

GRAPEVINE

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New Year thoughts

The land you are to take possession of is a land of mountains and valleys that drinks rain from heaven. It is a land the Lord your God takes care of; the eyes of the Lord your God are continually on it from the beginning of the year till its end.' (Deuteronomy 11.1-12).

Hello There,
As I sit and write this, the New Year has just begun and I have thoughts of what 2018 has in store for St John's, for Welling and for my family. As a new year begins we stand on the threshold of the unknown, a land not yet known to us. We see before us a newness, new opportunities. What new experiences or changes will come our way? What new needs arise?

Despite all the uncertainty that lies before us, we have the comforting message from our God. 'The Lord your God cares....' 'The eyes of the Lord are continually on it from the beginning of the year till its end.'

It really is a comforting message, and so wonderful to know that no matter what is to come in 2018 God is watching and with us in anything that is to come. The Lord is to be our source of supply. In him are springs, fountains and streams that will never be cut off or run dry. To those of us that are anxious comes the gracious promise of our heavenly father; if he is the source of our mercies, mercy will never fail us. No heat or drought can ever dry up the water that flows from God.

We know that the year ahead of us, the land in which we have just entered is full of valleys and hills. The path is not flat or downhill. We all remember the difficulties of 2017, for our world, for our country and I'm sure for our own family and friends. We remember the disaster of Grenfell Tower, the bombing in Manchester and the London attacks, just to name a few. We pray that we will not have to face these awful hardships and disasters

again, but we know that life is not continually smooth and hard times will occur.

We know there will be times when we burn the toast, we miss the bus or we forget to do something really important. We will face hills and valleys but we need them. The hills collect the rain for hundreds of fruitful valleys, and so it is with us, it is the tough times encountered on the hills that drives us to the throne of grace and brings us refreshing showers of blessing. Our year will have hills, where we will feel cold, windswept and perhaps even lost... it is here where we question, it is here where we complain and it is this that brings down the showers of blessing.

God's hills offer us a gracious protection against our foes. We cannot see what the loss, upset and trials are accomplishing, we need only trust. Trust the father who comes near to take us by our hand and lead us on our way TODAY. Contd p2

St John's News

What particularly impacted your Advent and Christmas 2017?

For me, it was the Advent focus on Hope, Love, Joy and Peace as we lit the candles during the four pre-Christmas Sundays and continued thinking and meditating as we unpacked these themes in our House Groups, using studies prepared by Miriam. (Although I shall never forget some scenes from the Christmas Eve Nativity... Mary and Joseph trotting between the towering Roman soldiers, the Star being forcefully marched round the church, King Herod's booming from the back of the church!)

Many people flocked into St John's to celebrate Christmas during December, starting with the TOFFs' carol service on 6th, then Christingle, Carols by Candlelight, Messy Christmas, the Crib Service, Christmas Eve Midnight Communion right up to Christmas Morning family worship!

Oh, and never forgetting the schools that used our building for their carol services: Bexley Grammar, Danson, Fosters and Hook Lane.

We don't know who came as a result of receiving our beautiful Christmas card through their door but I do know our Advent themes prompted me to pray as I delivered church cards, that households would begin to reach out and experience God's hope, love, joy and peace in their lives. Many people took on extra work and responsibility to enable services to run smoothly and worshipfully, which they did! Thank you **so** much.

Inspire had a morning considering Psychosis... complex... Watch Beautiful Minds! Their December Christmas gathering in the Nags Head was much appreciated. Speaking of eating events, as you can see overleaf, pictures confirm that the Men's Christmas Meal at The Anchor was a good evening as was the Alpha

Celebration meal at Kate and Roger's (Many House groups also enjoyed celebrating together with food and fun.)

A small group of us met just before **Midnight on December 31st** to mark the year change with God and it was good. We were delighted back in November when **John Gompers** and **Micah Derrota** shared the news they had got engaged and plan to marry in April. Many congratulations to them both! We continue to stand with those living through difficult times: Val Gompers' chemotherapy, Wendy and Chas Cole, Don and Margaret Smith, health issues, and those missing their dear loved ones.

So, into 2018 with its knowns and so many unknowns; well worth travelling it with the only One who "knows the way that I take" (Job 23).

Till April and Spring!!
Estelle Woodcock

Alpha: My experience

Leader—Continued from p1

At the beginning of a year, it is a really good opportunity to give the tough times and events that happened last year to God through prayer. It's also a really good time to start to think about your walk with God, it may be that you have not quite been in step with him lately and this year you want to begin it afresh and right with Him. I can promise you that it will be a good and blessed new year with God holding your hand.

Life is like a path, at times it can be straight and smooth; at other times it is bumpy and uneven. We stay on this path because it's here that we find joy in our journey....let's get on that path, let's get straight with God and grab hold of his hand for the journey into the land of 2018.

Love in Christ,
Danielle Pearson-Smith, Curate

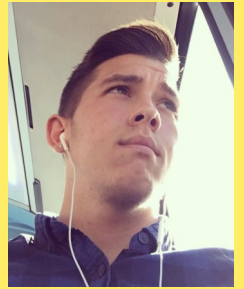
My experience of Alpha was one of growth, not only spiritually but personally as well. I didn't really know what to expect when I first went along. I was nervous but the first night settled my nerves. I put this down to the format in which the evenings were set out. We would start with dinner which allowed us to talk about how our weeks had gone. We began to feel comfortable with each other on a personal level. After this we would all go into the living room to watch that week's Alpha film which I must say were very good because they found ways to look at some of the

important questions in a fun and interesting way.

The film would lead us into the discussion part of the evening in which we would ask questions about what we watched and share our own personal take on it, listening to what others thought it meant.

My personal view on Alpha is that it's a great course to go on because it helps you to meet new people from lots of different backgrounds and create a closer bond with them. I also loved learning more about the Christian faith and God.

Tyler Gillam



Purulia News

Good news and bad news; After many years at Purulia, Dr Famkima and Dr Joydeepa have moved on to a new phase in their tireless work for TLM – They will now be responsible for *all* the TLM hospitals in India which, with their passion & experience, is absolutely fantastic. They both have an extraordinary gifting for leadership, and their experience will stand them in good stead to help share their expertise with other projects and hospitals.



However, sadly it means that as I write Purulia Hospital is without a Superintendent Doctor in charge, so please pray the right Doctor/s step forward to take the hospital forward in its new and exciting phase of modernisation, and that work on the new outpatients' department goes ahead as planned. There was a 'ground breaking' ceremony in November with Doctors, Nurses, TLM reps and Patients all taking turns to dig the ground. TLM Australia has donated a time lapse camera that will take pictures of the construction approx. every 15 minutes and should therefore allow thousands of images to be stitched together into a short video showing the entire construction process - which should be interesting to watch!

Alison Read

Lamplighters

A Huge Thank you to you all for your continued support – especially for the Christmas Fayre—it was the best ever raising a whopping £2232 and couldn't happen without you all.

The children have continued to have fun each

Friday evening - you can follow the fun & check out what we've been up to on the Welling Lamplighter Facebook page, please take a look.

If you know of a primary aged child who would like to join us then please call 07796 264309. They are guaranteed to have a great time; as well as games, crafts and fun, our children enjoy being directly involved in caring and praying for others and we feel it helps them develop a worldwide vision for helping those less fortunate.

By the time you read this Miriam will have completed a 20km walk for Purulia – well done Miriam! If you didn't sponsor her I'm sure it's not too late - check out her just giving page or speak to her direct.

Alison Read

Blessing water

Blessing of the waters, Danson Park, 2:00 pm Sunday 7th January 2018. Jenny and I processed together with about fifty other people from the Danson Road entrance of the Park to the Danson Boating Pool edge. Whilst it was a windy and brisk afternoon, the cross cultural and language experience with our Greek Orthodox friends was inspiring. There was an icon, and incense, and many men dressed in black suits and robes.



The Service was conducted in English which was then duplicated in Greek, and the Danson Boating Pool had its waters blessed with a small cross, and was made truly holy.

The quotations in the Service were mainly about Jesus being baptised in the Jordan waters by John the Baptist, and the Holy Spirit coming down upon Him.

We enjoyed the experience and it was good to spend time with our brothers and sisters in Christ from a slightly different culture, but with the same Saviour.

Mike Cossar

Men's Christmas Meal

65 men, of which 39 were from St John's and 26 from BR were welcomed by the amazing staff at the We Anchor in Hope for our Christmas meal.

There was a good mix of ages at the meal and some guests who aren't Christians as well. There was good beer, food and banter on the night with plenty of good cheer from all!



We would love it if more St John's men joined us for the Christmas 2018 meal, so if you want to, come and see Ken Woodcock or me and we will try

to give you good notice to drop everything and join us in due course!

They coped with us really well! The men from BR got their starters and mains before we had ours which meant a little delay for us but believe it or not the St John's chaps were extremely patient!

Simon Caddock



Recently, there have been a number of well publicised reports about the emotional wellbeing of young people and the pressures they face. One report locally said that 57% of secondary school age young people in Bexley reported feeling anxious or depressed at some point. At the same time, we in CRiBS have been reviewing our strategy for work in Secondary schools. Out of this has come *Unlimited*.

The idea is that the Christian church can become part of the solution to the issues facing young people, as volunteers from local churches go into schools to act as mentors for students nominated by the schools themselves. We are currently recruiting a new Secondary Schools Work co-ordinator, and a significant part of their job will be to oversee this project, liaising with schools and with volunteer mentors and matching them up.

We held a launch event for Unlimited on Thursday 11th January at Christ Church, Sidcup. 45-50 people were there, hearing from a teacher at a local secondary school, as well as from members of the team, about both the needs and the opportunities in secondary schools. Around 20 people signed up to find out more about becoming mentors – but there is still room for more! If you think you could be part of this exciting new initiative, then please get in touch with Mark at mark@cribsonline.org. And please pray that God will use Unlimited to bring hope to the lives of some of our young people.

Mark Leveson, CRiBS CEO

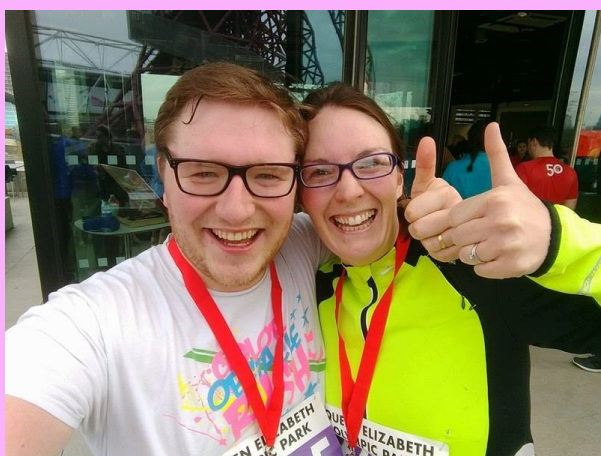
(The first mentor training day will be taking place on Sat 10th February 2018 9am-5pm at St John's, Welling. Contact Mark to book in.)

Running 10k home for good!

Home for Good is a wonderful charity which aims to raise awareness and support the fostering and adoption of children in care. Currently in the UK the number of children in care is increasing yet adoption and fostering rates are declining. Home for Good wants every child to find a home and works closely with churches and local authorities to support this process and equips them to offer welcoming communities for these children.

Billy-Jo O'Leary works for the charity and liaises closely with churches in Kent.

We wanted to help raise money for the charity so Sarah, David and I ran 10k at the Olympic Park Stratford. We trained hard but we were a little apprehensive. We ran on separate occasions yet our finish times were very similar. This was the first time I had run 10k but the biggest challenge was the weather conditions – it was snowing so some of the route was quite slippery. Nonetheless it was good fun and it was a



pleasure to help raise money for this great charity.

Thanks to the donations from both the congregation of St John's and from friends and family outside St John's, incredibly we managed to raise just over £800. We were very blessed to have the support of lovely people and were very grateful. You too could also raise money for Home for Good

by becoming a champion for Home for Good which involves spreading the word, including organising information events. Alternatively, you too could partake in a mile for every child, which could include for example running, walking or cycling. The aim is to cover 35,000 miles during 2018. Thanks again for all

of your support.

Gilda Spaducci

Christmas

Carols and Candles
Oranges in Christingles
Recorder and Singers at JNC.....
Christmas at St John's was a JOY as we celebrated the Incarnation



Joy to the World
The Lord is come
Let Earth receive her King!



Jobs: Mike and Jenny

Mike Cosser was brought up in Brigg, N Lincs, the middle child of 3. At 18 he was glad to move away to Salford, to study Biology. This was where he really grew up, and having nothing to say for the degree, the social life was good – darts, pinball, Manchester Utd, and a bit of biology. After a year back at home and a job in Scunthorpe Steelworks, he moved to Milton Keynes as a Houseparent in a residential school for maladjusted boys (not current terminology), and 15 months later to Leytonstone, Waltham Forest as a temporary social worker, after trying to join the Probation Service in 1973 but being turned down by the Home Office.

Mike trained at Worcester Social Services, a year on the job and 2 years at Bristol Poly (during which he met Jenny), and worked in Evesham as a Social Worker for 7 years, by then married to Jenny. They moved to Coventry when he was appointed as a Senior Social Worker, but it was a very hard team and he nearly had a breakdown, working all hours and suffering from depression.

After moving into a new team to avert the decline, he attended a local jobs fair where he heard a probation officer talk about enjoying his job. This was a new concept to Mike at the time, so in 1991 he applied to a vacancy and was successful. In the probation team he was the nominal white male! It was brilliant, his boss was very positive and he loved the work.

As a probationary probation officer, he was largely report writing, a skill second nature to Mike, so he did well. In 1993 he took on half time a new role of health and safety (H&S) rep, inspecting all the other probation offices in Coventry, which he fulfilled for 18½ years until his retirement in 2011. He visited offices for a day to review working conditions, about which he cared quite passionately because he is thankful for always having had good health, and wanted to help others to experience the same. It was a role he pioneered, and which grew gradually across the whole country. His was the first office in the County to take action on smoking in the workplace. "Once an inspector, always an inspector", and according to Jenny, "on holidays too, he was hard to live with, it's so boring!" His last two years were back to probation full-time before retirement aged 61 in 2011, but he continues both to write, and to meet people in their workplaces: in 2014 he began

to visit shops in order to bless them in Jesus' name. A year later Mike and Jenny moved to London, where he continues in his new career of blessing (and is very willing to talk about it if you ask him, or want to see what he writes).



Jenny was also born 1950, in the idyllic village of Stoke Gifford in North Bristol/Gloucestershire where her wider family lived. Also one of 3, she and her family thought she would always live there, and in the last year of formal education she was selected as Head Girl. On leaving school in 1967, she worked as an administrator, first for the SW Regional Hospital Board in Clifton, Bristol in the team appointing doctors, a lovely team to work for (5 years), and then for the Bristol Association of Youth Clubs (5 years) in reception. It was in Feb 76 that she met Mike, and this changed her rootedness in Bristol, as when they married in Summer 1977 they moved to Evesham, shocking her family, and surprising Jenny at how much she missed them. After two years in a very boring job in an irrigation firm (where she read a great deal to pass the time), she became in 1979 secretary to two probation officers, and then in 1980, Mike and Jenny's first child Emily was born, their son Alex following in 1982.

For the next 15 years, Jenny's work was based around home. When Alex was 1, she began to childmind until, when Emily started university, she didn't want a house full of children all week and was offered a job with an estate agent. Her final job was at the Age UK Coventry office in reception for 10 years until retirement at the same time as Mike in 2011. Moving to Bexley was precipitated by the birth of their second grandchild to Emily, so Mike and Jenny's lives now have children back in them.

Where did the roots of their Christian faith come from? Jenny's Mum took her to church as a child. There was nothing Christian in Mike's childhood home, but an Aunt in Lincoln modelled it by saying grace before meals, and I dare say she prayed for Mike as well. When Jenny and Mike married, Mike had a yearning for times past and for God, so they searched for a church, and as Jenny had a Baptist upbringing, they found a Baptist Church to join. Mike was baptised in Evesham in 1979.

Kate Foot

Blue Star

When our Housegroup was first asked to lead a Transform Service it

seemed rather daunting! However, once we got started we realised it was a wonderful opportunity to meet with members both old and new and for our families to meet too. We were lucky to be able to enjoy a meal together before the service which was hugely enjoyable for everyone involved. The easiest part of organising the service was picking the songs I think. We love worshipping at our Housegroup and sharing some of our favourite songs in the church was an amazing experience. Being up front meant stepping out of our comfort zones but I

hope we were able to get across how rewarding and fulfilling being a member of a Housegroup can be. The whole experience of leading the service has strengthened the wonderful bond we have as we learn and worship together.



Claire Levent, Blue Star Housegroup