

Donations

August 2026

GREETINGS
FROM
LUDLOW
METHODIST
CHURCH



**The restored
cathedral of
Notre Dame**

Is Loving Life a Christian thing to do?

Till the end of time, Christians will celebrate and look forward to life (with God) beyond death. But God our Creator is changing the world, and the pace seems to be quickening. In the meantime, we are called to work with God in helping God to answer our prayer that his will may be done on earth as in heaven – and, in doing so, to love life.

‘Love life’ was the lifelong motto of the famous painter, David Hockney, who died recently. Can it be a Christian motto? I think it can be, understood in the light of the Bible and the Christian faith. For centuries we’ve thought of our faith as other-worldly, and we Christians can give the impression that it is. The Bible, however, teaches otherwise.

The Bible starts on a very world-affirming note: ‘God looked on all that he had made, and saw that it was good and beautiful. (The Hebrew word means both). Our arrival and ‘fall’ from grace has complicated God’s plans, (to put it mildly). But because God came in Jesus – *and came to stay* – that has changed everything. Jesus came ‘that we might have life in all its fulness’ (John 10.10).

So thanking God for everything – ‘all the blessings of this life, and, above all, for Jesus’ has always been central to our faith and our worship. Sunday by Sunday, we thank God for all we enjoy – and that surely includes life itself.

How can we love life if life is hell? The Christian answer isn’t easy, but it is simple. Hell itself wasn’t off limits to Jesus, (1 Peter 3.18-20, Acts 2.31), and so there is no experience, however hellish, in which he can’t find us.

Where does sharing the cross of Jesus, as we are called to do, fit into all this? There is a deep paradox – an apparent contradiction – which runs all through the New Testament. Think of the Beatitudes: ‘Happy are the poor, those who mourn, those who are persecuted, who are peacemakers... (Matthew 5.1-11). ‘Rejoice *always*’ says St Paul. We can’t force ourselves to rejoice, but joy will keep breaking through, as C.S. Lewis’ famous conversion and book tells us: ‘*Surprised by Joy*’.

This means that everything which happens to us, everywhere we go, the beauty of creation, every meeting with someone else can

be a channel of God’s grace – i.e. God’s love and power – filling our lives.

And that includes ‘all the blessings of this life’ – all the life-giving, life-affirming things we enjoy. Is anything good or wholesome excluded? I think not; ‘God ...richly provides all things for us to enjoy’, (1 Timothy 6.20). Although Methodists have rightly taken seriously the Bible’s warnings against drunkenness, and, until recently, recommended being teetotal, we should note the Psalmist’s thanks for wine ‘which gladdens human hearts’, (Psalm 104.15).

Love God, love other people, love life and all its blessings: that is the Christian way.

Neil R., (deputising for our minister, Denise).



Church flowers, 5th July

SPOTLIGHT : on MARION TRAINER

Marion was born at Radcliffe, near Manchester, the oldest of a family of six children. She was educated at home until aged 10 when her family moved to Bloxwich near Walsall and she attended her first school.

Marion loved reading and had a natural talent for art. When she was thirteen a teacher suggested that she take the examination to attend art school. She gained a scholarship to Walsall School of Arts and Crafts and describes her time there as wonderful. When she was leaving the principal advised her to continue to study at night-school and she had ambitions to become a dress designer. She took dressmaking and tailoring lessons, designed wallpapers and fabrics and greatly enjoyed the course. The family all attended Blakenhall Congregational Church and Marion has very happy memories of her Sunday School teacher, Dr William Simpson, flying around the village on his bicycle with his black gown blowing behind him, and always welcoming them with the words "Hello my children."

After the war Marion managed to obtain a post making clothing for M&S and was also designing and making clothes for family and friends. In 1956 Marion met Charles Trainer at a local dance. Love blossomed and they married in 1957 at Blakenhall Church. They had three children, David, Christine and Susan and three grandchildren. Both Marion and Charles had several individual jobs for many years but in the 1980s they took on the joint stewardship of a private club in Penn in Wolverhampton where they were very happy.

Marion and Charles shared many hobbies including racing pigeons, and they had shares in racehorses including Hop Picker, a grey mare, which won at Ludlow by 30 lengths! They grew chrysanthemums and dahlias and competed at shows around the country. Marion still has a silver medal and certificate for White Cactus dahlias.

When they retired in 1991, they moved to Ludlow. Marion joined the Townswomen's Guild and became Press Officer. She joined Ludlow Hospital League of Friends and for seventeen years was a befriender for Age Concern.

At the invitation of a friend she came to the harvest supper here at the Methodist Church and she felt immediately welcome, so she joined the Wives and Friends group and began to worship here. She says, "I'm jolly glad I found this church." Marion - we are glad you did too.

Lynda Young

SILENCING THE SCREAMS



How much do you know about Ethiopia? This article has taken far longer than usual because as I read about Nejiba, he subject of our case study, I realised that apart from having heard of Haile Salassie and about Olympic athletes, I knew nothing. I think it's important that we know something about countries where Christian Aid supports local projects. I spent an enjoyable few hours becoming increasingly fascinated, so here are some of the facts I found, with apologies to those of you who know more about the country than I did:

- * it is landlocked
- * coffee was discovered first in Ethiopia
- * the Ark of the Covenant is believed to be in one of its churches
- * It is the oldest country in Africa
- * Dallol holds the record for the hottest inhabited place on earth (average annual temperature 35°C)
- * Addis Ababa is the highest situated capital in the world
- * the Ethiopian calendar is 7-8 years behind the Gregorian calendar

How many of the above facts affect the daily life of Nejiba? She is a 45-year old mother from the Oramia region, who has faced hardship due to a three-year old drought that led to the loss of her family's livestock. With her husband working as a day labourer and Nejiba selling eggs they struggled to make ends meet. Christian Aid and its local partner EECNY provided them with cash assistance of 7800 Ethiopian birr, which Nejiba used to start a poultry venture. The eggs became a sustainable income



Image by GDJ from Pixabay

source, improving their living conditions. Nejiba, along with many others, plans to expand into small and medium-sized enterprise activities and they are grateful for the support that transformed their lives – now they can eat three meals a day instead of just one.

Christian Aid has supported drought-affected communities with cash and emergency health care and protected livestock farming and agricultural distribution with the provision of a safe water supply .

Discussing the UK government's decision to cut foreign aid, a journalist recently highlighted how this affects individuals. He remains haunted by the piercing scream of a woman who had walked for 3-4 hours carrying her baby to queue for food, only to find that there was none left when she reached the head of the queue. Christian Aid's programmes are designed to save and protect lives and livelihoods and to restore dignity. Let us work and pray for this work so there are no more piercing screams to be heard.

Claire Wilcox

Young People

Dorothy and I were/are long-time supporters of Scripture Union (SU). I use their excellent daily Bible-reading notes and receive their news. Our son was a leader on their Nefyn Beach Mission team for many years and met his wife on the Mission! Their son and his girlfriend are now on the team. The following is an edited version of a recent article in one of their publications.

‘Children and young people are experiencing a spiritual awakening, the like of which we have not witnessed in decades. Some are even turning up on Church doorsteps in search of God – and we need to be ready to reveal Jesus to them.

‘At a Newcastle church, two ministers were chatting after a midweek service when a young man in his teens walked in, carrying a Bible. He looked round, walked to the front of the church, sat down and began reading. One minister went over to the young man, sat down with him and asked if he could help. The young man said he had a dream and, on waking, felt a strong urge to go to church and read his Bible. So, he had dug out his copy from school and here he was. The minister spent an hour talking and praying with this lad. The two of them now meet regularly for coffee, chat and prayer. An SU Regional Team Leader says ‘There are similar stories of children and young people turning up at churches, large and small, urban, suburban and rural, right across the country.’

‘As instructed by a dream, a teenage girl contacted a friend she had not seen in over a year and asked to go to church with her. They went – and later, on a church residential weekend, the girl decided to follow Jesus.

‘After two primary school children without church backgrounds had revelations of Jesus and his love in their dreams, they decided to start a prayer club at their school.

‘A teenage girl prayed to every god she could think of with no response until she had an incredible revelation of the love of Jesus. She found a local church and began to read the bible.

‘The new girlfriend of a lad in his mid-teens invited him to church. He told all his classmates that he had been, which was surprising enough. More surprising still was that his friends then went in search of his girlfriend to ask her about church!

‘Recent research confirms a big surge of interest in spirituality and a new openness to faith among young 18-25-year-olds. They have driven up Bible sales by 87% over the last five years. No research has yet been carried out to see whether the same holds true for school-age children, but anecdotal evidence such as the stories above, appears to show that it is.’

So, be heartened and be prepared, our Lord is working his purpose out, not perhaps in the way we might expect, but then plus ça change. Above all, pray for the youngsters who are seeking.

John Eadie

WCC refuses to expel Russian Orthodox Church

The general secretary of the World Council of Churches (WCC), the Revd Professor Jerry Pillay, has rejected recent calls from Ukraine, and even some WCC member churches, for the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) to be stripped of its membership of the WCC.

He said: “There remains, however, a clear need for active and ongoing dialogue within the ecumenical fellowship, in order to strive for mutual understanding with regard to positions attributed to Patriarch Kirill and the ROC that demonstrably diverge from ecumenical consensus positions on ‘Just Peace’.”

Viktor Yelensky, a senior Ukrainian government official, had asked the WCC to throw the Russian Church out, as it had violated the “fundamental principles of Christianity” by giving active support to Russia’s war against Ukraine.

Pillay said that instead, the WCC, would continue to seek “better mutual understanding within the ecumenical movement” of Russian Church attitudes.

Calls for the Russian Church’s expulsion were first made after the February 2022 invasion of Ukraine.

We need you all.....

The leadership team and indeed the whole church family was shocked and saddened by the death of Geoff Edwardson. We lost a friend and someone who did so much in various roles. We lost Cathy Pritchard in the autumn and then Heather Price. We won't ever "replace" them but we do need to find two new Church Stewards, a Property Steward and a Safeguarding Officer. In the short term, Roger Clayton who was due to stand down as a steward at the end of August has agreed to stay on a little longer, and we are very grateful for this.

So we are now looking for more people to join the team. We are looking for volunteers and nominations of willing people who have already been approached.

Did you come for tea in the gardens? Were they not lovely occasions for spending time with folks, getting to know them, discovering new connections, making new friends, catching up with the news? However, the Fun in Fundraising group which used to organise such events no longer exists. We need a group of people, other than the stewards, to suggest/promote more general activities for fellowship outside Sunday worship, and not necessarily with the aim of raising money. This might become an area in the remit of the Church Life meeting? Will you think what you might offer?

Wesleys has had to close on a Thursday due to failing energy. Other days are struggling too. It is a café but the outreach into the community is so important for the groups who meet there regularly and the easy access for groups hiring the rooms in the building. People have made it the success it is, we need more of you to come and help.

The smaller the group the greater the pressure put on the individuals already involved. The same goes for the cleaning rota, Sunday coffee rota, the flower rota, tea and worship rotas for speakers, cake makers and drivers.....

Please think whether you can spare a few hours to help out in any of these areas. We need you all...

Green Pages

*A round-up of environmental
and climate-change news*

August 2026

Methodist Conference: Net Zero update

The Methodist Conference has received an update on the church's 'Action for Hope' plans to become net zero by 2030.



Dr Hamish Leese, Director of Environmental Engagement for the Methodist Church, said: "In 2021 the Methodist Conference agreed and affirmed that the global climate emergency is a crisis for God's creation and a fundamental injustice. It is, therefore, not only a practical issue but a deeply spiritual one, which is

inextricably linked to discipleship and God's mission which we are called to join. At the same Conference, an aspirational target was agreed for the Church to aim to become net zero by 2030.

"In the years since 2021 a great deal of work has been undertaken by churches, circuits and districts all across the Connexion, and I want to say a big congratulations to all those who have made progress. We have seen churches all over the country making environmental concerns part of their worship and teaching life and reduce the amount of energy they are using, as well as sourcing it from renewable sources. Many churches have added solar panels or heat pumps, and many more have taken the first steps that will enable them to travel further on their sustainability journey. Over 1,300 Methodist churches in Great Britain are now registered with Eco Church, and this number is growing all the time.

cont. ➡

“While progress has been made which wouldn’t have happened without this target, it is important for us to recognise and acknowledge with lament that we will not be a net zero Church by 2030.

The target was aspirational precisely because we knew the scale of the challenge in achieving it, and it is one which the Church has not had the capacity to achieve. To retain a target we know we are unable to achieve would undermine our credibility on this incredibly important issue and would open us to accusations of ‘greenwashing’.

“Although the Church is moving away from a time-bound target, this is in no way an indication that these issues are any less important to the Church. Climate change is inherently and inescapably an issue of mission, discipleship and justice. Indeed, this proposed change is a recognition that an issue of this importance requires a realistic and practical approach which moves beyond an aspirational target which is out of reach.

“As we move into a new phase of our journey towards net zero it is critical that we maintain momentum, inspiration and a sense of urgency, where all Methodists and Methodist churches are called to act as swiftly as possible to reduce our emissions and, in doing so, promote climate justice and enable the flourishing of God’s creation.”

A report to the Church of England Synod also states that it will not reach net zero by 2030 and says that the forecast “should not be seen as a failure, but as an acknowledgement that making meaningful and lasting reductions in carbon emissions is hard and requires sustained action over the long-term which, if it is to be successful, requires parallel investment in capital works, as well as human capacity and skills development to enable all parts of the Church to take action”.

The Green Pages of the Ludlow Methodist Church monthly magazine are brought to you by the Care for Creation Group.

For more information about what we can do in Ludlow to work towards Net Zero, please contact Elizabeth Wright.

How beavers solved a flooding problem

Until recently, tiptoeing through floodwater to get to work was par for the course for Londoners living around Greenford Tube station. The ticket hall was frequently inundated after a heavy downpour. Nearby neighbourhoods also flooded, and it left the local council facing the daunting prospect of expensive engineering works to solve the problem – that was until beavers came along.

In 2023, four centuries after being pushed to extinction in England, beavers were reintroduced to a 10-hectare former golf course called Paradise Fields. Keen to demonstrate how ‘nature’s engineers’ could make London more climate resilient, conservationists were granted a licence to release five beavers along a stream.

The animals got to work immediately, re-engineering the landscape around Greenford with a series of dams, which created a new lake almost overnight. They even dismantled an old dam built by volunteers and replaced it with a better one! They also produced a litter within a year of arriving.

“Even in situations where there is really heavy rainfall, the area no longer floods” said Şeniz Mustafa, England’s first urban beaver officer, “when they put their minds to it, they really get things done.”

The beavers’ handiwork has not only helped alleviate flooding; it’s also boosted biodiversity. *“We’ve had four new species in the last 11 months alone, including sticklebacks, which live alongside dragonflies and damselflies, 14 different species of butterfly, tadpoles, freshwater shrimp and toads. We also had red pole, which is a bird that only stops off on migration. None of that would have happened without beavers.”*

It’s interesting to see how other wildlife will just re-colonise and return to a space. It’s a boon for humans, too, especially in a city where access to nature is limited.

London Mayor, Sadiq Khan, said *“We are facing climate and ecological emergencies worldwide, but we have the power to make a difference where we are.”*

Positive News

Food Waste Collections delayed

The Government set a legal requirement for the introduction of weekly food waste collections for all households by 1st April 2026. Shropshire Council says that the funding provided is not sufficient in a rural county such as ours, and with the complexity of its contract with Veolia. As a result, it may not be able to provide weekly collections until **2039**. Reducing food waste has been identified as a key “emergency brake” action to reduce climate change impacts but it also helps reduce the cost of wasted food, which is estimated to be £1,000 per year for the average household of four.

We urge Shropshire Council to invest in community waste reduction and composting campaigns which can significantly reduce food waste at a low cost and in which we have a great track record in Shropshire.

Shrewsbury Food Hub has developed an effective ‘Taste With No Waste Challenge’. It’s fun and engaging with practical tips from chef, Steve “The Hungry Guy”. It helps people reduce their waste by more than 70%, saving money and reducing stress around food planning.

Shropshire Master Composters have trained volunteers who share composting skills. Shropshire Good Food Partnership partnered with them at 20 schools in a Schools Food Web project in 2025-2026, introducing Hot Bin composters to reduce food waste and to create compost for growing new plants. The typical primary school in the project composted one tonne of food waste, producing 650 kg of compost, worth about £1,000, and saving about £1,350 in food waste disposal costs, not to mention the saving of CO₂ emissions.

By investing in prevention, with community partners, the council could create a new culture where food is valued not wasted, so that when a household food waste collection service is finally reintroduced, it can be done so at a smaller scale and lower cost.

Shropshire Good Food Partnership

Green Pages August 2026

‘Don’t die wondering’ – a questioning community grows in Broseley



Following the news that a fire had broken out in the churchyard, two young men appeared at the rectory door to express their anger about the fire. Shortly afterwards, a teenage boy spotted the vicar

and ran over and gave her a hug asking if she was OK and saying, “When I find out who did this...”. Rev Lynda Lilley gently replied, “How do you think I’m going to react?” Sheepishly, he responded, “You’ll talk to them.” She then spent a few minutes explaining the benefits of restorative justice.

The young men are part of a group of 15-20 who hang around the church hall. They are now an emerging questioning group meeting monthly in the church hall with Rev Lynda. It has taken a year of patience and persistence on her part. When she first spotted the boys, she engaged them in conversation. They peppered her with questions right away and the questions have kept coming: Why does God allow bad things to happen? What is the future going to be like? What is our purpose in life? What am I going to do with my life? “The questions are all fairly typical of young people but it was clear these boys didn’t have anyone else to ask,” says Lynda. “There’s at least one non-school attender and others from blended families, they feel lost in the complications of life,” she adds.

Shortly after their discussions began, a piece of graffiti appeared on the building: “DON’T DIE WONDERING” was carved into the wood. While all the lads denied responsibility, it led to a more focussed discussion about what questions they might have about life and faith. One afternoon, on her usual rounds, Lynda came across the group consuming ‘herbal substances’. Thinking she would be angry, the boys were surprised when she said she regularly checks the area in case she finds someone poorly, or

worse. The next Sunday morning, three of the boys turned up in the pews, and a total of five attended over the next few weeks. Like many Sunday morning services, these were not particularly geared towards youth, so Lynda asked them what they would like. "Somewhere to ask questions," was the reply, and the idea for the group was born. It seemed natural to call it 'Don't die wondering.'

"I tell them we may not be able to answer all the questions, but we can help them explore," says Lynda. "It's loosely structured, the boys lead, and we use Table Talk as a starting place. The discussions are fruitful in that we are having a discussion; responsible adults have shown an interest in their lives. Some of them ask questions of faith, one has asked to be baptised and we're talking about the path to confirmation."

"When the fire happened, although it didn't do a lot of damage, it made them worry that they might lose their space, and that mattered to them. Now they greet me in the street and call their friends over, saying "Rev Lynda is here!" God has shown me that this is where he is at work, and I've jumped in with both feet."

(Rev Phil Summers, Leominster, told us at our recent Church Council meeting that when he is out and about and wearing his clerical collar he regularly gets asked similar questions by younger folk – a sign of encouragement and hope?)

Hereford Diocese e-news



"I would like to encourage us all to think about how we live out our faith in practical ways. The Challenge Amazon Campaign gives us a chance to reflect on how our spending choices affect others around the world. I know not everyone will agree with me but please consider if there could be a more ethical way to make our purchases and support our local shops and businesses."
(Elizabeth Wright)

JustMoney Movement has launched an initiative, **Challenge Amazon: Break the Habit, Fix the Rules**, and is urging churches and individual Christians to consider moving their spending away from Amazon and towards more ethical alternatives.

With Amazon dominating global online retail, the campaign highlights long-standing concerns around the company's corporate tax practices, treatment of workers, and environmental impact. Organisers say billions in potential tax revenue may be lost globally each year; money, they argue, could otherwise support public services and communities.

Sarah Edwards, Executive Director of JustMoney Movement, said: "Christians have both the opportunity and responsibility to use their spending power to encourage fairer economic systems. As active Christians, we have the ability to choose companies that pay their taxes responsibly, support workers fairly, and care for the environment."

As part of the campaign, supporters and churches are being invited to sign an online pledge to "break the habit" of defaulting to Amazon when buying online, choosing more ethical options where possible. People will also be asked to contact MPs in support of international tax reform efforts, such as the UN Tax Convention.

The JustMoney Movement say the campaign is about rethinking everyday habits and choosing to spend in ways that shape a fairer, greener world.

The Challenge Amazon campaign is part of a wider movement calling for a fairer, greener global economy — one where wealth, responsibility, and environmental care are more evenly shared.

***JustMoney Movement** is a charity working towards a world where money shapes a fairer, greener future.*

Holy days in August

1st August Ethelwold - the Wessex saint who founded the first monastic cathedral

St Ethelwold (c.912 - 84) did great things for the church at Winchester, which in those days was the principle town of Wessex. He began as a simple monk, eager to restore the Rule of Benedictine in England, a major reform for the church of the time. So, after serving at the abbey in Glastonbury, he was sent on to restore the old abbey at Abingdon. The king thought highly of him, and used him to teach his son, the future king, Edgar.

When in 963 Ethelwold became Bishop of Winchester, he replaced the cathedral canons with monks, thus founding the first monastic cathedral in the land. This was a uniquely English institution, which remained until the Reformation. The monastic reform quickly gained momentum: with the King's support, Ethelwold restored old monasteries such as Milton (Dorset), New Minster and Nunnaminster in Winchester, while new monasteries were founded and richly endowed at Peterborough (966), Ely (970) and Thorney (972).

Ethelwold was austere, able and dynamic. Under his leadership, the monks excelled at music, illumination and writing. When Ethelwold set the monks to work with the masons in the cathedral at Winchester, he built the most powerful organ of its time in England: it was played by two monks, and had 400 pipes and 36 bellows. In music, Ethelwold's Winchester had the distinction of producing the first English polyphony in the Winchester Troper.

Ethelwold's monasteries also produced a surpassing new style of illumination, and his school of vernacular writing was the most important of its time: with accurate, linguistically significant translations. A major event of his episcopate was the consecration of Winchester Cathedral in 980.

6th August: The Transfiguration of Jesus

It's an unusual story. One day, Jesus is with three disciples on a high mountain in Galilee, when His appearance dramatically changes. Also, Moses and Elijah suddenly appear, and from a cloud comes the voice of God. What is this all about?

This event was witnessed by James, Peter, and John. They were close friends of Jesus. In the future, they were to become prominent

leaders in the Early Church. They needed to see something special that would help them remember Jesus in the difficult years ahead. They had a glimpse of Christ in His divine glory. His face shone like the sun and His clothes turned white as light.

While this was an extraordinary sight for the disciples, it served to encourage Jesus who once had glory and majesty in Heaven. One day He would have it again. But firstly, He had to fulfil His mission: to suffer on the cross and die.

Why were Moses and Elijah standing with Jesus? Moses was the giver of the Law and Elijah represented all the prophets. They had pointed people to the promised Messiah. Jesus was about to complete God's plan of salvation.

God's voice was heard to remind Peter there was no need to build shelters. They were not going to stay on the mountain. God spoke to get the disciples to fix their attention of Jesus. The wonder of the Transfiguration was a short interlude before Jesus had to return to His work and subsequent death on the cross.

This story is a reminder that our times of spiritual blessing have to be followed by down-to-earth commitments and responsibilities. In the same way that Jesus gave His friends a glimpse of His awesome glory, to help them face challenging and traumatic times ahead, our special times in His presence are provided to encourage us and equip us for the trials we may have to face.

Our journey through life may sometimes rise to the peaks but we can't stay on a 'high' all the time – no matter how much we want it! We have to descend to face everyday challenges if we are to fulfil our calling in Christ. From our mountain-top experiences we all need to find a balance between times alone with God and serving Him in the company of others.

Smiles

1. The curate went to the building society about his investments, adding: "We want to know how far afield we can go for our holiday. Handing him his statement the cashier enquired very gently: "Have you got a field at the back of your garden, sir?"

2. When Columbus started out, he didn't know where he was going. When he got there, he didn't know where he was. When he got back, he didn't know where he had been. And he did it all on other people's money. Can't help thinking that Columbus reminds me of some teenagers who go on family holidays...

God in the Sciences

Parable: The Strength of a Seed

At this time of year, we enjoy the fruits of our gardens, fields and hedgerows: vegetables ripen, crops are harvested, and berries begin to show bright among the leaves. Much of this growth started with a few seeds in spring: the miracle of life coming from small dead-looking things. There is a league table of long-lived seeds. The winners so far are from the narrow-leafed campion, buried by squirrels in the Siberian permafrost over 30,000 years ago. When those seeds finally germinated, they became healthy plants that flowered and produced seeds of their own.

The Bible contains many links between seeds and spiritual growth, and the parable of the sower is the most famous (in Matthew 13). A person may hear or experience something of God which has the potential to germinate into a life of following Him, resulting in the fruit of others coming to know God too. But things can happen that snatch that seed away, killing it before it has finished germinating, or choking its growth.

What about the knowledge of God that gets trampled, churned too deep in the mire of life to receive the warmth and light it needs to develop into faith? Buried seeds don't always die, but they can lie dormant, remaining alive but inactive until the earth is turned over. The possibility of that moment of connecting with something divine, scrap of knowledge, or snatch of conversation resulting in a changed life may seem infinitesimally small, but it's not zero. The seed may be incredibly tough, just waiting for a chance to grow.

The Gospel narrative plays on the fact that it took a long time for the disciples to understand the full implications of Jesus' teaching: a germination process that took many of them three or more years. They could have been discouraged, but Jesus was not. I don't think it's too much of stretch to draw out of the parable of the sower to include the observation that it can take a long time, sometimes decades, for people to work their way through the various barriers, sticking points, and phases of forgetfulness that may keep them from following through on their spiritual experience. When we finally receive – or are open to – the encouragement, challenge, or experience that helps our faith in Christ grow, we can experience the rich fruit of a transformed life.

Prayers for August 2026

Dear Father,

In this summer month of August, help us to be aware of Your presence.

If we are away on holiday, If we can't have a holiday, On our journeys, In our homes, With our families or friends, When we're alone, When life is sweet, When it's like an obstacle course.

At all times and in all circumstances, help us to know that You are in it with us, sharing our ups and downs, offering Your love and peace and hope when we connect with You through putting our trust in Your Son, Jesus.

Thank You Lord. In His name, Amen.

By Daphne Kitching

The Pilgrim's Aiding

God be with thee in every pass,

Jesus be with thee on every hill,

Spirit be with thee on every stream,

Headland and ridge and lawn;

Each sea and land, each moor and meadow,

Each lying down, each rising up,

In the trough of the waves, on the crest of the billows,

Each step of the journey thou goest.

A Celtic prayer collected by Alexander Carmichael

To a Fish of the Brook

Enjoy thy stream, O harmless fish

And when an angler for his dish,

Through gluttony's vile sin,

Attempts, a wretch, to pull thee OUT

God give thee strength, O gentle trout,

To pull the rascal IN!

By John Wolcot (Peter Pindar) 1738 – 1839