



**The Parish of
St. Martin's, Chipping Ongar
with St. Peter's, Shelley**

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JULY 2025 NEWSLETTER

To be a growing church, God's gift to the community

Letter from The Rectory ...

"I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now." This is the verse with which I began my sermon at the 8 am Communion Service on Trinity Sunday. My comment was that I suspect Jesus would be saying exactly the same thing today, to me, to you, to all his followers everywhere.

From Prison to Praise

This thought was triggered by a book Revd Neil lent to me when he saw our memory verse bookmarks. I finished reading it the week before Trinity Sunday and found it mind-boggling. It's called From Prison to Praise and is an autobiography by Lieutenant Colonel Merlin Carothers, Chaplain in the US Army. He enlisted in 1943; was arrested by the FBI for going AWOL because he was bored; received a suspended sentence; served as a demolition expert in Europe at the end of WWII. In his spare time, he did fairly well at gambling until he discovered profiteering on the black market was much more lucrative. On leaving the Army, he was going to train at law school, but thanks to his grandparents' prayers and their direct invitation to accompany him to their church, God spoke to him. He signed up as a Christian instead and became a Methodist minister. Three years later he rejoined the Army as a Chaplain and ended up serving round the world including Vietnam.

His desire for adventure and willingness to take risks enabled God to put him on a special training programme clearly designed and implemented by the Holy Spirit. Each step of the way, he learned something that previously he would have been unable to bear but now, even after his death, continues to pass on to others through his books.

I am now trying to put the learning from the final chapters of "From Prison to Praise" into practice, and have recruited the members of our Fellowship Group to do so as well. We've already had one rather amazing coincidence following our first attempt.



Give thanks in or for all circumstances?



**Rejoice always, pray without ceasing,
give thanks in all circumstances;
for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.
1 Thess 5.16-18**

To explain what we're doing, I first need to explain that I've always heard and understood that when the Bible tells us to rejoice always and give thanks in all circumstances, it means that we count our blessings, look on the bright side of life, praise and thank God for the good things, regardless of our circumstances.

As an army chaplain, Lt Col Carothers learned that fairly early on but then God moved him up a gear. Rather than thanking and praising him for good circumstances we find ourselves in and in spite of any bad ones, God prompted him to give thanks and praise for both good AND bad circumstances, and then God tested his obedience in several different ways.

One was through his car refusing to start. It meant he would be late, which is a big no-no in the Army. But he prayed thankyou prayers that it wouldn't start as presumably God was going to teach him something through it. No sooner had he finished than someone came along who got it started.

Exactly the same thing happened the next day. This time he took the car to the Army garage, where he learned the car mechanic for his kind of car was off sick and the nearby civilian garage was enjoying taking advantage of the situation. Sure enough, when he got there, it was with a certain amount of glee that the car mechanic told him he'd no idea what the problem was, no idea how long it would take nor how much it would cost and to bring the car back the next day. Lt Col Carothers promptly thanked God assuming that God would bring some good out of the situation. And right at that point the mechanic said, "Wait a minute! I've just thought of something!" poked around under the bonnet with a screwdriver and said, "Now try it." Needless to say the car started with no problem and sounded as good as new, and to cap it all the mechanic refused to charge him.

2025 Memory Verse on steroids

God's response was to say, "My Son, what I wanted you to know was that you never again have to worry whether anyone will overcharge you, hurt you, or mistreat you unless it is my will. Your life is in the palm of my hand and you can trust me for all things. As you continue to thank me in all circumstances you will see how perfectly I work out every detail of your life."

Wow. It sort of all makes sense doesn't it? If we really believe that God loves us, knows the best for us and that we can trust him for all things, then thanking him for all the circumstances we find ourselves in, is bound to come naturally, isn't it? Except that if you're anything like me, it doesn't but instead feels like a huge challenge. Whilst I've learned the power of forgiveness and counting my blessings, the power of praising God FOR the bad stuff whilst I'm in the midst of it and don't yet have the benefit of hindsight is something I'm only just beginning to experience.

God carried on giving the Lt Col opportunities to experiment with this. He tells story after story of people with problems, including himself, who put this in to practice by praying prayers such as, "Lord I really don't understand this, but your word clearly tells me to trust you, that you know the plans you have for me and they are plans to prosper me. It tells me you know all the hairs on my head and will provide everything I need. It tells me to rejoice always and to give thanks in every circumstance because this is your will for me. It tells me that you work all things together for good for those who love you. So I thank and praise you that my wife wants a divorce, that my husband has a serious drink problem, that I have a serious heart problem, that I have hayfever, that I've got a blinding migraine headache...

And in every case God stepped in with healing. He saw many seriously remarkable coincidences – including the absence of side effects in a 2-year-old girl who'd drunk turpentine, the mental healing of suicides, and the emotional healing of numerous marriages.

As I said, it all fits with biblical teaching, even if the church hasn't always taught this. Maybe that's merely symptomatic of our lack of faith and trust in God's love and care. We assume we know what's best for us and when we don't get it, we re-interpret scripture to fit our experience rather than wondering whether perhaps it's our understanding of what's best that is wrong, or wondering whether perhaps we've not properly put biblical teaching into practice so have simply failed to understand the power of praise in the spiritual battle that the bible warns us we are fighting.

You have a choice

The Lt Col did of course meet opposition, and I want to close by quoting a short extract from his book:

Wherever I went I now shared what I had discovered about the power of praise. I was beginning to learn that praise was not just a form of worship or prayer, but also a way of waging spiritual warfare. Often when someone began to praise God for the problems that faced them, they found that Satan increased his attacks and that the situation appeared to become worse instead of better. Many who tried the way of praise became discouraged and were unable to hold onto their belief that God was in charge.

Others simply didn't understand and refused to try praising God for unpleasant things. "It just doesn't make sense," they'd say. "I'm not going to praise God for something I just don't believe he's got anything to do with. How can God have anything to do with my broken arm or my wrecked car or my husband's horrible temper. I'd be foolish to thank him for something like that."

Of course it doesn't make sense. The question is does it work? It didn't make much sense when Jesus said leap for joy when you are hungry or poor or persecuted. Yet he very definitely told us to do just that. In Nehemiah 8:10 I read: 'the joy of the Lord is your strength'. The enemy's arrows just can't penetrate the joy of someone who is praising the Lord. In 2 Chronicles 20 we read how a whole army was defeated when the Israelites simply praised the Lord and believed him when he said that the battle wasn't theirs, but his.

The message is just as clear today. The battle isn't ours, it is God's. While we praise him, He sends our enemies scurrying.

You'll have to decide for yourselves. It is an immense challenge I know, but I for one am willing to accept the testimonies of both the apostle Paul and Lt Col Carothers and give it a go, asking the Holy Spirit for his help in doing so. I want to win the spiritual battles I find myself in and help others to do so as well. If you decide to try it too, then turn to the psalms for inspiration – they are full of prayers from psalmists like King David who find themselves in dire straits and whose common refrain is, "Yet will I praise the Lord." Which they promptly go on to do...

God bless and may your July be full of the power of praise and may you know the joy of the Lord as your strength.



Revd. Hazel



*Morning Prayer each
Wednesday at 9 am in St.
Martin's Church*

STREETS TO BE PRAYER FOR:

29 th June - 5 th July	Bansons Way and Frank Bretton House
6 th July - 12 th July	Bansons Lane and Bansons Court
13 th - 19 th July	Bansons Yard and Bansons Mews
20 th - 26 th July	Barkers Way
27 th July - 2 nd August	Barons Close

FROM THE REGISTERS:

Baptisms / Confirmations:

Weddings / Renewal of Weddings Vows:

Funerals / Internment of Ashes / Memorial Services / Cremations:



CALENDAR FOR JULY 2025

All Services are in St. Martin's unless otherwise stated

Wed	2	9.00 am	Morning Prayer
		10.00 am	Communion in the Chancel
		7.30 pm	"Leading Your Church Into Growth" Course at Toot Hill Village Hall <i>All welcome and if you would like to know more, please contact Revd. Neil Taylor - 01277 532770</i>
Sun	6	8.00 am	Communion
		10.30 am	One Big Family Service
		11.00 am	<i>Church@Home</i> Service of Morning Prayer*
Wed	9	9.00am	Morning Prayer
		10.00am	Communion in the Chancel
Thu	10	2.00pm	Julian Meeting in St. Peter's, Shelley
Sat	12	10.00am	Table-Top Sale in the Church Rooms, Castle Street
Sun	13	10.30 am	Communion with hymns <i>Church@Home</i> Service of Morning Prayer*
Tue	15	8.30 pm	Tuesday Club meets at The Cock
Wed	16	9.00 am	Morning Prayer
		10.00 am	Communion in the Chancel
Sat	19	9.00 am	St. Peter's, Shelley Churchyard working party <i>Please contact David Irving for more info</i>
Sun	20	8.00 am	Communion
		10.30 am	One Big Family Service
		11.00 am	<i>Church@Home</i> Service of Morning Prayer*
Wed	23	9.00 am	Morning Prayer
		10.00 am	Communion in the Chancel
Sun	27	10.30 am	Communion with hymns
		11.00 am	<i>Church@Home</i> Service of Morning Prayer*
Wed	30	9.00 am	Morning Prayer
		10.00 am	Communion in the Chancel

Another date for your diary

Sat 9th August **Summer Fayre at St. Peter's, Shelley**
Further details to follow when available

**If you haven't attended Church@Home before
and would like to attend, please contact Shirley Dudeney
(shirleydudeney@btinternet.com) for the necessary link*

*Are you holding an event? If you don't tell Peter Dudeney it won't appear in the Calendar.
His contact details are email peterdudeney@btinternet.com - Phone: 01277 364143*

TABLETOP SALE

Refreshments available

12TH JULY | 10AM TILL

NOON

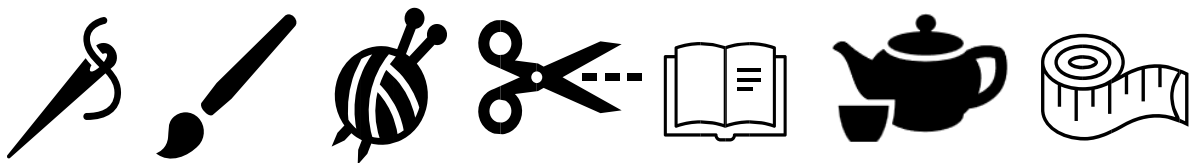
CHURCH ROOMS, CASTLE STREET, ONGAR

Tables available to book in advance are £10 each

Phone Linda on 07889 397811

Help us to raise funds for our church by selling your unwanted goods.

*IF YOU COULD MAKE SOME CAKES TO SELL AT THIS EVENT,
PLEASE LET LINDA KNOW. Many thanks...*



SMARTYCRAFT FOR JULY

Join us at our SmartyCraft session in the Church Rooms on Thursday 17th July from 1 pm until 3 pm.

Please come and relax with our craft project, tea and a chat. Jill will provide a short bible reflection for you to ponder on and Rita will provide refreshments.

Hope to see you there ... **Jill and Rita**



News from The Leprosy Mission June 2025

A Myanmar resident called Thander Bo, who works for The Leprosy Mission there, visited their Peterborough office recently. While there, she told of the horror the people of Myanmar are facing right now: story after story of people, made in God's image, desperately clinging to

the edge of existence. Today, a shocking humanitarian crisis is crushing those who already have nothing.

Families have been shattered by years of civil war. The devastating earthquake in March only added to their fear and suffering. Survival is a daily struggle. And as in any disaster, people living in poverty and those with leprosy are forgotten. It's impossible to get leprosy care. Many hospitals are closed. Landmines and fighting make travelling to the few open clinics dangerous.

People like Zaw Win (left) need to be found and cured before disability strikes. Many also need vital surgery to restore movement to hands and feet. Perhaps most of all, they need to know someone cares. Zaw Win used to be a bookbinder, even with leprosy. He used to volunteer as an accountant for the Myanmar Association of Persons Affected by Leprosy. He organised leprosy awareness events to help fight discrimination and ensure people learned how to recognise the signs and get treatment. Now he is confined to a makeshift shack because it's too dangerous to travel – even to the hospital for much-needed leprosy care. There is no work. There is no money. He can no longer provide for his family. He has lost touch with his children and grandchildren because he cannot pay his mobile phone bill.



There is a team of volunteers willing to take leprosy care and other aid to people in remote communities like Zaw Win, but they need funds to do so. £282 will train and equip and send out a community health volunteer for 3 months. That not only ensures people with leprosy are found and cured quickly to prevent disability, but also brings them hope and the love of Christ. £454 sets up a mobile reconstructive surgery clinic to restore movement to hands and feet, and healing broken lives. The Leprosy Mission ask us to give whatever we can, however little, to help those with leprosy survive the terrible crises afflicting their country.

Ongar & Shelley Ladies' Thursday Group

Guardian of the Lights

Linda introduced Mark Lewis who came to talk about lighthouses. The study of lighthouses is called Pharology, which derives from the first lighthouse built in 270bc called the Pharos of Alexandria. Sadly, it is no longer there. Apparently, none of the UK lighthouses are now manned and are all automatically controlled at a depot in Harwich.

Ancient mariners were guided by the stars, but in bad weather they could not see hazards such as rocks or sandbanks, so many ships were wrecked. When the first lighthouses were built, they had a fire at the top. This had to be continually stoked by the lighthouse keeper.

Muckle Flugga in the Shetlands is the most northerly lighthouse in the UK which took 12 years to build. Since the 1800's, the lighthouses used to be manned by 3 people, just in case one became ill or died.

All keepers had to be trained which included learning semaphore and cooking. Some land lighthouses could accommodate a family who needed to be self sufficient, growing fruit and vegetables and also having their own cow! It was hard work for a lighthouse keeper having to clean the glass lenses, check the lantern and lights, and keep a daily journal. Now the lighthouses have solar panels, but still need to be inspected regularly. Linda thanked Mark for a very interesting talk.

Next month we have our annual outing, so the next club meeting will be on Thursday 3rd July at the URC. Entry at 2 pm for 2.30 start.

Jan Turnbull - June 2025



St. Peter's Church, Shelley

What's happening at St. Peter's



On Sunday 29th June we celebrated our Patronal festival – St. Peter's Day with a bring and share picnic in the churchyard. We had a lovely relaxed time together and thoroughly enjoyed Karen's and Cheryl's home-made quiches.

This was followed by a Songs of Praise service, attended by eighteen people. The service was divided into three segments using the "teaspoon" model - Thanksgiving, saying Sorry and Please may we have ... each segment had a short homily followed by prayer.

The hymns were played beautifully by Susanna Brooks on our new preloved organ and included a beautiful ecological hymn sung to a familiar tune.

On Saturday 12th July we have a table at St. Martin's Table Top Sale to raise money for permanent toilets, please come, rummage and buy!

We have a working party planned for Saturday 19th July, in the morning, to tidy up the churchyard in preparation for our **Summer Fair** which will be on **Saturday 9th August** please put that date in your diaries."

For any queries about our events or about St. Peter's, please contact Monica Richardson on 07717-877575.

Monica Richardson

Unable to get to church?

Well why not go to?

A Church @ Home



Want to know more?

Well, contact Shirley Dudeney

shirleydudeney@btinternet.com

**for more information
and the Zoom Link**

HOME COMMUNION ... Is there anyone who, for one reason or another, cannot be in Church as they used to be? For those of you who would like it, we can offer home communions. If this is something you would like, please contact either myself, Sue on 01277 362723 or Shirley on 01277 364143, and we can arrange a convenient time to bring the sacrament to you.



ST. MARTIN'S, CHIPPING ONGAR

Times for Services & Private Prayer



Sunday Services

First & Third Sundays - 8 am - Holy Communion

**First & Third Sundays - 10.30 am - One Big Family for All
(non-Communion)**

**Second, Fourth & Fifth Sunday - 10.30 am - Holy
Communion**

Wednesday

9 am - Morning Prayer

10 am - Holy Communion

St. Martin's Church is usually open for Private Prayer each day between 9.30 am and 5 pm or until dusk whichever is the earliest (12 noon on Saturdays).

Please adhere to any notices displayed

WE LOOK FORWARD TO WELCOMING YOU!

Please do remember to visit us on the 'A Church Near You' website <https://www.achurchnearyou.com/>

OUR 2025 TEXT TO REMEMBER



Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18



THE TUESDAY CLUB



... next meets at ..

The Cock
on the

Third Tuesday of the month at 8.30 pm

Come along and enjoy good conversation and banter

ALL WELCOME !

PARISH VISION

To be a growing Church, God's gift to the community.

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

In the light of God's call and our situation here, our mission is:

to be a more evident presence in our community, witnessing to God's love for all;

**to be God's hands and feet within the Church and beyond through
worship and prayer;
listening and serving;
acceptance and welcome;**

**to be a people who are growing towards a closer relationship with God,
creation and each other.**