

GRAPEvine

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Harvest Time

As for you, be fruitful and increase in number; multiply on the earth and increase upon it."
Genesis 9:7, NIV

Dear Friend,
Well, it is actually coming to the end of harvest time in the Vicarage garden. It has been a mixed year with some crops doing well and others poorly or not growing at all! If you were in Church at the start of the summer you will have witnessed the miracle of the pea growing in a pot (100% germination) where as the ones I planted (and netted against birds) had a 1% germination success!

Jesus told us the parable of the sower which warns us of the importance of being good soil for his word to grow in, not rocky, weed infested or hard. We will be looking at this parable on Harvest Sunday, but we

are also thinking about another aspect of harvest this term as we start a series on evangelism – sharing the good news.

I have mentioned before that according to recent research people outside the church are more interested in our faith than we may believe. On 8th July 2017 J. John will be speaking at the Emirates Stadium at an event called 'Just One' and we aim to be there. The plan is that each Christian who attends takes 'Just One' non-Christian friend with them. In order to do that we need to be...

Strengthening our friendship with them.

Coffee, beer, golf, baking, going somewhere together?

Praying for them regularly.

With a prayer partner, in a WhatsApp group, on the train, as you do the washing up?

Getting yourself trained up.

Housegroups, church sermons this term, a training event on the morning of January 21st with Andrew Hawkins from 'Just One'?

Be ready to walk with them as they start their journey towards God.

It's easy to make excuses (I'm forming my own in my head as I type) but if God was willing to send His best, His Son Jesus, so we could have an eternal relationship with Him, it's a bit of a poor show if we won't make our best effort to lead our friends to Christ and that eternal relationship.

God bless you as you ask him who will be your 'Just One' and remember if it turns out to be 'Just Three' then J. John (and God) will be even more happy as he doesn't want the event to be filled with Christians!

Yours in Christ,

Adam

St John's News

So, **that** was the summer! After such a gloomy June and early July, what a lovely one it was too. It was a very hot July evening when many of us from St John's joined with the congregation, friends and family of **Stephen & Isabel Broadie** as Stephen was licensed as Assistant Minister of **St Nicholas' Farnborough**. Luisa won't forget her birthday either as the whole congregation including the Bishop joined in singing to her!

School terms ended, Housegroups had BBQs and special events and then it was **SPARK in the Park!!** We are almost in danger of taking the lovely weather that week for granted for again we were blessed with just the right amount of warmth and sunshine, families, loads of fun and an awesome awareness of God's blessing pouring over the site. Our prayer is that as people reflect on their time at SPARK they will be drawn towards the God who was shared in so many ways.

The end of SPARK saw a significant exodus as many of us went on family and/or group holidays. **3dub** went to **Soul Survivor** and had a wonderful time. Ask them about Noah's Ark!!

One lovely August event was **Sammi Strong's 75th** birthday party, a lovely evening of celebration and friendship with Sammi and her friends. **Elisa Stauß** had just one night back in Welling after Soul Survivor before her year in England working with CRiBS and part of us at St John's came to an end, and she was heading back to Stuttgart leaving many of us so grateful to have had her lovely company this last year. We miss her lots.

Church family life always has the bitter sweet mixture of farewells and welcomes and so we are delighted to welcome **Danielle Pearson-Smith**, as our new curate, with the added bonus that she has brought husband Steve and daughters Harriet and Isobel with her!! We are also so pleased to welcome **Nina Doll**, another

brave German gap year student, working with CRiBS and with us at St John's, living with Kate and Adam!



What a great weekend it was on 9/10th September as **John Graham & Laura Bohan** were married on the Saturday and baby **Zachary Hunt**, with parents **Jenna and Dean**, was baptised during Sunday morning service.

We have said temporary farewells to **Beth Webster** and **Alice Caddock** who are heading to Birmingham and Oxford Universities, respectively. We wish them all the very best as they adjust to new locations, learning and lifestyle. We will be praying that they discover that God is already there waiting for them!

The news that lovely **Audrey Lock** has died saddened many of us. We pray that Bob and the family know the peace that passes understanding as they mourn, but can be confident that she has, in a very real sense, "gone home."

More next time, **Estelle Woodcock**

Inspire: Mental Health Awareness

In July we set up the mental health awareness group: Inspire. The aim of the group is to promote love, education and discussion around mental health problems. At St John's we have a fantastic family and we aim to build a community that can support those with mental health problems so they can thrive as part of that family. We've had really positive feedback already:

Inspire is a great group for all people: those who have been through, are going through or supporting those with mental health disorders and that covers every single Christian! I've had the privilege of bringing my brother along to every meeting. He is a 'Pre-Christian' (but doesn't know it). He loves that a medical professional is sharing and it brings great comfort to see a room of people sharing in such an honest and respectful way. From the title of the group, I guess, you could expect quite a solemn meeting but... this

is no ordinary meeting because we meet together as church family, which means we do serious but we do laughter too and what would a group for mental health awareness be without laughter? God says: 'A cheerful heart is good medicine' (Proverbs 17:22). Linzi Golding

Over the coming months we have sessions on anxiety, OCD, dementia and coping with bereavement. In addition we have a speaker from Think Twice on October 17th – a charity who aim to increase awareness and decrease stigma in churches, so that talking about mental health issues is like talking about having flu. Our long term aim is to not only support those who regularly attend St John's but also other churches in Bexley and the users of our building. If you have any questions please email sarah.mallon1@gmail.com; otherwise do come and join us!



Sarah Mallon, David Foot and Simon Caddock

Bliss in Liss!

A bunch of us had a great weekend camping in Liss in the most beautiful picturesque 'back garden' (the size of a forest!) ever!



Defibrillator?

St John's has bought a defibrillator machine which you can find **in a box on the wall of the foyer between the church and the hall.**

Otherwise known as an AED (automatic external defibrillator - defib for now), a defib is a small, portable machine for use alongside CPR (pressing on the chest to get the blood circulating) when someone has a cardiac arrest. It delivers an electric charge to the heart to try to put it back onto a sustainable rhythm. If someone has a cardiac arrest then they need urgent attention from the ambulance service and, while waiting, immediate CPR from anyone nearby if there is to be a chance of survival.

The ambulance service encourages defibrillators to be provided wherever there are numbers of people gathered. Consideration will be given as to how we might make this expensive equipment available for use by others but for now, the focus is on enabling the different groups that use the church buildings to use the defib if the need arises. Designed so you cannot possibly make the situation worse, the machine talks to you, explaining each step (don't try it out of curiosity! The expensive battery pack is really set for dealing with one event).

A training session on CPR and use of the defib was held in September. Representatives from each main group of users of the church buildings were invited, with the numbers made up by people who responded to a short notice, open invitation.

Bob Morris



Over and out



OpenDoors

60 years of serving persecuted Christians

The Church is Jesus' hope for the world. What an amazing fact and joy it is that God is partnering with us to see *his* world transformed. No matter how far away wholeness and healing seems (and it does seem pretty far at the moment), we, and our brothers and sisters around the globe, will continue because Jesus is the *only* hope and he has made us his light. That's why we support the world-wide church.

With the lovely Chorlton family returning to the UK from Egypt, the Mission Council have prayed and carefully discussed what we do with our church finances and prayer. We have decided that we will increase our giving to our current four

partners (to £3,500p/a). We have also come to the decision that we will start giving

£1000p/a each to International Justice Mission (IJM) and OpenDoors (who support persecuted Christians). We feel that in the face of extremism, millions of refugees, civil wars and over 45 million people trapped in slavery we can't help but step up and *engage*. We want to see an end to this so we will give and we will *pray* – *our biggest weapon against evil.*

After several years as chair of the Mission Council, I have now decided that the time has come to step down. It has been an absolute privilege to be involved in the MC and, as mission is on my heart, my support for God's mission to the world through St John's won't end here. We are all entrusted with this task, so please do continue with your support. I know you will!

Nicola Foot



IJM



From the Calais Jungle

Gilda Spaducci and Louise Russell volunteered with a project in the Calais refugee camp in August. Louise shares...

It was coming home that broke me. As I showed my passport at the Calais Eurostar check-in, official eyes met mine with respect: "Bonjour... merci" then "Hello... thank you." I had dignity. After twenty-five minutes, the train resurfaced in Kent. Twenty-five minutes. Thousands have spent months or years, and risked life and limb, trying to make that journey. Me, I was now on home soil - but millions have travelled endlessly, trying to find a land in which they might feel safe and accepted enough to call it home.

In Calais, some 9,000 of these homeless travellers reside. It is France, but it feels hundreds of miles further away. Our pale faces mark us out as visitors, as Sudanese, Eritreans, Afghans and others offer their greetings: "Welcome to the Jungle." One of the men was keen to emphasise to me the truth in its designation as a jungle, rather than a "camp" or "centre": it is a jumble of tents, often pitched on sand dunes, with a few living in the more sturdy shelters of caravans, huts and shipping containers. There are rats, this refugee tells me. A friend of his was bitten as he slept in his tent. "Well, it's not the rats' fault," he tells me, shrugging his shoulders. "They were here first."

It is hard for any of us to get our heads around the extent of the crisis, and how on earth it might be solved. Visiting the camp and meeting the human beings caught, each in their own crisis, gave a shattering insight into the loss, trauma, anxiety and despair they experience. Into this place, we took ... a cup of tea. Each day, we were part of a team taking a converted ambulance into the camp, to serve over 500 cups of (highly-sugared) teas and coffees. We set up tables and chairs with board games outside the van, and joined the refugees in playing games and chatting.

Restaurants from all these nations line the main street. They are huts, held together with ingenuity and determination. There is fear and disorder here, but there is also joy and community. The refugees have not forgotten

the generous hospitality of their home cultures, and offers of food and tea abounded from the friends we made in our time there.

I do call them friends. I have heard their stories, felt their hurts, hoped their hopes. For of course, they are people, with stories and families like us. We served them a tea or coffee, that symbol of welcome and warmth, the world over. Then we had the honour of joining them in board games, music and conversation. The Jungle is home to chess geniuses, lovers of 'Connect 4' and 'Uno', musicians who make a beautiful sound on the guitar, musicians who make a terrible din on the accordion... They are like us.

Ahmed* is only 17 years old. He had arrived in the Jungle just the previous day when I spoke to him, having travelled from Sudan, alone. Having survived the dangers of Libya, he spent six days in a boat, he tells me, his face impassive as I imagine the terror. After that, he hid in trains to cross Europe. Later, I teach a group of refugees to play the card game Uno. Ahmed understands the game, yet looks up at me for reassurance each time it is his turn. I smile and nod encouragingly as I wonder sadly at the sense of security and parental reassurance he is so lacking.

Kasim* stayed for a while in Germany after he left Afghanistan ten years ago. There he was able to gain some psychological help for the traumas of war he had experienced back home. I look at his arms, covered in scars which we surmise to be a combination of self-harm and escapades through barbed wire and the like. He tells me how his friend was run over and killed by a lorry a couple of weeks ago. He has a real sadness about him, but also a friendliness and true generosity of spirit. He later invited our team back for (the most amazing) samosas.

The stories are endless. Yet Jesus is working in this place. Refugees have told of dreams in which a man in white walks through the camp. There is a clear spiritual hunger, as well as emotional need, and conversations about faith arise very organically. Offers of prayer for healing, help and comfort are often gratefully received. Three members of our team saw an instantaneous healing of a refugee's injured knee... They got lost on the way to the supermarket, and noticed the boy writhing in pain on the pavement. He refused to go to hospital, so they prayed. The boy looked up in shock as the pain vanished, and began jumping up and down, shouting out.



On our first day I had the chance to pray in the church, which stands boldly in the cleared wasteland where tents and huts once stood, but were demolished by the French authorities in March. God's presence is thick within the church. Well of course he is there: he lives among the broken-hearted. I had a great sense that he weeps over the camp.

Back in the UK, I gaze around St Pancras station, as if seeing London for the first time, and feel hugely disorientated. There are precious hearts, just a few miles away, who pin all their hopes on this land. Yes, many are naïve about what the UK can actually offer them: desperation has driven them to it. Mainland Europe has not helped them enough; their remaining hopes are pinned on the UK. Many have family and friends here and speak our language. There is a huge amount of confusion: they don't know how the European asylum systems work, and there is no significant attempt to help this from the UK or others. I cry over this extreme brokenness which has no apparent solution. We could not solve the problem, but we could meet people in their need, which they appreciated. No, it is not enough - and it was partly this guilt which made it so hard to leave. Only God can do enough - and from this I take heart, for I do believe he is working there.

** Names have been changed.*



Dubsters

Over the past couple of terms at Dubsters, we've had some real fun! Remember our Charity Bake-Off?! We also had a fantastic trip to Jump Giants in Thurrock - a warehouse of jumping surfaces including foam pits with launch pads, extreme dodgeball courts, slam dunk basketball and loads more! We had a great turnout with members bringing their friends.



We are blessed with a good group of leaders (Louise Russell, Laura Webster, John Gompers, Bob Morris and myself) for our small group of 10-14 year olds. Please do pray for us. Our desire is for the young people to know God more deeply, to be really good friends and for others to come join us. Parents - get your thinking caps on and encourage your children to come too!

Simon Caddock

Soul Survivor

"Being revealed to a bigger, better family"



"A fun and encouraging event, which always brings me closer to God"

"A great place to meet God, have fun and one that I look forward to each year!"

"Soul Survivor was an amazing experience with friends and God."

Soul Survivor is an amazing, uplifting event that 3dub were lucky enough to attend in August. As a group we had a chance to bond and grow together. We hung out with other youth groups and had a massive water fight! The talks at Soul Survivor are incredible! They provide a space to worship God and learn more about Him. They are always relevant and help so many of the young people to learn about God and even meet with Him for the first time or give their lives to Him. It is so encouraging to see hundreds and



hundreds of young people flooding to the front of the main tent to give their lives to God.

On the last night, everyone dresses up and this year the theme was Noah's Ark. There were some brilliant costumes! We had a dove, crocodile, a cloud, a rainbow, an ark, giraffes and zebras from 3dub.

Of course... the difficult part is coming back to the daily life of school, exams, work and stress...

Kate Freeman



SPARK in the Park

As this was my third year of being part of the SPARK team, I already knew I was going to have as great a time as the previous years! Even though the weather wasn't great on a couple of days, towards the end of the week the sunshine really picked up and SPARK in the Park was in full swing.

The best part about SPARK is seeing the excitement on all of the children's faces; even the parents look as though they're having a great time. I was seeing some of the same children every day and just as happy each time which is how I knew they were enjoying it so much.

This year there was a change of events on the Wednesday night: the Talent Show was

replaced with a Karaoke night. Rich AA and I had planned to sing a duet ('Year 3000' in case you're wondering!) but he claimed there were too many children performing so we wouldn't get the chance. We all know he chickened out at the last minute!!!

People often ask me why I give a week out of my summer holidays to help out with SPARK when it's an event that's aimed at kids. It's because it's usually the best and most enjoyable week of the whole year. Not

only is it enjoyable for everyone, but it's also always a big confidence boost and a place in which everyone can be themselves and connect with God in whichever way they feel most comfortable. It's always an amazing feeling when you make children smile!

Chris Knight



Hello from Germany!

For those who have already forgotten who I am or never knew: I had the privilege to be part of St John's for the last year as part of my gap year programme with CRiBS. Many of you have made this year special to me by being good friends, helping and supporting me. I can now say I've found a second home in England where I know I'm always welcome. Thank you so much for letting me be myself and accepting me.

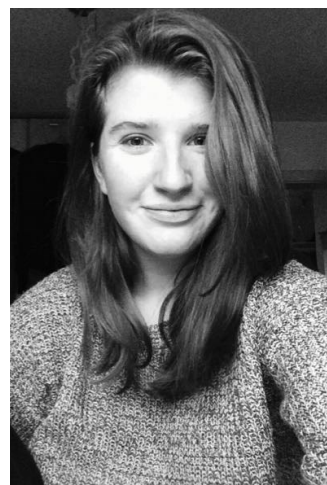
Now that the year is over I have to move on and I'm ready for whatever comes next. I will be starting university in October, studying Teaching Bilingual in Freiburg.

I'm not sure what I will be expecting, but I know God will make a way!

I don't know yet where I will be living so prayer would be appreciated! :)

Have a lovely Sunday and all the best from Germany,

Elisa Stauß



And finally...



...one of our oldest members meets our newest!

Zachary Hunt with Betty Lockington