CONTACT July 2023



Volume 64 - Issue 7 Sawston Free Church – Castle Camps URC

Churches Services and Dates for Your Diary

Future Services-(also available via zoom) SFC email: secretary@sawstonfreechurch.org.uk, Castle Camps email: sarabdavey@outlook.com

Sawston Free Church:

02 July	10.30am Morning Worship – Tess Maddin
	03.00pm Messy Church
09 July	10.30am Morning Worship and Communion – Rev Phil Nevard
16 July	10.30am Morning Worship – Rev Phil Nevard
23 July	10.30am Go4th
30 July	10.30am Morning Worship – Rev Phil Nevard

The closing date for August Contact is Monday 17th July

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

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The monthly magazine of Sawston Free Church United Reformed Methodist

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Dear Friends,

Football is temporarily giving way to cricket and tennis. As I write we are on day three of the first Ashes Test and rain has stopped play! So far, it's about even. England are testing out their thrilling new "BazBall" approach against the stiffest opposition yet and it seems Australia are, as yet a little unsure how to respond. By the time this goes to print, it will all be a lot clearer, and I fully expect England to be taking a beating!



This is my in-built approach to sport. I think it's down to having been a Bolton fan for well over 40yrs. For me, sport is a never-ending succession of crushing disappointments punctuated by an occasional moment of ecstatic joy! I think I now expect to lose so that when we do, it doesn't come as a crushing surprise, but when we occasionally win it feels like the most epoch-defining victory of all time. I'll never know, and fans I have spoken to me tell me that it's all a matter of scale and that they feel the same way, but I can't quite accept that it's even vaguely similar to be an Arsenal fan or a Man Utd fan. For them, success is always more common than failure and what counts as failure would be seen as fantastic success by virtually the entire rest of the football pyramid! I can't really feel sorry for a club that occasionally finishes just outside the top four of the premiership and the fans call that a disgrace and want to sack the manager!

I sometimes worry whether my sports attitude has begun to spill over into my general attitude to life. Do I expect almost everything to be awful so that when it isn't I can be happier about it? If so — is that healthy for my spiritual life?

I'm not sure the Bible gives much clear guidance! Of course, there are passages like 1 Thessalonians 5:16 which urges us to "be joyful at all times", but I rather suspect this is about finding joy even in disastrous times, and that's a different kind of skill. Both Jesus and Paul warn disciples that this Christlike life will inevitably lead to rejection and abandonment, to opposition and persecution, and we will have endless tough choices to make about our priorities — even towards friends and families.

I do feel myself drawn towards 1Thess.5:16, though, as I find there is a perverse, gloom defying stubborn-ness in most die-hard football fans. I have watched Bolton MANY times from cold, wet stands whilst we were getting a proper drubbing. And yet, the fans (usually the hard-core of dedicated away fans) will sing humorous self-deprecating songs which laugh in the face of adversity and leave the winning team's fans a bit bewildered as we have mocked ourselves long before they had thought to do so!

I think this is healthy. The quality of remaining fiercely devoted and committed whilst taking an absolute battering and to go further and laugh in the very face of this calamity is very similar to the way I want to live out my Christian Faith. In the darkest of times, in the hardest of days, through the most difficult situations, in the depths of deepest despair, we are called to be hope-seekers, joy-finders, light-shiners, peacemakers. We are called to be a blessing to those around us.

So, roll on ignominious ashes defeat and another drubbing by the Oz – OR... just maybe... maybe???

Every Blessing. Rev'd Phil Nevard Phil

CHRISTIAN AID 2023



The amounts raised and sent to Christian Aid were as follows:

336.63
81.64
273.43
195.00
<u>100.00</u>
986.70
<u>127.50</u>

£1,114.20

Thank you to everyone who contributed and helped in any way.

Our next Christian Aid fund raising event will be the Cream Teas in the Challis Garden on Saturday 9 September.

Pam, Tony, Mary, Jill and Richard

Sins and Trespasses



(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.)

When I was an undergraduate in Edinburgh I joined the University Choral Society. In my first year (1969/70), we sang Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis* in the Usher Hall. The emotions that poured through me when we rehearsed the *Agnus Dei* with soloists and orchestra remain with me to this day.

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, misereri nobis: Lamb of God, who takes/carries away/removes removes what?

I was brought up on the Book of Common Prayer. To me, therefore, the Lord's Prayer begins 'Our Father, *which* art in heaven.' I continue to pray 'which' quietly to myself Sunday by Sunday. And I continue also to beseech God to forgive my 'trespasses'. (Praise be! These days, at Sawston Free Church, the entire congregation usually does the same.)

Strictly speaking, the word 'sin' appears nowhere in our New Testament. Rather, we have three gospel words with differently nuanced meanings.

- (i) The word St Matthew gives to Jesus at Matt 6:12 means 'What is owing,' be it moral or financial. English-speaking churches in the Presbyterian and Lutheran traditions (but not the URC) usually pray 'Forgive us our *debts*,' capturing the same idea.
- (ii) St Matthew gives Jesus a second word. At Matt 6:14 Jesus' word means 'stumbling on the path,' or 'losing the path.'
- (iii) St Luke gives Jesus a third word (Lk 11:4), which matches St John (Jn 1:29), 'Forgive our failing to hit the mark' (as in archery).(1) John Wycliffe, who first rendered our gospels into English, in the 14th century, translated this word in St Luke as 'sin'.

William Tyndale, two hundred years later, gave us 'trespasses.' Another hundred years on, William Cranmer, composing the Book of Common Prayer, incorporated 'trespasses' into the Lord's Prayer, and there it remained until the Methodists (in 1975) and the Church of England (in 1980) reverted to Wycliffe's 'sins'. Intriguingly, the Roman Catholics today say 'trespasses'. When I was young, they were still saying (in Latin) 'peccata' ('mistakes').

......

I confess that I just loath the word 'sin'. Where on earth did it come from? Well, it very likely came to us (and to John Wycliffe in the 14th century) through its Germanic ancestors, but its Germanic ancestors got it from its Latin source, 'sons'. Sons Is an extrordinarily rare Latin technical legal word, meaning 'an act worthy of being found guilty,' or 'a person found guilty of a criminal act.' *Peccatum*, meaning 'mistake', is extremely common, and is the word almost always used in the Latin bible where we find the word 'sin' in our English translations.

The question then becomes, 'Why did John Wycliffe choose to ignore the Latin word that he heard in church every day - 'peccatum' (mistake) - and pick up instead on a Latin word so obscure that most modern Latin dictionaries don't even list it? To talk of 'sin' is primarily to talk not of mistakes or failings, but of guilt. Did Jesus talk much about guilt? I really don't think so. Nor, it seems to me, do the authors of the New Testament letters.

It distresses me to have to report that John Wycliffe, who is a great hero of mine, is responsible for encouraging us not to ask God to forgive our mistakes, our stumblings, or our trespasses, our failings, or what is owing, but instead to ask God to forgive us the things about which we feel guilty, as if that were the same thing.

So thank God for William Tyndale who, two hundred years later, gave us the word 'trespasses,' a word that stayed in our prayers until a mere fifty years ago. How I deplore those who in the 1970s, for (presumably) reasons of clarity, simplicity and modernisation, tried to take the blessed word 'trespasses' from us, and reinstate that ghastly word 'sins'. It delights me that as I preach around our congregations, I find that more and more have abandoned the 'new form' of the Lords Prayer and reverted to William Tyndale's blessed translation. They know what it means to trespass, to go where they should not have gone.

Back in 1983, Matthew Foxe published his 'Original Blessing'. It was a blast against a Church obsessed by the need to make people feel guilty as a preliminary to making them feel good. God's first act towards us humans was to bless us, says Foxe. And even though humans messed things up right from the start and have been doing so ever since. God has never ceased to bless us. God, Foxe said, has no interest in making us feel bad and guilty. Rather, God wants always to bless us into doing well and into feeling good about it. Misereri nobis. Pity us for wasting so much of our time and moral energy on feeling guilty and on trying to make others feel as guilty as us.

(1) It is this word which is being translated in the vast majority of instances where we read 'sin' in our modern English New Testaments.

Flowers for June

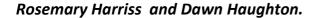
These are the dates that we will be arranging flowers for this month. As you see there is a blank week so it's not too late to offer. If you would like to put flowers in church to remember a special date, please talk to Dawn as she will be happy to arrange them for you.

2nd July -Maggie Jones

9th July -

16th July -Janet Parr 23rd July -Helen Sharpe 30th July -Sue Lelliot

Many thanks



Sanctions Don't Work – But They Are Increasing Anyway

Last month, the Department for Work and Pensions released its internal review into the effectiveness of benefit sanctions. To summarise the report – sanctions are not effective. Not only are they ineffective – they are harmful. Previous research shows that removing benefits increases hardship, destitution and foodbank use as well as damaging physical and mental health. The DWP's data now shows that sanctions fail on their own terms, as they also damage both earnings and employment prospects.

You probably think that now the DWP know about the harm sanctions do, the policy is bound to change. Indeed, it is: the Chancellor announced that sanctions will be applied more rigorously. The additional rigour will mainly be encouraging Jobcentre employees to press their customers more vigorously, but it also includes bringing many low-paid workers who previously could not be sanctioned into the sanctions system. Already the number of sanctions given out has doubled over the pre-pandemic levels from 2.2% of claimants (37,000) under sanction each day to almost 7% (120,000) in the latest figures. This research states – and the government accepts – that on average each person will have their long-term employment and earnings harmed by the sanction.

The research is not too new to affect policy. The report was produced in 2020, but the DWP decided it was not in the public interest to publish it, despite previous promises to do so. It took a tenacious Freedom of Information campaign by Dr David Webster of Glasgow University and the Information Commissioner to force publication. The DWP felt the best time to do this was 4.55pm on Maundy Thursday before the Easter weekend; a time unlikely to encourage press coverage.

What are sanctions?

- A sanction is a punishment given to people claiming Universal Credit, for not obeying the instructions of the Jobcentre usually being late or not attending an appointment.
- People sanctioned may be unemployed, in low-paid work or assessed unfit but capable of preparing for work.
- A sanction removes a person's "basic allowance" for up to 6 months. The average sanction duration is around 11 weeks.
- Sanctions are not used to punish dishonesty or fraud.

Taking away the jargon, this simply means the average person when sanctioned gets a job less quickly, and when they do, they earn less. The very opposite of what a benefits system should do. For those receiving a sanction, even when they get work, they earn on average £34 a month less for the following 6 months than people who weren't sanctioned. This is extraordinary. By contrast, the government was ecstatic about results from early trials of Universal Credit which said the new benefit would lead to around £15 of additional earnings sustained over 3 months (however this trend was not replicated when Universal Credit was more fully rolled out).

The report is short – but it is unremittingly bad news for advocates of benefit sanctions. It is also the only research report I have ever read which continually tries to convince the reader its results are unimportant. To underline this, a "context note" was published alongside the report. The report and note argue that it is "the deterrent effect" of sanctions that is important. Essentially, the

view is put forward that sanctions deter jobseekers from slacking off and are needed to force benefit claimants to comply with the Jobcentre's instructions. This begs the question: if you think deterrence is important, why don't you look into it? It is an easy question to answer, and fortunately more curious nations have.

It isn't a shock that being sanctioned harms job prospects. The National Audit Office said similar things seven years ago. There is a growing body of research from many nations saying that people who are sanctioned are almost invariably harmed. However even the threat of sanctions — also known as the "deterrent effect" — has negative effects as it encourages people to take unsuitable jobs leading to lower earnings and more spells of unemployment. For example, in December, Dutch researchers published results from a trial where 130,000 people looking for work were either offered advice about their next steps by the employment service, or offered advice which the jobseekers were told they must follow or have some of their benefits removed. The threat of benefit sanctions encouraged jobseekers to comply. However, these compliant jobseekers actually got into work slower than those who were not threatened. The active harm that adding the threat of sanction to employment advice was still detectable in people's lower employment and earnings 3 years later.

It appears that when agencies like the DWP threaten to remove benefits, they shift people's priorities from the goal of finding work towards the urgent but unhelpful goal of simply avoiding punishment. People focused on avoiding punishment don't get as good jobs as those solely focused on getting a good job.

The Sanctions Fashion Is Turning

The fashion for ramping up benefit sanctions to "drive behaviour change" began in Europe 25 years ago. There was evidence that sanctions (much milder than the UK's) increased the speed at which people signed off benefits. What has become clear is that they often left benefits for no work, sickness benefits or unsuitable, unsustainable jobs. In terms of improving lives or reducing government spending, sanctions have been a flop.

In part because of this, in November last year, Germany whose "Hartz IV" reforms paved the way for the UK's system, made substantial changes relaxing its sanctions regime. Reforms were proposed which more closely followed the evidence on what helps people get back to work, and would have reduced the sanctions regime and the use of compulsion of jobseekers even further. This was almost made law, but unfortunately, at the last moment there was a panic around what would happen if the poorest were allowed even more agency and choice as they looked for work. The reasons behind that panic, which slows reform in countries that are following the evidence, has led the UK government to simply avoid engaging with the evidence. This will be the subject of my next blog.

Where Next?

Universal Credit is barely enough to live on, falling well short of what is needed for families to sustainably avoid destitution. Each day, 7% of families relying on Universal Credit are not receiving their full benefit because of a sanction. If the sanction period overlapped with a Cost of Living payment date, they lost out on that too.

Sanctions are costly. The constant setting and checking of rules takes time and money. The administration and adjudication of the sanctions takes more time and more money. And there is no

rational reason to do it. The state is paying to harm to the wellbeing and job prospects of the poorest. That cannot continue and in other nations it is being rowed back on.

In 2016, it was clear to churches and charities on the ground that sanctions were causing a great deal of harm to the least well off. The estimate was that for every ten sanctions, five food parcels were given out. Along with partners, we led a campaign saying it was "Time to rethink Benefit Sanctions". It still is.

PAUL MORRISON (Writing for JPIT – the Joint Public Issues Team: The Baptist Union of Great Britain, the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church working together for peace and justice.)

Paul is the policy advisor with particular responsibility for issues around the economy including poverty and inequality. Prior to working for the Methodist Church he was a postdoctoral researcher at Imperial College studying viral disease and vaccine design.

God Calling

An Obstacle Race Rise above your fears and fancies into my joy. It will suffice to heal all your sores and wounds.

Forget all sense of failure and shortcomings, all the painful jolts and jars and trust Me, love Me, call upon Me.

Your discipleship is an obstacle race. "So run that ye may obtain".

Obtain not only your hearts desires, but obtain Me - your souls' Joy and Haven.

What would you think of a runner who threw himself on the ground in despondency at his first hurdle? Over and on and up. I am your Leader and your goal.

"I used to pray that God would feed the hungry, or do this or that, but now I pray that he will guide me to do whatever I'm supposed to do, what I can do.

I used to pray for answers, but now I'm praying for strength. I used to believe that prayer changes things, but now I know that prayer changes us and we change things." Mother Teresa

Many blessings to you all Kate Leach

Ministering Amongst Older People

On the 3rd of June I went off to the Queen Edith Chapel in Cambridge for a conference entitled Ministering Amongst Older People.

The Topics were:

- "Why the church should be a great place to grow old (what do we mean by "old"?)
- "Coming alongside people living with dementia".
- And finally "Re-imaging care home ministry".

The speaker, was Tina English. I was rather excited, as when I bought her book "A great place to grow old ", she wrote some kind words in my copy! It is a well worth reading.

We were encouraged to think about growing older in terms of the third and fourth ages of life. Those in the third age are described as retired, physically and mentally well. Those in the fourth age are physically frail and help is often needed.

We were reminded about the many references to older people in the bible. How we are instructed to care for them. How in fact we are all to care for one another and to carry one anothers burdens

When my family became homeless after the end of WW2, we went to live with my mother's mother. She was not frail then but was kind and loving. My great delight was to thread needles for her with different coloured threads as this had become a hard task for her. I felt happy to do this as she was always so appreciative. In fact when I was ill and in bed one day, I became bored and irritable and decided to throw myself out of bed to raise people's awareness. Suddenly, in came my grandmother with a dolly that was clothed in a red suit that she had made. I soon got better!

Coming alongside people with dementia was about helping us to discover a way through. How to find past history and to use that in conversations.

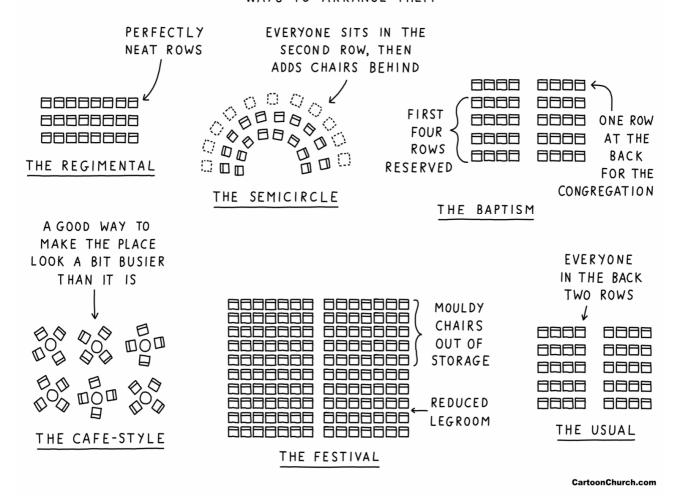
Home ministry would depend on going into a care home with permission and seeking what is helpful to the residents. Loneliness can be such a big issue at any age.

I enjoyed the day and found it very thought provoking.

Beryl

THE CHAIRS

WAYS TO ARRANGE THEM



SFC - Church Workday - July 8th - 8am till noon

Please come and help keep our premises looking good. There are various tasks to suit all talents and capabilities from painting to gardening, and a chance for a chat over cake and coffee.



Please let me know if you can come it really helps me to plan the work.

Thank You Gordon (833983)

CREATING AN OVERVIEW OF MY SHAPE

You have looked at the five aspects of your *SHAPE*: your Spiritual gifts, Heart's desire, Abilities, Personality and Experience. Hopefully you have gained some useful insights and feel encouraged.

However, you may feel rather overwhelmed by the number of questionnaires you have been asked to fill in and all the discussions and handouts!

The complexity and richness of one's own SHAPE can be a bit confusing. So now it is important to stand back, gain some perspective, and sort out the wood from the trees.

This Personal Reflection exercise will help you to clarify the main characteristics of each aspect of your SHAPE and to put them all on one page so that you can see them at a glance. Then you will be able to look for similarities and connections between them and draw it all together into an overview of your SHAPE.

To find the results of your Personal Reflections on your *SHAPE* look back at what you wrote on the handouts listed below (especially your summaries and reflections at the end of each):-

Spiritual Gifts: "Personal Reflection on Your Spiritual Gifts"

Heart's Desire: "What is your Heart's Desire?"

Abilities: "Personal Reflection on your Abilities"

Personality: "Personal Reflection on your Personality";

Experience: "Personal Reflection on your Experience"

Use these to fill in the next section, on the "Main Aspects of my SHAPE."

When you have transferred your main findings from the Handouts, to the left-hand column on page 2, then add any further important insights you may have gained about your **SHAPE** into the right-hand column.

MAIN ASPECTS OF MY SHAPE					
MY NAME:					
My SHAPE	Other important insights:				
S – Spiritual Gifts My 4 main gifts are:					
1)					
2)					
3)					
4)					

H – Heart's Desire	
My main focus is:	
,	
A – Abilities	
a) My strongest abilities are:	
a) My strongest admittes are.	
b) Many of my abilities relate to (Circle one):	
Things People Ideas Information	
P – Personality	
a) My strongest characteristics are:	
a, m, strongest anaracteristics are.	
The state of the state of the state of 200 has a state of the state of	
b) I am chiefly energised (Handout 3A) by working	
with (Circle one): Things People Ideas Information	
mings reopie ideas information	
E – Experience	
Main experiences and things I've done which could	
help me serve God and others:	

OVERVIEW OF MY SHAPE

MY NAME:	DATE:
----------	-------

Now seek to link together the 5 aspects of your SHAPE to create an overview.

Look at what you have just written ("Main Aspects of my SHAPE").

Search for similarities and connections between them.

Think about it and pray for God's discernment and wisdom.

Are there any themes or characteristics or insights about yourself, which emerge repeatedly?
Look at your Spiritual Gifts, Abilities, Personality and Experience. Can you see how these might relate to fulfilling your Heart's Desire?
How would you describe the overall <i>Picture</i> of your SHAPE? (Be creative! Draw it, or use images, metaphors or words)
When you have thought this through carefully and prayed about it, the best thing you can do is to talk it over with a trusted friend – someone who knows you well, it doesn't even have to be a Christian – someone who can help you gauge whether what you have written about yourself actually rings true! You might find this hugely challenging and hugely affirming in equal measure!
Then it's time to ask yourself if there is a pathway into serving in such a way through Sawston Free Church or further afield. If there is – then make contact! If there isn't, then maybe it's time for Sawston Free Church to build a ministry in that direction. It is better for a church to build ministries based on the gifts, skills, talents, experience and heart's desires that our members HAVE rather than building on ministries on gifts, skills, talents, experience and heart's desires that our members DON'T have! Maybe a chat with your Elder or the Minister is the next step?

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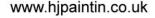
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The Footprints Café



Sawston Free Church

The **Footprints Café** is a community cafe offering a wide range of reasonably priced Snacks and Meals together with Teas & Coffees, Cold drinks, Cakes and Pastries.

We are open Monday to Friday from 8.30 am to 3.30 pm. Breakfasts are served until 11.30 am.

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

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