

# GRAPEVINE

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

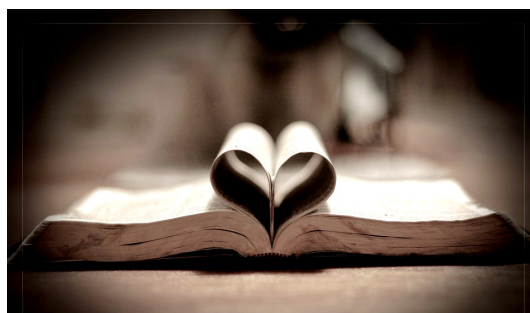
## 'God's Love Compels'

In John Chapter 3 verse 3, Jesus tells Nicodemus that no one can see the Kingdom of God unless he (or she) is born again.

The gift of the Holy Spirit (being born again) is a blessing now available to everyone who has faith in Jesus Christ, His miracles, sacrificial death on the cross, burial in a nearby tomb, and resurrection three days later. There is no other way.

But even if you are a staunch Christian believer, the Holy Spirit won't come unless a prayer of invitation is proclaimed from your heart. And maybe simultaneously being in a Beatitudes life experience (as in Matthew 5) may amplify one's prayers to God for that enlightenment.

All humans will experience suffering at some point in their lives, and uniquely for us followers of Christ, the Holy Spirit Experience, bringing comfort and joy in abundance, enables us



to glimpse and internalize the eternal love of God for us as individuals, and to receive a Hope for our souls beyond the trials, tribulations, and choices of our lives.

However, receiving this gift of be-

coming a new person, the best version of ourselves, brings a responsibility, the compulsion to realize and fulfill God's plan for our lives.

Whilst trying to be humble, it is impossible for us to keep to ourselves these mysteries and experiences that God has entrusted to us, as we grow in our faith journeys, and when we encounter many folk in Welling and in the wider world who are both suffering and standing in eternal jeopardy.

We know what we know, God is love (3 John 14 7-12) and as red dots we must get over ourselves and go forth and tell, God's love compels (1 Cor 5 v 14) us to do so.

So, please keep praying 'come Holy Spirit', and pray send me Lord, send me.

Much love to you all, **MCC**

was **JOURNEYS** and proved an interesting and challenging lens through which we looked at the different stages of the Nativity. I particularly appreciated Bev's and Danny's sermons (still online if you missed them). Before we leave **JOURNEYS**, it has been a delight to **journey** with the **Current Alpha group**. They completed their course at the end of January with a Celebration Evening which was also **the launch of the next course**.

An important **December journey** of a different kind was **the work on the Parish Profile**; our shop window description of our Church that potential Vicars will read and decide whether or not to apply to come as our Vicar.

The **Open Meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> January** was a real encouragement to the team who had spent many hours on this task. Church members were so supportive and helpful in their comments and suggested amendments. There is a real possibility that by the time you read this the profile may have gone to our Archdeacon. Once approved by her, we can advertise!

**Church Family news**  
Pete Ainsworth and Jon and Julie Stedman

have moved. Pete has moved back to his roots in Swanscombe and Jon and Julie moved locally in Bexleyheath. We wish them well as they settle into their new homes.

Mushi remains in Lewisham Hospital where he is making very slow progress.

Keith Mackley continues to battle an onslaught of health issues. They both need our ongoing prayer and support. Our Church WhatsApp groups regularly include prayer requests as folk face a variety of health issues. **Zoom prayer** provides a daily opportunity to pray with others for these and many other current situations further afield as well as local.

So, we continue on into our fifth month in Interregnum, holding fast to our Mission Statement: **TRANSFORMING LIFE THROUGH JESUS CHRIST**

And our verse for 2025 Joshua 1v9: **'Remember that I have commanded you to be determined and confident! Don't be afraid or discouraged, for I the LORD your God are with you wherever you go'** We can be sure **He** will still be keeping that promise in March!

**Estelle Woodcock**

## St John's News

Jim Charles reminded some of us the other day, that according to the Church Year, we continue to celebrate Christmas until Candlemas (Feb. 2<sup>nd</sup>) and, that his family won't be taking down their Christmas decorations until then!

However at St Johns, the final remnants of Christmas decorations were taken down after the Parish Profile meeting; more of which later.

**December at St John's** was a really busy month of celebrations and services with the two weeks before Christmas seeing a number of schools, including our own Playgroup, coming into Church for Carol services and Nativity plays. It was a real privilege to welcome them into our beautifully decorated and welcoming building and to pray for some groups as well.

In December we were primarily focussing on **Advent**, and with secular news increasingly dark, the focus on hope, peace joy and love was the right and encouraging.

**Our Theme for the Christmas services**

# Lamplighters 2024

'It was the Best of times. It was the Worst of times.'



We had a fantastic start putting on the pantomime Aladdin with the group leaders and raising money for the local Food Bank followed by a visit from Wendy our TLM rep when we celebrated 150 years of TLM with a cake, cards and a cheque. Our Friday evenings continued with song, craft, games, parties and fundraising activities.

With the sun shine in the Summer term Keith led lots of fun games outside on the grass under the trees which the children loved. We had already started planning our Pirate party always popular with children and adults alike. It was the best of times.

Sadly, it then changed to the worst of times. Keith had a

stroke in May followed by Covid, Norovirus, Double pneumonia and finally Flu in the course of 6 months and is no longer able to lead at Lamplighters. Our Pirate party in July followed by a fish and chip supper afterwards for the adults was great as usual although we were sad Keith couldn't be there to enjoy it.

Sadly, our joy turned to grief a few weeks later when Sylvia Costi unexpectedly became very ill and passed within a few days. She had been one of our faithful and long standing stalwarts and is still greatly missed by all the Lamplighter family.

Mushi had been the organiser of the fish and chip supper and always wore a great

pirate outfit. The life and soul of the event. When Mushi had a stroke at the end of the Summer it was the third major blow to our happy Lamplighter family. The children still ask after Mushi and we regularly remember him in our prayers.

Once back in the Autumn term although still shocked and saddened by the recent events we decided to start planning for the Lamplighter Fayre.

Without the strong support of Keith it was

and organised and run games, craft evenings and worship sessions. Cathy and Hannah have kindly joined the Lamplighter family and Natasha is on standby if we need an extra person. Julie S has taken over the role of Treasurer that Sylvia had done for nearly 20 years and we are very grateful that she has taken on this role. My huge thanks to all those folk and also to Pat, Harry, Jon, Lisa, Lucy, Alison, Tom and Doug. We couldn't do this without you.

It is wonderful to know that with the App supporters as well as our Friday night adults there are now over 40 people who are supporting and are very valued friends of Lamplighters. If you would like to go on the App please let me know. We would love more children at Lamplighters. If you know youngsters between the ages of 5 and 15 please encourage them to join us. Our Challenge group of Year 6 to Year 10 is now up to ten and we would love some



more teenagers.

On Friday January 24th this year Wendy Piccinini is visiting to receive a cheque and to update us on the work of TLM. All have been invited to this event. This years appeal is called REVIVE and is focusing on leprosy communities that have nothing. They are outcasts, no help at all, no food, no sanitation, no medicine, no proper homes, abandoned even by their own families. They get by through begging each day. Our fund raising will help to alleviate this situation and their suffering to bring hope and dignity.

We seek to follow Jesus' example when he held out his hand to the leprosy sufferer and commanded us to go and do likewise.

**Jackie Mackley**

hard and that's when Miriam S came up with the idea of a Lamplighter Xmas App for those interested in helping, preparing, setting up, manning a stall and praying. We had a great response and there are currently 35 members all supporting in very different ways. The App continues so that I can keep folk up to date with what we are doing. Currently that is a special raffle to raise money for this years mission focus. Thank you all for being on the App, your support and encouragement has been brilliant and thank you to Miriam for the idea. The Lamplighter Fayre was a huge success raising over £4,000.

During these changed and challenging times the group leaders have stepped up

ship fee and weekly subs. were agreed and we were soon able to pay off the loan.

After a while we were able to buy a third mat and later replace the original 2. Our membership grew to around 25 and we found rolling-up three mats to be hard work as they weigh about 40 Kg each. At that time we bought a second hand manual machine which looked like a giant mangle but this was still hard work. We found a company in Somerset that made a winding machine

powered by electric motors to do it for us. This however, cost £6,000. Once again the PCC were very supportive and provided a loan of half the cost and we were able to buy the machine and by increasing the fees for a while we were able to pay-off that loan too.

Currently we have about 20 members, less than half are St. John's members and so we pro-

vide a good link to the local community.



We would love to welcome anyone else to join us. You don't need to have any experience as everyone soon picks it up. Although most of us are a 'certain age' all are welcome. If anyone is interested in finding out more about playing, please contact me, Harry Costi, Derek Howell or Tony North.

**Roger Large**

## CLUBS: Bowls

In 2008 we asked if any members of the congregation would be interested in starting a bowls club to meet one afternoon in the church hall. The PCC agreed we could use the hall and provided a loan of £450 to help purchase 2 second hand mats.

The club had its first meeting early in 2009 and Tuesdays were found to be the most convenient day. A member-



# Safeguarding



Psalm 91: v4 **'He will cover you with His feathers and under His wings you will find refuge; His faithfulness will be your shield and rampart'**.

My name is Julie Stedman and I am the Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO) here at St John's Church.

SAFEGUARDING is put in place to make sure that children and vulnerable adults are kept safe.

My role is to ensure that everyone who works with children and / or vulnerable adults have completed the appropriate and relevant training. I also to deal with and take appropriate steps if a concern is raised or reported.

It is very important if you volunteer or work with children and/or vulnerable adults that you have done the appropriate training. You can speak to me if you are not sure how to go about this and you can speak to Cathy C in the office if you need to check if you have to have a DBS check or not. If you are volunteering to help with one of the groups you need to do the Basic and Foundation courses as well as the Domestic Abuse. These are the requirements of Rochester Diocese.

If you are in a Leadership role in the church, then you need to undertake the Safeguarding Pathways Leadership course. Please ask me if you are not sure.

You have probably seen the news around the Archbishop of Canterbury resigning and further news regarding the Archbishop of York. As Christians we have to make sure that safeguarding procedures are put in place and acted upon.

We want you to know that here at St John's we take Safeguarding very seriously. We want to make sure that everyone in our church family feels safe and confident to speak up if they feel the need.

SAFEGUARDING is EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY and if you see anything or know of anything that you are worried about, please speak to me.

In the Bible Safeguarding comes up a lot and one verse which is relevant is from Proverbs 31.8 -9 'Speak up for those who cannot speak for them-

selves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy'.

So, as we move forward from the recent news which has shaken the church we will strive to keep St John's a safe place to be for all.

Below is our policy taken from the website

St John's Welling, takes seriously its safeguarding responsibilities. We follow national guidelines in establishing a range of Safeguarding Policies and Forms.

## Worried about a child

If you are worried about a child or young person (under 18 years) and the information you have suggests that a child is at immediate risk of being harmed, you should tell the police without delay. This is an emergency and it is appropriate therefore to use the police emergency number 999.

If you are worried about a child but do not think that there is a risk of immediate harm, you should still speak to someone who can help as soon as possible. Whilst you can contact a member of the Diocesan Safeguarding Team for advice, we are not an emergency service or a replacement for the Local Authority Children's Service teams, and you should approach your local Children's Services.

Contact details:

**Bexley:** which includes Barnehurst, Blendon, Crayford, Erith, Northumberland Heath, Sidcup, Falconwood, Welling, Belvedere.

**Children: Office hours 0203 045 5440, Outside Office hours 0208 303 7171 /7777**

## Worried about an adult

Contact details:

**Bexley:** which includes Barnehurst, Blendon, Crayford, Erith, Northumberland Heath, Sidcup, Falconwood, Welling, Belvedere.

**Adult: Office hours 0208 303 7777, Outside Office hours 0208 303 7777**

**Support for Victims and Survivors**  
[Victim/Survivor support page.](#)

## Contact

**St John's Welling Safeguarding Officer:**

Julie Stedman  
[safeguarding@stjohnswelling.org.uk](mailto:safeguarding@stjohnswelling.org.uk)

# My Faith Journey: Micah Gompers

I grew up attending mass in a Catholic church and I decided earlier in life that when I grow up, I will stop going to church. I found it boring and pointless. In 2016, I studied the Bible with women who patiently taught me and helped me count the costs. I was baptised a few weeks later. The church where the foundations of my faith were being built, was a place filled with condemnation and each day felt heavy – carrying the guilt of sin everywhere I go. When I met John, I was introduced to the church of St John's and thanks to their prayers, I eventually left my former



church in 2017. However, it was hard to adjust at first even though I was already well-acquainted with the Gompers family.

I was searching for a place similar to where I came from. It was hard to accept things that will be condemned back at my old church which they were doing at St Johns! Women preachers - Dreadful! I simply cannot stay! But I did. Due to my indoctrination, I believed it highly important to be part of a church. Therefore, I dutifully attended on Sundays. No where else felt good enough anyway. I will never be satisfied.

After receiving my first ever handwritten letter from Jenny Cosser, building a friendship with Julie Stedman, and joining a house group, I started to feel more that I belong. Eventually, I opened myself to serving at church. Something I took a break from after feeling taken for granted at my former church. But now, I read, do the over-heads, and am happy to do more.

At St John's, I continue to experience first-hand, God's grace through His people. I have peace in my heart that I am certain only God can place there. He has surrounded me with people who exude His mercy. I will always be grateful for such a blessing and I hope to share it with others.

# Christian Minority

The first two weeks in December 2024 saw us in Pointe Sarene in south Senegal for a two-week holiday. Senegal is 97% Muslim and 3% Christian. Where we stayed had the largest Christian population in Senegal and the largest Christian church. Senegal is mainly French speaking, which Sue loved as she could converse in French. The people of Senegal are so friendly and welcoming. The weather was hot and sunny, around 35 degrees, just right for lying on the beach doing nothing, whilst we decided on excursions we wanted to do.

The first adventure was a short safari in a vehicle with a cage around us. As we drove, a huge lion and lioness jumped on to the vehicle. We were able to see many other animals too.



Goree Island

The second outing was dinner in the Bush with a local tribe, this was truly memorable, watching their dancing and eating local food and someone who lives in North Cray Rd was sitting on our table!

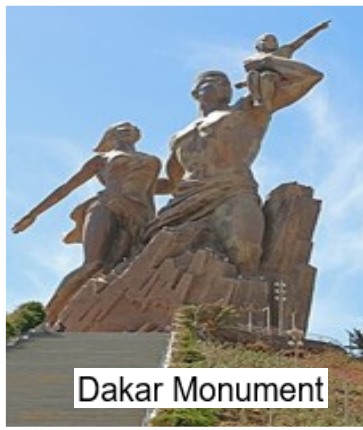
The final trip was on to a ferry from the capital Dakar, to Goree Island. As it was in international waters we had to show our passports. Goree Island is formerly a slave island with a very dark history. The island itself is absolutely beautiful, covered in flowers with an old catholic church at its heart, but you can't get away from the sense of

darkness. We went into the slave house museum that remains and saw how the slaves were segregated and how they were traded and removed and sent to the Americas or to Europe. The museum gave the history of slavery and its abolition but it made us ashamed how long our own country dragged its feet before abolition.

We left the island and went into Dakar where we visited several sites but the most impressive was a monument called The African Renaissance. This stood 52 metres (171ft) tall and represents an African family. This monument is made of bronze and is taller than the Statue of Liberty. To reach it we had to climb 198 steps in a temperature of 36deg, but it was well worth it.

Senegal is a fantastic place, if anyone would like to know more about visiting, speak to either one of us.

**Steve & Sue Read**



Dakar Monument



Slave House

# Article on Names

We see lots of exotic names of people in the Bible- many of them are old Hebrew names which often have parts meaning God. When you see "el" in a name, it usually means God, like in Daniel- "God is my judge", Samuel- "name of God" and Ezekiel- "God, strength".

It seem that El has its roots in meaning god rather than just God, whereas the name Yahweh was the Hebrew name for God himself, often explained as meaning "I am" in a continuous sense. This appears in people's names shortened to Yehu, Yo, Ya, Ye and at the end of a name as jah or iah, like Isaiah- "salvation of Yahweh" and Zechariah- "Yahweh remembers".

The same applies to Ja, Jo, Je, Jeho etc, in names, so for example, we have John (from Yehochanan) meaning "God is gracious" and Jesus, from Yehoshua, which became Yeshua and also Joshua, then anglicised to English via Greek to make Jesus, meaning "God saves".

You might see both in some names, so Joel means Yahweh is God and so does Elijah.

These names have really old origins so even the experts have to mix a bit of assumption with knowledge when investigating and I hope I have done the names justice. For me, knowing a bit about the names brings the Bible and its characters a little more to life.

**Bob Morris**

(from Old German for irritating know-it-all)

currently consisting of Jenny and Mike, Pat Wootton, Tom Snow, Sheila Clarke. Linda Dowell. and Sandy Kennedy, (from Welling Methodist Church) meet together on zoom, on the 715 685 8747, and password prayer. We have a leader's Rota, and people volunteer to be respondents, as we thank God for our days, and pray that He allows us a peaceful and restful night's sleep.

It is great to join Christians of all hues, and all over the world, in these ancient and beautiful prayers, to confess our shortcomings and worship God together in prayer, We would welcome anyone who, like us, benefits from communal prayer, and we are happy to report that we sleep well, having basked in prayer, in adoration, and given thanks to God for His infinite grace and mercy.

Thank you, Adam and Gordon, for introducing this resource to us, we really value it, and it has proven its worth on so many lovely evenings.

# Compline makes our day complete

Compline is defined as - a contemplative service of prayer and reflection that takes place at the end of the day.

Two of the challenges of my adult life have been sleeping and praying, so it was a delight when Gordon and Adam began to offer a Compline service on Zoom, a couple of years ago.

Compline is drawn from varied liturgies, such as the Celtic prayers from the Northumbrian Community, the Methodist prayers originating from the United States, Pete Greig's 24/7 web site, and the Church of England book of Common Worship, which varies its Psalm content to align with the Church seasons.

So on Mondays through to Thursdays, at 9:00 pm, , a small group

