

GRAPEVINE

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St John's Verse of the Year

What a poignant Verse to reflect on as we have been a church who has self-supported since October 2024. As we prepare to welcome and minister with Ian and Sue this Verse shares our same excitement and hope. This Verse speaks of God's closeness to His people and His presence with them. It calms His peoples fears with His love and celebrates with joy filled song's. This Verse highlights God's deep affection and comforting joy for those who follow him.

As we prepare to extend this same joy filled welcome to Ian and Sue we to are readying to celebrate with them in whom God loves as they prepare to come and settle with us. We pray prayers of thanksgiving ready for change



and extending hospitality. In our preparations of their new home the vicarage we delight (maybe not in chip wood paper) but in the readiness to make new friends in Ian and Sue. We also prepare to share with them who we are as a collective but also as individuals.

"He will take delight in you with gladness": God finds great pleasure and joy in His people, like a parent delighting in a child.

Let's all take some time to ready our hearts with this message of hope, reassurance with God's unwavering love for those who know His voice and are His faith filled followers.

Ian and Sue, we are excited to welcome you to the family here at St John's; you have and are deeply prayed for. Amen.

Billy-Jo O'Leary
St John's Welling

St John's News

It is almost impossible not be aware that the anticipation and fasting that marked Advent has been overtaken by Christmas celebrations which seem to begin almost as soon as the last firework fizzles away and, in Welling for sure, speedily follow the **Lamplighter Christmas Fayre**. We did however, focus on the Advent themes of Hope, Peace, Joy and Love; Sunday by Sunday through Advent as we lit each new candle.

Back to **The Lamplighter Fayre** which was a fun filled event raising a superb total of over £4k.

The **Ladies Breakfast** at the very end of November provided Kathryn Giles and Laura Gibbs with the energy needed to decorate the **Church Christmas tree** that together with **Sheila Clarke and her team's beautiful flowers arrangements** enabled the Church ready for the steady influx of schools for carol services which began in the first week of December.

The following week Douglas organised a lovely **Afternoon Tea** complete with Christmas Quiz and Christmas Bingo!

The lovely **Contemporary Christmas Carol Service** on 14th Dec saw the maxi-

mum numbers possible for a cafe style event and likewise the traditional **Carols by Candlelight** the following Sunday, found the Church almost at capacity. Between these two services we were privileged to host **CRIBS** as they shared with us, the Christmas presentation which they were taking into local schools.

The **Christmas Eve Crib Service** was slightly down in numbers but with a congregation as joyful and excited as ever. Those of us who could, joined Bishop Ridley for the 11.30pm **Christmas Eve Communion**, another powerful and beautiful service.

Charlotte O'Leary preached her debut sermon on Christmas morning joining **Lesley, Danny and Bev** all of whom, in their Christmas season sermons, graciously and clearly challenged us as to just how earth shattering and life changing were the events of the first Christmas and the importance of our response.

Overall, **hundreds of adults and children** came to Church over the Christmas season. Let us pray that during 2026 many discover that Jesus did not stay in the manger but is **ALIVE**, loves them, and longs for them to make Him Lord of their lives.

Our ladies had two opportunities to at-

tend special **conferences** during December, one at Wilmington and the other at Trinity Baptist. Those who were able to go, have shared how helped and encouraged they were.

Mike Cossier, Billy-Jo O'Leary and Cate Woodcock have just returned from the **Evangelists Conference** and early messages confirm that they too have had a wonderful time.

EXCITING, EXCITING!!! On December 21st we were able to share the lovely news we have been waiting and praying for! **Ian Jennings and his wife Sue** will be moving to Welling shortly in readiness for Ian's induction / licensing / institution as our Vicar, (date as yet not set).

Currently work is being done to prepare the Vicarage for their arrival.

We so look forward to welcoming and getting to know them. By the March Grapevine they will probably be here!

We continue to pray for those in our Church family who are coping with long term health issues,... Mushi and Jo Everest, Haydn Moyle and Christian Smith as well as Eva Harris's family and all those who lost a beloved family member during 2025.

So until March, Ian and Sue, its show-ers,... and **EASTER!**

Estelle Woodcock

Lamplighters



2025 was a busy year at Lamplighters starting with Wendy our TLM rep coming to speak at Lamplighters on the Friday before World Leprosy Sunday in January.

She was presented with a cheque for £4,000+ for Purulia and Odisha the focus for 2025.

It was great to welcome church members who joined us for that evening.

Our eyes were opened on that evening to the huge need for the leprosy sufferers in Odisha which prompted our first ever £5 Easter challenge where all the Lamplighter members were given £5 for 3 weeks over Easter to grow through, raffles, produce, coffee mornings etc, with the photos of the events still available to see in the Hall. Church members embraced the Challenge too and with numerous pop-up events, helped us to raise over £1,500 for Odisha. Summer brought our annual Lamplighter pirate party and the older Plus group joined the adult Group leaders for a fish and chip



To Light the Lamp of Love for those with Leprosy!! This year 2026 Lamplighters will be celebrating being a part of St John's Church for 60 years. We will celebrate our 60th year with more fundraising for



supper with quiz. Miriam TLM and Storey kept us all entertained with the quiz and jokes!!

As soon as the Autumn term started the big push towards the Lamplighter Christmas Fayre (our big fund raiser of the year) began. The 35 folk on the Lamplighter Xmas app pulled out the stops again

and a huge thank you for their efforts. Church members, family in Bedford and their friends plus local friends all made such a huge difference. Miriam Storey as usual had spent the whole year getting the 'unwanted gifts' stall ready and again this year raised over a £1,000 just on that.

Thank you to the folk who set up the Church and Hall for the Fayre; it wouldn't happen without you. Thank you to our group leaders and supporters who manned stalls, ran side shows and did refreshments. We couldn't do it without you. Over £4,000 was raised at the Fayre for Purulia. Why do we put all put this effort in each year? We do it to follow the Lamplighter Motto:

more fun for our local children at Lamplighters.

After Easter our Lamplighters times are changing on a Friday to create 2 distinct sessions.

For 4+ to 10 years old we will meet from 5.50pm to 7.00pm. For our Senior Plus group 11+ to 16 we will meet from 7.00pm to 8.15pm.

Do come and join us for fun and learn how you can make a difference in the world for children like you. We would love to welcome you.

On January 25th Wendy is back again on World Leprosy Sunday to receive our fundraising cheque and tell us all about the focus this year of eliminating leprosy in children around the World. A really good cause for another Easter Challenge.

Finally, our thank you to our Group leaders who come every Friday, many of them for many decades now. Thank you to Alison, Cathy, Hannah, Harry, Julie, Jon, Keith, Lisa, Miriam S, Pat T, and Tom.

God bless you all. Your Light shines so brightly!!

Jackie and Keith Mackley

Evangelists Conference

able, centering on his belief in the faithfulness of God,

Located at the Chesford Grange Hotel, Kenilworth, 13-15 January 2026.

People journeyed from all over the UK and the world to join J. John, Killy John and Andy Economides at this amazing event, which is for everyone who is called to be an evangelist, with the conviction that the gospel still transforms.

Billy-Jo O'Leary transported Mike Cosser and Cate Woodcock to and from the conference, so many thanks to her for that, and the joy of our chats together.

Mark Greenwood and Mark Ritchie gave us plenty of laughter and life. The key speakers were pastors Jurgen and Leanne Matthesius and Danny Guglielmucci; Noel Robinson and Theo Powell led us in amazing sung worship.

The excellent new venue enabled over three hundred evangelists to experience a bolder vision, a sign of the hunger God is stirring in this generation.

Pastor Jurgen told us hilarious intimate stories about his father, and wife, and their joint journeys in the faith. His wife, Pastor Leanne has a vision of men returning to their God ordained roles in family life. Pastor Danny's contributions were prophetic, intimate and vulner-



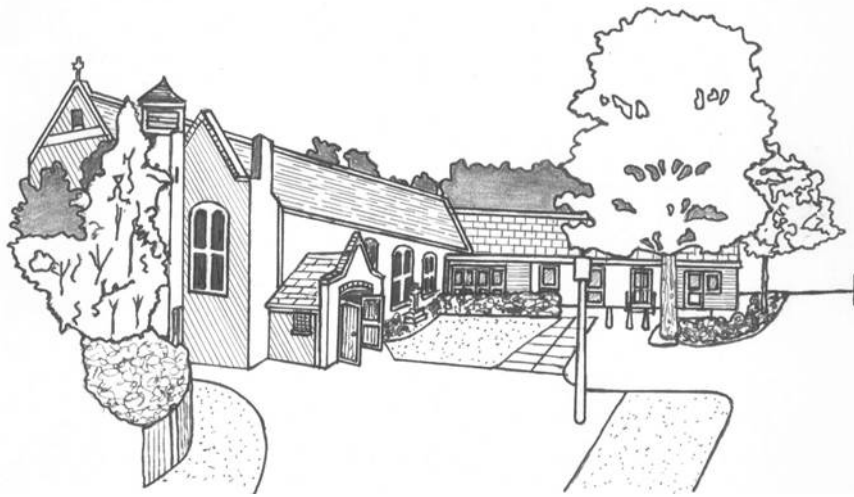
despite the massive grief at the death of his thirty-nine-year-old son, who was killed by a lightning strike in 2016, and his bowel surgery in 2017, followed by Hodgkin's Lymphoma in 2018.

The Conference was very precisely timed, but with many breaks to enable the visiting evangelists to try to get to know one another better. The presence of the Holy Spirit amongst us facilitated that process, indeed some forged friendships that they hope to maintain beyond next year's conference.

The aim of the conference was for the Lord to renew our passion, refresh our hearts, and re-envision our mission, so that as we leave we don't just go home inspired, but ignited. We all three agreed that this superb event achieved that aim completely. Thank you, Philo Trust.

MCC

New Beginnings,...



The Bishop of Rochester is pleased to announce that, subject to the usual legal formalities, **The Revd Ian Richard Jennings** is to be appointed the next Vicar of St John the Evangelist, Welling.

Ian has recently returned from a 3-year appointment through the Church Mission Society as Priest-in-Charge of the Church of the Holy Spirit in Vientiane, which is the capital city of Laos in South-East Asia. He also acted as Chaplain to the Vientiane Language School.

The Church of the Holy Spirit is the only Anglican church in the whole of Laos, and Ian was the sole licensed Anglican priest. His congregation was almost entirely made up of English-speaking foreign nationals from a number of countries around the world, all professionals and many with families. Ian was instrumental in growing the church, and in doing so was able to encourage and train a number of his laity to lead and preach. This collaborative approach to ministry, together with his broad parish experience, will hold him in very good stead at St John's.

Ian studied for ordination at Trinity College Bristol, and served his curacy in Worcester Diocese, before moving to take up an incumbent's post in the neighbouring parishes of Low Moor and Oakenshaw, Bradford (Leeds Diocese) in 2014. Before ordination he was a primary school teacher.

Ian is married to Sue who is also an ordained Anglican priest with a background as a physiotherapist for people with special needs. Together they have two grown up children: David, who is engaged to Emily, and Ruth who is married to Daniel and mum to baby Grace. Away from his priestly ministry, Ian enjoys walking, listening to music and reading. He also enjoys open water swimming.

Ian says: "I am delighted and honoured to have been given the opportunity to serve as your Vicar, and I look forward to being part of the parish, Deanery and wider community. With our Heavenly Father's guidance and enabling, together we will endeavour to undertake the mission to which we, His loved children, are all called. Like you, I want it to be easy for people to find Jesus through us at St John's, and to experience new life in Him. I am excited to be part of this outward looking, prayerful and missionally-minded parish as it looks to the months and years ahead. My wife and I look forward to making Welling and St John's our home. We are excited to move and cannot wait to meet you and begin to get you know you all."

Please pray for Ian and Sue as they prepare to move to The Vicarage after the New Year. A date for his licensing is awaited from the Bishop's Office, but we hope that will be in late February/early March. You will, of course, be kept updated as and when a date is arranged.

My Faith Journey: Trevor Thomas

As I grew up, my parents were lovely, but not church goers. I learnt Bible stories, and the Lord's prayer, at Primary School. At Grammar School, we had Divinity lessons, and sadly, I didn't learn much from them, and I was more interested in Science.

As I started work, my contact with Christians was notional, and the few I met didn't have a positive influence on me.



I met Pat, and we got married in Church, but I felt a bit hypocritical, as I didn't believe in God. We moved to Welling, and Pat made lots of friends who worshipped at St Johns, and she eventually found faith and was confirmed. After lots of persuasion, I attended a Basics Course. But I was still unconvinced.

Unbeknown to me, God was at work, calling me to Him.

I watched a television program of Alan Wicker interviewing Jackie Pullinger, whom God sent to the walled City of Hong Kong, to heal heroin addicts, without cold turkey, by praying for them in tongues and the power of the Holy Spirit. I asked Pat if she could pray in tongues and she told me she could.

I had suffered with nerves for some years, probably due to work pressures, but it was getting worse which affected me going out. One day we were due to go out to see a play about Adrian Mole, and as I was getting nervous about it, I asked Pat if she could pray for me in tongues, which she did, and after the prayer I felt so peaceful.

I suddenly realized there is a God, it had been the proof I needed, and we got to the play as well.

I accepted Christ into my life and was confirmed four months later. So many people at St Johns encouraged me, I felt I'd gained a whole new family.

My Christian journey has been challenging. In 2005, I was diagnosed with Parkinsons Disease, and received a considerable amount of prayer for healing.

In 2015, we lost our lovely daughter. I still have Parkinsons Disease, but I received the Lord's peace to accept the condition. Twenty years on, I am still managing with the Lord's help. Although I am rather slow.

Thank you, Church family, for your prayers and support.

Latin American Update

Dear friends,

Greetings in Jesus' name once again from CMS.

There have been such exciting things happening in Latin America over the last year and so I can only apologise that it has taken until now to start a more regular update from me and from CMS in Latin America. I do hope that this gives you a window into what God has been doing and how we are seeing new disciples of Jesus made, new communities of faith planted and mission movements built – all at “the edges”.

News from the Indigenous Mission Team

Part of the lack of communication has been due to a rather hectic start to the year with visits to different aspects of CMS's mission work with Indigenous Peoples. In January I was over in Peru to meet with the team leading the Indigenous mission work across the region. Here we reviewed last year's work, mainly focused on the training of indigenous leaders but also with some focus in opening mission work in new areas, particularly in the Andean regions of Peru and Bolivia. We made some

adjustments to plans for this coming year and are excited by some of the fruits we have seen. The stories of some of the incredible people I get to meet and work alongside as part of this team are on our website (Mirna and Sandra). It's great to see what God has been doing in their lives.

In March I was able to visit Northern Argentina and particularly the new Anglican Indigenous training centre in Ingeniero Juarez. While I was there the second cohort of students (this year 13 women) were receiving theological and practical training to return to serve in their communities across the huge expanse of the Chaco region.

Last year there were nine men being trained and

there is a story of how this has helped them on our website.

I then travelled overland to Paraguay to be present at the consecration of the new Bishop of Paraguay. It was a joyous time particularly enriched by the presence of a good number of the Indigenous pastors from the Paraguayan side of the Chaco. CMS is supporting the equipping and training of indigenous leadership in these areas plus investing in the young people who often don't even have the opportunity to complete their primary education, let alone secondary education. On our website is an example of how this support is making a difference through the story of Herme-negildo.

After moving house here in the UK, together with the family, I was then in Bolivia and Peru in April/May and was able to see those who are opening up new areas for mission in the Altiplano. Here the gospel is being shared sensitively but with integrity and new churches are being planted.

I visited Ajaría Grande, close to the shores of Lake Titicaca, and met with those involved and the community leaders. I attach some photos from my visit. One encouraging story that was shared with me was about Yhoselin who was a young woman who had lost hope of a better future. She had seen her education truncated by an early and unexpected pregnancy and was struggling with poverty. When she met with members of the church plant team she heard the good news of Jesus and has found hope and a foundation for life change. She has also sought to share about Jesus with her family too. She has experienced that life changing encounter with the gospel and how that impacts on the whole of life giving hope for life now and in the future.

For Your Prayers:

- Please do pray for the students studying at the CeFA and for the training in Paraguay and for more godly Indigenous leaders to be raised up to share the good news of Jesus in their contexts.
- Pray for the new community being established in Ajaría Grande and for more lives to be transformed by the gospel.
- Pray for the Indigenous Mission team and for attentiveness to God's guidance, for wisdom and for continued good decision making.
- Do please pray for me for my ongoing travels and for the family as they have Dad / husband away at different times.

I hope this is a helpful and encouraging update. We will send out others more regularly. Thank you for your ongoing prayers, financial support and interest.

Every blessing,

Paul Tester / Manager in Latin America



Battles & Blessings:

Tales from my Christian life pilgrimage
I was first rescued by the NHS in 1957, following bleeding after a tonsils and adenoids re-

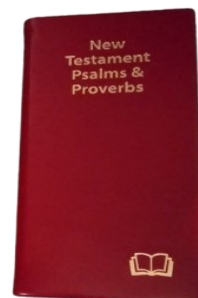


moval operation.

In 1969, I volunteered to be a warden for the Large Blue butterfly colony on a valley near Morwenstowe in North Cornwall, and I was rescued by the RNLI from a nearby cliff that I had managed to get stuck on, later that year, I became a blood donor.

In 1975, I was rescued by the Hereford and Worcester Social Services Training Director, Harry Loudon, who helped me to get a place on a Qualifying Course in Social Work at Bristol Polytechnic, and in Bristol, I met Jenny, in February 1976, at a local PHAB club. We got married in July 1977.

I was baptized in water in 1979, at Evesham Baptist Church, and in 1996 I was baptized in the Holy Spirit in a multi-story car park in Cov-



entry, which amplified my Bible understanding and faith in Jesus Christ.

I retired from West Midlands Probation Service in August 2011, and in 2014 I asked God to take my life and use me. And God told me to bless, and that same week I attended a day presentation on rediscovering the ministry of blessing led by Dr Russ Parker, whose book I also read.

I began blessing businesses on December 16th 2014, in a Barbers shop in Cheylesmore, Coventry. I used a written blessing, a copy of which I left in each shop I went into, but after some years the blessings evolved into Christian encouragement of those willing to receive a free verbal blessing prayer, and a Hope magazine or a New Testament and Psalms, and my Holy Spirit and blood donation testimonies.

In 2020, Jenny and I sat in our lounge and said 'Come Holy Spirit' for half an hour, and I received the gift of joy, which banishes my personal deficits, and enables me to function as an evangelist. I change. From a lamb to a lion, in fact.

MCC