

GRAPEVINE

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'Smile, be nice to people, preach the Gospel'

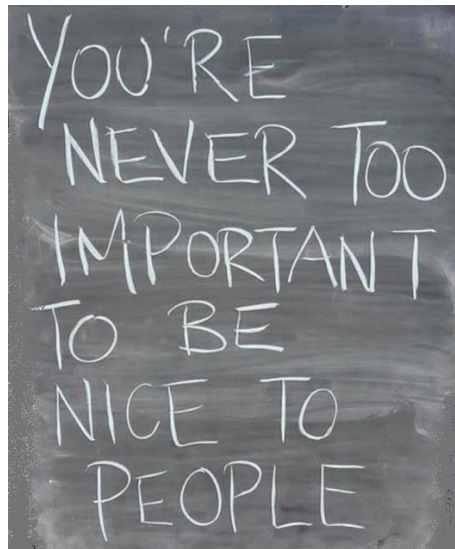
Adam Foot Circa 2015

Dear friends,

It was in about 2015 I was asked by someone returning to parish ministry how to grow church. I replied with the above quote. The world can be a very unkind place – social media causes people to shoot first and think afterwards. When Rev Neil Bunker and I took responsibility for St John's Erith three years ago I believe that is the model we used. And surprise, surprise, St John's Erith has grown and is in a healthy state. Now as I come to leave responsibility for Erith, and as we get ready with excitement for Rev Anthea to arrive, I can leave happy, knowing I have gained good friends and am leaving a church in a good place.

Here at St John's Welling, we need to continue to follow the above pattern in 'Smiling, being nice to people and preaching the Gospel'.

Without the first two we become hard and a place people won't want to stay, without the third we become a social club and are not actually being kind – people need to know the wonderful truth of a God who loves them enough to come among, and to die to take our place, and to bring us back into eternal



relationship with Him. I have always been impressed with the welcome new people receive when they arrive at our door. We must be sure that that welcome doesn't fade, and that people truly feel they have become part of the family.

Over the past two weeks we have all been thinking a lot about our late Queen Elizabeth, who I believe followed the 'smile be nice preach' with incredible humility. Whenever we feel down, let's smile at her interview with Paddington, and let's copy her living out of the Gospel, and her faithfulness at sharing the Good News with her Christmas messages.

My time as Area Dean of Erith has come to an end (5 years) and my time at St John's Erith is over – Rev Anthea starts

on November 14th so they will have the shortest interregnum ever – 45 days!

Blessings

Adam

Vicar, St John's Welling

St John's News

Earlier today I wrote Those Words, to House Group Leaders 'Hard to appreciate that Two weeks ago we were just waiting to hear who would be Prime Minister and leader of the Conservative party. The death of the Queen was still in the future and everything else that has followed her passing.'

By the time you read this, the passing of the Queen and the surreal days that followed will be ceasing to feel unbelievable. Referring to Charles as King and not Prince, will feel more natural and the wealth of images and experiences surrounding the ten days of mourning will be increasingly memories..

But, equally hard to remember right now, is that until the 8th September *normal* life continued:-

- Holidays and ventures drew to a close with wonderful stories of God at work in many different ways.

- Talk to **Val and Ray Gompers, Linzi Golding and Michelle Cronin** for more information!
- Many of us were able to witness **Ben and Livvi Haughton-Scales** beautiful August wedding, graciously conducted by Jeff Golding.
- Mid August, **Simone Wendel**, our lovely Koru gap year student, completed her year and returned to Germany where she will be starting medical school this month. Previous lovely Koru students, **Elisa and Valerie** came back to Welling during August, ensuring our German links are alive and well.
- Our **Social Sunday BBQ lunch** (+ Bouncy castle for the children) on 4th September, was brilliantly timed as Alex Barlow started the **Pastoral Principle sermon and House Group Series** that same Sunday. The key challenge from her sermon was the importance of being intentional about getting to know one another better...and the Social Sun-

day provided the ideal environment for us to do just that...and we did!

- September saw the school Autumn term restarting both for our children and Church activities the **4pm Life Service, Toffs, Lamplighters, Jesus Kidz, and Toddler Club.**

Then came **September 8th**..... Followed by special services, books of Remembrance, and the opportunity to join in with the funeral service in Church where it was shown on the big screen.

Many Congratulations to **Sylvia and Harry Costi** who recently celebrated their diamond wedding Anniversary.

We continue to pray for **Les and Pat Dunworth** as Les remains in need of hospital care.

We wish **Pete Ainsworth** the happiest of retirements as he ends his faithful years of caretaking and cleaning our Church and Hall.

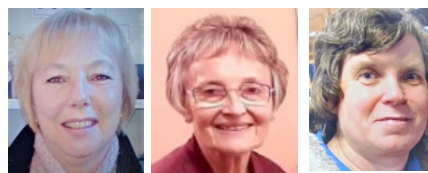
We extend our love, sympathy and prayers to **Daphne Thomas'** relatives and friends following her death at the end of August.
So, until December. **Estelle Woodcock**

JESUS! KIDS!

As most of you will know Linzi has taken a step back from the children's ministry to focus on growing our youth work.

We now have a new children's team who are myself, Estelle, Kwun, Viv, Alison, Margaret, Pat and Anne. We will be working on a rota basis and anyone is welcome to offer for the team if they feel that God's calling them into children's work.

Hannah Wood



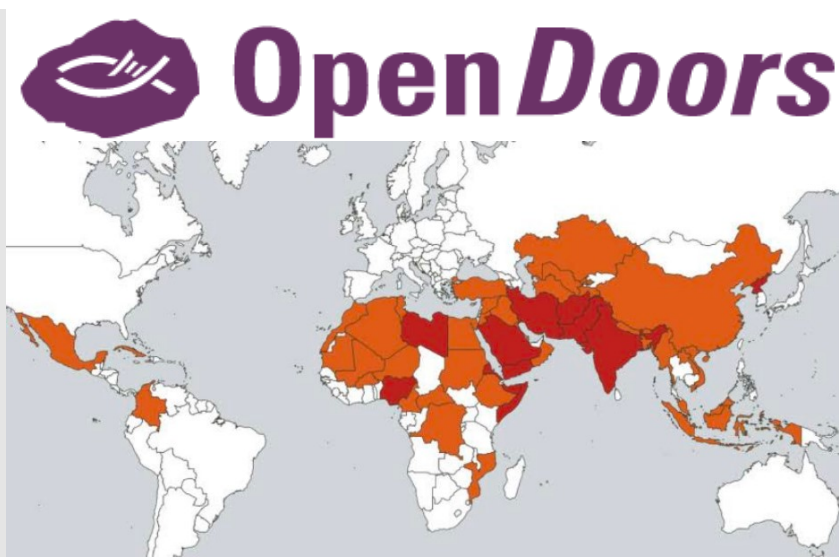
Open Doors support people who are beaten, tortured, imprisoned, falsely accused, and hated simply for following Jesus.

I come to you for protection, O Lord my God. Save me from my Persecutors – Rescue me! Psalms 7:1

The following is the latest from Open Doors on the top 10 most dangerous places to be a Christian.

There are Countries where Christians live in fear, where Churches are bombed and houses

burned, where following Jesus means sacrificing JOBS, Security & Family. There are Countries where you must keep your faith secret or it might get you KILLED. These are the countries on the Open Doors World Watch List and here are the top 10, marked in red on the map.



10 India - predominantly a Hindu nation where extremists actively use violence to push out minority religions.

9 Iran - Iranian Christians must meet secretly, being captured could mean long prison sentences in appalling conditions.

8 Pakistan - Christians in Pakistan are considered 2nd class citizens, innocent believers are falsely accused of blasphemy. Thousands of women are kidnapped and undergo forced conversions.

7 Nigeria - Christians face the most outright violence, many Christians have been killed or driven from their homes.

6 Eritrea - Over a 1000 Christians are imprisoned for their faith. Some Pastors have been locked up for over a decade without charge.

5 Yemen - Yemini culture is tribal faith, those who leave it could be banished or KILLED.

4 Libya - In this lawless land, Libyan Christians have to keep their faith secret - or risk punishment, arrest or DEATH.

3 Somalia - Islamist extremists consider Somalian Christians are HIGH VALUE TARGETS, so the tiny population of only a few hundred secret believers keep out of sight.

2 North Korea - There are around 400,000 Christians in North Korea, all of them must hide their faith. Discovery means exile, execution or being worked to death in horrific labour camps.

1 Afghanistan - The Taliban take-over means that it's the new number one, the most dangerous place in the World to be a Christian. Many Christians have become refugees, those who remain must keep utterly secret.

Jim Golding

JOBS: Sammi Strong

assign a gender (in her case wrongly). She has always been fully 'out' about this aspect of her.

tributed to her chest problems, there were no plastic gloves and face masks in those days. Around the same time in 1970, Sammi joined the Camping Club of Great Britain and N.I. and then founded the Disabled Campers Club. Although membership never grew to more than a dozen, it was just nice to share with each other solutions to common camping related issues. Members gradually went off to do other things, but in 1978 Sammi finished making the one person caravan she'd been making with friend Fred and Dad in time to be able to report back reactions to it on her weekends away to her Dad, by then in hospital, before he died from cancer in 1979.

In 1986 Sammi married, at the age of 46. Sammi had much less impairment than Rose, whom she rescued from a care home in Dagenham. Sammi said she would never have married Rose without telling her of her feminine side even if it meant losing her, but Sammi didn't start living as a woman while Rose was alive. Rose lovingly, jokingly would sing, 'I love you Samantha', hence Sammi's sec-

Sammi was born Frank in 1941, one of 4 siblings. Having cerebral palsy through birth, along with her older brother Arthur, she attended residential schools from age 7 in Croydon and Westerham. St. Margaret's, Croydon was a private school

Though a NW Kent kid, her first foray out into a hostile world was employment in a sheltered scheme in Birmingham in 1965, an industrial centre in the 60's. There were people from all over at Meadway Works. She worked as a Factory Hand with no prospect of advancement even to Charge Hand level. This lasted for 2 years and she finally left the job in disgust in 1967. The Works and Hostel were run by one of the big charities and were very institutional. The old attempts to interfere in her private life that she'd fought before were creeping back, so she returned to her parental home and in 1970 decided to begin her own printing business, starting (as most do) on home premises, in her case the shed in the back garden. She started with 2 Adana machines and later added 2 offset litho machines.

Sammi struggled on, doing small jobbing work through this period not making a living, and then came recession when all the small jobs were soaked up by the 'big boys' with their huge buying power. Eventually she sold her equipment and wound up the business, and was honestly glad not to have permanently black knuckles and fingernails. She is sure the strong solvents con-

with fees equal to Eton and Harrow, paid by LB Bexley. She often wondered what her Dad, a strong socialist, thought about two of his kids attending a school for toffs!

At Valence (secondary), if you were good at a subject you were encouraged, if not you were ignored. All she left with was a love of the English language and history and a determination that medical and other professionals would never direct her life again. Everything else has been self-taught through adulthood. The authorities' expectation was that pupils would go home after discharge until their parents grew too old to support them and then they would go into residential care.

Sammi's childhood medical records are lost forever but she has strong circumstantial evidence that convinces her she was given 'Corrective Surgery' as an infant in order to



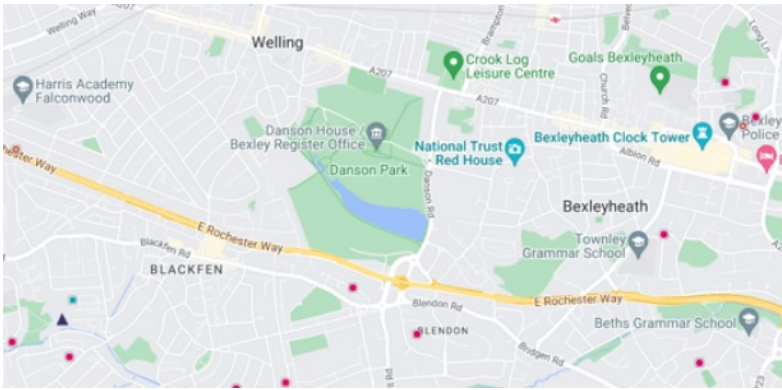
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Seen any Hedgehogs?

I saw one in Cardiff this summer (draenog in Welsh), which reminds me that I saw some two years running in Danson Park a few years ago when doing overnight security for SPARK in the Park. But none since.

Are they about locally? Recent sightings logged on the hedgehogstreet website map don't show any in Welling, but the little spots show where they have been seen not far away.

The national population has declined badly in recent years - far fewer insects, habitat loss, etc. But perhaps they are still around, maybe in gardens, particu-



larly near woods or parks like Danson, even like the wooded area in our church grounds, which we are so blessed to have. I was given a hedgehog shelter as a present. I think I will put it somewhere in the church grounds. If they are about, a hedgehog might like the location, away from lots of people and dogs. I would really like to hear if you have seen a hedgehog nearby recently, or heard tell of one. Do please email me at bobalive@live.co.uk if you have seen one locally in recent years or have a hedgehog story to tell. As an aside, it took me years to realise: the word creature just means something created. Well thank you God for your making of hedgehogs!

Bob Morris

(Continued from page 2)

ond name and nickname. 2 years later, Sammi passed a Training the Trainer course at the Greenwich Association of Disabled People (GAD), which enabled her to begin work to train others through Personal Assistant Management courses and Disability Equality courses for GAD, and work as a freelance trainer. This she continued for the next 20 years (1989-2010) until she was nearly 70. She always co-trained, with Sue Elsegood from 1993 (the Sue we've met at St John's, the best friend ever). They were developing their own courses and for every hour spent training, another four were spent planning. She also did some Equality Training to Bexley Council staff.

She remembers a big Helios Conference at Ross-on-Wye. Both she and Sue were pretty 'green' then. They were down to lead two sessions but the main speaker was unable to get there and they had to do the entire day. They spent most of the night in the hotel preparing enough material. This was a very busy and fulfilled period in her life with job satisfaction and the respect of her participants.

Between 1990 and 95, Sammi was very much an activist, attending rallies and taking direct action to achieve accessible mainstream public transport, equal rights and taking part in other campaigns. She took quite radical steps to get noticed, one day bringing Whitehall and Trafalgar Square to a standstill for an hour during the rush hour by sitting in front of buses with colleagues. Most

of the people who were getting off the buses were encouraging and supportive, and finally TfL conceded to provide the equal access for wheel users we now enjoy. In 2000 Sammi was widowed after only 14 years, and now employs personal assistants (when she can get them) to enable her to live independently in her flat. From her early school essays to the present day, she has always been a writer and poet, and is currently working on her autobiography and a work of fiction.

Kate Foot

The Meadow

*I am the meadow,
I am ten.
Friendless,
Without peers,
Far from home.
Isolated.
Dog Daisies and tall grass surround -
Hiding me.
Cow Parsley, Cornflowers
and purple Thistles paint the scene.
Beetles scurrying,
Brown cows gently moo across the ha-
ha.
Bees are humming about their work,
Friction making crickets complete the
song.
Away from childish games,
Away from bossy Housemothers,
Free in my thoughts,
I am at peace.
I am the meadow.
We are one*

Sammi Strong

My Faith Journey: Yvonne Lynch

Yvonne was an only child and was born in Balham. Her mum was a Christian, but her dad wasn't. Even so, Yvonne was baptised as a baby, and when she was two, her parents bought a house in Twickenham. Some years later, her parents separated, and she became a 'latch key kid'. It was her Church-going Aunt who introduced Yvonne to Jesus when she was three years old,



telling her all about Him, and showing her a picture of the crucifixion. Yvonne yearned to know more, having seen His hands and the wounds from the nails.

Yvonne remembers being anxious before a visit to the dentist when she was seven, and saying the Lord's prayer. It was then that she realized that God was always going to be there for her, and He always has been, and always is.

Yvonne attended two very Christian schools, and the first Hymn she learned was 'There is a green hill far away outside a City wall'. It remains her favourite to this day. Yvonne's secondary school was a mixed grammar, and the headmaster was a Christian conscientious objector.

Yvonne was confirmed in her late teens, and despite her mother wanting her to become a shorthand typist, God called her into a three year training in nursing, at nineteen years old. She got married at twenty two, and had a miscarriage and later a daughter, before having a son four years later.

Yvonne regards her children as gifts from God. Her daughter is a retired nurse, and her son is an HGV driver who trained as a nurse unsuccessfully. Her daughter-in-law is also a retired former nurse. Yvonne briefly lived in Carshalton early in her life, but then her parents moved to Welling, where she has lived ever since. After her husband died of cancer in 1994, Yvonne thought she ought to return to Church, and she got a lift to Saint John's thanks to Val Gompers in 2004.

Yvonne found us different to anything before, and liked Adam and the Church, so she has stayed here. Her faith has increased and increased ever since.

In lockdown, Yvonne listened to 'In touch' with Charles Stanley on Christian radio, and she found it amazing and uplifting. After lockdown, she returned to us, and is plodding on, she humbly told me.

Mike Cosser

A SPARK in the Park 2022 Overview



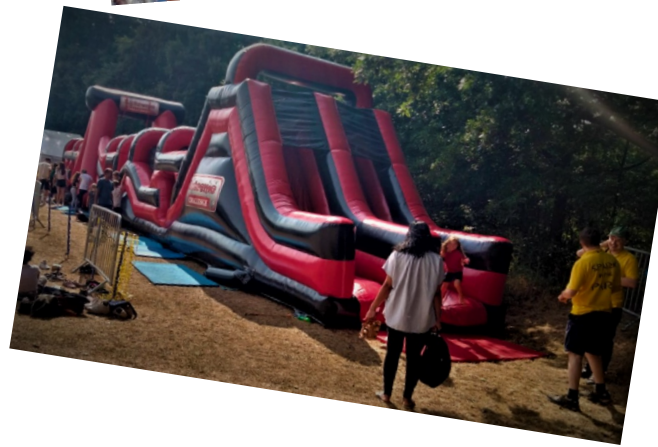
Our God seems to enjoy meeting us in tents, and demonstrated that at SPARK in the park, the Holy Spirit was happily among the volunteers from sixteen local Churches, who met new friends and families from all over our locality, who were keen to allow their children to experience the hockey, football, craft, inflatables and sumo wrestling, and all sorts of action and competition. And all of it at no cost to them.



I spent half my rota time in the prayer tent with Lionel, Tom, Del and Gordon, but at other times, I was meeting and greeting our visitors and trying to pray for them, and re-introduce them to our best friend Jesus. And this is what we do, powered by praying 'come Holy Spirit' which lifts us from being in normal mode to walking with the Lord's confidence and assurance.

Linzi co-wrote us a superb Superheroes booklet, script and artwork, and Jon Birkbeck led the spiritual surge section by playing the superhero called 'The Spark' superbly and energetically each day.

Jim Charles inspired the SPARK team brilliantly through Ezra, and Jacob Mills was an excellent worship leader. Adam, and John Masheder briefed, encouraged, and led us, on our daily update majoring on health and safety and safeguarding, and as a result, we were left feeling secure and cared for. Have you been 'on the SPARK team' yet? If not, why not try it? It is an amazing experience of practical outreach through team work. It's tiring, but magnificent, wonderful and very satisfying, gets you closer to God, and introduces Jesus Christ to our neighbours.



When The Spark (Jon) was asked about his superpower, he admitted that he didn't have one, but that he could do all things through Christ who gave him strength (Philippians 4 v 13). And so say all of us. The amazing thing about SPARK in the Park is that together with Jesus, we sacrifice our time and talents, and by His Holy Spirit, we all become so much more than our individual parts.

Praise the Lord for His blessings when we collectively 'go forth and tell'. Amen.

Mike Cossar

