

GRAPEvine

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A story from the Vicarage

Once upon a time there was a young Civil Engineering student in a far off Kingdom. During one holiday he worked at the local sewage works, cutting grass and cleaning the tanks (yuck!). When he got his pay packet (his first ever, in a brown envelope) he made sure that 10% went straight to the Church. Throughout his career he continued to do so because he had been taught by his church that everything belonged to God, and that God required us to give back to him the FIRST 10% of our income. When other special needs came up he was taught to give extra as a 'Free Will Offering', which he found to be fun!

Malachi 3:10 - *Bring the full tithe (10%) into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need.*

If you could track him down now he would tell you it was the soundest financial investment he ever made. Now I don't like

talking about giving - who does? One reason is that people who are already giving above and beyond tend to feel guilty and give more... If you are one of these move on to Estelle's article! But there are reasons why it is important.

Matthew 6: Treasures in Heaven - *Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

He found a deep secret. The more you try to out-give God, the more he blesses; the more you try to hold on to material riches the less happy you become. Why am I telling you this story? Not so you might feel impressed by that engineer (I wonder what happened to him?) BUT that you might consider again what you give to God and His work. Are you seeking first His Kingdom and His plans or yours?

There are two particulars I'd like to bring to your attention, and one for the future:

1) SPARK (costing around £15k annually) is likely to be very underfunded this year - if you wish to help, put it in an envelope marked SPARK (if you want tax reclaimed then put your number OR your name on it).

2) Our general funds - our giving has remained static for at least 5 years BUT costs have gone up. If we wish to continue to grow we probably need to grow our income each year by 5%. All our income comes from within; we don't get any grants from the Diocese, in fact we support it.

Soon we will have to raise the funding for our Prayer/Meeting room, which I hope to tell you more of soon. Please pray about all this. Remember, God is a God of grace, who wants our hearts first. Our open pockets will follow!

God bless you,

Adam

St John's News

Although it will probably be a distant memory as you read this, snuggled under a warm blanket to keep warm, but I am writing this on a sweltering hot evening... yes... the one!!

Learning wise we have been challenged by some of the Bible's amazing IF statements including, "If the Son makes you free, you are free indeed." Housegroups have been studying the Moses story, finding that humans and God really do not change.

Warm weather has not hitherto been the norm this Summer. Indeed we considered ourselves fortunate when the rain

held off for most of the Fun Day!! We did manage to have FUN however, and one Toddler Club dad made a point of saying the following Thursday how much he and his family had enjoyed the afternoon.



June 26th was a busy Sunday. In the morning a Healing Service - many people allowed God to touch mind, body and spirit as He knew they needed. In the evening we joined with four other churches at St Peter's where we were able to join with Emma Richardson and nine or so candidates from the other churches for their confirmation.

If we were in any doubt, the **SPARK team BBQ** confirmed that we are on the brink of **SPARK in the Park**. As you read this, it

may even be upon us! Please pray that God uses our meagre loaves and fish and turns them into something amazing in the lives of local families.

We rejoice along with Peter & Clare, and Roger & Kate, over the safe arrival of Lauren Finney, indeed she has already made her first visit to St John's!

Thank you to John Gompers and James Belsham who helped us to think through some of the issues surrounding the EU referendum in their debate after church one Sunday in June.

Our warmest congratulations to Becca Webster, Abby Still and Rachel Belsham on their excellent degree results!

So if this is your time for a break, have a good one!

Estelle Woodcock



High turnover!

One of the things we have to do as a Church of England Parish Church is complete an annual statistics form for the central statistical department of the Church of England. They track trends in attendance country-wide, reporting whether attendance is increasing or decreasing and in what ways. We give figures at Christmas and Easter for church, school and civic services¹, how many people we think we have as part of the total worshipping community², the average number of adults and U16s who attend services on a usual Sunday³, the actual number of worshippers for all Sundays in October (a typical month), numbers of baptisms, marriages and funerals⁴, and for the last few years the numbers of people joining and leaving each year and the reason for them doing it (e.g. joining by transferring from another church, attending church for the first time or leaving through death or illness).

James Belsham

Hello, I'm James Belsham and I study History and Politics at Sussex University. Next year I'll be moving out of campus and living in Brighton.



My first year has been great fun. I've met people from Russia, Hong Kong, Arizona and Norway and more nearby, like Manchester, Bristol and North London. I have even lived with flatmates from Lewisham and Joyden's Wood (small world). My course has been brilliant, looking back as far as the Tudors and as close as Tony Blair and New Labour. I'm really pleased I made the decision to study both Politics and History as an understanding of one can often lead to a better understanding of the other. My course has been very global, looking from Britain to Europe and from Turkey to China. Very relevant.

There are so many ideas from the Bible that are useful to academic study. Chief among them is discipline and self-control. If I can't motivate myself to work then no-one does, and I have found my faith particularly useful in managing myself. I have been fortunate to discuss religion in a friendly and respectful way with other students. What I found particularly interesting was the number of people who said that they admired faith but thought it wasn't for them.

Now that exams are over and I have found a place to live in Brighton, my next challenge is to find a new church to worship in!

James Belsham

This is a person by person exercise which requires the input of several people at St John's! Each year since this began we have been net gainers on members, and in 2015 we shrank very slightly, but it was a shock to me this year to discover that in 2015 we gained 48 people and lost 54. This is a sizeable turnover in a membership of 320 people, and goes a little way to explaining why we are always looking for new people to join teams and undertake new ministries.

Some leavers are people who should perhaps have been dropped off our big attendance list on a previous occasion, but the decision over whether a person comes to church or not can be ambiguous. How often do you have to attend services to count as a member? Weekly, monthly, six-monthly, on the odd occasion? And do you have to attend services? If you belong to a housegroup are you a church member here if you don't belong anywhere else? What about people who come regularly to Messy Church and then stop coming? And for how long does someone need to attend church services before we decide that they count as having joined us? Do you see the problem? We have very fuzzy edges. We lost members last year for some very good reasons (e.g. they were students, moved to new houses or they were only here for a year on placement). We do lose people who stop coming to church or housegroup, but we also re-gain some of them when their journey brings them back, so the challenge is when do we think they think they have left? And how much do we

follow them up? Some want to be noticed and others may not. God's wisdom is needed in all things. We gained through birth, Alpha, conversion, family members joining us, answered prayer, moving house, moving church, moving country, coming on placement, marriage, and returning to church.

So if you're reeling over not knowing who everybody is, there is a good reason: we keep changing! We only do a major update of the photo wall annually, and it's about to be re-done, but always there are new photos going up. Each new person may stay because you speak to them, sit next to them, talk to them. So please don't give up! We all need to be part of our welcoming community.

¹ The Crib service in 2015 was attended by over 50% more adults and 50% more children. I wonder why!

² In every broad age range this remained remarkably consistent with the previous year despite our high turnover. We're gaining and losing across all ages.

³ This also remained remarkably consistent from 2014, despite turnover!

⁴ There were almost no weddings or baptisms of non-church members last year, and for the first time the number of believers' baptisms and reaffirmations (7) exceeded the number of infant baptisms and thanksgivings (6).

Kate Foot

"Blessed are those who mourn...

...for they shall be comforted"

As most of you know, our daughter Angela died very suddenly a year ago. She was only forty.

I've often wondered at this verse "Blessed (or happy) are those who mourn" – how can that be?! But it continues "for they shall be comforted."

Well Trevor and I can really say we have been comforted and blessed over the past year. The sadness of loss goes on but God has comforted us in many ways. Thank you everyone who has shown us God's love, patience, kindness, and gentleness. You have truly brought us God's comfort.

We want to share another comfort that came to us from out of the blue from Angela's work. Angela started work at Royal Park School when she left college and worked there for 22 years. She loved

her work with nursery and reception children, especially those with special educational or physical needs. Over 22 years she got to know so many families and colleagues at the school. Recently the school updated and redeveloped the nursery and reception area. Amazingly they have chosen to name this "The Angela Smith Early Years Centre" and we were invited with Harry, Angela's son, to officially open the Centre on 24th June. We joined the staff afterwards for refreshments as a celebration.

What a comfort this occasion was. It truly brought a smile to our faces as we shared memories of Angela, to hear how loved and admired she was, but mostly she was remembered for her kindness to all, her warmth and welcoming smile. Angela will always be remembered in the place of work she loved – we are truly blessed and comforted.

Pat and Trevor Thomas



Bowls Club

The St John's Bowls Club must be one of the youngest social groups in the church; we only started in 2009. I was inspired to think about starting the club by our late dear friend Les Pride who over the years encouraged many of us to take up the sport and often said how good it would be if we could start our own club. I soon found that Edd Upson had the same idea and others gave us support. The PCC kindly loaned us £450 to purchase two second hand mats and equipment, and we were able to pay this back by the end of the first year. Since then we have been able to replace the mats and purchase a third.

At the beginning our membership of 18 was drawn mainly from St John's but now we have 27 members and more than half have no particular church affiliation. Each Tuesday afternoon we meet to play a serious game of bowls in a friendly and welcoming atmosphere. We have been invited to join the local league but decided not to as we want to keep our meeting more as social events rather than be pressured to play competition matches; this is appreciated by many. Some of our members who are more competitive also belong to other clubs and play in the



league with them.

We have held a couple of Saturday events to which anyone in church has been invited to come along and have a go and we raised funds for local charities. One evening we joined our Cub Scouts at their meeting and helped them achieve their sportsman badge by showing them a new sport. This is to be repeated this coming November when we hope to also involve Beavers.

Please, if you're free on a Tuesday afternoon, do pop in and see what we do. Although we often have a waiting list we can usually offer a 'taster' session.

Roger Large

The Stones Cry Out

Let's face it, a lot of people outside the church believe that the Bible is just a lot of made up stories. So when the possibility of doing a tour of The British Museum came up, looking at artefacts that tie in with the Biblical history narrative, I wasn't one to say "No".

'The Stones Cry Out' tour was an excellent, faith-affirming day out. Starting with parallels of the Biblical creation accounts in surrounding cultures, the tour then picked up the story with the discovery of Ur – birthplace of Abraham – and the cultures found there. It proceeded through the history of Egypt, with some intriguing evidence as to whom the pharaoh of The Exodus might have been, on to the religious practices of the Canaanites and the archaeological digs around Jericho. We continued to follow the timeline of Biblical history through the turbulent periods of Kings/Chronicles – particularly

Sennacherib's failed attack on Jerusalem in 2 Kings 19, all the way up to Daniel and the exile – with a whistle-stop mention of the return as time was running out.

I would definitely recommend the trip for anyone who wants to brush up on their Biblical history or who wants some physical evidence to back up their belief in the historical truth of scripture.

John Gompers



Alice & Claire

We have recently enjoyed a lovely visit from our Ugandan friends Claire and Alice; here are a few highlights!



After the mammoth task of getting Claire a visa (thankfully God intervened!), Alice and Claire were due to arrive together on the 1st Friday morning in June. Unfortunately, when I got to the airport, Claire was alone! Due to a mix-up Alice arrived at the airport with no passport and was not allowed to travel! It was Claire's first time on a plane; she really enjoyed it and couldn't believe how green England was driving back from Gatwick. Groundhog Day on Saturday and we went to pick Alice up. Poor Steve was perplexed when he could hardly carry Alice's bag. When we arrived home we discovered it contained 5 massive pineapples, maize and millet flour and a host of other things. How she got them through customs we will never know!

Alice and Claire really enjoyed the service at St John's which was the Lamplighters 50th Anniversary celebration; they were amazed at how much participation there was from the children. As Claire is pregnant (due on 22nd July) she only planned to come for 2 weeks. She went on the London Eye and we also went on the full London Bus Tour which they really enjoyed. We had a good evening with 22 people when they came to have an 'at home with Alice and Claire'.



After more visits Claire started the journey home... No, you guessed it, something went wrong again! Emirates wouldn't let her travel as there was no date of confinement on her doctor's certificate. There was a fraught 24 hours trying to get one. She was distraught at first but really enjoyed the hotel room they put her in and watched TV and ate all day long.

Alice meanwhile stayed 6 weeks and travelled from Beccles to Newark, Grantham, Carlisle, Durham, Manchester, Wales & finally Guildford, thanking people for their support for Modern Primary School and to drum up more support. Thankfully there was no further mix ups with her flights and she is now in Dallas, Texas with her other daughter Caroline, whom she has not seen for 5 years.

They want to pass on their thanks to all of us and look forward to seeing many of you in their own environment!

Sue Read

Lamplighters' 50th!

It's fair to say we were a little weary on May 22nd after a series of difficult days, but it's hard to be weary when you are surrounded by so many blessings, old friends, excited children, happy memories, great worship, fantastic dance, thankful prayers and all in the presence of our Lord. We were so overwhelmed by what turned into a very special morning. After months of planning, fundraising and organising, members old and new came together to celebrate 50 years of Lamplighters at St John's!

Leprosy Mission England and Wales, Trevor Grant who has been acting as our area rep as well as former area rep Lisa Lewis and Catherine Benbow who was our mission contact in East Timor during the 1990s. Through social media, letters and emails we had also invited former Lamplighters and we were so pleased to see so many familiar faces! We were very pleased to be able to present a cheque to Peter Walker for £10,000. This amazing total was only made possible by the support of so many people who used their talents, gave up their time, donated items or just collected pennies in an L shaped box! We were so moved by the response from the St John's family, from the 2-92 year olds. The money raised is going to our link hospital in Purulia, India. Money raised by Lamplighters will provide the cure for 200 patients with leprosy, provide reconstructive hand or foot surgery for 30



patients and sight saving eye surgery for 20 patients. So in total that is 250 individual people that will have their lives healed, restored and transformed by the generosity of those who have given.

In October Alison Read will be visiting Purulia Hospital with The Leprosy Mission as our representative to see first hand the work that is carried out there. Please keep her in your prayers over the next few months as she prepares for this trip.

'To Light the Lamp of Love for those with Leprosy'.

Miriam Storey



Lamplighters is a group for primary aged children that runs every Friday supporting & fundraising for The Leprosy Mission. We were very pleased to be able to welcome Peter Walker, director of The

Big Church Day Out!

As I lay in my tent at 3am listening to the thunder and rain, wondering if my tent would catch fire if hit by lightning, I questioned my sanity in going to BCDO. I can safely say it was a fantastic decision, storms included. BCDO is a great opportunity to hang out with people from church, worship God and, importantly, have a laugh. From setting up tents together to helping out with forgotten wellies, sharing beers to praying, the opportunity to relax, experience new worship music and make new friends is not one to be missed.

couples and singles. It means if you aren't confident camping someone is always on

hand to help out. There is also something for everyone. Free children's activities, a shopping area and fairground rides, along with multiple places to purchase ice-cream! There is a main stage with popular worship music, an "illuminate" stage with more of a dance vibe and a tea stage where you can drink Pimm's and have a cream tea (my personal favourite!).



For me, sitting in the sun and relaxing with my friends was the highlight. Others had prayers answered or simply time away from life to spend with God. BCDO has all the pros of a festival (awesome music, beer and sunshine) with the massive plus that the atmosphere is safe and friendly. If you are considering going next year – do it! You won't regret it!

Sarah Mallon

Peru: Paul & Sarah Tester

Paul started this month's newsletter with this verse from Isaiah 43:18-19:

"Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?"

The Anglican Church in Peru has been going through major changes and in April Bishop William, after serving for 20 years, returned to the UK. The first Peruvian

Bishop for the Anglican Church has been appointed. Paul asked us to pray for the new Bishop, Jorge Aguilar, and area Deans during this time of change, that Jesus would guide all that they do. As we at St John's welcome Danielle and her family it is exciting to think of God on the

move all around the world. Our nation is also in a time of change and as Jeff Golding quoted the metaphor by Corrie Ten Boom at the Transform service, a tapestry can look messy with our limited vision but from God's perspective it is beautiful. As we pray for our church, our nation and our mission partners around the world may our pray be that hearts and minds are fixed on Jesus so to reflect his glorious light.

It has been amazing to share in the news of baby Tester number 3! I know a lot of you reading this would have prayed for Paul and Sarah as they started their family and know just how amazing it is to hear about another blessing on the way. Lord, we pour out our praise to you for the amazing gift of children and

particularly for Sophia, Emily and the new baby. Please pray for Sarah as she continues in her pregnancy; Baby is due October 23rd.

As always Paul and Sarah's focus has been on the youth ministry in Peru with a Youth Alpha, youth camps and outreach work. Paul and Sarah are seeing the young people of Peru rise up as disciples and go out into leadership roles equipped and encouraged. Lord, we thank you for your faithfulness.

Sarah Coates

