

The Buzz From St B's

Online

Autumn 2026



Hadleigh Castle

St Barnabas Parish Church
Church Road, Hadleigh SS7 2EJ

Here For Everyone!

www.stbarnabas-hadleigh.org.uk

You Give Them Something to Eat



The evenings have begun to draw in. It happens every year and every year it catches me out — that first week when you look up from the washing up and find the light has gone from the window a good hour earlier than it did a fortnight ago. By the end of October the clocks will go back and the dark will arrive properly, in the middle of the afternoon, as it always does.

For most of us that is an inconvenience. For some of the people living around us, it is the beginning of the hardest stretch of the year. The curtains close at four. The road goes quiet. The company thins out. Whatever loneliness has been manageable through a bright summer becomes a good deal less manageable when it is dark by teatime and stays dark until breakfast.

I want to write about that, but I need to come at it through Romans, because that is where we have been these past weeks.

We travelled through Paul's letter together this summer. We asked whether we should carry on in sin so that grace might abound, and we said no. We asked which master we serve, and we answered: Christ. We sat with Paul in the spiral of Romans 7, where we fall and turn and fall again, each turning pulling us further inward instead of further out. We heard that there is now no condemnation. And underneath all of it we held on to one thing: it may feel as though we are the ones walking away from God, but God is not walking away from us.

Then Paul brings the whole argument to its summit. "I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Nothing in the whole of creation is strong enough to prise us out of his grip. Not our failures. Not our spiraling. Not death itself. And then — this is the part that has stayed with me — Paul does not stop to enjoy it.

Having reached the highest point in anything he ever wrote, he says in the very next breath: "I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart." He is thinking of his own people, and he says something extraordinary: that he could wish himself cursed and cut off from Christ if it meant they might come in. He has just declared that nothing can separate him from the love of God, and immediately he would accept that separation himself for the sake of people who have not yet heard.

That is not Paul contradicting himself. It is Paul showing us what that love does when it actually lands in a human heart. Assurance is not a cushion to sit on. When you truly know that nothing can separate you from the love of God, it does not turn you inward. It turns you outward, with an ache for everyone who does not yet know that the same is true of them.

Matthew shows us the same movement in Jesus. He hears that John the Baptist has been killed and withdraws by boat to a solitary place; he is grieving, and he wants to be alone. The crowds follow him round the shore on foot. And when he comes ashore and sees them, Matthew tells us he had compassion on them and healed their sick. Grieving — and still he turns toward them.

Then evening comes, and the disciples say the sensible thing. Send the crowds away to buy food for themselves. There is not enough here. Jesus says they do not need to go away, and with five loaves and two fish he feeds five thousand people, with twelve baskets left over at the end. Nobody has to leave in order to be fed. What was needed was already there, in his hands, and it was more than enough.

So here is what I want to say, and I want to say it plainly.

You are held. Nothing in all creation can separate you from the love of God in Christ Jesus. But Paul does not stop at his own security, and I do not think we can either. There are people all over this town who have not the faintest idea that any of it is true of them. They believe God left them a long time ago. They believe they have wandered too far to come back. Nobody has ever told them otherwise.

This church already gives a great deal to this community, and I do not take that for granted for a moment. But I want to ask for something more, and to be straight with you about why. I cannot do this on my own. I can stand at the front on a Sunday. I can knock on the doors I am asked to knock on, and I will. But I cannot be at your neighbour's gate, or in the queue behind someone at the shop, or on the end of the telephone to a friend you have known for fifty years. Only you can be there.

And I know some of you quietly think this work belongs to younger people now. It does not. If you have known the love of God for sixty or seventy years, that is not a reason to hand the job on to somebody else — it is precisely what qualifies you for it. Someone who is convinced that God has abandoned them will not be argued out of it. But they may well be moved by a person who has walked with him through a long life, through loss and doubt and all the ordinary years in between, and who can say simply: he did not leave me, and he has not left you. That is all it takes. Not eloquence. Not theology. A voice, and a bit of courage.

So as the light starts to go this autumn, and the curtains begin closing earlier along our roads, I would ask you to think of one person. Not a list — one. Someone for whom the coming months will be long. Knock, or ring, or stop them in the street. You do not need to bring them anything but yourself.

The disciples looked at that hillside and said: send them away, there is not enough here. Jesus said: they do not need to go away. And then he turned to his friends and gave them the sentence I believe he is still giving to us.:

You give them something to eat.

Lord, you have never left me, and nothing in all creation can take me out of your hand.

Guide me, then, to the one you would have me go to. Send me, though the evenings are dark and I would rather stay in. Use me — my years, my voice, my own ordinary life — to say to somebody who has stopped believing it: he did not leave me, and he has not left you. Here I am, Lord. Amen.



COVER PICTURE HADLEIGH CASTLE

Hadleigh Castle was built in 1215 by Hubert de Burgh, Earl of Kent, as a personal fortress, and was later expanded by King Edward III to defend the coast and serve as a private royal retreat. The Castle fell into ruin through a combination of geological instability and deliberate dismantling by local landowners. St James the Less Church, a little earlier than the Castle, dates from around 1150 AD.

There are stories about a tunnel linking Church and Castle, but no supporting evidence. A tale that I like concerns the fact that stones from the Castle have at some time in past ages been used to repair the walls of the Church.

Again unsupported by evidence, the story goes that the estranged wife of the then owner of the Castle, disgruntled at her husband's refusal to give her any money, took matters into her own hands. She secretly arranged for part of the Castle walls to be demolished and then sold the stones that were subsequently used to repair the Church.

Fanciful? Yes! Thankfully, St James the Less Church continues to be the architectural gem that graces the town centre, and is a much-loved place of worship. It is also in much better shape than the Castle.

Mike



**MESSY
CHURCH
BIG
SPLASH
13th JULY
2026**

**KIDS HAD A GREAT TIME
ADULTS TOO!
THANK YOU FOR COMING
THANK YOU TO ALL THE HELPERS**

**Want to know more
about Messy Church?**

**Call Marion
01702 613516**





WIND AND SPIRIT

While we're currently in the middle of our 3rd, or is it 4th? heat wave of the year, I still vividly remember the storm we had one night a few weeks ago – although most of the rain missed us, unfortunately.

Lying in bed, I heard the thunder and incredibly strong gusts of wind whistling and howling, just like it is described in spooky tales! Suddenly there was a crash, like glass or china being smashed and I became fully awake. My first thought was that I must have left a plate or something on the balcony table and it had been blown off; but I was pretty sure I'd brought everything inside that night, and while something else on the balcony might have blown over, it couldn't have fallen with a smash like that.

On investigation it was indeed a plate, but not one left outside. It had been in a plate display holder standing on the window sill in another room. The window had been left open a fraction but the wind had found its way in, forced the window open and knocked the plate onto the tiled floor. The debris could wait until morning.

Relieved yet puzzled, I went back to sleep; yet the thought of that powerful gust made me think of a hymn, "Spirit of God, unseen as the wind..." which led me to ponder on the power of the Holy Spirit and how it can bring about even the most unlikely events. It gives me some hope in this troubled world.

Sonia

The Hebrew word 'ruach' has a double meaning. It can mean both wind and spirit - either a wind generated by the forces of nature, or the life-changing wind from God - the Holy Spirit. (Ed)

SOCIALISING IN RETIREMENT

Church members at St Barnabas know the value of meeting and sharing with others, in church and in life. Retirement may have its difficulties with health and mobility, but age is no barrier to enjoyment - life is for living!

R C F Prayer

Almighty God,
We thank you for the privilege
of serving you in our later years.
Keep us:
steadfast in our calling,
true in our faith,
joyful in our witness,
and sure of your precious gift
of eternal life
in Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

With other retired local clergy, I belong to a fellowship of retired clergy, wives and husbands, some of whom are widows or widowers. We meet regularly and often have a guest speaker. Every summer we have a garden party, this year at the home of Revd Brian Ash. A prayer that we pray at all of our meetings might be said for all older Christians, not just clergy:

(Mike)



Retired Clergy Fellowship
Garden Party
14th July 2026

A BIBLE SURPRISE!

THE SONG OF SOLOMON

Many people are surprised to discover exquisite love poetry in the Bible, in the Old Testament Song of Songs, or Song of Solomon. There are six songs; the first begins in chapter one with a woman saying to a man (this from the Dramatised Bible):

*Your lips cover me with kisses;
Your love is better than wine.
There is a fragrance about you;
The sound of your name recalls it.
No woman could help loving you.
Take me with you, and we'll run away;
Be my king and take me to your room.
We will be happy together,
Drink deep and lose ourselves in love.
No wonder all women love you!*

In the last part of the same song, the woman says:

*I am a rose of Sharon,
A lily of the valleys.*

The man responds:

*As a lily among brambles,
So is my love among maidens.*

The woman continues:

*As an apple tree among the trees of the wood,
So is my beloved among young men.
With great delight I sat in his shadow,
And his fruit was sweet to my taste.
He brought me to his banqueting house,
And his intention towards me was love.*

*Sustain me with raisins,
Refresh me with apples;
For I am faint with love.
O that his left hand were under my head,
and that his right hand embraced me.*

The Song of Songs is unique. Because of its eroticism, scholars debate whether or not it should have a place in the canon of scripture. Some interpret it as being a picture of the relationship between God and his people, or in Christian theology as being an allegory of Christ's love for the Church.

Whatever the theological argument, here Holy Scripture is lifted to another dimension by addressing human love at its most tender, its warmest and most dramatic. God is the origin of all love, philanthropic, self-sacrificing, romantic and erotic; the Song of Songs gives us an insight into the nature of God that we would not otherwise be privileged to have.

If you haven't read the Song of Solomon, do give it a try. The Dramatised Bible is particularly helpful because it separates the songs into six, names the characters involved, and attributes the verses to them. But even without all that, the Song of Songs is still a wonderful read.

This amazing and surprising Old Testament book is named in the first line by an announcer:

'The Song of Songs, which is Solomon's'

or in the dramatised Bible's version, which I much prefer:

'The Most Beautiful of Songs, by Solomon'

Mike

From Richard Ambrose:

In a former life I was a country branch bank manager – just like Captain Mainwaring in Dad's Army but a bit more friendly.

One day a local farmer came to see me and was a bit nervous as we had not met before. It was immediately apparent that he suffered from a very severe and debilitating speech impediment.



His stammer was so bad that it took almost half an hour for him to tell me what he had come to see me about. Fortunately, I was aware that the best way to help is to wait patiently and not to try to prompt or guess what he wanted to say.

Farmers didn't often visit the bank in those days and I only saw this particular gentleman once or twice a year. Each time it was a trial for him, but as he got to know me his stammer improved until after about three years we could hold a reasonable conversation. I was delighted with this and like to think that regardless of the business element my greatest success in that branch was helping a lovely man to overcome his speech impediment.

Thanks Richard. A nice reminder that courtesy and empathy cost nothing. A country bank manager, yes, but you are nothing like Captain Mainwaring!
(Ed)



The Kindness of Strangers

In the most recent of the BBC series 'Race Across the World' several participants, notably two young men from Liverpool, were touched by the kindness and hospitality of people they

met for the first time as they travelled through new countries and cultures. The lack of a common language was not a barrier; communication was more through deeds than words.

As I watched, I was reminded of an experience from many years ago. The ship in which I was serving visited Volos in central Greece. Braving the hot weather, two colleagues and I decided to climb a hill that we could see in the distance. Wearing light clothes and hats, and with plenty of water, we set off. As our ascent began, we walked through terraced vineyards in beautiful countryside.

The landscape became less verdant as we climbed. Nearing the top, hot, tired and in need of a rest, we spotted a man busy working. We walked over to him - a weatherworn older man. He was laying a water pipeline. He was Greek and spoke no English; none of us had any knowledge of Greek.

The man beckoned us to stay. He produced a large cloth and a packed lunch and motioned us to sit with him. He generously shared his lunch, sandwiches, fruit and wine. We could only converse in sign and gesture, but this kindness from a stranger spoke volumes. After lunch, the man resumed his task and we said our farewells and continued our walk, much refreshed, in both mind and body.

Kindness is one of the key Christian attributes in the Bible

Mothers' Union is 150 Years Old



Celebrating 150 Years!

**Marion and Sheila with happy Ghanaian MU Members
at St Paul's Cathedral 10th June 2026**

This year, 2026, marks the 150th Anniversary of the founding of Mothers' Union in 1876. Mary Sumner (who was married to Revd. George Sumner, Rector of St. Mary the Virgin, Old Alresford, Winchester), had, since the birth of her own children been concerned about the responsibilities of bringing up children. After the birth of her first child, Mary, she was quoted as saying, 'I shall never forget the awful sense of responsibility which seemed to overwhelm me as I held her in my arms'

It wasn't until her daughter Margaret had her first child that Mary Sumner, by now almost 50 years old, saw her long-held vision of creating a fellowship of Christian mothers to offer mutual support, to teach and train their children to be followers of Christ, come to fruition.

Mary invited the mothers of Old Alresford to a meeting in the Rectory drawing room. Well-dressed matrons descended from carriages; cottage women came on foot in neat, best, clear cotton. They sat and waited; at which point Mary took fright and, not able to face the women, summoned her husband and begged him to speak to them! Mary would in her later years encourage the timid by this account of her own fearfulness at embarking on a new area of Christian service.

In 1885, the first overseas branch started in Secunderabad, India, formed by the army wives who accompanied their husbands, based at Aldershot Barracks, when one of their regiments was sent to India. There followed branches in New Zealand, Canada, Australia, South Africa, China, Japan, Malta and South America, as a result of government personnel being posted abroad, and a time of great missionary outreach. Today we have 4 million members in over 80 countries working with people of all faiths and none, strengthening families and communities. We are rooted in kindness and compassionate action, and strive to create a better future where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

Some early parenting advice from Mary Sumner:

Try with God's help to make your children, truthful, obedient and pure. Never allow coarse jests, bad angry words, or low talk in your house. Speak gently. You are strongly advised never to give children beer, wine or spirits without the doctor's orders, or to send young people to the public house (to collect jugs of beer). Do not allow girls to go about the streets at night, and keep them from unsafe companions and from any dangerous amusement. Be careful that your children do not read bad books or police reports. Set them a good example in word and deed.

How does that translate in today's society?!

Marion Ketley - Branch Leader St. Barnabas

The Volunteer Organist

(submitted by Ann Daws)

The preacher in the village church one Sunday morning said:
Our organist is ill today, will someone play instead?
An anxious look crept o'er the face of every person there,
As eagerly they watched to see who'd fill the vacant chair.

A man then staggered down the aisle whose clothes were old and torn
How strange a drunkard seemed to me, in church on Sunday morn.
But as he touched the organ keys without a single word,
The melody that followed was the sweetest ever heard.

Each eye shed tears within that church, the strongest men grew pale;

The organist in melody had told his own life's tale.

The sermon of the preacher was no lesson to compare
With that of life's example who sat in the organ chair;

And when the service ended not a soul had left a seat,
Except the poor old organist, who started toward the street.
Along the aisle and out the door, he slowly walked away:
The preacher rose, and softly said, "Good brethren, let us pray."

The scene was one I'll ne'er forget as long as I may live,
And just to see it o'er again, all earthly wealth I'd give;
The congregation all amazed, the preacher old and gray,
The organ and the organist who volunteered to play. *(Anon)*

Written, under the pseudonym of W B Glenroy (1893) as the lyrics for a song (music by Henry Lamb a pseudonym of Henry Spaulding). This is allegedly based on a real incident at the Christian Herald Bowery Mission in New York. Victor H. Behnke (died July 15, 1904) was the actual organist there and is supposed to be the volunteer in question according to a wall tablet in the Mission.

St Barnabas Parish Church, Church Road, Hadleigh SS7 2EJ

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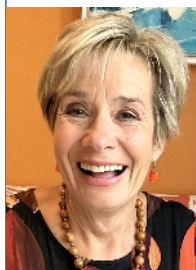
Parish Office - 01702 558591 (Hall Bookings / Enquiries)

Messages left will be answered

Associate Minister
to St James-the-Less & St Barnabas

Rev'd Mark Smeed

mark.smeed@bth-group.org



Churchwarden

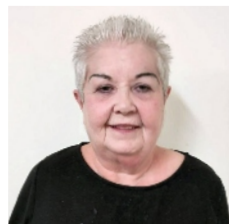
Catherine

churchwardenstbs@gmail.com



Churchwarden Sandra

churchwardenstbs@gmail.com



Safeguarding Officer

Marion 01268 211009

SUNDAY SERVICES

1st and 3rd Sundays

9.30am Holy Communion

2nd and 4th Sundays

9.30am Morning Service

Mid-Week Service

Thursdays 10.30am Holy Communion

For more information please visit:

www.stbarnabas-hadleigh.org.uk



MESSY CHURCH DATES

Monday 7th September
Monday 12th October
Monday 9th November
Monday 14th December

4.00pm - 6.00pm

CRAFT - STORY & SONG - COOKED MEAL

ALL WELCOME

Children must be accompanied by an adult



'KETTLE'S ON'

Cuppa

Refreshment & Chat
at St Barnabas
EVERY TUESDAY
10.30 - 12.00



We are sorry that, except for some copies in church, The Buzz is no longer published in printed form - distribution became impossible. *Mike*
info@stbarnabas-hadleigh.org.uk

Need a Hall for your organisation to use or for a special function? St Barnabas Church has a large hall with kitchen and toilets for hire. **Please contact the Parish Office & leave a message**

01702 558591