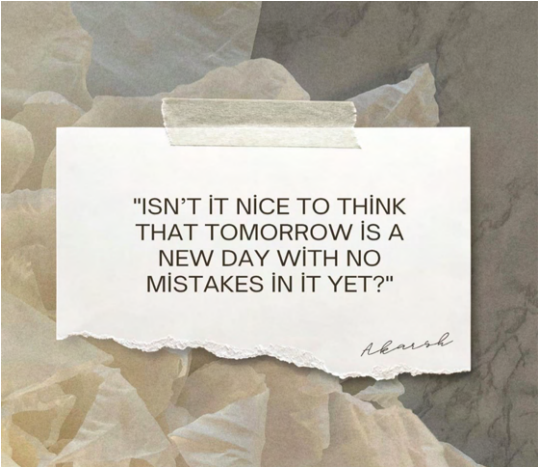
Baby wipes  
Hand soap  
Baby food  
Incontinence products

Cereal  
Pasta  
Baked beans  
Pasta packets





Trusting God is not always easy, especially when life doesn't make sense and the answers you're looking for haven't come yet. But faith grows when you choose to trust God's character over your circumstances. He sees what you cannot see, knows what you do not know, and is working in ways you may not understand right now. The same God who has carried you through every past season will be faithful in this one too. Keep praying, keep believing, and keep placing your life in his hands.



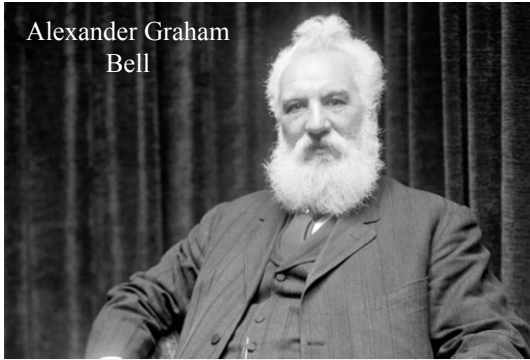
"ISN'T IT NICE TO THINK  
THAT TOMORROW IS A  
NEW DAY WITH NO  
MISTAKES IN IT YET?"

*Abundant*

# Closed Doors

How often do we stand staring at a closed door, replaying what could have been, wishing things had turned out differently?

Yet life has a way of moving forward, even when we're reluctant to let go. Sometimes the opportunities, blessings, and new beginnings we're praying for are already taking shape... we're just too focused on what we've lost to see them. Faith invites us to trust that not every closed door is a setback. Some are redirections. Some are protection. And some are making room for something better than we could have imagined.



Alexander Graham  
Bell

The famous saying, "when one door closes, another door opens," is actually a famous quote by Alexander Graham Bell. The quote ends with "but we often look so long and so regretfully upon the closed door that we do not see the ones which open for us."

# Good Deeds

Marcus Aurelius, the Roman emperor and philosopher, once asked: "When thou hast done a good act and another has received it, why dost thou still look for a third thing besides these?"

He was talking about those who seek praise. But you did something well and it helped someone. Those are wonderful things in their own right!

***Friendship Book - submitted by Fran Maddy***

# Sunday Services at 9.30am

5th July	Holy Communion	Revd Geoffrey Hodgess Roper
19th July	Morning Service	Peter Horrocks
2nd August	Holy Communion	Peter Horrocks

## F&F Rota

Please report any problems with the buildings in July to:

Brian Douglas 01789296290 / 07899 777432

or

Ann Jones 01789266177 / 07580 557163

## Flower Rota

5th July	Brian
19th July	Lesley
2nd August	Linda & Peter

## Link

**Because of the way our Sunday services are now structured, the editors have decided that the physical copies of Link magazine will be available on the 1st Sunday of each month rather than the last Sunday of the month. The electronic version may well be available before then. When there are 5 Sundays in the month the Link will be available on that 5th Sunday.**

**The August edition of Link will be published on the 2nd August.**

The deadline for submission to the next edition is Monday 27th July.

Please send us your articles, pictures, humour etc.

**Editors contact details:**

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# People's Emergency Briefing

*On the climate and nature crisis*

## Stratford upon Avon



Film screening and discussion

Rother Street Arts House  
29<sup>th</sup> July 2026 6.30 pm

[www.nebriefing.org](http://www.nebriefing.org)

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