



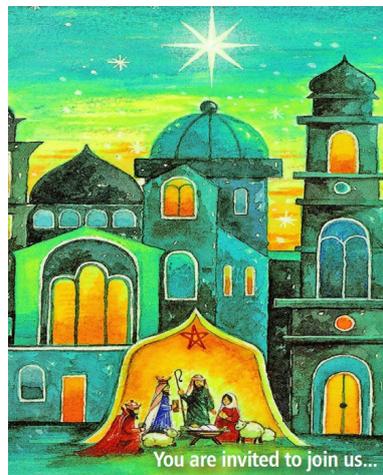
...then came a STAR!

Dear friends,
Journeying. That is the name of the St John's Advent Sermon Series (JASS for short). Now that may sound like Jazz, a nice music genre that covers a huge repertoire of sounds and emotions, but this is a different sound and a very different outcome. This music of journeying is following a Cosmic event on a scale beyond our imagining, to a tune that is set in glorious heavenly language.

This was a journey that started with no form, no horizons, no substance and then there was LIGHT, and the darkness did not overwhelm it. From that came forth form, shape, function, day, night, water, earth and LIFE.

And LIFE took shape in the Imagio Dei. A new journey, a living breathing being created in the image of God found in HUMAN form. Then LIES, SIN and DEATH happened, and all that was good was changed and broken, but GRACE, MERCY and PEACE continued to follow into the world, speaking out in LOVE.

Yet people chose their OWN pathways of life, into darkness and dying. PROPHECY



those waiting for a new life. Then a STAR came, from far off in the Cosmos, a twinkling, a bright light that drew eyes to heaven, that spoke of a NEW beginning, of a SAVIOUR, a KING and a MESSIAH. True DIVINITY, chose to become fully HUMAN. The Incarnation, the HOLY SPIRIT in Mary, and GOD took on the fragility of the of human form accepting the consequences with

speaking of a MESSIAH gave hope to

obedience, grace and love, even to DEATH on a CROSS.

Miracles, water to wine, healing, storms stilled, death defeated, then betrayal, judgement, the Cross, grave, darkness, silence, chains broken, sin conquered, LIGHT, LIFE, LOVE. Jesus speaking PEACE. BAPTISM, Repentance and new life. ASCENSION. Journeys, they take shape in our lives, from door to gate, from gate to car, from car to shops. And we see life flashing by, working, teaching, learning, enduring and looking. Journeys have destinations, and JESUS gave us a destination that is beyond this world to the NEW JERUSALEM.

How we get there depends on WHO we follow. Narrow is the path that leads to salvation and broad is the path that leads to destruction. Your WORD is a lamp to my feet and a LIGHT for my path. Jesus is the WAY, the TRUTH and the LIGHT, leading people back to the FATHER.

May our Journeying be one that is illuminated by the WORD, sustained by the SPIRIT and governed by the FATHER. God is LOVE, true, deep, everlasting, holy and powerful love.

Blessings, Gordon
Curate, St John's Welling

St John's News

Not so much change in the last eight weeks.. Oh, unless one includes yet another new Prime Minister and Cabinet..!

Here at St John's we have been experiencing a season of painful Lows and wonderful Highs.

We have had to say an earthly goodbye to Stan Zirfas and Les Dunworth. Many of our Church family were able to join their families at their moving funeral services. We continue to pray for both families as they begin the long, hard road ahead.

In marked contrast it was such a joy to attend Sophie Smither's, Grace and Caleb Beaumont's Baptisms and enjoy the wonderful Bring and Share Lunch that followed.

We were greatly challenged on 16th October by Rachel, our guest preacher from IJM, one of our Mission Partners, who helped us appreciate more clearly the difficult and life changing work done by IJM.

Other Special Sundays have included Harvest and Remembrance when we were able to thank God firstly for His Provision and then His Protection.

Twenty five ladies met for Saturday breakfast on 22nd October. We thoroughly enjoyed our time together and hope to do it again soon!

The Lights @ Life after an excellent Life service on 30th October was a lovely time of fun and friendship...I'm sure there will be more about it elsewhere in Grapevine!

It was a real privilege to pray for Sue and Steve Read and Linzi Golding, both before and during their three

week trip to Uganda, and good too, to welcome them home.

A big shout for Jim Golding who not only led the youth groups whilst Linzi was away, but has also been leading the autumn lunchtime Alpha group.

Back in September, a group of us were able to travel to Rochester for the beautiful installation service of our new Bishop Jonathan Gibbs. Please be praying for him.

Throughout this challenging season both locally and nationally, the sermon series on the five Pastoral Principles has been really helpful.

So, on into Advent and Christmas. Never more than now, do we need to build our lives in the Light and with the Guidance of the One who was born that first Christmas, and help others to do so too.

Happy, Jesus filled Christmas,

Estelle Woodcock

Rukungiri,... after too long

After nearly too long we were back in Rukungiri and couldn't wait to see the children and the teachers. Since our last visit Sue and I are now trustees of the charity, so along with Linzi and two of the other trustees Judy and Roger we eagerly awaited our welcome to the school. Even we were surprised, not only the band but flowers and a tunnel of honour with the children waving leaves, we were back. We had a lot to catch up on and knew it was going to be hard and tiring. We set about the admin we needed to do, the photos of every child in the school, writing



much needed mattresses and chairs for the Nursery along with new benches for Primary and a new generator for the pri-



mary school, their old one was continually



breaking down. The electricity supply this year in the town was very much off then on.

We found that the oven we normally use to bake the bread rolls was no longer serviceable. We reverted to plan B, doughnuts. We had class P6 come and help us, making doughnuts is hard, hot, tiring work having to fry them over a wooden fire. Af-



ter some 8hrs of frying we had approx 1500 to give to the children. We were also able to distribute some to the local deaf school. The cost of making the doughnuts was roughly £400 but well worth it to see their faces and taste the sugar in them lol! We also did our customary shopping with some of the sponsored children, taking 57 children out to buy new school shoes, socks and a bag along with new trousers and shirts for best.

We would like to thank all of you at St John's for sponsoring the children and supporting the school and especially for all your prayers.

God Bless

Steve Read



sponsors letters and meeting after meeting with the school management team. A lot had changed since our last visit, especially the cost of food and the ever dwindling exchange rate. The first stage of the toilets had been completed and the second stage was underway with Martin the builder on site, planning for the work to start in the holidays.

The children never change, remembering us by name and as the rolls people, and of course Steve and his gun that fires water. One thing that never changes is the love the children have for our Lord, to watch them worship and pray brings tears of joy to you every time.

Thanks to the generosity of St John's congregation and other churches and family and friends, we were able to purchase



A Day in the Life (22nd November 2022)

I cannot do anything without being filled with the Holy Spirit, so after I got out of the front door I said 'come Holy Spirit' twice before jogging slowly to Bursted Woods, and saying 'hello and God bless you,' to my dog walking friends, whilst completing my two laps of the small park land.

On exiting, I encountered a young man just near his car. I asked him if he would like a Christian blessing prayer and we prayed briefly, and he accepted a testament, a Hope magazine and a Why Jesus? booklet from me.



After Zoom prayers, I travelled for two hours by bus, train and tube to Ruislip Manor, and started my second day there trying to pray for shopkeepers in that area.

That day I was refused by eleven shopkeepers, it being a Sikh area, but five people allowed me to pray and/or speak to them about my Christian faith journey. Of those, two young women got a full introduction to Christianity and an encouragement to think about finding a local Alpha course.

I had an interesting conversation with one man who was finding himself in an empty Church but not knowing why, and he refused any further



help from me, so when a customer arrived, I departed.

I took a 'Why Jesus?' booklet to a shop where I had had a long discussion with a woman last week. Sadly she was out, but her husband and I had a great chat about Alpha and the Holy Spirit, and I encouraged him that both of them should try an Alpha course locally, as being a good reintroduction to our faith.

In 2014, I asked God to use my life and He told me to bless, so with the help of the Holy Spirit, I try to pray for people I encounter in shops and elsewhere, wherever I happen to find myself.

I hope to encourage people in their faith journeys, that's my role, and it's always good to discover who God places in front of me.

Mike Cossor

A Rubbish Article

You know that Bexley Council provides you with a recycling bin for solid plastic packaging. Did you know that you can easily get your soft plastic packaging — any plastic that can be scrunched up — recycled too?

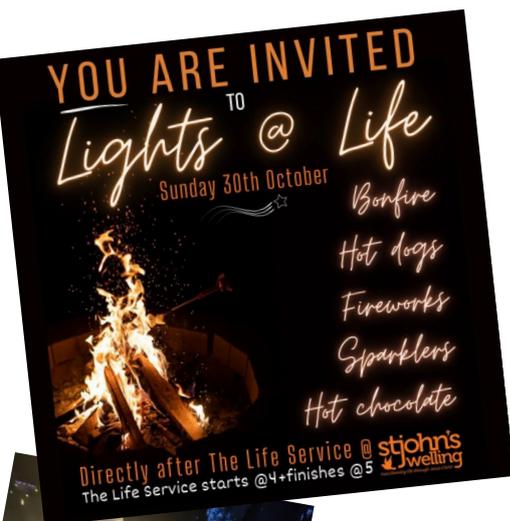
Supermarkets such as Tesco (in the front entrance foyer) and Morrisons (by the till furthest from the door) in Welling and Co-op in Bexleyheath have containers for you to drop off your soft plastic waste.

Since I have been doing this, I have been surprised how little rubbish I need to put in my general waste bin which I believe goes to landfill.

Why am I telling you in Grapevine?! Partly because Grapevine isn't just for updates on church activities (think about whether you would like to put in an article) and partly because this is all part of caring for God's creation. Some people feel called to do overseas mission or street evangelism, etc and it's okay if not everyone does those particular things. Caring for creation cannot be left to just some people. It's there in the Bible but I think we often miss it, for example when we read "all the earth" and maybe assume it to always mean "all people". The more you have it in your mind when reading the Bible, the more you spot references to a relationship between God and all creation and our responsibility to look after His creation.

I would be interested to hear how you get on.

Bob Morris



Lights @ Life



was enjoyed by many of all ages on 30th October at St John's. The event included something for everyone with a massive bonfire, sparklers, glow stick games, craft, a firework display, hot chocolate and other refreshments, delicious sausage rolls (including a veggie option) and lots of opportunities to share and serve as we are called to do.



My Faith Journey: Anne Hill

Anne was born in Bermondsey in 1965, and was a small baby with a hole in the heart. She was baptized in hospital as there were concerns about whether she would survive. Anne very much feels that she survived because God has a plan for her life and work to perform. Her family lived in Pages Walk until she was three. Her dad was a non-attending Catholic, and her mum was a high church



Anglican. Anne attended Danson Primary and at the age of eight Anne's heart failure was cured by an operation to correct the heart's structure and functioning. She then moved on to attend Blackfen Girls' School.

In 1968, a next door neighbour commended St John's Welling to Anne's mum, and she and Anne began to attend here. Anne continues to attend since her mum's passing.

Anne and Alan were married on 1st June 1984 and have been blessed with two children, Claire (29) and Sean (25).

Anne, partnered by long time friend Tracey Knight, had her baptism reaffirmed in 2010, and Anne has helped with the children's work, the welcome team, and in the sidespersons team, as her ministry at St John's.

Anne experienced the Holy Spirit hugging her in 2015, but she went home and cried afterwards, feeling it was frightening and she subsequently sought advice from Adam, who reassured her that her experience was from the Holy Spirit, and a positive experience, which Anne accepts.

Anne suffered two brief periods of depression caring for her mother whilst she (mum) suffered with dementia and later when mum sadly died. She credits her recovery from her low moods to help from her GP and her faith, without which, she feels things would have been a lot worse.

Anne uses her awake time from 1:00 am to 4:00am to pray, every day.

Walk in the Park

On Sunday 18th September, having seen that David Beckham and Miriam and Estelle had queued to say thanks and farewell to the late Queen in Westminster Hall where her flag covered coffin was lying in state, I felt compelled to join the queue and pay my respects and thanks to Her Majesty.

I discussed this with Jenny and she encouraged me to go early, so I quickly freshened up, and packed a bar of chocolate and a bag of walnuts, and set off on my adventure, dressed for all weathers.

It was with some relief that I got to Southwark Park by 10.30am, and joined the queue of hundreds of people, by beginning a zig zagging walk on some matting, before we were given a green arm band for security.

At this point a jovial man was immediately in front of me talking to a young woman, and I managed to get to talk to them as they were Chelsea fans, as is my son-in-law Ateesh.

We stayed together alongside her brother, and the four of us entertained one another on what turned out to be a nine and a half hour walk and queue. We shared our life stories with one another over the length of our walk, and despite loo and water and food breaks, we all stayed together, debating topics such as our favourite—cities, holiday venues, films, football teams and hobbies, and I prayed with those who were willing.

With a growing feeling of elation, we crossed the Thames and arrived tired and elated at Westminster and had armband checks before entering the final zigzag. At eight o'clock, we were welcomed and there was a very thorough security check which we went through together.

Following that, we entered Westminster Hall, admiring the ceiling and the ambience, and paid our respects to Her late Majesty, a very wonderful Christian and human being.

I said thanks and farewell to my friends on the Embankment near Charing Cross, and have since discovered that Pete Smithers, Sue and Steve Read and Julia Stevens also queued to pay their respects, so well done them.

Mike Cosser

