

GRAPEvine

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On Christ the Solid Rock I Stand

Psalm 25 Of David.

¹ In you, Lord my God, I put my trust.

² I trust in you; do not let me be put to shame,
nor let my enemies triumph over me.

Dear Friends,

I don't know about you but for me this winter seems particularly grey – Pandemic and Politics mixed with cold damp weather and you have the perfect storm for feeling down. One of the things we wrestle with as Christians is the temptation to be tossed about by the storms around us – to be dragged down by the circumstances – to take our eyes off the truth that Jesus Christ is Lord.

I used to encourage my Dad to read the Psalms as they show King David and others wrestling with troubles and enemies and doubt. Almost always they finish with a hope restored in the Living God. Dad always found it difficult to comprehend as he 'had no enemies'. Our enemies are often not people but things like depressive thoughts, or illness, or poverty. Or if they are people they are often faceless or nameless. God is still in control.



I have found particular comfort in the Psalms around no. 23 (The Lord's my Shepherd) with 24 reminding us that everything is the Lord's, 25 reminding us that God is trustworthy, 26 calling for vindication, and 27 reminding us that if we have the Lord's salvation there is nothing to fear, and if you ever feel

that God isn't listening psalm 28 put's that right!

Can I encourage you if you are going through a colourless time to read these Psalms and to put your trust in the reality of a God who loves and cares for you. 'Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning

and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. NIV Eph 4:14'

On Christ the Solid Rock I stand – all other Ground is sinking sand – Edward Mote 1834
God bless you all,

Adam

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

St John's News

It is 2022..... How did that happen?! So, lateral flow tests at the ready, we review the last couple of months including Christmas which was so nearly, but not quite hijacked by the omicron Covid variant.

What stands out in your mind? For me and others (over 30 of us log in as and when we can) to daily zoom prayer sessions, which continue to facilitate an increasingly essential time to pray together.

The various WhatsApp groups are other great prayer power houses as many requests are shared, and by faith, people and situations are brought again and again to the One who answers prayer AND we then hear, and are amazed, by what God is doing!

I had the privilege of leading the TOFF's Carol service right at the beginning of December which, together with the singing group practices for Christmas, was a lovely preparation for focussing on the Advent and Christmas 'Hope', which

we Christians depend on more than ever, with the secular world growing gloomier every passing day.

The Alpha celebration evening on December 9th was restricted to immediate course members because of a growing number of covid cases but was a wonderful time of sharing together face to face growing relationships both with God and one another (only the second time during the course).

Lamplighters, Playgroup and Open Door (Toddler Club) were able to

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Jesus Kids!

mornings in September venturing into 'The Year Long Bible Journey' (although it's going to take us longer than a year!) This is a series taking us through the entire Bible from cover to cover.

Starting in Genesis and ending in Revelation, we are learning all about God, his people, and His Son, Jesus, through games, videos and crafts, but more importantly through prayer and worship we are getting to know God more. We are seeing answers to prayers regularly and know that God cares about us in our day to day – nothing is too big or too small for Him.

In light of the ongoing covid epidemic, once again, our Nativity Service went online, and the children did a fantastic job at voicing all the characters in an animation. Christmas 2020 they were Emoji characters...Christmas 2021 they were Lego!

'We officially returned to in-person sessions of 'Jesus Kids!' on Sunday

Through the scriptures, readings, skits, and music, 'Jesus Kids!' taught us the story of Jesus' birth and all that Jesus means to us; that no matter how dark our world may be, there's still a star shining bright to light our way back to Christ.

The children only saw the scripts for the scenes they were part of so that everyone would get a pleasant surprise when they saw and heard the entire animated Nativity. The biggest surprise was to see themselves as Lego characters!

The Nativity animation, along with many other Bible-based, God-centred videos aimed at children, can be found on our Youtube channel, 'Kids & Youth SJW Church' or our Facebook



page, 'stjohnswellingkids'. There's also a wealth of videos and downloadable resources (and seasonal extras) found on the St John's Welling website. Enjoy!

Blessings from **Linzi Golding & Team**

Reflecting On What We Sing

Those who attend Zoom prayer will know that when I lead (usually on a Thursday) we typically pray through a hymn/song. I try to find something about its background and author - and reflect on what the words mean. So this short article will briefly look at three contrasting examples.

1. May the mind of Christ my Saviour (1925) – What do the words mean? May the mind of Christ my Saviour live in me from day to day, by His love and power controlling all I do and say.

The author of this six verse hymn, Kate B. Wilkinson (1859-1928), thought on what it means to have the mind of Christ Jesus (Philippians 2:5 "In your relationship with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus"). To have the mind of Christ is to have Christ with His love "controlling all I do and say" (verse 1), that people seeing me, realise "I triumph only through His power" (verse 2). Mrs. Wilkinson also includes Hebrews 12:1-2 in her hymn: "May I run the race before me...looking unto Jesus" (verse 5). It was first published in the London children's hymnbook Golden Bells in 1925.

2. Goodness of God (2018) – Why has the song been written?

All my life You have been faithful. All my life You have been so, so good. With every breath that I am able I will sing of the goodness of God.

The author Jenn Johnson (b. 1982), an American Christian worship singer, songwriter and worship pastor, shared that the song had been inspired by the process of adopting her fourth child. She had been singing impromptu into her phone while driving on a long country road about the faithfulness and kindness of God. The song was then developed from the impromptu recording. Jenn and her husband Brian hope to inspire others to adopt, after their adopted son Ryder Moses ("adopted deliverer") changed their lives.



Charles Wesley

3. Hark the Herald Angels Sing (1743/1753) – Who has been involved in its development?

This famous carol which I am sure you will have sung at some point each December, was written by Charles Wesley (1707-1788) in 1743 (with the title "A Hymn for Christmas Day"). It originally had ten (short) verses. Verses 1 and 2 were published as follows:

*Hark how all the Welkin rings "Glory to the King of Kings,
Peace on Earth, and Mercy mild, God and Sinners reconciled!"
Joyful all ye Nations rise, join the Triumph of the Skies;
Universal Nature say, " Christ the Lord is born to Day!*

It was Wesley's friend and colleague George Whitefield, in 1753, who published a revised version with the more familiar opening lines. There were also further revisions over time to make the three verse carol we sing today - the famous tune associated with it, taken from a cantata by Mendelssohn, did not appear until a hundred years later in 1856.

The Lord has inspired writers and musicians over the centuries to compose hymns, songs and anthems and still does today – some with very interesting/challenging stories. I hope the above may inspire you to investigate the history and meaning behind your favourites.

Doug Snow

Surviving as a Christian in North Korea

Despite the pain our persecuted church family experienced, YOUR prayers and support have brought HOPE, healing and joy to thousands of persecuted Christians – Thank you!

In January 2022, the up to date Watch list will be released and although this was typed prior to its release I can guarantee that within the top 5 will be: North Korea, Afghanistan and Somalia.

North Korea has held the top spot for the last 20 years!

Christians in North Korea account for about 1.5% of the population, roughly 400,000 and sadly 50-70,000 of those are held in horrendous prisons or work in labour camps, assuming you aren't killed instantly.

The secret Police carry out raids and

even encourage children to tell their teachers about any sign of faith. There are stories of husbands/wives not knowing their spouse is a Christian.

Could it get any harder?

Whilst you'd be right to think that life as a Christian couldn't get any harder, Covid-19 has made it worse. The authorities would have you believe that Covid-19 has had very little impact, sadly the people are so malnourished, they die quicker. The border to China/South Korea, where North Koreans were able to escape or obtain food on the black market is now under tighter control.

The most dangerous place in the World to be a Christian

Although it's the most dangerous place in the World to be a Christian Open Door workers still put their life

in danger to meet believers, to provide spiritual help, vital food, shelter and training.

What can we do? Please keep praying for our Brothers and Sisters.

Psalm 65 v5

"You faithfully answer our prayers with awesome deeds, O God our Saviour.

You are the Hope of everyone on earth, even those who sail on distant seas."

If you use Facebook, you will see that every morning I post Open Doors Daily Prayer. I was told that the more people who read the prayer, the louder it is – Let's make it deafening.(extract from Open Doors)

Jim Golding, St John's Welling Open Doors Rep.

[Serving Persecuted Christians Worldwide - Home - Open Doors UK & Ireland](#)

Lamplighters / The Leprosy Mission

For those who don't know anything about Lamplighters, we are a group that meets every Friday evening at St John's. Children of Primary School age together with their leaders come to have fun, but also to support The Leprosy Mission with their prayers and fund raising.

Our motto is : To Light the Lamp of Love for those with Leprosy

It has been so good to get back together again after the disruption of COVID. Last November we were able to have our annual Christmas Fayre and were delighted to raise nearly £2000 on line and over £2,800 on the night. The online money has already gone to Purulia hospital in India to support Leprosy patients. Purulia hospital is our main support link through St John's. The need has been particularly great during COVID with provision of food for the patients also needed.

It was also great to be able to do a Lamplighter Nativity for the parents which was a very special start to Christmas for all of us.

During January the children have been preparing for World Leprosy Sunday on January 30th. They lead the morning service at St John's and it gives everyone a chance to find out more about where the money raised is spent.

This year The Leprosy Mission focus is on Anandaban Leprosy hospital in Nepal. It has research labs there that

are on the point of closure due to the physical state of the labs especially since the earthquake in 2005. These labs are doing amazing research with the aim of ending Leprosy for good. This could be the Breakthrough we have all been longing and hoping for and it's vital the labs are rebuilt. Some of our fund raising will also go to this urgent appeal and we look forward to hearing when the renovations are completed.



Lamplighters has been a part of St John's Church for 56 years and we are thankful for the generosity of the congregation and their support both financially and by supporting our events.

If you have a child of 5 - 10 years old we would love them to join us and they would receive a warm welcome. If you would like to try a free taster session then text 07796 264 309 to arrange it.

Finally I must thank the group leaders and helpers who come every Friday night, their dedication and enthusiasm is to be commended. Many have been coming for over 20 years, their tireless support is inspiring.

My thanks go to Alison, Ayla, Ben, Gordon, Lisa, Lucy, Julie, Jon, Miriam, Pat, Simone, Sylvia, Tom, Thomas, and of course my dear husband Keith. You are stars everyone of you !!

Jackie Mackley

General Synod

As I sit to write this to you I have just read through some of the documenta-

tion for General Synod (GS) in February. In reflecting on my first experience, I will know what is ahead of me this time. In November 2021 I walked into a door I had passed many times. I would walk past this door for work and wonder "what do they do in there?" because the door has the CofE sign on it. As I followed my sat nav from the hotel to the venue for the first of the GS meetings and introduction I entered a door. I looked at my reflection and said "Oh that's what they do in here!" It is a church house where the General Synod is held. I didn't know; now I do.

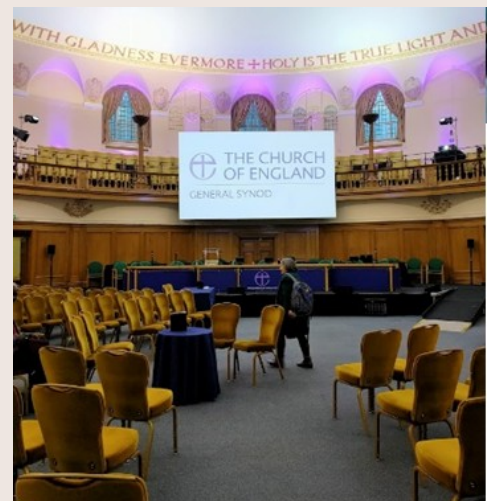
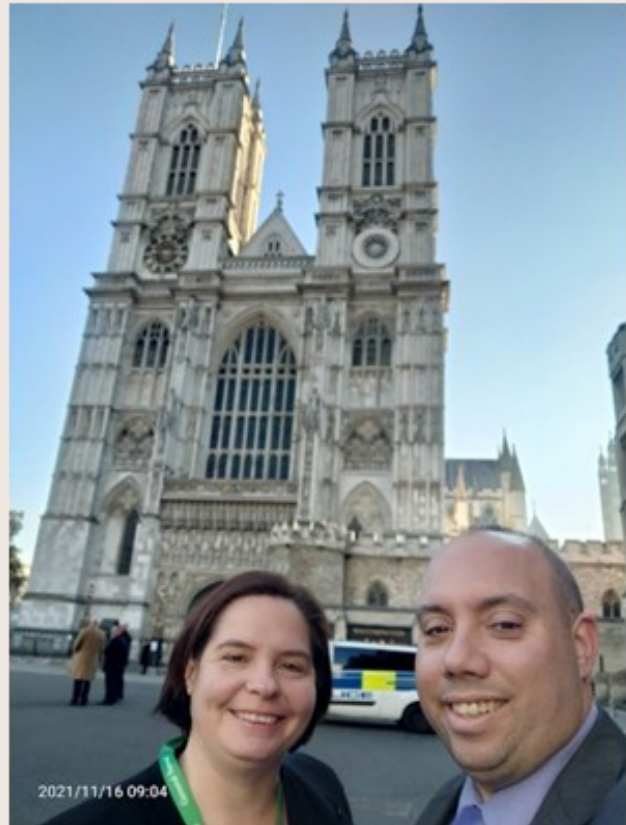
I wonder how many other people are puzzled about the usage of this Church house? It is a circle but you can and I did get lost. There is a parable and a sermon in my experience of finding General Synod, for another time. GS faces very many hard tasks in the coming years.

The service was an epic with all the bells and whistles. What was such a blessing was to hear from Prince Edward a very gentle man who delivered his mums speech with grace and care. For these 2 hours we were in the safest place in the UK and literally locked down in the chamber by security forces.

I was told to expect to be the youngest delegate, but I was pleasantly surprised to see other young(er) people in the chamber. If you are interested in finding out more, you can watch the sessions online via the website.

It is an interesting place with a variety of Christians from diverse backgrounds and experiences. It can be very aggressive at times. But I find peace, and the Rochester crest in the Chapel.

It is a surreal world in Synod but as Jesus said to me when I was trying to avoid the calling to Synod "I am there or there would be no General Synod". So as I and many I have talked with over 4 years, please know I am serving the diocese in this place to find Jesus, where He is at work and to join in. Included are some of my favourite pictures.



Billy-Jo O'Leary

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celebrate Christmas, as for their first time some of the children taking part enacted the Christmas story and enjoyed parties and fun. As Christmas drew closer we enjoyed two beautiful carol services; the Contemporary 4pm service on Dec 12th and the following Sunday, the more traditional Carols by Candlelight. The Christmas Eve Crib Service and Midnight Communion services were more wonderful times of anticipating the unique joy and life changing truth of Christmas Day.

But, term time is back underway. We need and we are having three challenging Sunday sermon series; the book of Hosea in the morning (House Groups are also studying Hosea!), Romans in the evening and The Life service series on key aspects of Church and Christian living. So plenty of choice and all good. Online Spring Alpha started on 27th January and should you be reading this early in February, it is not too late to join alone or supporting a friend. It is so good to welcome Lesley South back into church following three

months recovering from a dislocated elbow. Many of us have been so humbled and helped by the peace and courage shown by Christine Belsham who has managed to return to work having successfully completed 8 months of cancer treatment, and Sheila Clarke who is undergoing several weeks of radiotherapy. We continue to pray for Daphne Thomas as she mourns her second son Winston. Until April and Spring!

Estelle Woodcock