

GRAPEVINE

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'Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path' Psalm 119 v 105

I was walking the dog in Lesnes Abbey early in the morning in September. As is my habit, I was listening to my Pray as you Go app, when this soft beam of light shone down in front of my pathway.

The Psalm 119v105, **'Your word is a lamp for my foot, a light on my path'**, came immediately to mind. I had been thinking about my future and what I could be doing as a Priest in service of the Lord in His church in the not-too-distant future.

I confess that it is overwhelming, and here in the woods, was this reminder, a light softly illuminating the already lit path in front of me. This past Sunday at The Life Service, Kwun was speaking on one of the "I AM" statements by Jesus and it was so appropriately "I AM the light of the world."

God provides reminders of his presence through his creation and through the teaching of his people. We are told to re-



main in the fellowship of Christ for a reason, so that our faith can be constantly renewed and strengthened. It is in God's presence that we take our journeys, we are not doing this alone, but strengthened by his Holy Spirit, we are constantly reminded

that we pilgrimage in His protection. There are wonderful reminders from within the Church community that God is our provider, He alone has the power to change what is happening, and we often we see Him at work in our midst.

I know that I am trusting to the Holy Spirit, being faithful to the Word of God and trusting in His provision for the future (Jehovah Jirah – the Lord is my Provider). Wherever we as a family end up going, it will be the place that God has appointed for His good work to be done.

And I am assured, that when my family and I have moved on, there will be new people taking up ministry, there will be a testing of gifts and a moving of God's Holy Spirit, not because we leave a void, but because the Lord provides, and His work will continue to be done. May you be rich in love, strong in faith and holy in living out the faith in Christ that leads to eternal life.

Love and blessings,
Gordon

Rev Gordon MacBean, Curate St. John's Welling

St John's News

I concluded the August news thus, 'So on into high Summer, when hopefully we won't experience the searing heat Europe is having'. Until ten days ago it seemed my wish had been granted. Then, came our week of intense heat which as I write is just ending, leaving some mourning its departure and others delighted that finally its cool enough to sleep at night!

However, in the intervening weeks since the last Grapevine, we have enjoyed the special times that come with Summer school holidays. First of which was **Spark in the Park** which followed swiftly on the heels of the end of the Summer term. It was a wonderful week in every way during which 24 churches worked together to providing families with the opportunity to enjoy, large and small games, craft, inflatables, and to learn more about the great Bible story.

Youth under the Stars was a wonderful time when our own young people spent time camping together in Welling (Adam and Kate's garden!), enjoying great fun and great teaching. Thank you, thank you Linzi and team.

Many of us were able to holiday away from Welling and are returning with good memories of life away from the normal routine.

Kate Finney and Loretta are gladly settling into new homes after the stress of moving.

Ronnie Mehmet and **Danielle** were Baptised at a wonderful August Life Service surrounded by the Prayer and rejoicing of family and friends.

The Autumn season is well underway with groups meeting regularly again and new challenging sermons at the 10.30am and Life Services. The 6.30pm service series on Exodus is ongoing and so helpful in growing understanding of God's Character and human behaviour. The briefest glance at the news confirms that, neither have

changed.

The **Autumn Alpha Course** has just begun. Such a great way to explore the Christian faith. I encourage you to watch a session. They are all available on YouTube. As well as being personally worthwhile, I find it builds my confidence in inviting guests to join the course. Its so engaging.

By the time you read this, we will be delightedly welcoming **Adam and Kate**, back following their month's Sabbatical. (and the Uganda group will just have set off).

We have just welcomed our lovely new German Koru gap year student, working with **CRIBS: Sarah Hormmann**. Do introduce yourself to her if you haven't already done so.

Ongoing prayer needed for **Eileen Dowsett and family** as they mourn the death of Eileen's sister Ann and, **Michelle Cronin and family** as they mourn her Nan.

Let's Keep worshipping and serving throughout Autumn. **Estelle Woodcock**

CRiBS

'The speed of God is 3 miles an hour'

Gordon said, as

the CRiBS founder and past CEO led a time of devotionals for us. The thought that God is never in a rush, panicked, confused or flummoxed was a helpful one to ponder on the eve of a new term.

The team are involved in their different areas of work, ranging from RE lessons, primary Unlimited intervention work and secondary Unlimited mentoring sessions, as well as the administration and fund-raising work that is often unseen and unmentioned.

We're thrilled to have our Koru gap-year programme spring to life again in the form of Marie and Sarah and, God willing Stella too in November; it's a wonderful thing to hear the quiet murmur of the German language in the office again and even more wonderful to have their help in schools!

'Christmas'. There, I've said the word! It's on our radar and preparation has already begun for the play ('A place for you'). It's a new one and we'd like to include a greater use of shadow puppetry than we've done before

Thank you for partnering with us! It's so humbling that you continue to do so. Here's some summary points:

- Thanks to God for some encouraging responses to fund applications recently
- Thanks to God that the Koru paperwork is getting sorted



(several schools have requested they have the same documentation as UK school visitors).

- The Christmas play prep
- Inspiration for lesson prep and God's blessing on a new school booking in Gravesend and a new pre-school in Sidcup
- God's leading in every Unlimited mentoring session and any associated club.
- The key office team (CEO, admin/business managing, fund-raising)
- Church tour visits on some Sundays in October (especially for Mark)

Jason Vaughan

Caps & Packets

Please save up your **milk bottle caps** and **crisp packets** (shaken empty and laid flat please) and put them in a round red box which is clearly labelled that is under the counter in the St John's Welling Church kitchenette which I will empty regularly.

You can already take crisp packets to the supermarket recycling cages (eg in the entrance foyer of Tesco and behind the tills at Morrisons in Welling and milk bottle caps can go in your white lidded bin for the Council to collect with other plastics but here are four reasons to bring them into church instead:

- They will go to an organisation - **Terracycle**- who make sure that the plastic is reused well.
- plastic of a single type is of a much better quality for converting into other products than mixed plastics.
- the scheme raises a small amount of money for dogs for the blind and for the Kent Air Ambulance.
- taking a very small step to reduce the impact of waste on the planet will help you get a bit more into the mindset of trying to be less part of the problem and more part of the solution to the environmental damage that humans create.

No other types of bottle cap please.

Thanks.
Bob Morris

Growing Leaders



I remember visiting a church with my family when I was eight and once I got home asked for a Bible and 'acted out' being a vicar! I remember being asked at that time if I wanted to be a Priest and I remember saying yes! Whether that was the beginning of my calling I don't know!

However fast forward over twenty years and it wasn't until being at St John's that this calling developed. Through the encouragement of others, particularly my house group and members of my family, that I felt I could no longer ignore this sense and needed to pursue it further.

I love learning and studying God's word to know him more and feel a natural urge to share the knowledge of God's love and for people to know Jesus.

When I was asked to be a part of The Life Service team it

seemed like a no brainer for me.

An opportunity that I am incredibly grateful for.

Being a member of The Life Service team and learning from others as well as 'testing' out my calling and completing the Growing Leaders course really solidified my conviction that God was calling me to ministry. This made me seek the formal process for discernment.

The discernment process which I thought was going to be gradual began in May 2022 and seemed to go lightning quick. I completed my Stage 1 interviews in February 2023 and was recommended for training after Stage 2 in May 2023.

This September I stated training at St Mellitus College in South Kensington. Studying part time. This was a decision we felt best suited our family at this time, plus I have a particular love for London so studying in the city was attractive to me.

I am excited for what the next three years of study has in store. It is a privilege to be studying to serve God's church. I'm also really looking forward to seeing God's plan unfold in Sarah, Harry and Millie's lives also as we go on this journey together.

In the meantime we are so pleased that we can continue being a part of the St John's church family as I have my placement here.

I am so thankful for the encouragement and prayers that I have received from you all and ask that you please continue to pray for me and my family throughout this time. That God would lead us all and guide us to fulfil his will for our lives. God bless.

Danny Branch

My Faith Journey: Mushi Rahman

phase I was going through. My Dad challenged me to meet a Christian who had become a Muslim. So, I met this person on my



Enrich Lives Through Compassion and Connection: Volunteer with Evergreen Care UK

Are you ready to make a profound difference in the lives of the elderly in the Bexley area?

"In his grace, God has given you the ability to prophesy, speak out with as much faith as God has given you. If your gift is serving others, serve them well... If your gift is to encourage others, be encouraging. If it is to giving, give generously... And if you have a gift for showing kindness to others do it gladly".

Romans 12:6-8

Step into the heartwarming world of Evergreen Care, where acts of kindness transform lives. Join us as a volunteer and become a beacon of support and friendship for those in need.

The Joy of Befriending: Lifelong Connections

When Sheila learned about our service in September 2022 and met her befriender, Liz, their bond was instantaneous. Over cups of tea and heartfelt chats at Sheila's home their friendship blossomed.

For Sheila, Evergreen's befriending service became a lifeline. Without any family to rely on, Liz's visits became the highlight of her days. Eagerly anticipating the sight of Liz's red car, Sheila felt her heart fill with joy at the prospect of their time together.

Discover Elderberries Cafes: A Welcoming Community

Sheila's journey with Evergreen began when she stumbled upon a leaflet. She found herself in Elderberries, where she was embraced by the kindness of our volunteers and guests. It didn't take long for her to become a cherished regular, forging unexpected connections.

Your Invitation to Make a Difference

Sheila and Liz's story showcases the profound impact you can have as a volunteer. Brighten the lives of the elderly in your community and foster enduring friendships. Become a befriender or lend a hand at Elderberries Cafes, offering genuine care and understanding.

Step into the world of Evergreen Care today, where compassion knows no bounds, and together, we'll create a community where everyone feels valued and loved. Make the decision that will touch lives and inspire others to do the same.

"A sweet friendship refreshes the soul"

Proverbs 27:9

To volunteer with Evergreen Care UK today, contact befriending@evergreencareuk.org

Wendy Morris & Caroline Millson
Friendship Coordinators



Sheila & Liz

I come from an Islamic background. I never ever doubted the existence of God and believed Allah to be the Supreme Being. As a small boy growing up in England, I remember reading the Quran in Arabic (although not really understanding what I was reading) and being sent to evening classes to learn about Islam.

My first contact with Christianity was when I went to boarding school during my teenage years where I attended the local Anglican church on a Sunday morning as part of the curriculum; I do not recollect my church attendance during my teenage years having any spiritual effect on me.

When I left school and started working, I walked into a Baptist church on an Easter Sunday of my own accord without been invited to go in. I always had a strong conviction that this world could not just have happened by accident and there must be a Supreme Being behind it. From that day I began to attend Christian gatherings asking the question is Jesus really God why do I need to repent of my sin if I am good person and a responsible citizen. It was during a bible study at a home group were the penny dropped for me that Jesus Christ also known as Jesus of Nazareth the first century Jewish preacher was both fully God and fully man.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men". John 1:1-3 (New King James Version)

"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth". John 1:14 (New King James Version)

"For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him." John 1:17-18 (New King James Version)

People around me thought my conversion to Christianity was just a

own at Regent's Park Mosque and explained to him and others Muslims in the mosque that you could not inherit your Christian faith but had to come to faith in Jesus personally so God's Holy Spirit could reside in you. One of the Muslims snatched my small New Testament out of my hands and said I will show you a verse that disproves your Bible; he flicked through the pages and randomly read the following verse out loud to the small group that had now gathered in the prayer hall of the mosque.

"Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you: God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things. Acts:17: 24-25

I said to the Muslim do you realise what you have just read. I then addressed the small gathering of Muslims saying the God who made the world and everything in it and is the Lord of heaven and earth does not dwell in temples made with hands. I believe this God is Jesus and I have come to faith in Jesus. At this point the man whom Dad wanted me to meet signalled we had better make a quick exit so we put on our shoes and left the mosque in haste. My decision to get baptised by full immersion in a Baptist church sent a clear signal to Dad and others around me that my decision to become a Christian was here to stay and there was no turning back!

Mushi Rahman



Youth Under the Stars (YUTS) 2023



We (youth and leaders) had a blast at YUTS! The prayer room was turned into a retro games room for chill time, and then an arcade-game-themed escape room. We played football and hockey, and had *heated* chess games! We ventured out to the cinema, and then to bowling the following day. Oh! And we camped in the vicarage garden! We had daily teaching linked to video gaming; a 3-part series on identity helping youth to discern and discover their true identities in Christ. Here's a *very* brief outline:



In session one, we discovered that we are children of God. We play computer games as characters, adopting their characteristics. In reality, few people grapple with life's most important question: "Who am I?" We explored Mark's gospel about a woman and society who saw her *issue* as her identity, and how Jesus instead defined her as His daughter. Through the Apostle Paul in Ephesians, we discovered that we are God's masterpieces. Our identity and value come from our designer. Session two answered two questions: how God sees us, and why He created us? We are each a masterpiece with a mission.



Everyone has a label these days, we're even labelled with brands, but in session three we discovered that the only supreme label is in Christ. The team was incredible! Dad (Jim), Adam, Kate and Hannah...Harry even came *after work*! Adam, our wonderful chef, made sure no one was ever hungry! Kate and Dad (Jim) led us in creative worship and ministry time giving the youth a chance to respond to the talks and meet with God. Our group's creative worship, which the youth continued in their free time, is on the wall in the creche for a while.



The beauty of having the camp at church was how comfortable the youth were in "their domain" and that youth that had other commitments were still able to join us for one or two days. Here are some thoughts from the youth and what they enjoyed:

"Camping was great fun and it was nice to hang out with friends. The talks helped me know that I am part of God's family and that is my identity"
 "Just chilling with friends and the cinema. Etc."
 "It was like a mini 'Satellites'" This was the aim, so mission accomplished! (Satellites is a summer camp by 'Youthscape' that we attended in 2022).



Linzi Golding (Youth Worker)

