

GRAPEVINE

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Easter People

⁹ Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! ¹⁰ For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!

Romans 5:9-11

Dear Friends,

In a few weeks we will be greeting each other with the ancient Christian greeting "Christ is risen — **He is risen indeed Halleluiah!**" because we are Easter people and live in the knowledge that Christ's resurrection from the dead gives us confidence in our eternal future. But for that to be true Christ first had to suffer and die on the Cross – for your sin and mine. Some would like to whitewash the cross out and talk only of the love of God, without reference to judgement, or sin, or the need for salvation.

The book of Romans is a wonderful

book, which many have struggled with – it speaks eloquently of the fallen state of humanity and then the amazing grace offer of God through Christ. Truth is if we look at the world we cannot see everything getting better. All around us



we see the spiralling consequences of individual and corporate sin. Russia's shameful invasion of and war crimes against Ukraine, shoddy building practices and corner cutting in Turkey (and

at Grenfell Tower in case we begin to feel smug), large swathes of Pakistan lost under water due to our lack of care for our planet, slavery at an all time high. No – we need to be rescued, and the only rescue plan that lasts for eternity is the one offered through our acceptance of Christ's death and resurrection.

Which is why we get excited over the full Easter story... 'Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again!' The most amazing story of all time, and we need to be people who believe and trust and live our lives to the full, secure in the

promise of eternal life.

God bless you this Easter time.

Adam
Vicar, St John's Welling

St John's News

In my opinion, at least, it's been a very long winter, and increasing signs of Spring, daylight hours, even the higher temperatures are so welcome. However, the cold dark days have not prevented St John's family from meeting, learning, celebrating and sometimes weeping together.

Notable opportunities for learning and encouragement have been from sermons from Andy Roberts, from the same Missionary Society as the Testers (and he knows them), and Roman, a Ukrainian Pastor working in this country who spoke at The Life Service sharing wonderful stories, that don't feature in the news, of God at work in Ukraine.

The current Alpha group is well underway ably hosted by Bob Morris and Cate Woodcock.

Several from St John's were able to attend the New Wine Leaders Conference in March, returning, encouraged and strengthened.

The recent Healing Service helped many people have much needed prayer. God was definitely at work.

Ladies' Breakfasts are becoming a regular and appreciated feature for St John's ladies, enabling us to deepen friendships and make new ones. I have heard a whisper that the men may be planning their own breakfast sometime soon!

We send Congratulations to Laura Gibbs on her promotion to Deputy Head teacher, and to Lucy Hynes as she takes up an administrative post at Trinity school in Belvedere, and to Danny Branch who has 'passed stage 1' in the journey to

start training for Ordination.

Some of our church family are in the exhausting process of moving house. We pray that they will trust in God's overall hand in the often slow and stressful processes involved.

Linzi Golding will value our love and prayers as she heads off for eight weeks in Uganda testing God's calling to live and work there more permanently

We continue to pray for our lovely members dealing with both new and longer term bereavement .

As I write, Mothering Sunday, Holy week and Easter are just round the corner, and with the Coronation, will all, as dates, be in the past by the next Grapevine, BUT, their ongoing impact on our lives maybe / should be very real.

'Til June
Estelle Woodcock

Fairtrade Fortnight

What does Fairtrade mean, and why does St. John's believe it is so important to be a certified Fairtrade Church?

The Fairtrade certification aims to ensure that a set of standards are met in the production and supply of a product or ingredients. For farmers and workers, it means workers' rights, safer working conditions and fairer pay. For shoppers it means high quality, ethically produced products.

In other words, buying Fairtrade means that you care about the people who produce the products that you

buy, and that you want to ensure that they are fairly paid and treated.

Some of you will have looked at the products which were displayed in church during Fairtrade Fortnight, but this was just a small selection of what is available.

Of course, Fairtrade products can be more expensive than non-Fairtrade, so you may not be able to go completely Fairtrade straight away, but if you start with, for example, Fairtrade tea, you will be showing that you are committed to the values of Fairtrade. Tea is the easiest one to start with, as there are so many different Fairtrade brands.

If you haven't done so already, give it a try.

Lesley South

New Wine Leaders Conference, February 2023

A few of us at St John's went to the New Wine Leaders Conference in Harrogate at the end of February this year. After the heart breaking and gut wrenching General Synod it proved to be the place of healing, affirmation, repentance, engagement, worship, teaching, prayer and fellowship that we all needed. There were standout teachings from Bishop Jill Duff (a trustee of New Wine), John McGinley (do read his "The Church of Tomorrow" book), and Pastor Tope who spoke of the Weight of God's Glory. He reminded us that we are to come trembling into His presence, that we must remember to turn in repentance to the one who saves us, Jesus Christ.

There were times of ministry, receiving and giving, surrendering to God's Presence, being swept in the Holy Spirit in a time of worship that was transforming and beautiful. The place was given over to the worship of God, Holy Holy Holy, Worthy is the Lamb. One thing that stood out for me was the clear emphasis on Biblical integrity, of being rooted in the Word, being



found firmly bound by Scripture and adhering to the teaching of the Church as handed down through the years of faithful living.

At the ground floor there was a large gathering of exhibitors from various Christian agencies, Lee Abbey, Wycliffe Bibles, Clergy Support Trust, Daily Bread, IJM and many more. You were greatly encouraged by the offerings that they were sharing, taking time to look at how your ministry could be enhanced and deepened. The fellowship over the evening meals was wonderful, just having a chance to eat and laugh together.

There is a revival coming and we need to be prepared for the harvest that is to come. May God grant us the gifts of his Holy Spirit in abundance as we declare the saving might of his Holy Name. May the weight of His Glory fill our Churches.

Rev Gordon MacBean

Who Cares



There are so many things to care about and it is so good that most Christians feel called to get involved with righting wrongs in some way, whether directly or by supporting an organisation or by prayer.

We can't each get involved with every good cause and that is okay. Caring for God's creation is different.

How so? I am not belittling other causes, I am saying that in most other cases, we are helping to tackle wrongs caused by others (or by circumstances of which we were not a part). In the case of environmental issues, we are talking about a wrong which you, I and everyone is causing.

I would go further and say that caring for God's creation isn't so much about doing good as committing to do less bad! Just by being alive, we are consumers and wasters but we have got used to doing it to an extent that seriously damages the environment and usually affects the poorest in the world most.

The first step is to at least understand and acknowledge that we are all contributing to a problem which seriously offends God (there is plenty in the Bible to indicate this), then to begin with a few small changes to reduce our part in creating it.

This isn't about making us feel guilt-ridden! We know how life works in the Christian faith; we acknowledge that we have been doing bad stuff, we ask God to forgive us through Jesus and we change our ways. With His help, we deal with it.

The PCC (our church council) has already committed to taking meaningful steps to do this. They can improve things to do with the buildings, the grounds, the teaching, etc but the biggest and best change will come from us as individuals each making small (or perhaps big) changes.

If you want to talk about it or ask for tips, then I would be very happy to hear from you either face to face or you can email me at:

bobbyalive@hotmail.com

Bob Morris

My Faith Journey: Roulla Gonzi

Roulla and I were together on the welcome team at St Johns for many months in the pre lockdown era, so it felt natural and easy for us to have a brief chat together as friends, for this column.

Roulla was born in Cyprus in a Greek family, and was baptized as a baby, attending a nearby Greek Orthodox Church, until she was fifteen years old and in 1971 when she emigrated to the UK and Dulwich where her Dad lived. The family then moved to Peckham when she was sixteen, and Roulla attended a Greek Orthodox Church in Camberwell.

Roulla got married to Michael at the age of twenty-six, and finding Greek Orthodox Services too long, she began to attend St Mary's Church, a local Church of



England Church in Peckham. The couple had two daughters, Louise, and Annmarie.

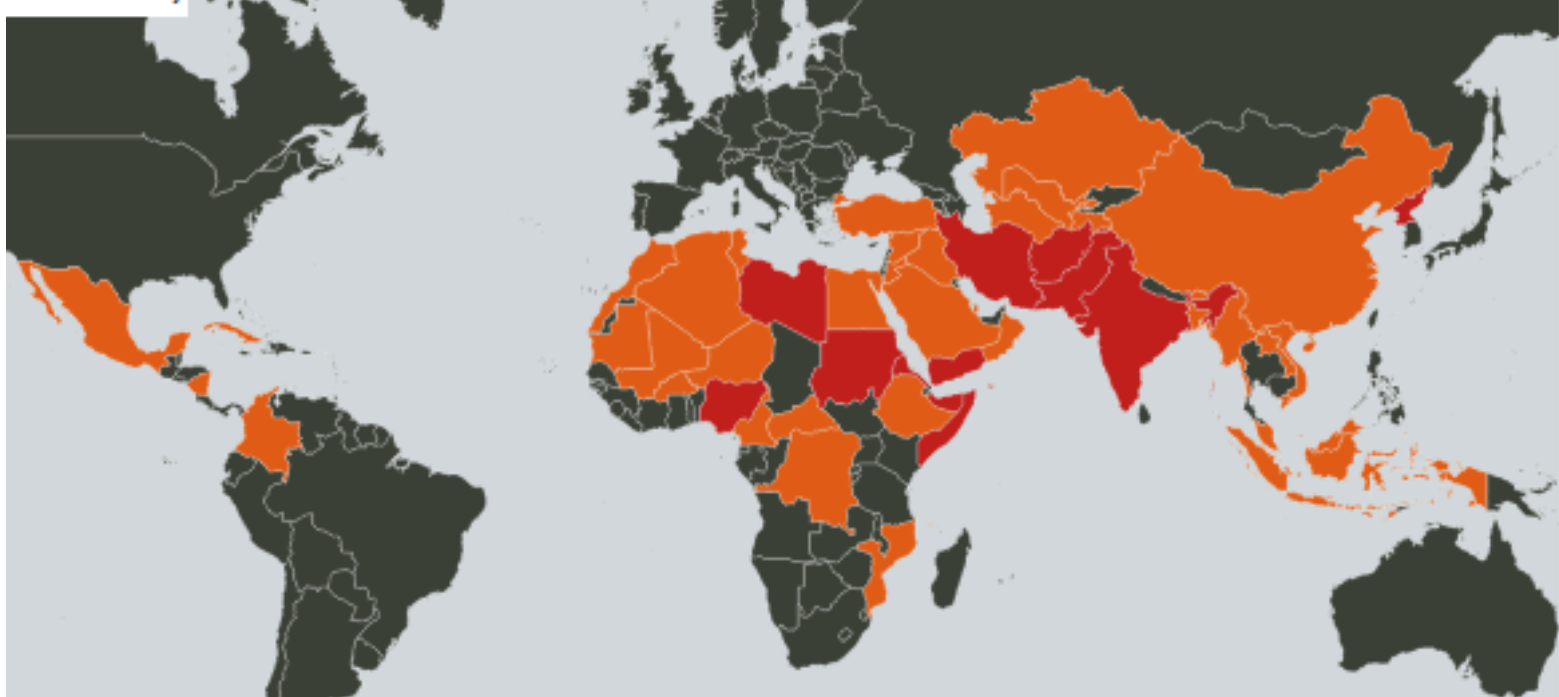
A move to Rotherhithe by herself in 2005, began a lonely time for Roulla, with Louise at University and Annmarie visiting her at the weekends to give her some company.

She got divorced from Michael in 2010,... and met Joseph in 2011 at a public house. They moved together to Grove Park, Lewisham in 2012 and got married by Adam, in 2013 at St John the Evangelist, Welling. Roulla took part in an Alpha course at St John's led by Graham and Margaret. She was not sure about whether God has blessed her with the Holy Spirit, so I encouraged her to ask the Lord again, should that be her heart's desire.

Come Holy Spirit, indeed.

Mike Cosser

Hover over a country



Open Doors –

Have you ever wondered how the Watch list is compiled?

Since 1993, data has

been gathered & analysed, whilst we often refer to the TOP 50, there are over 150 Countries monitored by Open Doors partners.

Sadly there are no clear legal definition of persecution which means Open Doors has opted for a theological approach, measuring “hostility experienced”. This can include attitudes, words and actions towards Christians.

The methodology looks at two areas, “Smash” violence because of their faith, which includes mental or physical violence, sexual harassment, arrest, abduction, imprisonment and death.

There are also 5 areas that fall short of violence and come under the heading “squeeze”.

These include

Private Life – how much freedom an individual has to worship & read Christian material.

Family Life – how free are Christians to express their faith within the family, are Christian marriages and funerals allowed?

Community Life – can a Christian live within a community without fear of any kind of retribution? This could include stopping their education or employment.

National Life – does the Government allow them to express their faith openly? Can they include their faith on official documents or not be targeted by Police?

The 5 squeeze and 1 smash make up the 6 categories that Open Doors measures for any change year on year.

How is the data gathered? (Simple version)

A survey of 100 questions, 16 are used to gather background data such as change over time, type of oppression, organised crime etc. The remaining 84 are used to score the “smash & squeeze”.

How is each category scored?

Points are awarded for each category, e.g. if a Christian has been murdered for their faith = 3 points, 10 or more then the max 30 points is awarded, less severe actions = fewer points. It sounds simple, but a very complex weighted system is used ensuring each category shows an average for each of the 6 “Smash & Squeeze” categories. Once all the questions have been asked, the results go to external experts and the results and methods are independently audited by the International Institute of Religious Freedom.

The maximum a country can score is 100, the levels of persecution are recorded as
Extremely High 81-100
Very High 61-80

High 41 – 60

This year there are 11 countries listed as Extremely High, for further information please visit the [Open Doors Website](#) or look on the noticeboard in church.

Jim Golding

2023 rankings

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|----|-----------------------------|----|--|
| 1 | North Korea | 11 | India |
| 2 | Somalia | 12 | Syria |
| 3 | Yemen | 13 | Saudi Arabia |
| 4 | Eritrea | 14 | Myanmar |
| 5 | Libya | 15 | Maldives |
| 6 | Nigeria | 16 | China |
| 7 | Pakistan | 17 | Mali |
| 8 | Iran | 18 | Iraq |
| 9 | Afghanistan | 19 | Algeria |
| 10 | Sudan | 20 | Mauritania |
| | | 21 | Uzbekistan |
| | | 22 | Colombia |
| | | 23 | Burkina Faso |
| | | 24 | Central African Republic |
| | | 25 | Vietnam |
| | | 26 | Turkmenistan |
| | | 27 | Cuba |
| | | 28 | Niger |
| | | 29 | Morocco |
| | | 30 | Bangladesh |

Levels of persecution:

Extreme Very High