

# HEATH LIVES

Number 22

**February/March 2026**



## **EDITORIAL**

Our cover photo for this issue was sent in by Lesley Smith—thank you. We are also continuing our series on other faiths with a look at Sikhism: we hope you find this interesting.

Our search for a new minister continues but the work of the church does not stop meanwhile. We thank everyone who has helped to 'keep the show on the road' in one way or another.

Spring is now on its way and we look forward to warmer weather and more opportunities to sit in our Community Garden and pass the time with friends and neighbours.

Photos from Pixabay, with thanks.

JOIN US FOR  
OUR

**SPRING  
LUNCH**

On  
Sunday  
29th March  
In the Church Hall  
(Manor Drive  
entrance)

No booking  
required—just  
come along  
£10 per person



## **CHURCH CONTACT DETAILS**

**Services are held on Sundays at 10.30 a.m.** We are always pleased to welcome visitors.

Church Secretary: Mrs Jane Simmons: [heathchurchhalifax@gmail.com](mailto:heathchurchhalifax@gmail.com)

Website: [heathchurchhalifax.org.uk](http://heathchurchhalifax.org.uk)

Facebook: Heath URC in Halifax

Dear Friends

November 28<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> was the URCs annual children's workers conference, and as the Pilots secretary I was lucky enough to be able to attend. It was held at Highgate House in Northampton, which is an excellent conference centre, very comfortable with great food. The theme for the weekend was 'Sitting with children in wonder', led by Peter Privett who is the International Regional Consultant for Godly Play. Over the weekend, Peter expanded on each word in the theme, but here I want to share with you just the overall meaning.

Jesus said 'Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the Kingdom of heaven.' (New International Version – Matthew 18: v3).

But Jesus didn't intend us to run around making a lot of noise and getting upset at the smallest thing! What Jesus was referring to was our faith. Children have to accept things that they don't understand, because they don't yet understand very much. We could be tempted to think that with the internet, and our advanced technologies that we understand everything, but this simply isn't true. Just 100 or so years ago, man could not explain how the humble bumble bee could fly. Science as it stood told us it wasn't possible.

But with recent improvements in photography, allowing us to film a bee in flight, and playing this back very slowly, we now understand how a bee is able to fly.



There are many things we don't yet understand. We

believe the universe began with a big bang 13.8 billion years ago, and that it is still expanding, and accelerating. But what caused this huge explosion in the first place? No scientist has ever been able to explain this. Scientists believe that an inert situation can be affected by a catalyst so that a reaction occurs.

We now have the wonders of Artificial Intelligence. This is no more than a quick way to trawl the internet, analyse all it finds, and present a summary. But using this man made tool, it summarises that scientists avoid attributing the Big Bang to God, because other unexplained scientific events have previously been attributed to God, and then man has discovered a worldly cause, and scientists don't like to be proved wrong!



So, what does all that mean for us? Going back to the quote from Jesus, he was saying it is necessary sometimes to just accept that it is so. Not to understand the how, why, where or when of a fact, but simply to have faith that it is so. Without simply accepting the existence of God, and that Jesus was his son, and that He left the Holy Spirit to be with us always, we will never be able to enter the Kingdom. That step can be difficult (like a scientist accepting that not everything can be explained), but it is necessary to become a Christian.

But why I am I putting that in a church magazine? We have all decided to become Christians, though we are all at different stages in that journey. But sometimes we find things hard. The things that happen in this world can leave us questioning our faith. If we feel we have taken a wrong route in life, to find out where we went wrong, we might go 'back to basics'. It is my hope that should you be in that position, the above might help you to get back on the right track.

I am a scientist, and I love the fact that I am alive when there are so many fantastic scientific discoveries being made. But I am also a Christian, and I can't help looking back and seeing how the path of scientific discovery has to have been planned by somebody much bigger than you or I. I remain in awe of God's wonderful creation, and I hope you do too.

*Alan Kendall*

## ***THE MAN WHO CAN***

If you think you are beaten, you are  
If you think you dare not, you don't,  
If you like to win, but you think you can't  
It is almost certain you won't.

If you think you'll lose, you're lost  
For out of the world we find,  
Success begins with a fellow's will  
It's all in the state of mind.

If you think you are outclassed, you are  
You've got to think high to rise,  
You've got to be sure of yourself before  
You can ever win a prize.

Life's battles don't always go  
To the stronger or faster man,  
But soon or late the man who wins  
Is the man WHO THINKS HE CAN!"

*Walter D. Wintle*



February 8<sup>th</sup> 2026 sees the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the opening night of the Victoria Hall. Dave Russell of the Friends of the Victoria Theatre offers this history of the sometimes uneven path to the event.

## **“A HALL WE HAVE LONG WAITED FOR”**

‘It is almost impossible in the present state of things to say with any certainty when the building will be ready for opening. Everything is very wet’. With these glum words, William Clement Williams, architect of the Victoria Hall, greeted a *Halifax Evening Courier* reporter gently enquiring when the town’s much-vaunted new concert hall might actually open.

Williams was understandably downbeat. The two men were meeting in early December 1900, by which time a planned opening for Christmas Eve had already been abandoned. The weather was certainly wet and the building’s concrete floor was wetter still. Attempts to speed up the drying process by using firepans had annoyed the painters, worried that the sulphurous fumes would damage their work. Now, even as he spoke to the *Courier*, he learnt that the plumbers had downed tools for the day, worried that the fumes would damage them.

The opening of the Victoria Hall, or, indeed, any form of purpose-built concert hall, was certainly eagerly awaited. The town was unusual in lacking such a facility. A few places, such as Bradford, with its St. George’s Hall, had opted for a building entirely devoted to music and culture. Most, though, incorporated concert facilities within their town halls. Sir Charles Barry, architect of Halifax Town Hall, would have none of this. Reporting to the Borough Council in 1859 he complained that:

‘In the populous and thriving towns of the north of England, it appears to me that a serious error has been committed in partly devoting these buildings to the recreations, rather than exclusively to the serious business of life: whereby a needlessly lavish expenditure has been incurred and the usefulness and characteristic features of a town hall have been impaired.’

His promise of reduced costs clearly struck home and the town hall that resulted was to serve a purely administrative function. Concerts thereby took place in a variety of venues often far from ideal. By the late nineteenth century, for example, the Halifax Choral Society found itself performing in the Drill Hall in Union Street. A building intended as a venue for training part-time soldiers was hardly suited to an evening with Handel, Haydn or Mendelssohn and not least because the seating largely comprised free-standing chairs crammed together to maximise audience numbers. Vice-president Edward Huntriss drily noted that it would be far preferable if audiences ‘could be better accommodated with some slight degree of comfort and not have to sit with their chins up to their knees until they brought about a state of cramp so painful that it was impossible to listen to

music, however fine it might be.”

By the mid-1890s, there were few music lovers who disagreed with the town clerk’s tart observation that ‘it was the greatest mistake that a concert hall was not provided when the town hall was built’. Plans began to take shape amongst some musical enthusiasts for a municipally-funded hall to be built alongside the proposed new law courts and police station on Harrison Road. In November 1895, this proposal found an energetic advocate in the shape of the newly elected mayor, Alderman George Henry Smith, director of the family wire manufactory at Caledonia Works on Charleston Road and leading figure in local political and religious life.

The municipal scheme proved impractical, defeated by a combination of lack of space and a sense that, at a time when ratepayers were facing the costs of the town’s new tram system, additional costs would prove extremely unpopular. Undeterred, Smith set about forming the Halifax Concert Hall and Public Rooms Company Limited, a private company dedicated to erecting ‘the Victoria Public Hall’. Launched on 19 March 1897, it swiftly acquired a vacant plot, once part of the garden and orchard of Royds House, at the junction of Commercial and Fountain



*Photo by Ray Stearn*

Streets,  
from the

Rawson family at the ‘very reasonable price’ of 4 guineas a square yard (£8169 in total). Williams was appointed as architect soon after. Born in Retford, he had moved to Halifax in the 1870s and established a highly successful practice that was to have a considerable impact on the local townscape. Other major commissions included two significant buildings in Commercial Street, the Halifax and Huddersfield Union Bank (1898) and York Buildings (1905), designed for Alexander Scott’s drapery showroom and warehouse, as well as the Poor Law Hospital at Salterhebble (1901).

Williams eventually informed his journalist visitor that he had some hope for an



*Calderdale Central Library*

opening night 'towards the middle or the end of January'. For a while it looked as though he might get his wish. Drier weather and thus drier flooring allowed for a grand concert to be organised for Friday 25. However, as ever more sombre medical bulletins arrived from Queen Victoria's residence at Osborne House on the Isle of Wight, it became clear that postponement was once again inevitable. The Queen died on 22nd January and the nation went into mourning.

As soon as decency permitted, hasty preparations were made for a third attempt at opening. Finally, on Friday 8 February 1901, in the words of the *Halifax Evening Courier*, a 'crowded and...wildly cheering' audience witnessed 'a concert that will ever stand out in the musical annals of the town'. The Queen's death meant that both audience and hall were decorated in more sombre tones than originally anticipated. One paper reported stories of 'many orders for coloured eveningwear having been cancelled in Halifax and of people who had already obtained costumes, which, so far as this season goes, will unfortunately be useless'. The change of dates had led to the loss of one particularly eminent performer – one whose name was important enough to be inscribed on the side of the building – in the shape of the composer and director of the Royal College of Music, Sir Hubert Parry. He had been booked to conduct his choral work, 'Blest Pair of Sirens', but was now unable to attend. Fortunately, Manchester's Hallé Orchestra under its famed Austrian conductor, Dr Hans Richter, leading mezzo-soprano Marie Brema and, of course, the Halifax Choral Society, had no such problems. Following the national anthem, the 'Funeral March' from Beethoven's 'Eroica Symphony', played in honour of the late Queen, became the first orchestral work to be performed at the Victoria. The hall Halifax had longed for had begun its life.



A second gala event followed on the Saturday evening and a lecture on Wagner and Bayreuth filled the hall to bursting point on the Sunday: a successful future looked assured. Strange then, that within a decade, the building was running mainly as a cinema. Halifax composer and music teacher, Joseph Weston Nicholl, complained to the local press that this was a 'disgrace.' How would he have felt if he'd known that this would be the case for another forty years?

## **APPLE BREAD**

500g cooking apples. Peeled, cored and chopped into 2cm cubes

100 g butter

250 g each of white and brown bread flour

2 tsp fast acting yeast

2 tsp salt 50 g sugar

Egg wash for glazing (optional)

Fry the apples in 25 g of butter for 2 -3 mins until golden brown. Melt remaining butter and leave to cool

Sift together flours and salt, then add the sugar, yeast and melted butter. Slowly add 175 ml / 6 fl oz of lukewarm water to make a kneadable dough.

Add the apple. Add a little more water or flour if needed and knead the dough for 10 mins on floured surface. Put in a bowl, cover with a tea-towel and leave to rise in a warm place until doubled in size.

Knead again, then divide into 4 big round buns or shape into a loaf. Glaze if desired. Rest for half an hour then bake in pre-heated oven gas 4 for approx 35 mins .



# **CASH IS KING**

My name is Andrew Sykes and for the last 15 years I've run various money - related projects at the Calderdale mental health charity, the Noah's Ark Centre. There's a massive link between poor MH and money worries. For many of those suffering low mood, depression and especially anxiety money problems are the root cause.

The client waking in the night worrying about paying their bills, or too anxious to open the dreaded 'brown envelope' or answer the door, are all examples of poor MH.

In 15 years our different money advice projects have worked with thousands of Calderdale families and we're really proud of the outcomes. We offer a multitude of services all aimed at the alleviation of poverty:

- Debt advice - our project is one of the most successful small debt advice projects in the UK. In the last 8.5 years we've helped 2,500 Calderdale families become debt-free dealing with almost £30,000,000 of problem debt in the process.
- Benefits advice - our specialist benefits advisor helps struggling families ensure they receive everything they are entitled to. Annually, income totalling many hundreds of thousands of pounds is secured for struggling families.
- Food support - we believe very much in providing a hand up, not a hand out and have worked harder than any other charity in recent years to end food poverty.
- Energy support - we bring the ethos to energy support as we do food support. Our approach is focused around what we can do to understand why someone is energy insecure and support them to break the cycle of need.
- Bossing the COLC - cost of living pressures over the last few years have hit the poorest households hardest. We've developed strategies for supporting our clients to better manage their bills, from arranging over 600 energy efficiency surveys to providing lessons on where to shop and how to cook.
- Carpets, carpets, carpets - in September 2023 we began a project working to end carpet poverty. In conjunction with the UK's biggest carpet wholesaler, the Headlam / Mercado Group, we've carpeted over 620 Calderdale homes using flooring that would otherwise have been destined for landfill or incineration.

An amazing project bringing fantastic outcomes for our client group, everything from safer homes for children to warmer, better insulated homes with lower energy bills.

- Small grants - in April 2024 we started a new project with a charity called The Glasspool Trust ([www.glasspool.co.uk](http://www.glasspool.co.uk)) and in conjunction with another partner, ACTS435 ([www.acts435.co.uk](http://www.acts435.co.uk)) we now distribute funds in excess of £100,000 annually. We support clients with an array of essential items—washing machines to cookers, fridge freezers to false teeth!

Budget Like a Boss!!!! - 15 years of supporting thousands of individuals struggling to manage their money has taught me one key thing - they don't know how to budget. My colleague Kelly and I have delivered almost 150 budgeting courses in the last 6 years and the common thread that runs through them is a failure to understand the basics. Paying your TV licence is more important than paying Sky TV. Paying your council tax is more important than paying your credit card. What the majority in society take as a given our client group doesn't.



For many, the digitalisation of our spending habits has been a good thing: simplifying the buying process is seen as progress. Who knew that a nail salon would take the chip from your credit card, glue it to a nail and fit an acrylic nail on top. All so that we can make a purchase with one finger,...never having to open our wallets ever again!

For me, whilst that for many may be seen as progress, I don't think it

necessarily is. 40 years ago when I got my first job, I recall using 2 methods of payment, cash or cheque. Now when I consider how I can personally access my hard-earned money there are myriad ways. I still use cash a lot, but I have a debit card, credit card, my iPhone, an Apple Watch, Amazon one click - I haven't succumbed to a ring yet or the nail implant and don't intend to.

For poorer families I see danger in this myriad of payment methods. It leads to uncontrolled spending, to impulse buying and that can lead to direct debits bouncing and bills going unpaid. Banks and big business have desensitised the buying process, they've taken all the emotion out of it. Our relationship with cash goes back to early childhood. We love cash, we love the birthday card from our grandparents and the expectation of what might be inside.

It's a fact that our grandparents' generation were better with money than the current one. And I think there is a simple explanation for this: they usually paid with cash because that's all they had.

One of our mantras is "Cash is King!" I firmly believe we need to bring back the pain-of-paying feeling that we get when using cash. Lots of research projects have shown that we don't like to part with cash, we're emotionally attached to it and simply don't like giving it away.

The pain of paying makes us pause and think. Another mantra we like is, "Do I need it.... can I afford it", because we've all got an item of clothing in our wardrobe that we've never worn. You might be wondering, "where's the harm in that?" and there isn't any if your bills are paid. But what if that impulse buy meant your direct debit for council tax bounced and you got behind?

The debt collection process endured by our client group for something like council tax arrears can be brutal, quickly escalating from a couple of missed payments to a burly bailiff at your door threatening to seize your car and possessions. Consequences can be severe.

We advocate a budgeting approach that has all your important bills paid first and foremost, with the remaining surplus funds being taken in cash and allocated to each week of the month. This approach ensures bills are always paid (and we always suggest using direct debit) and encourages more controlled spending patterns because clients are using cash and experiencing the pain of paying.

Thanks for reading this and remember - CASH IS KING!!!!

## **MY FAITH—SIKHISM**

*(Continuing our series of looking at other faiths)*

The Sikhs originate from India; their homeland is Punjab. The state of Punjab was divided in two in 1947, when Pakistan was born. However, most Sikhs fled to the Indian side of Punjab and have many painful stories to tell of when they left their established roots. Many lost their lives.

Punjab means “The Land of Five Rivers” and Punjabi is the language the Sikhs speak. Sikhs are a minority in India but they have a great presence in society; their influence has been felt in most aspects of life in India and wherever they live in the world. Sikhs believe in hard work and integration in society. Their goal is “Sewa”, service to all living beings: through service they feel that you are closer to God as God resides in all of us. The founder of Sikhism was Guru Nanak, born in 1469. Guru Nanak was a Hindu by birth, but he revolted against the caste system and all the trappings it brought in practice. He was also unhappy about the intolerance and fanaticism in the name of religion. At the age of thirty he travelled far and wide to spread “His Message”. The four great journeys stretched from Punjab to Mecca Medina, Baghdad, Tehran, Mashhad, and Kabul to Bengal, Orissa and south to Sri Lanka. Guru Nanak suggested practical ways of dealing with selfishness and ignorance; the spiritual and social welfare of the common people was his prime concern and both Hindus and Muslims became his followers, Sikhism was born and Guru Nanak's way of life began. Guru Nanak's message was carried forward by his nine successors, who did further work over the next two hundred years: the Punjabi script and language was popularised, 'Parda' and 'Satti' were abolished among the Sikhs, the Holy City of Amritsar was founded, the two-part Holy Book was compiled, the Sikh symbol of swords of spiritual and temporal powers was introduced, the Sikh faith promoted, freedom of worship for Hindus protected and 'Khalsa', the formation of Sikhs with turbans etc, founded.

After Guru Nanak the following Gurus carried out the good work in their own right and contributed to Sikhism in many ways. It is a way of life and a guide to live happily and into the next life. Sikhs believe in reincarnation.

The tenth Guru, Guru Gobind Singh (1666-1708) could not bear to see the suffering people were going through, he had to get the Sikhs to stand up and claim what was theirs, and to protect the peace-loving people. On Vaisakhi day, which falls usually on the thirteenth of April, the Guru encouraged the people to get together on this harvest festival. He picked five fearless Sikhs, who were ready to sacrifice their lives for the good of everyone. He called them 'The Five Beloved ones'. They were not to cut their hair, were to wear a Turban, carry a small comb to keep their hair neat, wear a seamless bangle to remind



them that their characters should be perfect, carry a sword for protection, and wear special shorts so that they were decent and presentable. These are known as the five 'K's', because all the five items begin with a 'K' in the Sikh language, namely Punjabi. This was to be the Uniform for the Sikhs and all Sikhs are supposed to follow the order.

The Sikhs fought many wars and Guru Gobind Singh lost all his family trying to protect the people of India. He compiled the Sikh holy book, 'Guru Granth Sahib' which can be found in any Sikh temple; many Sikhs keep a copy at home.

Sikhs in these modern times can be identified wearing Turbans with western clothing. They would visit the temple ('Gurdwara') on

Sundays. Sikhs have close family bonds, believe in hard work to earn a living and that one should give some of the earnings away for those less fortunate than themselves.

The Sikhs are easily recognised by their turbans. When going to the Sikh temple they may wear a more traditional dress: men wear a gown-like garment called a Kurta and ladies may wear salwar-kamiz—a typical Punjabi dress—although most men would wear ordinary shirt and trousers. The Sikh Temple is known as a Gurdwara meaning literally "the house of God." Sikhs would visit the Gurdwara daily or weekly or some would only go when there is a special occasion. Sikhs use the Gurdwara for daily prayers, for naming a child, birthdays, weddings, blessings and death ceremonies. To name a child the close relatives would gather in the Gurdwara, the priest would open the holy book Guru Granth Sahib at random, read the verses and select the letter to name the child. If the letter is not to the liking of the family, the second letter of the same word will be offered and then the third and so

on, until the family is satisfied and the chosen name would then be used to bless the child.

Weddings are the most enthusiastic occasions when friends and relations of the bride and groom get together. The host is usually the bride's parents and family. The day begins with the family members meeting with garlands. Everyone assembles in the Gurdwara prayer hall and the ceremony begins with the president welcoming all present and instructing the musicians and the priest to perform the wedding. The groom sits facing the holy book and waits for the bride----- who is normally late. The priest reads the verses and the musicians sing them. The bride and groom slowly walk around the Guru Granth Sahib and come back to the front and sit. The four vows are taken and "I Do" is demonstrated by going around the holy book four times. The final prayers and blessings are given by the priest. Holy sweets are distributed amongst all present; congratulations are distributed in abundance before leaving for the reception hall. This is where all friends and relatives show off their Bangra skills, and who said Sikhs don't drink? Many Sikhs have socially accepted the use of alcoholic drinks at home and abroad.

Sikhs at the end of life are bathed, dressed and taken to the Gurdwara for a last blessing before being cremated. The loved ones, friends and all concerned return to the Gurdwara for a final prayer and a simple meal before departing. The bereft family is supported by the near family and friends for as long as required.

Sikhs celebrate the births and deaths of all Gurus, and Visakhi being the day of the birth of Khalsa, (Sikhs with their turbans and five K's) is celebrated in Gurdwaras. Sikhs also celebrate Diwali, a national day in India, and it also holds a special significance as a Sikh Guru is concerned.

This is a very brief insight into Sikhism; I hope it has been of interest to all who have read it.

*Ujjal Kular*

## **AGEING WELL SESSIONS**

Badminton, table tennis and pickleball 10 a.m. to 12 noon  
Most Tuesdays

More sports to be added soon.

Tai Chi 12 noon to 1 p.m.

Inspire Centre, Calderdale College.

Book on the app or via a receptionist at Sowerby Bridge pool or  
Brighouse pool.

## A VISIT TO EGYPT

In the year 2000 Betty and I flew to Egypt on St. Valentine's Day. We passed the first week on one of the river boats cruising up the river from Luxor, which in earlier times was known as Thebes, and was the major city of Egypt. Sailing up to Aswan, we came to the beautiful temple of Isis at Philae, built in 280BC. The Temple of Isis epitomises Egyptian culture and the sheer beauty of it has to be seen to be appreciated. It was here each year that the priests used to pray for the coming of the floods from the Upper Nile which meant life to the people for the next twelve months.



Returning from Aswan past the white-sailed feluccas which grace the river, we came to Edifu where the temple of the falcon-headed god Horus can be seen on the edge of the little town where the camel and the donkey contest the way with battered cars and vans, while bicycles weave between and the little calèches, or horse-drawn carriages, are everywhere. At nearby Kom Ombo we visited the enormous temple complex which is dedicated to two deities, the crocodile-headed Sobek and Haroeris with the head of a hawk.

From the temple of Amon-Ra, near to Luxor, a wide way, edged on each side by small sphinxes, each with the head of a ram, runs to the nearby temple of Karnak. This is a wonderful sight with its columns of enormous pillars

headed with a capital in the form of a lotus flower, which was shown in the film of Agatha Christie's book 'Death on the Nile'. Coming here one evening, we gathered outside the great pylon, or gateway, leading into the temple and were able to watch the *Son et Lumière* which was a moving experience in the warm darkness of the Egyptian evening, and the story of Karnak's past unfolded dramatically as we passed through the hypostyle

hall, ending at the sacred lake behind the temple. It was a strange feeling to stand there with the ancient temple before us lit by soft moonlight and spotlights in the knowledge that it had been there for four thousand years and would remain long after our own deaths. A lasting tribute to Man's building skills and to his religious fervour.

Across the Nile from our hotel lay the Valley of the Kings with the Valley of the Queens nearby and, visiting these, setting out before dawn to avoid the noon-day heat, we were able to examine some of the tombs, although we saw that of the renowned Tutankhamen only from the outside. The ones into which we descended were awe-inspiring. On the walls were pictures and hieroglyphics which, in spite of their age, were still strikingly coloured. In the tombs were cartouches, which are oval shapes enclosing hieroglyphs representing the name of the king buried there. The burial chambers were chilly and when we emerged from them into the bright sunshine above, it was nearing midday and although only February, the sun was very hot. Among the tombs we saw were those of Ramases II, Thot-Mosis and Horenheb and others. In the Valley of the Kings stands the temple dedicated to Queen Hatshepsut and, while admiring this and learning something of its history, we remembered only too well that two years before, a number of tourists had been massacred on the steps there. With this thought in our minds, we were grateful to see the number of armed policemen who were nearby and also on the town streets.



Sitting on our balcony each evening, watching the sun go down across the Nile to disappear beyond the Valley of the Kings, we drank in the beauty of it all and stored away memories against our return to England. It is true to say that those memories are still clear in our minds. The amazing sights we experienced gave us some pause for thought. This ancient civilisation obviously had a great need for God, or gods, and put them at the centre of life. We can perhaps learn much from them, not least that we should build our lives around God and put Him at the centre of everything.

*Derek Bridge*

## TWELVE WORDS

“Stone walls do not a prison make,  
Nor iron bars a cage.”

So wrote Richard Lovelace in 1642, from his prison cell.

What is a prison? We tend to think of it as an escape-proof place of incarceration for punishment, perhaps of rehabilitation. At the very least, as a way of getting those who prey on society off the streets for a while. But the words quoted above give much to think about.

Firstly, there are those for whom prison becomes 'home', They have company, three meals a day, somewhere warm and dry to sleep and no responsibilities. Often people of this sort, on release, find the problem of looking after themselves, of the daily small decisions to be made (even the simple 'what shall I eat? And when?') can be too much and they will re-offend quickly in order to be sent back. For these, the stone walls are not a prison but an embrace.

Then there are other prisoners who may be incarcerated but whose minds cannot be confined. St Paul is a good example: when he and Silas were in prison with their feet in the stocks, they sang and praised God. In his letter to the Philippians, Paul, again in prison,, wrote: 'Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me (being imprisoned) has actually served to advance the gospel. As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. And because of my chains, most of the brothers and sisters have become confident in the Lord and dare all the more to proclaim the gospel without fear.' Prison had no power to daunt Paul, and indeed gave him the leisure to write long letters to the congregations of his seven churches. His spirit was free to soar even while his body was confined. He could truly say, with Hamlet, 'I could be bounded in a nutshell and count myself a king of infinite space.'

On the other hand, there are those who are nominally 'free' but imprisoned by circumstances. Illness and pain can make someone feel like a prisoner, thankfully for most a temporary situation but for some a chronic condition. It is easy to isolate oneself and, perhaps, give in to self-pity and resentment. Having a very dependent relative can, at times, be stifling. Poverty is another constraint. It can limit our opportunities in a way

that can seem like confinement. In Walter Greenwood's 'Love on the Dole' Harry Hardcastle realises the restrictions imposed by his poverty:

"He suddenly wakened to the fact that he was a prisoner. The walls of the shops, houses and places of amusement were his prison walls; lacking money to buy his way into them, doors were all closed against him. That was the function of doors and walls; they were there to keep out those who hadn't any money. He was a prisoner at large. Immediately the confines of the world shrank....Walls and doors guarding him from the things he wanted." He was free to walk the streets but his freedom extended no further than the walls around him.

Rather more insidious can be the prisons we make for ourselves. Fear can take away our strength and encourage us to retreat into a little box of safety: guilt can stop us moving forward as we go over an event again and again in our minds as if we were stuck on an ever-spinning hamster wheel; bitterness, jealousy, unforgiveness, all corral the mind and spirit into a tiny world of self-pity or self-justification and lead to a withering of our own souls. Even love, in its obsessive and possessive forms, can create a cage both for the lover (be it a friend, a spouse or a parent) and the beloved.

Jesus did not come to throw open the doors of Wormwood Scrubs or Strangeways but to help us see a whole new world, one where we accept that 'the truth can set you free' and where we realise that, as John Milton wrote, 'The mind is its own place and, in itself, can make a heaven of hell or a hell of heaven.' It doesn't take stone walls or iron bars to imprison us but even if we are so restricted, our minds can float free and take us to the ends of the earth.



*Gemma Wassell*

## ***World Cruise: Things You Didn't Know You Didn't Know***

These are a few odd facts I learned from my trip which may be of interest.

### **Hawaii:**

1. The Hawaiian language only has 12 letters in its alphabet comprising 7 consonants and 5 vowels. Almost all words are unpronounceable to foreigners!
2. The native Macademia nuts grow alongside the blossom unlike fruit trees.
3. Mauna Loa and Kilauea (erupting while I was on The Big Island) are both rising sea mounts and, taking the extra underwater height into account, both measure about 4,000 feet higher than Mount Everest.

### **Indonesia:**

1. Should you find yourself needing it, the local word for Hello is Hal O.
2. Jakarta, on Java, is sinking on average around 6 and a half inches every year due to rising water tables. As a result the Government is building a new Capital, Nusantara, on the island of Borneo which should be ready by 2047. Hopefully, it won't be too late!
3. There are over 17,500 islands in the Indonesian archipelago but its population is spread over only 1,000 or so islands. So if you want an island of your own you have plenty of choice.

### **Singapore:**

1. If you buy a plot of land to build on and it has vegetation already growing on it you cannot get rid of it but instead have to incorporate it in your new project which is why many buildings have trees sticking out of them.
2. Vaping is forbidden while cigarette smoking is not. This is due to the perceived threat from the chemicals in vapes. Somewhat bizarre thinking to my mind.

### **San Francisco/California:**

1. It could have been British if it hadn't been for the fog banks which often obscure the entrance to the Bay. Sir Francis Drake is known to have passed it by on at least 2 occasions 160 years before the Spanish discovered it.
2. The Golden Gate Bridge is not actually part of SF but is located in Marin County.
3. California provides 70% of all the fruits and vegetables consumed in the USA.
4. In parts of Carmel the houses have no postal addresses: the inhabitants collect their mail on a weekly basis directly from the Post Office. Other deliveries are made by giving the senders a rough geographical location.

And, finally, on a sombre note, around 200 people die annually onboard cruise ships. However, as about 35 million people cruise every year you have a fair chance of surviving!

*Stephen Wassell*

## **FORTHCOMING CONCERTS AT HEATH**



**NICOLA MILLS**

**Opera for the People**

**Saturday 7th February 2026**

**@ 2.30 p.m.**



**CHRIS WILLIAMS**

**Entertainer and Singer**

**Saturday 14th March 2026**

**@2.30 p.m.**



**THE FLASHBACKS**

**Jazz Band**

**Saturday 25th April 2026**

**@ 2.30 p.m.**

**EACH CONCERT £10 INCLUDES REFRESHMENTS**

## **BLESSED ARE THEY**

If I am reading it right  
the people that God calls blessed  
are the ones who  
feed the hungry  
welcome the stranger  
befriend those in trouble  
care for those in pain.

Not a word about  
who or what they do or don't believe in,  
only a description of how they live their lives.

So I ask a blessing, God,  
on my friends  
who cannot  
or who do not  
believe in you.  
A blessing that they are not expecting  
yet one which they will recognise.  
A blessing of joy, integrity and justice,  
a blessing of love and life.

*Ruth Burgess: Candles and Conifers*

Matthew 25 v 34-46

### **MAGAZINE DEADLINE**

Please ensure that all contributions for the April/May issue of Heath Lives are received by the editor before

**9 a.m. on Friday 6th March 2026**

We welcome all contributions but publication is not guaranteed.

Send to: [garnetr@outlook.com](mailto:garnetr@outlook.com)  
or hand to Gemma or to Anne Boyd

Please note that inclusion of an article does not necessarily mean that the Editors agree with the sentiments expressed.

## **ACTIVITIES IN HEATH CHURCH**

On the third **Tuesday** of each month at 10.30 a.m., a **Coffee Morning** is held in the Lounge (using the Manor Drive entrance). Everyone welcome.

On the second **Thursday** of each month at 7.30 in the evening, we hold meetings of the **Thursday Club** in the lounge . We welcome new members.

### **Jason Whitaker Boxing Fitness.**

Boxing padwork sessions available for all fitness levels and abilities including group classes, 1-to-1s and 2-to-1s.

FB: Jasonwhitakerboxingfitness

Tel:07929372498

### **Kim's Dance and Movement**

**Tuesdays 10am** - Adult Beginners' Tap Class. Suitable for complete beginners or those with a little bit of tap experience in the past and needing a basic recap.

**Tuesdays 11am** - Adult Intermediate Tap Class. Anyone from 18-80 with previous knowledge or experience in tap dancing. Fun class.

**Thursdays 11am** - Move & Groove Dance fitness. Over 18's Aerobic-style fitness class. A nice feel-good class with a mixture of songs/routines including salsa and Cha-cha. All abilities as you can take it at your own pace.

Contact Kim on 07747 867706 or Facebook @kimsmoveandgroove

### **\*Move to Improve\* standing and seated exercise classes with Heidi.**

Help Improve your balance and posture, and strengthen muscle & bone plus improve your overall fitness.

Wednesday 2pm Back to Basics Gentle keep fit.

Friday Gentle keep fit 10am & 11.10am.

Please contact Heidi 07791869594

Email [heidimolle@googlemail.com](mailto:heidimolle@googlemail.com)



## Regular bookings at Heath United Reformed Church Autumn 2025

**All activities and hire times are subject to change.**

**TT = Term time S = Seasonal V = Variable O = Occasional**

| Day              | User                        | Time   | Location      |
|------------------|-----------------------------|--|---------------|
| <b>Monday</b>    | Coccinelle French Class     | 11.30-3 TT<br>ellie.fitzgerald1@outlookcom                         | Lounge        |
|                  | Janet's Eazi Dance          | 2-3 janetfletcher5@yahoo.com                                       | Hall          |
|                  | Steph's Sing for Fun        | 2-3 no need to book  | Upstairs      |
|                  | Beavers                     | 6-7 Beavers @49thhalifax.org.uk                                    | Lounge & Hall |
|                  | Cubs                        | 6.30-8 Cubs@49thhalifax.org.uk                                     | Hall          |
|                  | Halifax Symphony Orchestra  | 7-9.30 S<br>roybiggs@halifaxorchestra.org                          | Upstairs      |
| <b>Tuesday</b>   | Community Coffee Club       | 10.30-12 (3 <sup>rd</sup> Tuesday)<br>heathchurchhalifax@gmail.com | Lounge        |
|                  | AGK3 meditation             | 10.00 – 12.00 <a href="mailto:hello@agk3.uk">hello@agk3.uk</a>     | Lounge        |
|                  | Yvonne's Tai Chi            | 1.30-3.30  | Hall          |
|                  | Kim's music lessons         | 4.15-8.15 pm TT  | Upstairs      |
|                  | Kim's dance class           | 6.15-7.15 07747 867706   | Hall          |
|                  | Scout District Meetings     | 7.30 – 9.30 V  | Lounge        |
| <b>Wednesday</b> | Northern Lights House Group | 10.30-12.30 fortnightly<br>07929 372498                            | Lounge        |
|                  | WoW! Worship on Wednesday   | 2.30-3.30 (1st & 3rd Wednesdays)<br>07748988161                    | Lounge        |
|                  | Heidi's cardiac rehab       | 2-3 07791 869594   | Hall          |
| <b>Thursday</b>  | Heath Study Group           | 10.30-12 V<br>01422 431424 heathchurchhalifax@gmail.com            | Lounge        |
|                  | WAM choir                   | 10-12  | Upstairs      |
|                  | Kim's dance class           | 11-12 07747 867706   | Hall          |
|                  | Halifax Young Singers       | 6-9 TT halifaxyoungsingers2@gmail.com                              | Upstairs      |
|                  | Laura Morrell Singing       | 8-9 TT 07425 893945 (in hall on 2nd Thursdays)                     | Lounge        |
|                  | Thursday Club               | 7.30-9 (2nd Thurs)<br>heathchurchhalifax@gmail.com                 | Lounge/visit  |
| <b>Friday</b>    | Private dog training        | 7-8 am   | Hall          |
|                  | Heidi's cardiac rehab       | 10-12 07791869594  | Hall          |
|                  | Kim's music lessons         | 4.15-6.15 pm TT  | Upstairs      |
|                  | Scouts & Explorer Scouts    | 7.30-9 Scouts@49thhalifax.org.uk                                   | Hall & Lounge |
|                  | Kim's music lessons         | 9-11 TT  | Upstairs      |
|                  |                             |  |               |
| <b>Saturday</b>  | Kim's music lessons         | 8.15-11.15 TT  | Upstairs      |
|                  | Calderdale Chess League     | 2.00 -7.00 07504 598590 O  | Hall          |
| <b>Sunday</b>    | Heath's Worship             | 10-12 Service 10:30-11:30 07748988161                              | Upstairs      |
|                  | Northern Lights             | 2.30-6 07970 256243<br>(Independent church, not linked to Heath)   | Hall/Lounge   |