

GRAPEVINE

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LOVE came for US

Christmas begins on Christmas Eve in the MacBean's house! We follow the Hungarian tradition of giving and receiving presents after a family service on Christmas Eve, usually the Christingle service here in the UK and then we go home, gather around the tree and unwrap all the goodies that have been bought, carefully chosen presents met with cries of delight and lots of hugging!

Then we have a meal of salmon (the cats get their share) and trimmings. This year's celebration will be a little different with me being celebrant at Christ Church Erith's Midnight Service and Christmas Day. No wine for Gordon until Christmas Day lunch!

Christmas Day, going to Church, celebrating the Bethlehem event that changed the world.

But what does this all add up to for us today? We have been seeing the various "Christmas" decorations going up, the worries that there will be shortages of various technological gifts, shortages of turkey, shortages of whatever presents are deemed expensive enough to satisfy the receiver and valuable and prestigious enough to satisfy those who see what you have received!

The commercial aspects of Christmas deny and hide the pure reality of what happened in Bethlehem over 2000 years ago.

That Mary gave birth to a boy and named him Jesus. Emmanuel, GOD is with US. How incredibly profound is that. GOD is with US. Present in our world, breathing our air, eating our food, drinking our wine (leave some for me) and going about life as one of us. We get excited to go and watch the latest super hero movie, the latest love story romance or the action horror movie that scares you silly. We forget that we have Christmas to remind us of the reality of God's power and divine love.

At Christmas we are reminded of the tender love of God, the

incandescent reality of LOVE that chooses to abide with us. How cheap everything else feels next to that reality, all our worldly goods fade away into dust and we are ashamed to put so much value in them. God's pure love has come to be with us, and we rush



Christmas blessings from St John's Church Welling

from place to place trying to buy the best gifts we can, when the greatest gift of all is waiting for our response. Yes Lord, I believe, please save me, show me your love, show me your power, forgive me my sins and let me live with you in my life. May we celebrate our Christmases in joy, whether by ourselves or with our families and friends, may our Christmas remind us of that birth in Bethlehem, that LOVE came for US.

Rev Gordon MacBean

St John's News

And it's December!!

Hopefully by the time you read this, our current crop of Covid patients will be back to health and strength and their places will not have been taken by more sufferers. But, if you are suffering, we wish you the speediest of recoveries.

The last eight weeks have seen a steady return to a more normal pattern of Church life. Toffs have had their first meeting since Lockdown 1 and welcomed 42 guests, delighted to be back together again. They are now looking forward to their carol service in early December.

The current Alpha Course is well underway with everybody involved growing in friendship with one another and, we pray, with God.

Toddler Club enjoyed their Annual Bonfire Lunch, yet again a rain free day!

It was a real delight to see so many of the uniformed groups back parading for the Remembrance Sunday Service. It was a well attended, dignified and lovely service in every way.

The ramp to the Church hall is in place with just some finishing touches still outstanding. New Hall doors are coming soon!

The ladies' social activities are getting underway with a well attended evening at

Zingara's and an even larger number planning to enjoy afternoon tea together. Men have had one curry night with future outings being planned.

Our congratulations to Billy-Jo, who has been elected onto General Synod (the big decision making council of the Church of England). She so values and needs our prayer and support in this new challenge. We continue to pray for Sheila Clarke, Julie Dowsett, Christine Belsham and Lesley South as they convalesce following surgery.

So on into Advent candles, music, celebration and 'Good News' because Jesus came and will come again!

Estelle Woodcock

The Testers, CMS Peru

“There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens” Ecclesiastes 3:1

Life as a mission partner living in Peru inevitably means that there will be plenty of change and transition. It means shifting between places, cultures and languages regularly and it means there are times and seasons when things look very different to others. Change is part of life for all of us but it seems that it is accentuated by this life to which we have been called.

As the writer of Ecclesiastes continues, there is “a time to plant and a time to uproot” and having come back to the UK for a few months at the end of July there has certainly been a strong sense of uprooting from Peru after a very intense period there. Of course, having been planted in the UK for a few months, another time of uprooting will come when we return to Peru on the 6th January.



Later the author reflects that there is “a time to weep and a time to laugh”. All of us have had times to weep over the last couple of years and so it has been all the sweeter to have been able to have times with family and friends recently and to laugh together.

In all of these seasons of life, and particularly in the midst of change, we need to remember that, as the writer notes later, “everything God does will endure for ever” and only that. So, if we want to live a fruitful life, we need to be continually seeking to be in the place God has called us to be to do the things God calls us to do. It might mean making a change or it might mean keeping going even when everything is changing around us. Let us pray we are sensitive to the Holy Spirit to know God’s leading and for the Spirit to give us the strength to follow that leading, even when it’s difficult.

Paul and Sarah Tester, Mission Partners with Church Mission Society in Lima, Peru

Let’s Build Together

We all want to live in homes that are well built. Every brick has to be in place so that we can be sure our homes will be a safe place to live.

The same is true in the life of the church. St John’s needs everyone to play their role in making the life of the church a place where God through Jesus can advance His Kingdom in Welling and further afield.

Because it is important that we all contribute to the life of St John’s Church, back in October we launched the volunteering scheme to get more people to be involved and there was a marvellous response with lots of people signing up for things.

There are more people needed to unlock the church along with Val, Ali, Jon and Trevor – speak to Val.

Can you play the organ – Doug is looking for an Assistant – would that

be you?
People are needed in the Technical Team involving



three separate jobs—PowerPoint, OBS or sound—talk to Mushi or Ray Gompers.

You could join the Bible Reading rota or Prayer rota for the 10.30am or 6.30pm services.

If you want to help at the Life Service (4.00pm) speak to Alex Barlow.

How about helping in crèche, teas and coffees after morning worship, driving people to church – let’s talk.

It’s our church and we all need to play a part. Stop us and have a word – I guarantee it will be fun and you’ll get to know lots of other people.

“So, then you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with the saints, and members of God’s household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus Himself as the cornerstone. The whole building, being put together by Him, grows into a holy sanctuary in the Lord. You also are being built together for God’s dwelling in the Spirit.”

Ephesians 2:19-22

For more information speak to Mushi Rahman or Jenny Cosser



LIVING VALUES  **GROWING FAITH**

-school group for one of the primary team.

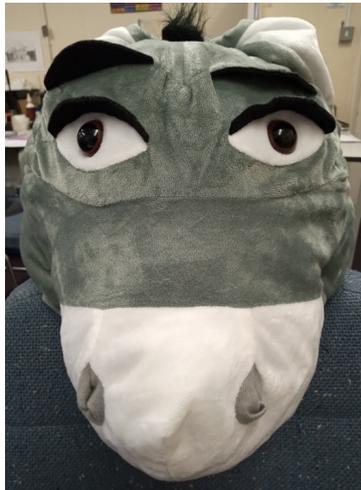
We continue to be blessed by Germany's finest young people, this year in the form of Simone, our superb Koru gap year student. One class teacher was nothing short of astonished when Simone, with marker pen in hand confidently asked pupils questions and wrote their answers on the board. How many of us could do that in a German school if the tables were turned? We all very much appreciate

her as a person and all that she contributes.

"The Christmas play diary is almost fully booked!" This was the surprising announcement Fiona, our Administrator, gave us at a team meeting one Monday morning in early October and it immediately answered the question we'd been pondering as to whether we prepare a Christmas drama for live performance this year and the prospect of doing so is an exciting one.

At time of writing, we're working to get two drama teams of four people ready to present 'The Promise Keeper', a re-telling of the Nativity as narrated by Mary & Joseph's Donkey (an idea inspired by a stage performance by the Young Vic Theatre Company some years ago) and so, if the Lord wills it, we could find ourselves 'treading the boards' of primary school halls and stages this December to tell the story of the Hope of all hopes, Emmanuel, God with us.

Jason Vaughan



Life at CRiBS recently has seen the team engaging in various aspects of work in schools, such as leading sessions in primary classrooms from the older 'RE:refresh' topic series as well as sessions from the new and developing 'RE:connect' series in response to Bexley Borough's new RE Syllabus. Intervention work, especially via 'Boys Noise' and some secondary mentoring opportunities have also taken place, as have visits to a pre

A Thank You...

To God for the blessings of my life with: The NHS, our personal health, and safety, Covid and other inoculations, National blood donation Service, the Bible, Jesus coming, the Holy Spirit, finding my life purpose, evangelism, Alpha, marriage, Jenny, family, children, parenthood, grand parenthood, parental love experience, grandchildren, joy, happiness, weather variations and seasonal variations, our climate, sunny days, rainy days, dull days, wind,



sunflowers, fresh air and exercise, running, sports clubs, all clubs, football clubs, sport, Olympic games, England Football team, Gareth Southgate, prayer, I can please God, I can talk to Jesus, Come Holy Spirit, boldness to approach strangers, adversity, nice people, optimism, positivity, a good enough God, forgiveness of sins, and of my sins, all Churches, our Church, our Church Community, House groups, friends, confidence,

music, worship, praise, art, creativity, the creative arts, writing, poetry, talents of all sorts, diversity, gender, smiling, optimism. Contemplation, inspiration, fruits of

the spirit, love joy, peace, patience, kindness, sadness, gladness, self-control, choices, experience, lifelong learning, U3A, Charities, working to eliminate Diabetes, Leukaemia, Autism, charity shops, reading, swimming, water, food, clothes, just enough not too much, mobile phones, parks, park benches, travel, holidays, trains and buses, cafes, Hotels, the sabbath, days off, time alone, time together, time with family, time with friends, other species, people's pets, the Probation Service, the Police, Courts, Prisons, and the Justice system, in UK and worldwide, The UK, democracy, peace on earth, history, our parents and forebears, and their sacrifice for us to enjoy our lives today, chances to show faith, hospitality, refugees, our brothers and sisters in the faith, life itself, the gift of the day.

Mike Cossar

Introducing:



My name is Cathy Claridge, and I am delighted to have joined the community at St. John's Welling.

A little bit about me; I have three lovely daughters Joanne, Leanne and Sophie and four grandchildren, Rhys, Caitlin, Sam and Charlie.

I also have shares in a miniature long haired dachshund called Bella and more recently a Cocker Spaniel puppy called Bailey 🐶.

I have lived on Thamesmead for about 38 years. In 1984, I was visited by a London City Missionary, and after a few bible studies I gave my life to the Lord. I have attended the same church from this date and have continued in my faith even during hard times such as divorce and bringing up three children as a single parent. Following a change in leadership at the Church, lots of prayer and family discussions, I have decided to make St John's Welling my new spiritual home.

In my spare time I am a Greenwich Street Pastor and have been volunteering since completing my training programme in 2012. I currently volunteer at least once a month to care for, listen to and help the people of Woolwich Town centre on a Friday night.

I am a trained CRUSE Bereavement Counsellor, and volunteer when needed at a Greenwich Foodbank Welcome Centre.

My first-born grandson Rhys is a keen footballer and I really enjoy watching him play (but maybe not so much in the winter).

I have been working in the church environment for almost 30 years and in August this year I was made redundant from a part time admin role at a pre-school which enabled me to apply for the position of Assistant Administrator at St. John's. I have already been made to feel so welcome and I am really looking forward to getting to know you all over the coming months.

Cathy Claridge

Hello dear Parishioners at St. John's. My name is Simone Wendel, I am 19 years old and very happy to be part of St. John's for a year as part of my gap year programme with CRiBS.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the congregation for their warm welcome and Estelle and Ken Woodcock for giving me a loving English home for the coming year.

I grew up together with my two older siblings in a Christian family in a village in the Stuttgart area (in the southwest of Germany).

After my "Abitur" (German A-levels), which I completed in the last school year, I wanted to do this year abroad in order to gain a lot of experience and foreign language practice, as well as to share my faith with other young people and, at best, to be able to pass it on. I think that is a great opportunity before I go to university and in Germany it is not that unusual to do social work for one year after school.



In St. John's I am spending the coming year helping in various groups for children and young people. So, I am part of the leadership team for Jesus Kids, Dubsters and 3Dub, as well as Lamplighters. During the last half term, I have also helped with the toddler groups at St John's and BCLC.

With CRiBS I am going into RE lessons in different schools in the area. We are also starting to rehearse the annual Christmas production which we will perform in schools.

I would really appreciate Your prayers for the coming year, for the St. John's children and youth groups and the CRiBS and Lamplighter Nativity plays.

I am looking forward to the coming year together with you.

Simone Wendel

Cake and Make

Thank you to all our happy helpers who came to "Cake and Make" (including Steve and Mushi who were heavily outnumbered 😊) we got lots done and are so grateful for the laughter, fellowship and extra hands 🤗🎄🍰🥰

