

GRAPEVINE

grapevine@stjohnswelling.org.uk www.stjohnswelling.org.uk 020 8303 1107 editors: MCC, WMI & NC

God's Faithful

Dear Friends at St John's Welling and Erith. What interesting times we live in. Social distancing, self-isolating, working from home, not able to worship in our churches. I know some of us are lonely, some scared, some annoyed at exams being cancelled (others rejoicing!) and all across the city families coming to terms with loss. Some maybe even having a crisis of faith.

Truth is though that our faith should not have anything to do with our circumstances – God is faithful and He will go on being faithful to eternity. *'The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms. He will drive out your enemies before you, saying, 'Destroy them!'* Deut 33:27 NIV

We have tried to keep our church relationships going – by phone, by email, by Facebook and websites. I have even broken my lifetime ban on Facebook to see what you are all up to! Some have ventured onto Skype and Zoom to keep in touch – housegroups (and Alpha) video-

conferencing and services recorded on the web.

So – what are we all doing to keep **busy doing nothing**? Some suggestions (5 P's) from what I am up to in increased hours without meetings...

*We're busy doin' nothin'
Workin' the whole day through
Tryin' to find lots of things not to do
We're busy goin' nowhere
Isn't it just a crime
We'd like to be unhappy, but
We never do have the time.*

Bing Crosby

Prayer – has become an even more important part of life. Giving thanks to God for all we have, and for the amazing NHS and its staff, and praying for God to turn this virus back, and to keep our borough and its people safe. Pray for those who are working harder than ever in our shops and hospitals or who have children

unexpectedly at home.

Phoning – If God puts someone on your heart, phone them, ask them how they are doing, maybe even pray with them down the phone. I have surprised 2 aunts and others...

Playing – Kate and I have rediscovered the delights of jigsaw puzzles – and we have discovered several others doing so too!

Perambulating (Walking!) – It's amazing how much better the world looks after a brisk socially distant walk in Danson Park.

Preparing – by getting into God's word in a deeper way. Maybe I will even release my Biblical musings from the greenhouse one day!

Do your best to keep safe, keep in touch, keep the faith, keep smiling, and... Keep your Distance.

God bless,

Adam

Adam Foot, Vicar St. John's Welling and Priest in Charge St. John's Erith

St John's News

We are in unique times, for our generation anyway. Never before have we experienced so universal a threat as Covid-19 nor the challenges of virtual lock down, but the potential to share what it means to know the peace and power of Jesus in our lives with those who are panicking.

So has nothing happened in the life of our church in the last few weeks? Far from it!

The Bexley Winter Shelter continued on from January with increasingly low numbers as guests moved into permanent accommodation. The remaining guests when the shelter closed were due to be taken to hotels under a London Mayoral scheme.

Lamplighters took a big part in the moving and challenging service on World Leprosy Day.

The Spring Alpha course has just finished (see Mike's article) with the two concluding sessions involving us meeting remotely to share and discuss

- but sadly no shared supper. February Messy Church was a good time of fun, families and fellowship.

The Uganda visit involved Sue and Steve Read, Alison Read, Linzi and Roulla. From all accounts they had a very worthwhile visit.

House Groups have been studying Old Testament characters. They have a lot to teach us!

So, until Junemay we keep close to God and keep safe learning more and more about church outside walls.

Estelle Woodcock

Four Months on Soul61

These first 4 months on Soul61 have just been a whirlwind. I have encountered God every single day and the intimacy of my relationship with him has grown massively. I feel I have learned so much during my time here and I am excited to see what I learn and what God does in me over the next 6 months. The other people on my course are a marvellous bunch from all over the globe, who are all set on fire for God and have true servant hearts for the Lord. We have really helped each other over the course as well as the church community, to keep our eyes fixed on God and grow our faiths together. I truly believe the friendships I have made through this course will last a lifetime.

At Soul Survivor, to get us settled into the church family better, we were all asked to choose a Connect Group in which to meet other people in the church. There were many options to choose from but I decided on the Jujitsu Connect Group. At Jujitsu I have got to know many people both from Church and non-Church backgrounds, which has led to some awesome conversations about faith and some non-Christians starting to come to Church. As Soul61's we all got given a placement within the Church, where we can shadow

the team and learn about various parts of it. Luckily I got selected to be a part of the Youth Team, where I serve at the older youth club as well as Sunday School for the younger youth. During the week we meet up and pray for the youth as well as arranging and preparing for various outreaches for them such as Laser Tag, football tournaments and scavenger hunts. I have been really blessed by the Youth Team as they are just such amazing people, who are doing everything to support our growth as leaders over the year.

While being in Watford my prayer life has just exploded and through it I have seen God do some amazing, truly amazing things such as use me to give prophecies to many people, heal people and bring them to faith. The more I pray and spend time with the Father, the more supernatural events happen around me as

well as the easier it is to listen to where God is calling me to go and what to do for him. Through all this time spent with God, I believe I am called to stay in Watford for the next few years as I feel I'm called to be here for a season to continue to work and grow in my leadership, while I study Theology (hopefully) at St. Mellitus next year. I believe God is calling me into ministry to be a preacher and speaker for him, so to follow my calling I'm going to study to increase my theological knowledge of him and to prepare myself for whatever God has in store next.



I want to thank everyone reading this for your ongoing support whether prayer or financial, as I know I would not be able to respond to God's call without your support til now, and ongoing for the rest of the course. My prayer requests are that I keep my eyes fixed on Jesus as I pursue him, that I can keep up a great prayer and Bible study life as well, that I stay set on fire for God and that how on fire I am only keeps growing.

Boaz Moody

JOBS: Mark Belsham

Mark's dad was an Army Doctor, so science and health were in Mark's blood, so to speak.

Mark grew up attending boarding schools as his dad had to move around regularly in his work with the military. Mark first came to Bexley around age 10, when his dad was posted to the Royal Herbert Hospital, built as a military hospital on Shooters Hill by Florence Nightingale Hospital, working as a consultant anaesthetist and doing minor surgery alongside. (Interestingly, Pat Wootton worked with him in theatre at Erith Hospital in the late 70s when he was anaesthetist for the orthopaedic surgeon.)

Mark's first time taste of day schooling was not until studying for A-levels at Erith College in the late 1970s, from whence he moved to Norwich for a degree in Biochemistry at the University of East Anglia, which he thoroughly enjoyed. Apart from filling in after university with some plumbing work for 6-8 months, he has worked in hospital laboratories all his working life since.

His first job was at Kings College Hospital, where he trained as a Medical Laboratory Scientific Officer in the Biochemistry Lab doing an MSc. The Biochemistry Department deals mainly with the fluid that blood cells circulate in: plasma.

and monitor many diseases including of the liver, kidney and heart. Diabetes is a major part of Mark's work as is diagnos-



ing cancers using faecal testing. It's a job that both requires meticulous attention to detail and a thorough scientific knowledge, continually updated through the years as research adds to the testing that can take place.

After 6-7 years at Kings, Mark secured a senior post at the Brook Hospital on

Shooters Hill, a general hospital that also specialised in cardio-thoracic and head injuries, where he worked until the last but one hospital reorganisation in the late 1990s when 5 hospitals were amalgamated into Greenwich Hospital. The most recent reorganisation in the early 2000s took Mark to Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Woolwich, where he remains. The Pathology Department is now merging, with specialisms, between Barts Hospital, Royal London Hospital, University Hospital Lewisham, and Homerton University Hospital. They wait to see whether bigger is better.

As the years have passed, the key changes have been an increase in the number of tests available (as science progresses), the number of samples being processed (both increased population and more testing), and the ways in which the testing is performed. More and more of the testing has been able to be automated, thereby providing a more rapid progress from sample to diagnosis, and leaving behind the part of the job that Mark finds more interesting and can now do more of the time, the hands on manual testing work with a smaller number of samples.

Tests are carried out for in-patients, out-patients and GP practices, and sometimes it's not until the early hours of the morning that each day's GP samples are dealt with. As a team, the department works round the clock round the year, as

St John's Church Playgroup

sions almost full up. There is also a very healthy waiting list too.

We are continuing to pay for children to have some 1-1 and small group support for Speech and Language and EAL. This is going very well and the children are benefiting greatly from it.

Next term I will be gathering information about what the parents' intentions are for September regarding schools and other settings, and then I will start inviting prospective parents to visit, and teachers from receiving

schools, as part of the transition process.

I would like to thank Val, Pat T and Miriam G on the Playgroup Council for everything they continue to do for the Playgroup as I appreciate that they give up their own time. Also thank you to all volunteers who help us out and make our lives a lot easier! Thanks too to Jackie for continuing with the Staff Appraisals.

God Bless.

Julie Stedman, Manager

St John's Playgroup Staff



with the children. This has been great and the children love it!

We have an ex parent who comes in occasionally to teach the children some Taekwondo skills and we also hoping that the Guide Dogs will pay us a visit.

The children have a stimulating and exciting time at Playgroup which is essential for their development and preparation for school.

The numbers on role have been steadily increasing this year with all ses-

Playgroup has had another very busy and productive year.

We have had several trips and events with the children, including a visit to Woodlands farm, Sport's Day, the Nativity Play, end of term parties, the Annual Sponsored Wheelathon, fundraising for Children in Need, Sport's Relief, Red Nose Day, Mac-Millan Big Coffee morning and Bexley Winter Shelter. We

took part in World Book Day, trips around Danson Park and we are looking forward to organizing more fun things in the Summer Term. We also gave some money to Rukungiri to be shared out among a few children including the child that we sponsor.

All of these events have been very well supported by the parents and our volunteers.

We have had some very talented members of the congregation coming in to play musical instruments and sing

there is always overnight work for in-patients, including accident and emergency arrivals. The team is always very busy, and although Mark himself usually works early shifts, he can still work 8am-8pm when needed. At the present time he is potentially covering weekends as well.

The biochemistry department is part of pathology (the science of the causes and effects of diseases, especially the branch of medicine that deals with the laboratory examination of samples of body tissue for diagnostic or forensic purposes), and Mark also deals with examination of faeces and urine. One of his former responsibilities was urine drug screening, which he enjoyed, but as the numbers were small, in this area this has been centralised to Kings.

Mark is a scientist at heart. He has considered but discarded more senior roles which have a greater proportion of administration and politics, preferring the hands on work of the lab.

Kate Foot

Rainbows



¹⁵ I will remember my promise to you and to all the animals that a flood will never again destroy all living beings.

¹⁶ When the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between me and all living beings on earth. ¹⁷ That is the sign of the promise which I am making to all living beings."

Genesis 9:15-17 (GNT)

In windows around Welling rainbows have appeared coming out of clouds.



1st Welling Guides are second to none

the great outdoors, but one of the best

What do you get if you cross half a million girls with a truckload of fun and some serious skills building? The answer is Girlguiding UK. Fortunately, at 1st Welling we don't have to fit quite that many in the church hall, so if you'd like to join us, we've got space to welcome you to our group!

Guides has been around for more than 100 years, but if you think we're stuck learning how to be perfect housewives, think again. These days we're a thoroughly modern movement with activities to help every girl live her best life.

This term we've celebrated Chinese New Year by exercising our 'rat senses' with a blind sniff test. Girls identified rose petals, coconut and lemon. Oh, and raw garlic, mackerel and marmite!

We also roped up and reached new

heights at a climbing wall, sashayed away in recycled fashion and pam-

things about Guides is that the girls are in charge! We plan together to make sure the programme they get is the one they'll enjoy. The experiences and skills they gain are all just part of the fun.

If you would like your daughter to join Guides (10-14yrs) simply visit www.girlguidinguk.org and follow the joining instructions. You can do the same for Rainbows (5-7yrs), Brownies (7-10yrs) and to become a leader.

We meet on a Wednesday during term time at 7.45-9pm in St John's church hall. for more information contact Sarah at wellingguides@yahoo.com

We can't wait to meet you!

Sarah, 1st Welling Guides



pered ourselves with homemade face packs. And ok, we did have a campfire with squishy summores, but some Guide traditions are worth keeping.

As the nights get lighter we'll be looking to get up to more adventures in

little to the discussions. Add to all this the lovely Holy Spirit away day at the country

of Church, and looking to the future.

Owing to the restrictions imposed by the Corona virus pandemic, our final weeks have been conducted online, but the magical process has melted hearts and allowed love to flourish. We are now all friends who know and trust one another, bonded by Alpha and our growing love for Jesus, who transforms lives.

Thanks to Estelle and Ken for their hospitality, amazing oversight

and organising work, and a very big thank you to all those who every week, cooked the most wonderful food, for a varied group of dietary needs from carnivores to vegetarians, to vegans, and for those with nut allergies.

And thanks to all the volunteers, you know who you are, and now so do our guests, they are Christ's beloved, His pearl of great price that He died to save. Praise the Lord for the way He uses Alpha.

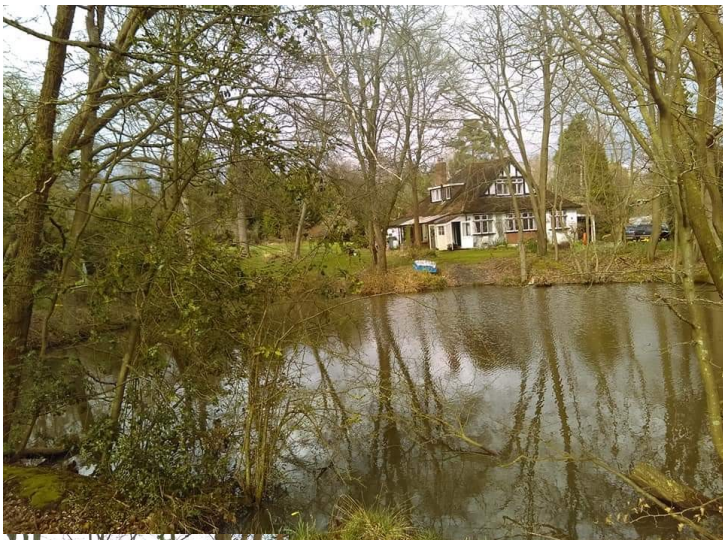
Mike Cosser

Spring Alpha 2020

Take a varied group of people searching for life's meaning and put them into Estelle and Ken's living room for ten weekly Alpha meetings on a Wednesday night, and what do you get? From people who were initially nervous and unsure, God gradually introduces love and trust, and by week three they are beginning to relax and trust one another and themselves.

They are additionally 'melted' by the cooked meal they receive each night, something all of us came to look forward to.

Key to this process was the brilliance of the sequence of 20 mins long Alpha teaching sessions which we watched each week. These create such a strong and inspiring platform of introduction to the Christian faith that those of us encouraging conversation had to add very



home of Margaret and Andy Wooding Jones in Hildenborough, where the guests had an opportunity to invite the Holy Spirit into their lives, and the Alpha process headed towards its conclusion with further sessions to come on healing, being part

wards its conclusion with further sessions to come on healing, being part