

GRAPEVINE

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editors: MCC & NC

Renewing our Minds

I and my wife had the privilege of hearing Jo Hargreaves talk at Wildfires this summer.

Jo is a pastor with her husband in Lincoln. She is also a psychotherapist who dives deeply into neurology and has found time and time again that research supports what she already knew through her reading of scripture. She recollects how brain research recently discovered that a person cannot be anxious and grateful at the same time. Hmmmm. Does that remind you of anything? Philippians 4:6 "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with *thanksgiving*, present your requests to God." She also learned how meditating on the goodness of God increases the hormone "oxytocin". This hormone helps reduce "cortisol" which is the hormone that if present in large amounts can lead to stress and poor physical health. "Perfect love drives out fear" (1 John 4:18).

We have been learning for some time that we can "rewire" our brains, which is a source of great hope to those who have been traumatised and for whom the trauma, or inse-



cure attachment issues in early parenting, has caused them to have flashbacks, or be permanently hyper-vigilant or unable to form trusting intimate friendships, or adapt by being emotionally "numb". What is particularly satisfying is the research on the kinds of things that Christians do, which includes things like meditating on the love of God, praying in tongues, worshipping with others, being grateful, all result in health benefits and *physical changes* to the brain.

Jo Hargreaves says, "If you can worry, you can use the same 'muscle' (thought process) to chew over the goodness of God". We can also change our mood with truth. We can also interrupt default negative thought patterns by "*noticing*" them and counteracting them with the truth that God's grace abounds and that He is with us. Jo Hargreaves talks a lot about the power of "*noticing*". So, let us notice our thinking, capture our thoughts, meditate on the truth and let God's positive, joy-filled, hopeful perspective on our lives and issues change and renew us completely! God's thoughts in our thoughts; God's truth renewing our minds.

Rev Ian Jennings
Vicar, St. John's Welling

St John's News

St Johns News October 2026

Its Evening as I type, and I am debating whether or not to find a something warmer to wear,... Autumn must be on the horizon!

Summer 2026 however, has been dominated by heat as our gardens, woods and parks bear witness, but green grass is reappearing,... wonderful!

Apart from the weather what else has been happening?

Holidays and Christian events for many of us. A few of us went to **Wildfires**,... not the most helpful name this Summer, but we had a great time with very loud worship and challenging teaching.

A small group of our youngsters, went with others from BCLC and Well Spring,

to **LIMITLESS**, a Christian Youth event and had a wonderful time.

They were just back intime for **Spark in the Park**, our Annual Holiday Week gift to the Community. We had a new location this year and planning and preparation had not been without apprehension as to how it would be.

In the event, the things that had caused us most concern, the lack of shade, distance from toilets, security, distance equipment had to be transported, were manageable. The different lay out was attractive and we loved it. God answered our prayers, sending cooler weather and hundreds of children and their families! Successful? I believe yes on many levels. Families loved their times with us. Many engaged with the Hot Spot. The Hosting and Prayer Teams had many God planned encounters over the week. Will there be **Spark in 2027**? We believe so,.. just a gentle hint if you have time,

and some energy, PLEASE consider now being on the team next year.

While we have all been out and about the painters have done a lovely job **decorating the Church Hall**. The new windows and doors were installed just in time for the new term. Blinds, curtains and hopefully 'something' that can absorb some of the echo, are in the pipeline.

As our groups and Teams get back into the Autumn swing, please be praying that God will bring us families and children. We have great **Youth and Jesus Kids leaders** who have so much planned for youngsters, that will encourage them to grow in their faith and love for Jesus.

Harvest, Remembrance, New Sermon and study series and courses,... Its going to be a good Autumn! Until November,

Estelle Woodcock

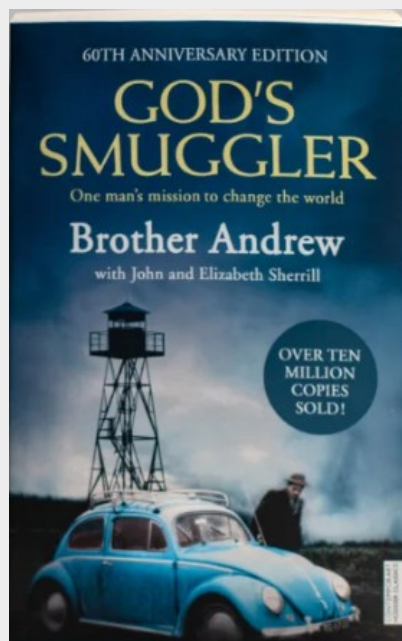
How it Began,..

Open Doors International began in 1955 with the courage and determination of a Dutch Christian named Brother Andrew, whose real name was Anne van der Bijl. He was deeply concerned about Christians living under communist governments, where openly practising their faith could lead to surveillance, arrest, or punishment. His response to their isolation eventually grew into Open Doors, an international organisation supporting persecuted Christians worldwide.

Brother Andrew first saw the situation clearly when he travelled to communist Poland in 1955 to attend a Christian youth conference. Behind the Iron Curtain, the political divide separating the Soviet Union and other communist countries from Western Europe, Christians often had little access to Bibles, Christian books, or contact with believers outside their countries. Their churches were watched closely, and their faith was frequently restricted.

Brother Andrew decided that concern alone was not enough. He began carrying Bibles and Christian literature across communist borders, often concealed in his car. Each journey involved real danger. Border guards could search his vehicle, confiscate the mate-

rials, or arrest him. Before crossing, he prayed for protection and continued even when the outcome was uncertain. His actions brought more than books: they reminded isolated Christians that they had not been forgotten. The Bibles he delivered strengthened churches,



encouraged believers, and helped Christian leaders continue their work despite government pressure.

As reports of his efforts spread, other Christians joined him. What began as one man's risky journeys developed

into a growing ministry. Open Doors started distributing Bibles, training church leaders, offering practical assistance, and encouraging Christians facing discrimination, imprisonment, violence, and other forms of persecution. Its work gradually expanded beyond Eastern Europe, reaching churches and Christian communities in many parts of the world.

A major turning point came in 1967 with the publication of **"God's Smuggler,"** Brother Andrew's autobiography, written with John Sherrill. The book described his dangerous journeys and introduced Open Doors to a global audience. It inspired people to pray, give financial support, and become more aware of persecuted Christians.

Today, Open Doors International continues that mission. It provides Bibles, leadership training, emergency aid, and support for Christians affected by violence and persecution, while also raising global awareness. Its history shows how one person's willingness to take risks created a worldwide movement that has brought practical help, courage, and hope to millions of believers.

Copies of *God's Smuggler* are available to loan from St John's along with up to date Daily Prayer Requests. Please look out for the Daily Prayer on St John's Facebook page too.

God Bless,

Jim Golding

Limitless 2026

From 5–9 August, some of our young people joined thousands of others at Limitless Festival at Stafford Showground. Limitless is a Christian youth festival with worship, Bible teaching, prayer and ministry, alongside seminars, sports, activities and evening venues. This year's theme focused particularly on "breaking out", not simply encountering God at a festival but taking our faith beyond the church building



through mission, justice, social action and evangelism. But perhaps the best way to describe Limitless is through the experiences of some of our own young people.

Eliza (13): *"It was a great experience and I was able to make lots of great memories and get closer to God."*

Ronnie (13): *"My overall experience, was really good and I*

really enjoyed the of the whole festival. As a Christian, I feel as if my faith in Jesus has grown substantially over such a short span of time. Everyone who attended was very welcoming and thoughtful and I made good friends along the way. Finally, the main meetings were really energetic and uplifting and the guest speakers were very motivational and inspiring and allowed the Holy Spirit to penetrate into people hearts."

Anaya (15): *"This year, I attended Limitless 2026. I saw miracles happen, prayers answered, and the Holy Spirit filled every room. I made so many new friends, in my group and other youth. Speaking of making new friends, I met an incredible girl who had the most beautiful soul. She had come to pray for another member of my youth group (she didn't know us). Once she had finished praying for my friend, me and her got chatting, she asked me if I had ever self-harmed. I told her that I had, and she said she was filled with the Holy Spirit, and she felt, before I had confirmed, that I needed prayer for self-harm."*

She began to pray she held my hands, and we were so deep in prayer. The Holy Spirit flooded through me, and I had the craziest sensation on my scars. It was this incredible burning felt so freeing. I have learned that even if you have gone through something that you think is better to just leave in the past, just pray over whatever happened. It could be a burden that you don't realise is still hurting you."

And the "breaking out" does not end with the festival. On 31 October, Limitless is encouraging children and young people across Britain to take part in Breakout Mission Day, bringing the light of Jesus into their communities through practical mission and outreach. We are hoping to join with BCLC and get our young people involved locally.

Please pray for our young people as they continue to grow in faith and discover what it means to follow Jesus beyond the walls of church.

Linzi Golding, Youth Worker

My Faith Journey: Ian Jennings

I was born into a church family: my Father was a Methodist minister. So as far as I can remember I have always thought of God as father and believed Jesus was God's son. Nevertheless, aged 7, at a Pentecostal camp at Butlins in Minehead in 1973 I stood up for a call to follow Christ and told my parents.

At that time we were living in Lincoln, and the Charismatic Renewal was in full swing. The power of the Holy Spirit was encountered, people were experiencing being filled or baptised in the Spirit, speaking in tongues, a hunger for the Bible and an excitement and boldness about the future. There was also a breaking down of barriers between denominations and an unstoppable outflow of praise. I was in no doubt that this Jesus was real and that the Holy Spirit was present, powerful, and life could be fulfilling and exciting.

Sometime in Lincoln I decided to pursue God when on my own. I think I was eight at the time. I decided to pray and sing all the simple choruses I knew. Not long into the session God through his Spirit touched me again and I cried. I remember being overcome and inarticulate when I told my parents about what just happened. God did the

unexpected and the lovely. When my family left Lincoln we moved to Rochdale. At Rochdale, as a young teenager I grew in Christian maturity and as a family we went to Hollybush summer camps in North Yorkshire where we saw the miraculous and got to sing some Pentecostal worship songs. I also started reading some Christian autobiographies that fed me.

The family then moved to Wembley. By this time I was boarding at Kingswood School, Bath. I was very happy here but often lost in my own thought world as I wrestled with life's dilemmas and things like "predestination and freewill". At this stage I also started going to a Charismatic Anglican church that really fed me and I felt close to God.

I lived for a year with my parents in Wembley because I needed to retake some A levels. At this time I got into the habit of going to Holy Trinity Brompton and St Andrew's Chorleywood and experienced good contemporary worship and heard testimonies of the Spirit's power. It was at this time that my Father went to the Wembley conference centre and heard and saw John Wimber. He was very impressed and I read his book, *Power Evangelism*.

In 1986 I went to the Birmingham Convention Centre and saw the Holy Spirit move in waves across the auditorium. I also believed I heard the wind of the Holy Spirit. It was amazing.

I got acquainted with New Wine around this

time and experienced worship in the Holy Spirit. This means that now I am aware where worship can go, and I am frustrated when people expect so little and seem to be resistant to the leadings of the Holy Spirit. I went to Liverpool University to study Psychology. Here my faith was challenged and came through much stronger.

I ended up as a primary school teacher and started going to Sutton Coldfield Vineyard where I met my wife and experienced God powerfully. We had our two children in Sutton Coldfield. We moved to Worcester after Sutton Coldfield and we attended a Salt and Light Church.

A sense of calling to church leadership had not gone away but was very much on the back burner whilst living in Worcester. It was here where two unusual confirmations of a call to the Anglican priesthood took place and when accepted for ordination training I went to Trinity College, Bristol.

Looking back, my testimony is that God is real. He will direct our steps. He can meet us at our deepest point of need and can give a joy and a peace that nothing else can, as well as a purpose for living. Also, there is nothing like God's presence!



And just like that, SPARK '27 begins!

Hold your horses, Charlotte - let's recap SPARK '26 first! It's hard to believe that over a month ago, the SPARK site was being set up. Daily services were happening, crafts were being made, snacks and drinks were being sold, under 5's were thriving, prayer was being prayed, inflatables were bouncing, and footballs and hockey sticks flew through the air! SEN fought dinosaurs, First Aid was on the lookout, Good News for Everyone and hosts welcomed people, and the Hot Spot was full of thrilling battles between Sean's Buddies and Luke's Minions. Scooper and Paul had their daily piece of rock and visit from Peter, whilst Charlotte and Richard danced and sang about Jesus being their Lighthouse and having their God Suit On. And then,... then we did it all again! The evenings came around fast at SPARK. Quick break, eat food, tidy up dinner, set up for the evening event - Family Fun Night, Quiz or SPARKextra - run the event, then pack everything away and secure the tents overnight with our amazing security team. And finally, SPARK had to go back to the various churches



who physically support and make the SPARK site possible. So, not much went on really,... especially on the Saturday after! The team have met to talk about next year, and we are SO excited to say:

YES - SPARK '27 IS HAPPENING! AUGUST 23RD-27TH! (21st - set up / 22nd - commissioning service)

A massive **THANK YOU** to everyone who has prayed for the mission of SPARK. Please keep praying and sharing your amazing stories with everyone — and I mean *everyone*. ***Don't get bored of your stories. God isn't bored with them. He loves it when we share what He is doing and talk about His Kingdom. So, let's keep sharing!***

Charlotte O'Leary



Our Wedding Day,..

Was on 30th May 2026, and it was honestly such a special day for us. We were so lucky with the weather as it was beautifully sunny and warm, which made everything feel even more perfect. We had always wanted to get married, but it was one



of those things that kept getting put to the side. Once we finally set the date and started planning properly, everything seemed to come together so well. We really felt that God was with us through it all, and we were so thankful for how smoothly everything went.

We got married at St John's Church, which holds a very special place in our hearts. It meant so much to be able to get married there, surrounded by our family, friends and church family.

For us, the day was about more than just having a wedding. It was about becoming one, making our promises to each

other before God, and beginning married life with Him at the centre.

One Bible verse that really means something to us is, *"the two will become one flesh"* (Mark 10:8). It felt especially fitting for the day and for what marriage means to us.

Everyone looked amazing dressed up, and the whole day had such a happy and joyful atmosphere. We laughed, danced, ate, took lots of photos and made so many memories together.

We are so grateful to everyone who supported us and helped make the day so special. Above all, we give thanks to God for His love, His guidance and for blessing us with such a wonderful beginning to married life.

It truly was a day we will never forget.

Mr & Mrs Towler

