

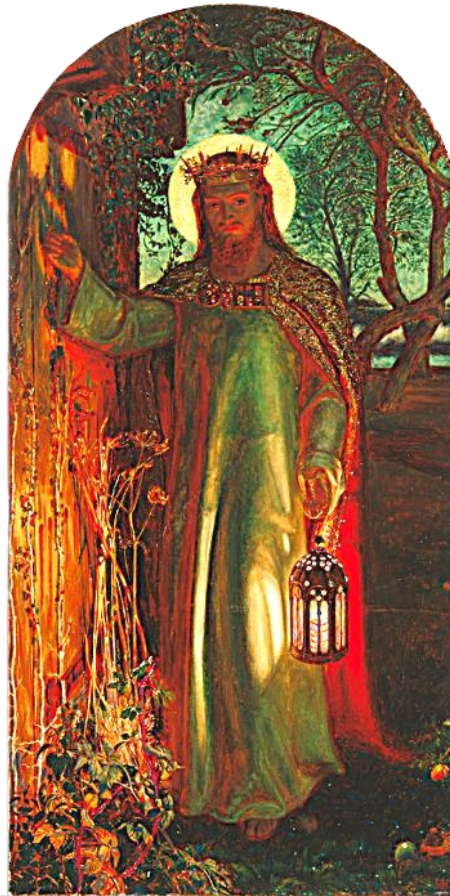
GRAPEVINE

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God has a plan and purpose for all of our lives

It struck me recently that Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus, two members of the Jewish Council, and Pontius Pilate the Roman Governor of Judea, together, had a critical role to play in the Easter Story, and our Christian faith.

You'll recall that all four Gospels tell us how, after Jesus' death by crucifixion, Joseph of Arimathea, a secret follower of Jesus, bravely broke cover, and asked for Pilate's permission to hand Jesus body to him for burial,.. and crucially Pilate agreed for him to do so, after having asked a Centurian to verify Jesus death, which was indeed confirmed. Later Joseph and Nicodemus retrieved Jesus dead body from the cross, and took Him to a newly prepared burial place in the garden close by, where He was clothed in burial garments, covered with aloe and Myrrh, which Nicodemus had carried. And laid to rest. A stone



was laid across the entrance to the new tomb, and it was sealed and guarded by Roman troops. at the request of the Jewish authorities.

So there it was, game over and seemingly, the Jews had shut Jesus up for ever, extinguishing the threat to Judaism, by the death of their rival, Jesus the Messiah, and son of God.

But if Joseph and Nicodemus had failed to turn out, or Pilate had ordered Jesus body to be otherwise disposed of, the resurrection of our beloved Lord might not have proceeded as prophesied.

The challenge for us, from these events, is whether we are prepared to fulfil God's purpose for our lives. Will we act decisively like Joseph and Nicodemus did, to show our faith in Christ, when for us, a crucial moment arises?

Let's pray that we will, and do. Amen. **MCC**

St John's News

So much has happened in the last eight weeks: People, Places, and Positives,.. where shall we start?

On May 11th we were delighted to welcome Terry Stennegger who came and preached on Open Doors at the 10.30am and 4pm services challenging us to pray for Christians enduring persecution.

We have recently had to say goodbye to two lovely people, Ian Giles and Andi Inglis. We continue to pray for Miriam, Tim and Kathryn Giles and Nicky, Neil and Bethan Inglis and their families and friends as they learn to live without them.

We are appreciating work carried out by quite a small group of people at the

two recent work days, including the installation of water heaters in both kitchens, and, the construction of a dividing wall in the Frank Moore Room enabling much better usage of the available space.

The Lamplighters were joined by adult Church members in their Easter holiday challenge to see how they might use and increase £5 for the Leprosy Mission. Not even Jackie Mackley who set the challenge, could have anticipated the wonderful sum that would be raised: £1,540!!

The Evening Alpha Group had their Celebration Evening and then, at the Sunday morning service, shared the impact, meeting Jesus through Alpha has had on their lives.

The Life Service has started running Jesus Kids for the children who attend at 4pm with their parents.

It was a delight to welcome many visitors who came and worshipped with us over the Easter season. We were privileged to have David and Christabel Ager leading and preaching on Easter Sunday, and Neil Bunker at the beginning of May.

We continue to pray for Twink, Mushi and Bev's Mum Gwen, all of whom are currently in hospital.

Interregnum news is that we are very close to being able to advertise for our next Vicar!

Maybe by July, we will have that news. So on to the Summer, holidays and Spark!!

Estelle Woodcock



Open Door

Open Door is held in the St John's Church Hall on a Thursday afternoon between 1.30-3.00 pm, during school term time. Run by our church vol-

unteers it is literally an open door for any parents, grandparents, carers and minders with their babies and toddlers, up to school age, to come along for a chat with others and to participate with their children as they play.

There are nine volunteers altogether: Estelle and Ken Woodcock, Sheila Hall, Kate Finney, Doug Snow, Harry Costi, Siew Kee, Linda and Derek Howell. We all enjoy getting to know the mums and carers with their youngsters and are delighted when they bring in their new-born babes after we have followed their pregnancies. We also find that we are often a listening ear as they share their many problems and joys with bringing up their families. This also provides a brilliant opportunity for us to share the love of Jesus and to invite them along to other activities and services taking place in St John's.

Over the course of the year, we have different celebrations with the children when, in November, we have a bonfire party with sparklers and food. Then at the Christmas party we have a visit from Father Christmas where the children receive a Bible-based book and a party bag of goodies. Just before Easter we have hot cross buns, and in the summer, we have a Teddy bear's Picnic, enjoyed by all.

The usual weekly routine is to welcome everyone at the door, where they register and pay a small fee; there are toys available for all under-five age groups together with a different craft each week. Tea, coffee and juice is served at 2.00pm with fresh fruit, then at 2.30pm chairs are put in circle for passing round the 'musical bag' to sing nursery rhymes, all arranged by Estelle and Doug. Following that we have the big clear up. As some of the volunteers are now quite senior, we would welcome anyone willing to help in this task.

Linda Howell



informs governments and policymakers about the severity of religious perse-

es Christians around the world to pray for their persecuted brothers and sisters, offering prayer guides, devotionals, and online resources to foster global solidarity. Its motto—"One Family, One Body"—reflects a belief in the unity of Christians worldwide, regardless of borders or denominations.

By standing alongside the persecuted church, Open Doors reminds the global Christian community that faith is not just a private matter but a lived commitment—even when it comes at great cost. Through advocacy, aid, and prayer, Open Doors offers courage and hope where they are needed most.

The Open Doors daily prayer is posted on St John's web page daily or you can visit Open Doors website

Jim Golding

Open Doors: Who are they and what do they do?

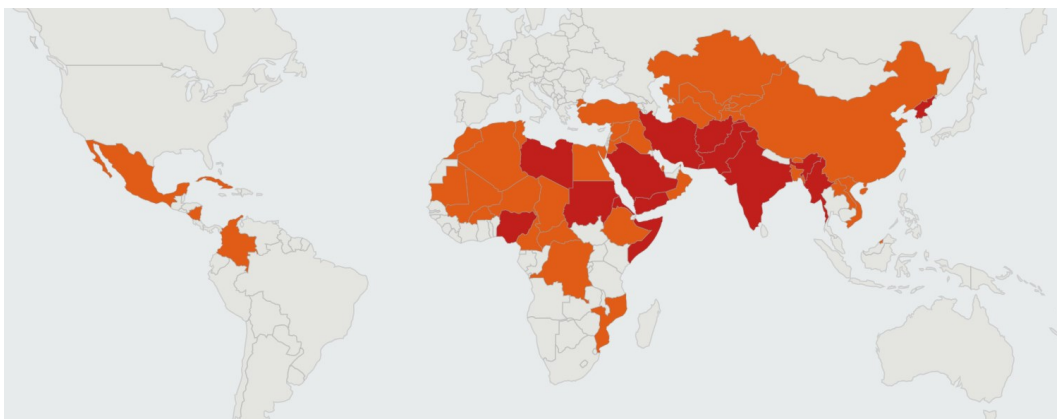
Open Doors is a global Christian charity dedicated to supporting persecuted Christians in some of the most dangerous places to follow Jesus. Founded in 1955 by a Dutchman known as Brother Andrew—famous for smuggling Bibles into communist Eastern Europe—the organization has grown into a vital lifeline for millions of Christians facing oppression, violence, and discrimination due to their faith.

Operating in over 70 countries, Open Doors provides practical support, such as food, shelter, and medical aid, to those affected by persecution. The charity also supplies Bibles and Christian literature, helps churches with leadership and discipleship training, and advocates on behalf of persecuted believers at political and international levels. One of its key tools is the World Watch List, an annual ranking of the 50 countries where it is most dangerous to be a Christian. This list raises awareness, fuels prayer efforts, and

cution worldwide.

Open Doors serves believers in regions dominated by religious extremism, oppressive regimes, or where conversion to Christianity is seen as a betrayal of family or culture. In places like North Korea, Afghanistan, Somalia, and parts of the Middle East and Africa, Christians often face imprisonment, torture, or death. Despite these dangers, many continue to practice their faith secretly, sustained by the hope and encouragement that organizations like Open Doors provide.

Prayer is central to Open Doors' mission. The charity actively mobiliz-



My Recent Reads

Jenny and I enjoy a good read, and agree that a really excellent book captivates one, and gives one another place which you enjoy to visit again and again in the hope of a happy finale. Here are some books I have recently enjoyed, some are fiction. And not at all Christian, please note.

The Whistler: By John Grisham: I love John Grisham's books, and this one is my favourite. So much so, that I've read it twice. It's a legal crime thriller, with a cracking plot.

God of the mountain, God of the valley by Christina Cunningham: Rev Christina is the founder and Chairperson of New Zion Healing Centres, a Global charity that operates in India, Africa and the UK. She and her husband are currently ministering at Wellspring Pentecostal Church, Welling. This book is Rev Christina's auto biography, and is an amazing testimony of her struggle against ill health and abuse, and of how God has used her in healing the needy with signs and wonders.

Ultra processed people by Chris Van Tulleken: I am currently reading this book, which is about our dangerous addictive modern ultra processed food. It's a concentrated read and very academic, but has important things to say about how we are neglecting natural foods, like fruit and vegetables, because big corporations are creating chemically enhanced products produced for huge profits which we eat to excess and which cause cancer, obesity, and bowel problems.

Your life is God's story, by Tim Dilena. Is a brilliant book, written by pastor and teacher Tim, about eleven Biblical figures, and their life journeys woven by obedience to God's plans, and combined with personal stories from his own life, and ministry. We are persuaded that God is still at work, weaving our lives into His story today.

The Holy Bible: this is a good read, which God Himself wants us all to encounter and become familiar with. It's messages and wisdom, are a lifetime commitment to study for every Christian. The Bible in a Year App by Nicky and Pippa Gumbel, has inspired me over the past two years, and enables me to listen to while I perform my morning Pilates.

MCC

My Faith Journey: Ken Woodcock

My family, wife and 3 young children were on our way home from having fun in the park. We passed a Methodist

Church in Gillingham, Kent, which was advertising a visiting speaker. I said lets go and listen to him, and that was the start of my Christian journey. We moved to Welling and joined Welling Methodist Church and made many friends but God moved us to St John's. Spring Harvest was a big player in my Christian life. I learnt so much from the talented speakers and was introduced to modern worship which I loved. Sadly my marriage broke up. I worked as a manager in a Barclay's credit company for over 20 years and then as a senior manager for a Japanese trading company. In 2000 I married Estelle who you all know and love, it was a great celebration. My stepson Andy is a vicar in Derby, my stepdaughter Alex is training to be a vicar. I was a Church Warden for 6 years and now am again to help out during our Church Vacancy, I am church Treasurer with Elaine Passey, Alison and Natasha on Finance team.



Estelle and I have run a housegroup since we were married and we have run more Alpha's than we can count. We have hosted many Christian Students, mostly Germans working for CRIBS being Elisa, Fiona, Simone, Sarah, Valerie, Leonie, Olivia, and our current student Smilla, We also hosted Zerlina, Yolly and Naban and also Kim who married Jeff Golding, (who is now a vicar in Derby.)

Most Students come back to see us, sometimes with friends or family members. Estelle and I are part of the Open Door toddler group which meets every Thursday. I love being part of Communion music group. We have 10 grandchildren and my stepson Joseph tells us there's another on the way. My daughters, Johanna and Sharon are both Christians who both live in Seasalter. Estelle and I enjoy beach walks to Whitstable with their families and of course their dogs. Jesus is very important to me. There is too much darkness in the world, we all need Jesus.

Spring Harvest 2025 'No Greater Story'

Jon and I went to Spring Harvest Minehead in April. It was an amazing experience and time to get closer to God.



It is such a privilege to be under a roof (or several) with thousands of Christians for a few days. We are all like one big family with a common link...JESUS!! At Spring Harvest there is something for everyone of all ages and it is very inclusive and accessible. There are plenty of activities for children and youth

as well as the older generations. Each day Jon and I went for a very tasty breakfast in the Dining Hall where you can eat as much as you like and then straight from there, we would go to the main Bible Teaching based on the theme 'No Greater Story'. The Bible teaching was excellent and delivered in the mornings by Helen Painter.

Next on the agenda for the rest of the day there were seminars and workshops to choose from. Some examples of things we attended were 'The Big Sing', 'The Watoto Choir', Seminars about 'retirement' and 'Kingdom work', 'Holy Spirit' discussions and 'prayer sessions', 'art workshops' and so much more!

If you have time between all of this you can go swimming, bowling, walk along the beach into town or look at the books and merchandise.

One of the highlights this year was an interview with Bear Grylls and as you can imagine the place was packed!

After a delicious dinner we would go to two amazing worship and teaching sessions one after the other which finished at about 10pm.

There are after hours Christian comedy shows and other music gigs and quizzes etc., if you still have any energy left!!!

There is also early morning communion and prayer session if you can manage it!

The youth and kids have worship sessions and sport and craft all week.

Spring Harvest is a great time to be with God and experience some wonderful fellowship. You come home full of the Holy Spirit!

Below is a link with information for booking next year if you are interested. Booking opens on June 12th and you can pay by instalments to spread the cost.

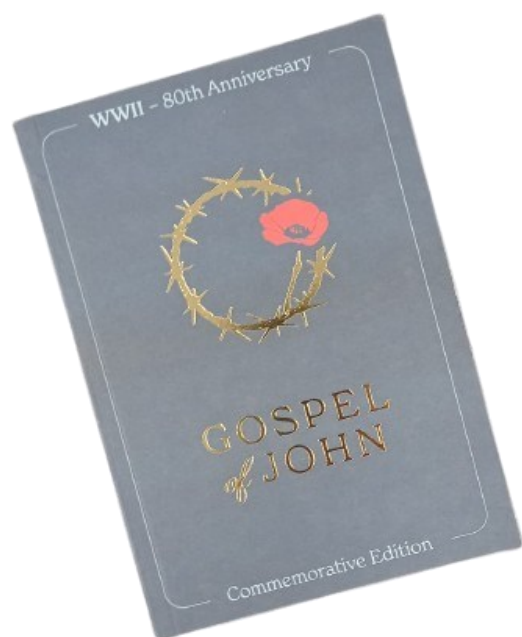
<https://www.springharvest.org/events/prices/>

Julie & Jon Stedman

VE DAY—Thursday 8th May Commemorating 80 Years



On VE Day St John's Welling was open from 11am to 12noon and 3pm to 4pm for prayer and refreshments to commemorate the 80th anniversary of Victory in Europe (VE) Day. An opportunity to pray as we thank God for the freedom won in 1945 and pray for peace in the many conflicts that exist in the world today. An opportunity to light a candle was also available. In addition we observed the two-minute National silence at 12noon to mark the 80th anniversary of VE Day. At 6pm the Church Bells were rung as part of the National VE Day commemoration. Available on the day were commemorative editions of the Gospel of John. An informative VE Day booklet produced by Doug Snow is available to view [here](#).



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