

# GRAPEVINE



grapevine@stjohnswelling.org.uk www.stjohnswelling.org.uk 020 8303 1107 editors: MCC & NC

## ...OPEN HEAVENS...

A few weeks ago whilst I was in the USA I went to a conference at Bethel Church in Redding California.

I felt it was God prompt to go even though it's a little out of my comfort zone. And on the first night God spoke very personally and clearly to me, so it was Def right to be there.

Here's my reflections (noting this was a conference not weekly church life):

- Great welcome
- People were so friendly
- Guests would just go ahead and pray & prophesy over you.
- Worship was musically on point, but more importantly they spent a long time in sung worship welcoming the presence of God.
- Unreserved in worship
- Expectant that God would move
- Incredible generosity towards a family where the dad had died in recent



terms of the main stage & sung worship

- They shared story after story of what God has done in their midst
- Jeremy Riddle spoke persuasively on repentance
- Now I couldn't get to the morning devotionals because they were booking only, but in the main session scripture

months, I don't know the amount but so many people got up and gave.

- United in vision
- Leadership was passed around in

was assumed & sometimes referenced but not taught much.

- When it was taught it was often single texts or used in an unusual way.

- Ministry times were a bit hyped compared to my background (but I'm not a Pentecostal)

- They didn't tell stories where things hadn't happened or stories of "failure" (I suspect they'd say they are seeking to build faith)

- One non Bethel speaker wasn't great. He kept saying "we need to get into the word" but didn't open it, kept trying to sell his books & his stories were very much about him even though he said it was about Jesus

- The cost of their new build is staggering (but I do recognise it is the USA and California)

John Wimber said "eat the fish, spit out the bones" and there was so much to be thankful for.

Here were some of the songs we sang that were newer to me: <https://music.youtube.com/playlist...>

Andy Bond

## St John's News

What a careless Church we are! A year ago when I wrote the December news we had both a Vicar and a Curate but somehow, now we seem to have lost both!

Adam and Kate's **two Goodbye weekends** are still fresh in our minds. So many people made journeys, long as well as short, to be



service. For all of us who have been in St John's during Adam's ministry I believe the abiding memory will be of two people who lived for and shared Jesus with all of us, as well as encouraging many to step into the Christian family, and then grow in their faith and service. These pictures say more even than words.

We are now in **Interregnum**, the name given to the time between two serving Vicars. Our first task in the process that will end when the next Vicar is appointed is to write the Parish Profile. This is a

document describing St John's, which anyone considering applying to be our next Vicar will read and be able to decide whether this is a Parish where God might want him/ her to apply to serve.

The PCC have agreed to update Congregations monthly as to where we are in the process. The group writing the profile will have their first meeting tomorrow as I write (17<sup>th</sup> November).

Just to say how much we appreciate **Gordon** returning to take our monthly morning Communion service.

Our **Hall ceiling** was replaced during the Autumn Half term and makes the hall so much smarter and bright.

The **Lights@Life service** is one of the Annual Highlights on the Life Service Calendar and this year was no exception with a large number at the service when Alex Barlow spoke, and even more joined for the fireworks and fun that followed.

(Continued on page 2)



at their Afternoon tea or the final Goodbye

**Home for Good Safe Family Merger: Good News**  
 Since the founding of Safe Families and Home for Good, we've consistently found ways to collaborate, and through this process we have increasingly recognised an alignment in our vision.

Together we have a vision to provide a more **holistic solution, through the Church**, to prevent children entering the care system through family support and then, if they do, ensuring there are enough safe and nurturing homes through fostering, adoption, and supported lodgings.

We believe that by joining together, as one organisation, we will see more churches equipped more volunteers empowered and trained, more local authorities served, more families supported, less children entering care and for those that do, well-matched homes found.

**Every child needs** a stable place to call home, an environment that feels safe and nurturing, and someone they can trust who will offer unconditional care and support.

**Every family need** people around who care and can support them, so that when challenges happen, they don't have to face them alone.

This merger will create huge opportunities for both charities. Each organisation brings unique strengths and bringing the experience and expertise of both together will help amplify these strengths even further.

There are some immediate opportunities that the merger will create.

The first is being able to speak to the Church with one voice – to respond to direct feedback we have had from church leaders for greater collaboration and to bring an offer to the Church that allows for a holistic response to the needs of children and families, whether that is for an hour, a month or a lifetime.

Secondly, we have an opportunity to speak to both local government and national government with one voice. To add the voices of the 3,000+ children and their families that Safe Families supports each year to the expertise and advocacy of Home for Good.

Other areas of overlap and collaboration include our commitment to being trauma informed and equipping the Church with excellent training and resources that enable them to love well those impacted by trauma.

For further reading click here <https://homeforgood.org.uk/merger> and do reach out to Billy-Jo on [Billyjo.oleary@homeforgood.org.uk](mailto:Billyjo.oleary@homeforgood.org.uk)

(Continued from page 1)

The two **Remembrance Sunday Services** were very different but equally poignant. The Morning service included the 2 minute silence as we remembered those who sacrificed their lives in war, and then the 5.00pm Memorial Service when we remember family members and friends whom we mourn personally.

The **Lampighter Fayre** usually falls too late to feature in the December magazine,.. But not so this year! The Mackley family are still recovering after the gigantic achievement of planning such an enormous and brilliant event. The final amount raised is over £4,000! And again pictures say more



recovered after the gigantic achievement of planning such an enormous and brilliant event. The final amount raised is over £4,000! And again pictures say more

than words. These pictures show the amazing layout before the doors opened to let folk in.

We continue to pray for Mushi Rahman who remains in Lewisham hospital making limited progress

So, on into Advent, Christmas and.....2025

May we all know and celebrate the Truth without which Christmas is just a hollow celebration of.....?

Till February!



**Estelle Woodcock**

## JOB: Kathryn Giles

If you know her, you may have spotted Kathryn Giles at St John's after many years elsewhere. Kathryn grew up at St John's, baptised at 5 alongside her whole family, gave her life to Jesus at 10, and at 14, began to sense a strong call from God to mission and a secondary calling to teaching. Kathryn spent a month in Kenya with CMS to test out her calling, find out about mission and live in another culture. As she flew home, the clouds suddenly cleared over the Alps, and she sensed God saying He was calling her to somewhere with 'mountains and children'. She met her parents at the airport with the words, "It's not Africa...it's South America!"

She prepared with a teaching degree ("Father God, what now? Still mission overseas?") and five years teaching at Bedonwell Primary, and at St John's working with Dubsters and Youth Alpha



and playing with the music group, then Kathryn applied to All

for mission. During the two-year course, she also spent a year in Bolivia with Latin Link's Stride programme. You may remember us 'selling off' parts of her body in sponsorship to get her there and support her?!

Whilst in Bolivia, she kept pushing doors to confirm if this was where God wanted her, but could never find His peace. Now she knows that He was leading her to become a missionary in her own culture. She continued to wait for God's guidance, until she was invited to become the Children's Worker in St Andrew's, Archway, N London. Kathryn took up the offer, always feeling that God was saying, "It's not about the geography, it's about saying YES to Me."

She stayed at St Andrew's for six years working with children and youth, leading, preaching and teaching, and even testing whether or not Ordination was for her. Adding a second job with Oasis Mission Society for 18 months preparing others to go overseas, she then thought "What am I

Nations Christian College (ANCC) to train

(Continued on page 3)

# My ALPHA Experiences

I have participated in Alpha groups on many occasions, beginning in the mid 1990s when it was brand new, and Jenny and I were at Quinton Park Baptist Church in Cheylesmore, Coventry.

We held one Alpha group at our house, and I helped to lead a youth Alpha with some then teenagers, and can recall an amazing High ropes exercise on an away day, which contained a leap of faith experience, which was just frightening enough to be a great memory.

Since coming to St John's Welling, I ( alongside leader Estelle Woodcock, Ken Woodcock, Bob Morris, Cate Woodcock, Mushi Rahman, Miriam Giles, Danielle Cook, John Kurowski, and many others) have volunteered to help on about four recent Alpha courses one or two on line in Covid, the others at Estelle and Ken's home.

The amazing thing that I can testify to is that each Alpha course I have gone on, has in different ways, inspired, renewed, and strengthened my faith. Strong bonds and relationships have been formed and remain, and I recall that small group experience of love for fellow pilgrims, in faith with thanks.

I am sharing this commendation with all of you, because Alpha is not just for newbies, it is for everyone, and can benefit everyone.

I sense that there are many of us at St Johns of mature years and lengthy faith, who might benefit as participants, from another Alpha small group experience, and certainly from the opportunity presented by the Holy Spirit away day which is crucial to all our faith journeys.

So why not "get over yourself" (my current prayer) and dare to face the uncertainty of a slightly unknown experience, and give Alpha a try or another try. You will not regret it and will certainly feel the love, for others and for and from, Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour.

**Mike Cosser**

*(Continued from page 2)*

doing, Lord? Why am I not working with children?"

Kathryn visited the local CofE primary school, where she had previously led assemblies, to enquire about supply as a way to getting back into teaching. Instead the Headteacher insisted Kathryn join the staff as a full-time classroom teacher, where she stayed for the next 15 years until July 2024, eventually becoming the RE and Collective Worship Lead within the school. God kept adding to her role, making it feel more missional with the variety of languages and cultures, especially Latino and African, and becoming involved with families in an area where extreme wealth and extreme poverty co-exist. She began to realise she had been on the mission field the whole time and just hadn't recognised it!

While visiting St John's in May '23, a conversation arose between educators, including Laura Gibbs who is Deputy Head for a large Federation involving two Primary Schools over three sites in Greenwich, Woolwich and the Peninsula. An RE post was about to open up across the Federation, and Laura left her with an open invitation to contact her if she was ever looking for a move.

At the same time, unable ever to raise the deposit to buy her own home, Kathryn's Dad encouraged her to return to Welling to work and save, from home. To this end, Kathryn looked for a new teaching post in Bexley, but God closed doors on all of them. While walking to school one day in May, He spoke through a worship song "I'll do anything for your glory." Always having been a nomad for Jesus, the thought came: "Why don't you give Laura a call?" Laura replied within seconds and by the end of that day, Kathryn had an application form for the Koinonia Federation. At every stage the doors opened. "It was like St John's Primary School but SO much bigger." By the end of term she not only had a job as a classroom teacher but was also appointed RE & Worship Lead across the whole Federation.

Kathryn began to dismantle her life in North London over the summer break: six weeks to move house, break ties, leave church and uproot completely to a new area. In Kathryn's words, "I like new challenges and the opportunities for mission, and being 'Jesus' wherever He places me. I have learnt to follow the peace, to keep moving at Jesus' pace. I know I'm in the right job and am where I'm supposed to be."

**Kate Foot**

# My Faith Journey: Hannah Wood

My faith journey began in 2014/2015 when I began helping out at the church brownie unit which I now run, I enjoyed coming along to the parade services. I then started finding excuses to come back to the church, shortly after that I became friendly with Laura Webster who invited me to come along to messy church which I did and enjoyed helping out on. I was invited to join an alpha course in 2016 after helping at messy church for a while but declined as didn't feel ready or confident enough to



attend. A year later after coming along to church on a more regular basis I decided to join spark in the park on team which I thoroughly enjoyed throwing myself into everything including the team games, during spark the subject of Alpha came up again starting in September 2017. I was still undecided and a bit nervous to attend but after the week had ended I decided to go along with the support of Laura and Alison Read.

I began an Alpha course in September 2017 run by Billy-Jo and Dominic O Leary at Kate Finney's house, I went along feeling anxious and worried about what to expect but by the end of the evening having had a meal and chat with people I felt more relaxed.

After the alpha course finished I decided that I was ready to give my life to Jesus and was baptised by Danielle Pearson-Smith by full immersion on 1st April 2018, I then also joined Ken and Estelle Woodcocks house group on a Tuesday evening.

After being baptised I decided to join the Jesus Kids team once a month alongside Laura and continued to help with messy church and other church activities for the children including Erith deanery youth trust events.

On 2nd June 2019 I was confirmed at St Peter's church Bexleyheath alongside Jim Golding and Laura Gibbs, by this point I was fully immersed in church life helping regularly with children's groups and serving in other ways, fast forward to current day and I'm now part of the children and youth teams at church as well as serving on the PCC and on The Life Service team.

# House Group: Men's Group

We continue to be a small but close group of guys who meet on Zoom most Thursday evenings. We talk about what we read in the Bible and we talk about life and about

how the two overlap as we try to be in this world but not too much of this world. And we of course pray together. We used to meet in person every two weeks but when lockdown came, we met more frequently by zoom in order to keep encouraging and supporting one another and that has stuck. That support sometimes overlaps into practical support, as I'm sure happens with other house groups.

**Bob Morris**

I would say that the Men's zoom group is helpful for me, as it's a reason to keep in touch with some of my friends from St John's (since my departure many years ago now). I am a good ear and says it how it is but still have God at the forefront of the group. It's a fun way to interact with each other and it keeps us all "daft as brushes"!

**Simon Caddock**

I got involved with the Thursday night Men's Group that Bob devised and leads, several years ago. It is very relaxed, and ever since COVID takes place on zoom. Mostly it is composed of Bob, Simon, and myself, with Pete Knight and Pete Smithers attending when their busy circumstances allow.

Bob leads and usually provides some loose structure; Biblical heroes, Bible passages, prayer topics. etc. Simon adds his unique take and sense of humour, and I bring what I bring; news local, national and international, and people to pray for. Recently Mushi has been our hot topic, as well as politics and war concerns.

We enjoy one another's company, and occasionally a coherent word or prayer emerges amid the joy and fun. I am glad the group exists and thank you Bob for being patient with us, and ensuring that Jesus is always at the centre.

**Mike Cosser**



Andy Bond



## Christmas Blessings

Danson Lane Welling DA16 2BQ

We warmly invite you to join us at the Christmas services at St John's Church Welling this year. If you would appreciate us praying for you, please email [Prayforme@stjohnswelling.org.uk](mailto:Prayforme@stjohnswelling.org.uk). God bless you,

**Christmas Services at St John's Welling**

- Sunday 15th December 2024  
4.00pm Life@Christmas (ticketed event)
- Sunday 22nd December 2024  
6.30pm Carols by Candlelight
- Tuesday 24th December 2024  
6.00pm Crib Service (especially for children)  
11.30pm Midnight Holy Communion
- Wednesday 25th December 2024  
10.30am Christmas Day Service

☎ 020 8303 1107    🌐 [www.stjohnswelling.org.uk](http://www.stjohnswelling.org.uk)    ✉ [office@stjohnswelling.org.uk](mailto:office@stjohnswelling.org.uk)    📺 Welling St Johns