

CONTACT

June 2024



Volume 65 - Issue 6
Sawston Free Church

Churches Services and Dates for Your Diary

**SFC Services-(also available via zoom) SFC email: secretary@sawstonfreechurch.org.uk,
Sawston Free Church:**

02 June 10.30am : Morning Worship – Rev Mike Wilson
3.00-5pm: Messy Church
09 June 10.30am : Morning Worship and Holy Communion –
16 June 10.30am : Morning Worship – Rev Mike Wilson
23 June 10.30am : Go4th
30 June 10.30am : Morning Worship –

The closing date for **July Contact** is **Wednesday 19th June**

**David Nunn is the editor, so please email your items
to anne.nunn@btinternet.com**

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The monthly magazine of
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Dear friends,

I write from hospital where I have been for the last week awaiting further exploration of a possible heart problem. I have spent most of the week in a cardiac ward with four other men, all awaiting similar interventions. I have been very conscious of this ward being my “front line” – as we have been exploring on our series “Fruitfulness on the Frontline”. What would it mean for me to be “fruitful” on this front line?



The most constant feature of this front line is my fellow patients. We are all wired in to monitors, so, apart from when I escaped to the day room on my birthday for a while, we spent the whole week together. There are not that many situations where you spend a whole week in the same room with four other men you haven’t met before. Chris, Dmytro, Graham and Brian* became my constant companions.

I found a few ways to be fruitful on this frontline. The first thing, as is often the case, is to make contact. Wards can easily be (like railway carriages) places where you are close to one another in proximity, but make no real contact. The best way to break this down is simply to engage – to talk to someone. I chose Brian, he was opposite me and I walked past his bed regularly to get to the bathroom. I simply stopped the morning after he was admitted and said, “welcome to the ward”. That’s literally all it took. It often takes just one person to talk and all of a sudden it is normal to talk to each other.

Wards are never private spaces, we all quickly accepted that we all knew each others’ business! Curtains are drawn when doctors appear, but they are only paper curtains. Quickly we knew LOTS about each other – medical history, recent bowel movements, domestic dramas... I even know Graham’s house key-safe code and the first line of his address because he had to explain it loudly several times to a friend on the phone! (I also know he lives on his own and he’s away at the moment!)

In terms of the language used in our series, this is a very mild way of “**Moulding Culture**”. The culture on the ward became – it’s normal for us to stop and chat – to pull up a chair and ask how we’re doing – it’s how we do things on this ward with this intake of men. I learned a lot about Chris’s job before he retired; I learned as much as is possible with Google translate about Dmytro and his family coming over from Ukraine; I learned about Brian’s two brushes with death when his heart had stopped, one where he saw the “white light” (a long way off) and the other where his heart miraculously restarted itself after 8 seconds after he had collapsed on the bathroom floor, in the house on his own; I learned a lot about Graham’s quite colourful drinking past in Glasgow! All of this is simply being a person who listens – or “**Modelling Godly Character**”.

The other part of this frontline is the many and various staff in so many different roles coming in and out every day. I can **model Godly character** to them and the other patients by NOT treating those changing beds or bringing tea trolleys as my servants, but being interested in their lives too. Saying please and thank you, being patient through frustrating delays, making an effort to remember their names, asking tired nightshift workers how they are doing... all “**modelling Godly character**”.

Alongside my fabulous family and the warmth of this congregation expressed through visits, messages and cards (and a Whittlesford bible study group singing happy birthday to me down the phone from their meeting) – these patients and staff shared my 60th birthday. Staff sang to me and patients all shared my cake!

None of this is in the least bit remarkable, none of this is in the least bit special or impressive. And that’s the point! Being fruitful on your frontline is simply taking more seriously and intentionally the ordinary everyday interactions and connections that are already part of your day or your week. You might be the postman every day. Have you ever asked him anything about his life or struck up a conversation? Who are the people you see every day and yet do not know their names? ***What does your front line look like, and how can you be fruitful there?***



Every Blessing,

Rev’d Phil Nevard

Phil

*names changed to protect confidentiality

Poverty and Inequality in the UK

PAUL MORRISON (JPIT Policy advisor with particular responsibility for issues around the economy including poverty and inequality.)

The government statistics from March this year on UK poverty make for horrendous reading. The median UK household got poorer by 1.5% after housing costs. However, behind that average hides a story of those with the most getting more, and those with the least having even less.

This is a familiar pattern, however because so many people have so little room in their budgets, reductions in income translate much more quickly into hardship and hunger. For instance, while the number assessed as experiencing “absolute poverty” rose by around 0.6 million, the number of people at risk of not affording enough food jumped 2.5 million, from 4.7 to 7.2 million, in a single year.

Some headlines:

- 14.3 million people experiencing relative poverty
- 4.3 million children in relative poverty – the highest ever
- 3.6 million children in “absolute” poverty – up 300,000 in a year
- 7.2 million people living in “food insecure” households – up over 50% in year
- 2.2 million children living in “food insecure” households

These numbers in context:

14.3 million people experiencing poverty, including 4.3 million children, should be shocking enough. But to make sense of them we need to look at how poverty in the UK has developed over recent years.

Average household incomes have grown slowly over the past decade – even relative to average prices. The median family with an average shopping basket is slightly better off than a decade ago. However, the prices of things the least well off must spend their money on, such as food and energy, have risen more than the average. On top of that, many on low or no incomes rely on benefits, which have been subject to huge reductions. As is well documented by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, this means that benefits do not provide enough for many families to avoid destitution.

In this context incomes fell, and the safety net of the benefits system was unable to catch struggling families. For me the two most striking things from these statistics are how quickly income loss leads to hardship, and how already marginalised families are bearing the brunt of increasing poverty.

Hunger has moved closer

A decade ago, there was an unspoken assumption that if a person was supported well, destitution could be avoided for all but a very few. The dangers of being pushed into poverty lay in not accessing support, and over the medium and long term as future health and life chances were eroded. This was especially true for children.

These numbers tell a different story – one that is now familiar to church foodbanks and community projects. Families experience a fall in income, and even with all the support available, rapidly come face to face with impossible decisions about how to maintain the very basics of life including food.

In the UK today 7.2 million households face food insecurity, this is a jump of over 50% from the previous year, with families with children seeing the most rapid rise. In non-technical language this means they sometimes can't afford enough food. Sitting and chatting with people visiting foodbanks will tell you that "sometimes" not being able to feed your child translates into "always" worrying and struggling to keep food on the table.

Poverty has been focused on already marginalised groups

It is important to recognise that the UK is a wealthy country, and that wealth is increasing. Incomes and wealth have grown over the past decade. However large numbers of people are locked out of these gains.

We know that wage progression from low paying jobs is becoming rarer and more difficult. Just as importantly the large increases in wealth we see are not generated by more saving, but existing assets, especially property and shares, increasing in value – that means those that already have assets get more while those without see asset prices moving further and further out of reach.

This means that those with least are being locked out of the gains in national wealth. Benefit cuts compounded this, by focussing losses on communities with low incomes and especially their children. Totemic of this is the fact that the majority (51%) of Black, African or Caribbean children in the UK now experience poverty. How have we allowed this to happen?

Let's End Poverty

A series of political and policy choices have resulted in this situation, where the wealthiest have got wealthier and poverty has increased among our least well-off children, so much so that 17% no longer live in families that are food secure. That situation is not inevitable. Different choices can be made.

The Let's End Poverty campaign is premised on the belief that with political will we can turn the tide on poverty in the UK. The £10Bn spent on National Insurance cuts in the recent Budget could bring poverty down to below pre-pandemic levels, or take us half the way to ensuring destitution and hunger are eradicated.

These numbers show why every politician in every party going into the next election needs to be able to explain how they will tackle poverty in the UK.

(The Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT) is a partnership between the Baptist Union of Great Britain, the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church. The purpose of JPIT is to help the Churches to work together for peace and justice through listening, learning, praying, speaking and acting on public policy issues.)

<https://jpit.uk/>

GOD CALLING

Calm not speed

"In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength"

ISAIAH 30:15

All agitation is destructive of good. All calm is constructive of good, and at the same time destructive of evil.

When man wants evil destroyed so often he rushes to action. It is wrong. First be still and know that I am God. Then act only as I tell you. Always calm with God. Calm is trust in action. Only trust, perfect trust can keep one calm.

Never be afraid of any circumstances or difficulties that help you to cultivate. this calm. As the world, to attain, has to learn speed, you, to attain, have to learn calm. All great work for Me is done first in the individual soul of the worker

Many blessings

Kate Leach

PREVIOUS INCUMBENTS



BUILT THE
TOWER



INSTALLED
GAS LIGHTING



MAGNIFICENT
BEARD



FOUNDED THE
SCHOOL



DID WONDERS
FOR THE ROSES



NAME ON
A PLAQUE



LARGELY
ABSENT



INTRODUCED
INNOVATIONS



ABOLISHED
INNOVATIONS



LEFT UNDER
A CLOUD



WROTE
A BOOK



BUILT CHURCH
ON NEW ESTATE



DAY OFF:
FRIDAY



UPSET THE
FLOWER ARRANGERS



PUB OUTREACH
MINISTRY



BEFRIENDED
THE METHODISTS



STARTED THE
FOOD BANK



KEPT THE
PLACE GOING



We started Christian Aid week on Saturday 11th May with a Quiz night.

About 70 people took part and our quiz master Janet Bennett gave us questions for 9 rounds. She did an excellent job and it was a close run final.

It was a very enjoyable evening which included a Ploughman's supper and we were very happy to welcome teams from St Mary's, Our Lady of Lourdes, and the local community.

Thanks so much to everyone who helped out, from setting up, manning the sound, preparing and serving the delicious food, and tidying the church ready for the Sunday service.



On the Sunday morning a few of us manned the cake and drinks stall outside the church ready to hand out to the runners of the Fun Run. We were kept very busy with the 1500 runners of all ages who passed by, some running, some walking but all happy to take some refreshment and enjoy the morning. Thank you to those

who helped and provided cakes. They were all eaten!!

In the afternoon our minister Phil led us in worship centred around Christian Aid and the help they are giving to the people of Burundi.

The following Saturday we collected money outside the Co op and people were very kind in supporting us. Thank you to all those who helped and to the people who gave.

We have not yet counted the donations but will include the totals raised in the next Contact.

Mary.

June Flower Rota

I am sure we are all very happy to see the church decorated with flowers, and, as you know, after the service the flowers are passed on to anyone in the church who needs support.

As you can see below, two people have put their names down for June. Please think about signing up for any dates that you would like to pay for flowers and discuss with any member of the flower team if you have any special requirements.

A member of the flower team will contact you nearer the date you have chosen.

2 nd June	- available
9 th June	- available
16 th June	- available
23 rd June	- Mary Simuyandi
30 th June	- Maggie Jones



Many thanks,

Rosemary Harriss, Rosemary Livings, Dawn Haughton, Vivien Ford and Linda Moxon.

Please note that the views expressed in this article are those of the author, Michael Wilson, and not in any way representative of the views of Sawston Free Church.)

On 12th August 2022, the novelist Salman Rushdie was the victim of an assassination attempt whilst preparing to give a lecture in New York. In April of this year he published *Knife*[2] describing the attack and his subsequent reflections. His Muslim attacker is understood to have been indirectly motivated by the Iranian *fatwa* issued against Rushdie in 1989 in the wake of his novel *The Satanic Verses*. He has lived under the shadow of possible assassination ever since.

Towards the end of his book Rushdie meditates upon the role of art in the face of orthodox teaching. He says,

‘Art challenges Orthodoxy. To reject or vilify Art because it does that is to fail to understand its nature. Art knows that received ideas are the enemies of Art. ... Without Art, our ability to think, to see freshly, and to renew our world, would wither and die. Art is not a luxury. It stands at the essence of our humanity. And it asks for no special protection except the right to exist. It accepts argument, criticism, even rejection. It does not accept violence.

This is, I think, an important observation. Rushdie speaks of Art. He could equally well speak of creativity, and include in that all the creativity and imaginative thinking that goes into science and technology. For what he is pointing out is that the clash between those who think things should stay just as they are (or even go back to having things as they were in some previous golden age[3]) and those who want things to change seems to be both violent and inevitable. There is no room for negotiated compromise. ‘Just a little change’ is still change. To the diehard, a little change is merely the thin end of the wedge, and equally unacceptable. But is Rushdie right? Is the clash inevitable? And is it inevitably violent?

We in the church are acutely conscious of the issue. On the one hand are those who suppose that the church as it is (or as it used to be) represents the correct understanding of the unchanging truths and ordinances expressed in the scriptures and the creeds. It should not be altered one jot or tittle (Matt 5:18) On the other are those who suppose that (as Jesus teaches at John 16:13) it is the Holy Spirit of God

that leads us into all truth, and that the same Spirit of God is now calling the church to new things. The clash is inevitable.

Is the clash inevitably violent? Well, *emotionally*, it can be very violent indeed. It can and does lead to scenes quite inappropriate within the fellowship of Christ. But remember Jesus' anger as he cleared the temple courtyard (Matt 21:12). The idea of a church without Christ-like passionate commitment is surely horrible?

Is the *physical* violence inevitable? It is certainly recurrent. Our history of unspeakable cruelty inflicted by Christians on Christians over this issue besmirches the name of Christ. It certainly *appears* to be inevitable.

We Christians look to the death of Jesus as a touchstone. What does it tell us in this instance? Does it tell us that religious violence, even *within* Christianity, is simply how it is and that the death of Jesus is our clue as to how to endure this cruel yet God-created world? The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world' (Rev 13:8)? Or does it point us to some fundamental flaw in human thinking from which we could and should learn? Let me suggest the latter.

Arguably, Jesus died because the Jewish authorities recognised virtually from the start that he represented a threat to them so radical that there was no room for compromise (Mk 2:6, John 11:53). His vision of the life of freedom in the spirit of Divine Love was incompatible with theirs of the life of righteousness under the Law of Moses.

Jesus was not the first to point this out. That fell to Jeremiah. Six hundred years before Jesus, he watched Jerusalem being reduced to rubble by the ineptness of its rulers and the Babylonian army. The Moses project, it seemed, had failed. If the day ever came when Jerusalem was to be rebuilt, what should they do? Rebuild as before, and have it happen again? Which is what they in fact attempted.

In one of the most sublime moments in the Old Testament, Jeremiah realised that the problem was that the Mosaic Law of God was written on tablets of stone. It was deliberately designed so that it could never, ever, be changed. He heard God saying, 'I will put my law within them, *and I will write it on their hearts*' (Jer 31:33).

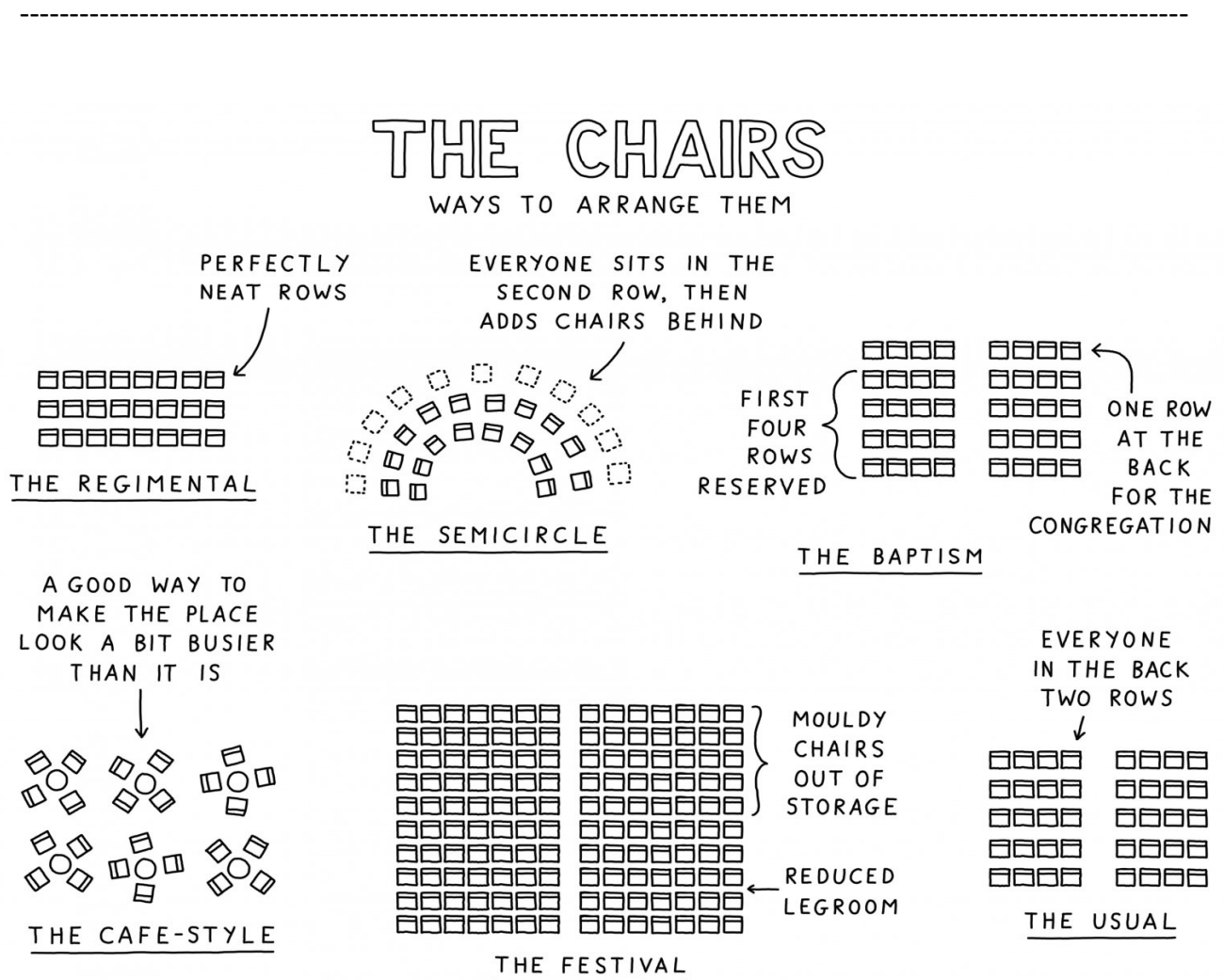
Does God *ever* write on tablets of stone? Like Jeremiah, I think not. When people write on tablets of stone, they do it not to serve God, but to serve themselves. As a young minister, someone actually said to my face, 'We haven't spent all these years getting this church as we like it only to have you come and change it!' That is it in a nutshell. As we like it.

Here then, I suggest, is a Christian commentary on Rushdie’s observations on orthodoxy and change: The Law of Christ isn’t written on tablets of stone. It is written on our hearts – written in love. The Law of Christ is not, *cannot ever be*, set in opposition to the movement of the Spirit. In Christ, change is constant and inevitable. To be ‘in Christ’ is to rejoice in new things being written on our hearts, however much we regret what we leave behind. To reject new things *per se* is, in fact, to reject Christ! We look forward, to a better city (Heb 11:10). For as Jesus says, ‘No-one who puts a hand to the plough and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God’ (Lk 9:62).

[1]Exodus 16:3

[2]Rushdie, Salman. *Knife: Meditations after an attempted murder*. London: Jonathan Cape (Penguin Books). 2024

[3]As Michael Flanders famously remarked, ‘If God had intended us to fly, he would never have given us the railways.’



STEP Bible

(brief introduction by Phil Nevard)

STEP stands for Scripture Tools for Every Person' and is designed to give users across the world, particularly those in disadvantaged countries, free access to trustworthy Bible expertise. Created by Bible scholars at Tyndale House, Cambridge, UK, it is curated by a non-denominational body of scholars and other volunteers who are passionate about sharing accurate information on the Bible.

This is an absolutely fantastic FREE resource for anyone wanting to look a bit deeper at any Bible passage, without every having had to learn any Greek or Hebrew!

When you open it up, the Bible is in a window on the left (you can choose from a huge selection of translations), with all the non-incidental words highlighted in blue. When you click on a word, the window on the right tells you the Hebrew/Greek as appropriate, lists the meaning(s) of that word and, really helpfully, lists all the other verses in the Bible where that word is used.

For example: If you find John chapter 21, and click on the word “love” as Jesus asks Peter three times “do you love me?”, you will find that Jesus uses the word “agapao” twice, but Peter answers using “fileo”. Then Jesus uses the word “fileo”. To help understand the nuances of these words – and therefore this conversation, you can then see where else they are used to help you understand the kind of contexts they are usually used in.

Had this tool been available 30years ago, it might have saved me 2yrs of study! I can't recommend it highly enough and it is entirely free! It has many more tools apart from this one – to be explored and enjoyed at your leisure.

It can be found here: <https://www.stepbible.org/>

It can also be downloaded as an app on your phone or onto your laptop.

IT DOESN'T MATTER

*The man is unreasonable, illogical and
egocentric —
It doesn't matter, love him.*

*If you do good, they attribute it to your ego —
It doesn't matter, do the good.*

*If you realise your objectives,
you find that you have false friends and true enemies —
It doesn't matter, realise them.*

*The good you do today is forgotten tomorrow —
It doesn't matter, do the good.*

*Honesty and sincerity make you vulnerable —
It doesn't matter, be frank and honest.*

*That which you have constructed in a year
is destroyed in a moment —
It doesn't matter, construct.*

*If you help the people, they resent it —
It doesn't matter, help them.*

*You give the world the best of yourself
and find that you receive a kick —
It doesn't matter, give the best of yourself.*

— MOTHER TERESA



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The Footprints Café is located at the back of Sawston Free Church. Car parking behind the church.

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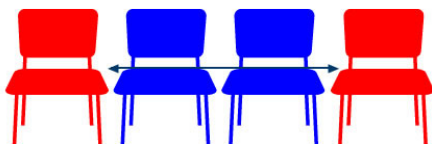
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**We're back to normal
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or from the comfort of your home using Zoom!

Email secretary@sawstonfreechurch.org.uk for more details

in person



online

