



**Sullington & Thakeham with Warminghurst**  
Same family. Two parishes. Working together.

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Dear Church Family,

At Sullington on Sunday we continued the story of Jacob, looking at Genesis 32:21-32. This is a story which is probably familiar to many of you, but I suspect its familiarity probably doesn't make it any less intriguing or bemusing.

Genesis 32:21-32 recounts Jacob wrestling with a man all night whilst preparing to re-enter the promised land and potentially encounter Esau again. Remember Jacob hasn't seen his brother Esau since tricking Isaac to gain the blessing that should have been Esau's by right, and when Jacob left Esau was planning to kill Jacob.

So we can understand that Jacob may well have been feeling nervous about encountering Esau again, and we could probably expect some level of mental anguish, but what we definitely aren't expecting is for Jacob to wrestle with a man. But there are a few things that this passage reveals to us.

Firstly it reveals much about the character and nature of Jacob up to this point in the narrative. Jacob has been in almost continuous conflict with someone in the story so far. He begins in competition with his brother Esau, and this competition seems to have forced his parents to take sides, and then in competition with Laban. With Laban and Jacob continually seeking to gain the upper hand through deception. The narrative has been structured in such a way for us to see that Jacob, although being God's chosen one, has been behaving in a manner more reminiscent of the serpent in the Garden of Eden. But in verse 28 the real reason for Jacob's strained relationships with those around him is revealed. The man he is wrestling says this "you have struggled with God and with humans." Jacob's struggles with those around him, reflect his struggles with God.

Jacob remember, valued the promises that his grandfather Abraham, and his father Isaac had received from God, and was determined that those promises should be true for him. On the face of it this sounds like a noble ambition, however Jacob allows his ambition to corrupt him. Instead of trusting God to bless him (as was prophesied to his mother) Jacob decides to steal the blessing through cunning. The result of his failure to trust is conflict, a conflict that won't cease until he has settled his conflict with God. Like Jacob we cannot seize God's blessings through force, or by our own actions.

Jacob wrestles this man, and we are meant to understand this enigmatic man as being God or Jesus himself, as Jacob says after the encounter "I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared." Although it is true that his life was spared, this encounter is one of suffering, and one which will mark Jacob for the rest of his days. We read that he walked with a limp at the end of this. Whilst we never want to seek out suffering this passage does have hope for those of us suffering. Jacob through this time of suffering comes to recognise the nature and character of God for the first time in his life. It's also worth noting that God was with Jacob throughout his time of suffering, and he is with us when we suffer.

Jacob is a changed man after this encounter. We read that his name is now changed to Israel, meaning one who struggles with God. The meaning of the name seems to echo throughout the following generations, where the history of the nation will be one of struggling with God. But the name can also mean 'God perseveres,' and we can see that too. For decades Jacob has struggled with God, thinking he can seize God's blessings for himself, despite this God does not abandon him, but repeatedly seeks him out, not because Jacob is good, but because God is. There is hope for us in that too, God seeks us because God is love, not because we are special. Jacob isn't perfect from this point on, but he does finally recognise God. It's never too late for us!

Revd Joel Willmer



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## THIS WEEK'S CHURCH SERVICES:

### SUNDAY 21st JUNE

10:30am SULLINGTON:  
Holy Communion

10:30am THAKEHAM:  
Holy Communion

**We look forward to welcoming  
you!**



Hear me, Lord, and answer me, for I am poor and needy.  
Guard my life, for I am faithful to you; save your servant who trusts in you.  
You are my God; have mercy on me, Lord, for I call to you all day long.  
Bring joy to your servant, Lord, for I put my trust in you.  
You, Lord, are forgiving and good, abounding in love to all who call to you.  
Hear my prayer, Lord; listen to my cry for mercy.  
When I am in distress, I call to you, because you answer me.  
Among the gods there is none like you, Lord; no deeds can compare with yours.  
All the nations you have made will come and worship before you, Lord;  
they will bring glory to your name.  
For you are great and do marvelous deeds; you alone are God.



# NOTICES:

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## STORRINGTON DEANERY SYNOD

Storrington Deanery Synod will next meet on Thursday 25 th June 2026 at 7.00pm (coffee and cake) for 7.30pm start at St.Michael's Church, Amberley. It is an open meeting and will include a talk by The Revd Felix Smith - newly appointed Diocesan Focal Ministry Officer. Focal ministry is an initiative to support clergy in multi-church benefices and is firmly grounded in the parish system and our ongoing commitment to ensure sacramental and pastoral care and mission in every parish. Local leaders, known as focal ministers, appointed to be 'the face of the church' locally – providing local leadership and a consistent presence in their communities, under the oversight of the incumbent of the benefice. Such local leaders could be ordained (SSM deacons or priests or clergy with PTO) or authorised or licensed lay ministers. All are very welcome at this open meeting.

Further details from Chris Whitehead. Tel: 01903 741252.



# EVENTS:

St Mary's Church, Sullington

## QUIZ NIGHT!

At Sullington Great Barn, Sullington Manor Farm,  
RH20 4AE

£15 per person   
Ploughman's supper included!  
Cash bar available for drinks

 Book your table now  
Gail Kittle: 01903 745754

19<sup>th</sup> June 2026  
6:30pm for a 7pm prompt start 

Tables of up to 6 people available  
Smaller groups welcome - teams can be combined

Quiz night! Tickets available please come along for a fun night out!

If you would like to donate raffle prizes for this please bring items to St Mary's Sullington on Saturday at worship cafe, Sunday at church or contact Carol directly.

FUNDRAISING EVENING FOR THAKEHAM COMMUNITY

BRING YOUR OWN COCKTAILS & DRINKS 

# CARIBBEAN Night

BRING YOUR OWN COCKTAILS & DRINKS

**SATURDAY, JUNE 20TH**

Thakeham Village Hall

**7PM TO 10.30PM**

Special Guests  
**WORTHING STEEL BAND**

SCAN QR CODE TO BOOK 

TICKETS £22 PER PERSON

Supported by 

AUTHENTIC CARIBBEAN SUPPER INCLUDED



Join us this Saturday for our Caribbean Night at 7pm in the Thakeham Village Hall.

St Mary's Thakeham Flower Festival presents

## BEYOND THE ILLUSION



**FRIDAY 3RD JULY**  
6:30pm - 8:30pm

Join us for a fascinating evening of survival, magic and faith with **Tim Saiet**

at  
Thakeham Village Hall  
RH20 3GW

Tickets: £10.50pp.  
includes a glass of wine

Scan QR code to buy in advance

Printed tickets available from Meadow Stores, Thakeham



[www.buytickets.at/stmaryschurchthakeham/219669](http://www.buytickets.at/stmaryschurchthakeham/219669)

# EVENTS:



— St Mary's Thakeham —

## FLOWER AND CRAFT FESTIVAL

'What a Wonderful World'

**FREE**  
Park and Ride  
from the Village Hall

**OPEN GARDENS**  
SATURDAY & SUNDAY  
2-5pm

**3rd, 4th & 5th July • 10am - 5pm**

**Friday:** Flower Displays in Church • Refreshments  
**Saturday & Sunday:** Flower Displays • Refreshments  
• Children's Activities • Stalls • Open Gardens • Music  
• Bell Ringer Tours • Songs of Praise

Full programme at [www.stmarysthakeham.org](http://www.stmarysthakeham.org)



— St Mary's Thakeham —

## OPEN GARDENS

Saturday 4th July & Sunday 5th July  
2pm - 5pm

**FREE**  
Park and Ride  
from the Village Hall

Ten Gardens near the church in Thakeham will be open as part of St Mary's Church Flower Festival. Do come and wander around them, enjoy the refreshments and stalls nearby, and visit the wonderful flower displays in the church as well!

£7.50 per person for all the gardens • Children under 12 go free

Tickets may be purchased on the day