

GRAPEVINE

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Christmas thoughts: Hope

'There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens.' Ecclesiastes 3.1, NIV

Hi there. This is the first time that I have had the pleasure of writing to you in the Grapevine. I want to thank everyone for the tremendous welcome that we, as a family, have received both to St John's and to Welling.

As we come to the end of another season, the colours of autumn are beginning to fade, with the remaining leaves falling from the trees. The apples and pears have been picked and the beautiful ripe strawberries of the summer feel like a lifetime ago. The garden may look increasingly sparse and dull-coloured, but the foundations of next year's rebirth lie sleeping underneath the ground, just waiting for the warmth of springtime. We are fast approaching Christmas; shops have

been playing Christmas songs for some weeks now and our eye is drawn to glittery trees, decorations, food and presents that line our shops and high street. People are rushing around with lists of things to do and to buy, many feeling stressed and worn out. How nice it would be if we could be like the plants and trees in the garden, resting and waiting for the warmer weather of spring.

As Advent begins, we start the long wait through the dark days before Christmas, in expectancy of the birth of our Saviour Jesus. In this time, we experience birth in midwinter giving us all hope for the future. Perhaps as we do our Christmas shopping and prepare food for our friends and family, we could also think and pray for those who will find Christmas and winter a cold and dark time, not just physically but also mentally and spiritually too.

There is great hope that a winter night shelter will be up and running by the end of January. Perhaps within your Christmas preparations you might like to hold the night shelter in your thoughts and prayers. If you feel called in any way to help or support this please contact Melvyn French (m.french7@btinternet.com) who is waiting on volunteers as I write.

Let's together help shine the light of Christ during this Advent and Christmas season. I wish you all a very peaceful Advent, a wonderful and blessed Christmas and a very happy New Year.

God bless,
Danielle Pearson-Smith

St John's News

What a rich tapestry of memories October and November make up!

October started on the 1st with celebrations: at **Danielle's ordination** in Rochester, in Hyde for **Phil and Lauren's** wedding and with the Singing Group at St John's helping with the worship for another wedding! Before we leave weddings and celebration, October ended with **David and Sarah's** wedding! It was another fantastic big "family" day. We won't forget October 2016 with its two beautiful weddings (and wedding blessing!) starting and finishing the month.



There have been many significant moments and ongoing challenges. **Alison Read** has probably had the biggest challenge as she visited Purulia Leprosy Mission Hospital in India. Her first-hand descriptions of life there are helping us better understand the need for our ongoing

support. Should we be **sharing our faith** and if so how? Our sermons and housegroup follow ups on Evangelism have been a real and vital challenge this Autumn. We have considered different ways to share our faith, the difficulties we will encounter and the need for prayer. We have learnt to reply on the Holy Spirit to do the work in hearts and lives and that underpinning everything is the amazing love God has for each one of His creation and the lengths to which He has gone to enable us to know that love.

At our **Remembrance Sunday Parade**, Adam helped us think about how we can be people of peace and the over 120 shoe boxes of Christmas gifts brought to the same service were a practical token of our longing to give something good to children, often from war torn countries.

Our children have had a great Star Wars-themed **Messy Church** and **Light Party**, helped significantly by Linzi Golding's creativity, skill and hard work.

The **Toddler Club** children and adults

enjoyed their "bonfire" lunch, greatly helped by a beautiful sunny Autumn day. **Cubs and Scouts** also enjoyed their bonfire.



We ladies have nursed a growing envy for the men's regular curry nights so it was with real satisfaction that about 30 of us went out together for a Mexican meal, which we thoroughly enjoyed. I am pleased to report there are more meals in the planning!

Our prayers are needed for **Chas Cole** and **Lionel King** as they recover from enforced time in hospital. Some of us were able to meet to bid that final earthly farewell to **Peter Pierson** and **Sandy King**, very different personalities and life stories, but both men whose Christian faith was the driving force in their lives.

Have a wonderful Christmas when it comes! May we all demonstrate and share the real reason for the season.

Estelle Woodcock

Cornerstone

Recovery through Christ

For there will never cease to be poor in the land. Therefore I command you, 'You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor, in your land.' Deut 15:11 ESV

Cornerstone is a recovery based fellowship, made up of men and women of all ages and from many different churches. Our youngest member is 19 and our oldest is 80. We study the Bible together, discuss our own experiences of Jesus working in our lives, worship and pray. We are open and honest with each other and have a strong bond of strength and unity.

Cornerstone welcomes all people and will support them in anyway we can, whether that's through prayer, study, one-to-one or through the fellowship we share together.

In the beginning it was a group designed for people in recovery or those who wanted to recover, mostly from various addictions like alcohol, drugs, gambling etc, but as our group grew it became clear that actually many people are in need of 'soul recovery' in its widest sense, whether specifically struggling with addictions or not. We believe, as others do, that the connection between addictions, homelessness, poverty, loneliness and mental health needs to be addressed.

We have run a recovery Alpha at Trinity Baptist Church for the last 7 years and I speak also for myself when I say that it has brought many people to faith and changed lives. Our members help at Trinity's Foodbank and this has proved to be beneficial not only to the people who volunteer but also to the people who use the service. It is our desire to provide a presence at every Foodbank in Bexley, acknowledging that many users of Foodbanks also have addiction (and usually housing) issues. We are also going to be involved with TBB's night shelter project. Having people who have experienced and overcome addictions and are being changed by their faith will be of value to the people who will use these shelters and also to helpers who do not have any experience or understanding of addictions and the issues that arise from these crippling afflictions.

We have a big vision for Cornerstone and if you would like to be a part of that or would just like to see what we do, please do come along to Trinity Baptist, Bexleyheath on a Tuesday 7pm to start at 7.30. As I said before, not all of our group are in recovery from addictions, some of them just love our fellowship and feel blessed by it.

Blessings,

Carole Bevan

My best Friend

Those of you who were blessed enough to have met Sandy King will know he was a true gentleman who inspired many. I first met Sandy at Spring Harvest 5 years ago and from the moment we were introduced I knew we would be extra special friends and that we were. I can honestly say that I feel Sandy was blessed with all the fruit of the Spirit and if you asked me to describe him in just a few words I would say: he was kind, loving, gentle, self-controlled, patient and faithful. A true man of God.

Sandy enjoyed the simple things in life that some of us would take for granted. These being a text message from a friend or meeting for a spot of lunch. He loved visiting the seaside and sitting back, watching others having fun. Whilst arranging Sandy's funeral I came to realise just how many friends Sandy had and each one of them had a story of how he had touched their lives: truly humbling.

Sandy could make friends anywhere, even a lady who worked on the checkouts in his local Tesco would bring him presents back from her holiday! He had that presence about him. I feel honoured to have had Sandy as a friend and will miss him loads as I know many of you will too, but I know no doubt that Sandy is with Jesus, pain free and watching us. It gives me great comfort. Thank you everyone for your help and support over the past few months. I leave you with a poem of Sandy's.

Lena Robinson

*My best Friend is Reliable and Punctual,
My best Friend is there for me
24 Hours a Day,
My best Friend is there for me
when I'm Lonely and Afraid,
My best Friend is there
through Sickness and Health.
My best Friend is Merciful and Forgiving,
My best Friend accepts me for who I am,
My best Friend Provides for me Everyday,
My best Friend will Never Forget Me,
or Leave Me,
My best Friend Loves me like no Other, and I
Love Him.
My best Friend Died for Me.
My best Friend came Back to Me.
My best Friend is a Friend for Eternity,
My best Friend is in my Mind, Heart
and Soul.*

*My best Friend Can be
Your Best Friend Too,
All You Have to do is Ask Him.
My best Friend's Name is
The Lord Jesus Christ.*

*God bless You All.
Sandy King*

SJ Danson FC

Despite having been propping up the table after our first three games, we managed to hit a good run of form and are currently residing in third position, with seven teams below us. If our league form continues I will be predicting a top four finish in the Premier Division of the Bromley & Croydon Christian Football League.



Rob Still, Manager



Playgroup



Playgroup has had a very good term so far. We have had lots of new children to settle in which has been fun! We took the children for an Autumn walk in Danson Park which everyone enjoyed and we finished off the morning with a cake sale, raising £139.80 which was very pleasing.

We have just launched our new website!
www.stjohnschurchplaygroupwelling.com

The team are working hard together, including our volunteers. We are grateful for the lovely people who give up their time each week to come and help us, and also to our Playgroup Council members.

We have some fun events coming up soon! The Little Urchins Photographer is going to be visiting and we will be holding a cake sale for Children in Need. We will also be performing our Nativity Play in the church in a few weeks' time.

If anyone would like to visit us or offer to volunteer, we would be very happy to hear from you!

Thank you,

Julie Stedman and the team

Jesus in my home

Jesus did a huge amount of his ministry in people's homes. He ate, rested, visited, healed and taught. He graced the unlikely with his presence. If this was Jesus' way then, you can bet it's his way today too.

Of course, unlike the first disciples, we don't have Jesus here with us physically, but we do have the heavenly power of his Spirit. The night before his greatest struggle, he prepared his followers not in a grand temple, or a cathedral - not even in a purpose built palace. In fact, he sat with his family to eat dinner as simply as he had arrived in a stable. Jesus doesn't care about the surroundings, he cares only that the hearts of his followers are seeking him at all times, anywhere.

If it's good enough for Jesus, it's good enough for us. We are blessed at St John's to have some wonderful people who are prepared to give up their homes and invite us in each week. It's honouring to them for us to come, and worship, learn and grow with them.

St John's housegroups? What are they? Why go? When and where are they?

What: Housegroups are midweek Bible

study groups. They help us to explore the Bible in a smaller group, allowing deeper thinking and closer friendships to develop.

Why: The week is very long. I believe it's hard not to wrestle with questions and situations in our lives which are in need of change through prayer and community, and Sunday mornings just can't meet all of these. So why try a house group? If you want more information contact Estelle Woodcock, our housegroup co-ordinator!

When and where: There are a variety of options during the week. More information can be found on the church website.

Lastly, why am I passionate about housegroups (other than my housegroup being the best...!)? Mine is my extended family time. We all have the greatest thing in common: 'Our Father', and we all desire to know him better and we are doing that together. Helping each other understand what it is to live a life filled with the Holy Spirit, because of Jesus.

It's not always easy following Jesus and when it's really hard where else is better to be than with a group of Jesus nutters

(that's me!) all praying for you, sharing in your story and trying to figure it out together? Worship is doing the Jesus thing - not just on Sundays. Jesus doesn't do one day weeks and he has so much blessing he wants to give us.

Housegroups are one way Jesus can break into our week, not just Sundays. Consider then the impact Jesus could have in your own journey if you were to seek him with others. Jesus still visits homes today.

"Dear Lord, you came to live among us and to visit us in our homes. You showed love for us and brought salvation to us. Many people didn't recognise you or receive you. Thank you for opening our eyes to who you are. Help us to take your good news to the homes of other people who need you."

Billy-Jo O'Leary



CRiBS (Christian Resources in Bexley Schools)

Those who get communications directly from CRiBS will know that the last school year was jam packed full of great work and stories from young people. Since the last newsletter CRiBS has had more responses to our questionnaire and can now record that 93% of teachers rated their Christian RE lessons as 'outstanding'! If you'd like to receive updates on the amazing work CRiBS do, please get in touch! info@cribsonline.org or call 01322 330730.

The work continues apace. The Primary and Secondary teams continue in schools, but are also looking to Christmas and preparing for the Christmas plays. This means that they have their gap-year students trying to make over-sized telescopes and other random props! Schools are booking their places and they have three and even four performances per day! Each performance is the chance to explain the reason for the hope that we have. Your prayers over this, and all CRiBS' work, I know are very valued. Boys Noise, their project which unblocks

barriers to learning and relating with others, continues to get to the heart of issues with small group HeartSense sessions. Afterschool clubs are also part of this work and this term the team are taking on cookery. 'b:You', the sister project, started with Louise Russell's help, continues and CRiBS now has a full time worker, Hannah Bates. In this intervention work there are deeply saddening times, hearing of loss and hurt, but also great opportunities to start the healing process. What an honour!

For the first time last Spring CRiBS piloted an intervention project in a Bexley Secondary School - one that has already proved itself in Liverpool. With Nicola Foot's help in liaising with a group called Pure Creative Arts, CRiBS ran a course for young men called Courageous. The success of this group has led to the school re-booking and the CRiBS team are in the middle of their second course with a new group of boys. A girls' school in Bexley are also looking to book the CRiBS team.

CRiBS continues to be grateful for all our support, so thank you for coming along to their events, thank you for praying, and thank you for all your kind donations which enable this work to happen.

Peter Smithers



Congratulations to...



Phil and Lauren Beaumont
who wed on 1st October 2016!



David and Sarah Foot
who wed on 28th October 2016!

Edd and Twink Upson



When Twink (not her real name) left school at 15, there weren't many options for girls. Mum had died when she was 11 and Dad was not a well person. She was the middle of five children and none were pushed, so they had to find their own way. Twink went to work in the Co-op florist in Welling where she learnt a lot, making wreaths and arrangements, as well as learning the world of flowers (and the mark-up!). After two years there she married Edd, just when he was about to enter the army (conscription by then was coming to an end).

Edd also left school at 15, as was the norm, having been told by his least favourite teacher that he would end up in the gutter. This neither deterred nor spurred him on, but he got a job in road transport as a driver's mate, which led him into driving large lorries. Edd was (and still is) a natural maker and mender. He taught himself mechanics for large vehicles, and evolved into a mechanic. He had no qualifications, but his last job was running a heavy vehicle workshop for a plant hire firm.

Edd drove mainly long haul trips in the UK, and all told had 3 brake failures and fell asleep at the wheel 3 times. This was before tachographs and MOTs came in with the 1968 Traffic Act. In one job he drove to Sheffield with scrap metal and back with coal, and as he braked coming down into Sheffield, with Twink and children also in the cab, there was no air in the brakes so nothing happened. I expect nowadays he would have prayed, but back then he had to wait for air to build up, using steering to avoid a collision. The brakes recovered enough to keep them safe, and Twink never knew until much more recently!

Twink went on from the florist to have many part-time jobs – Sidney Ross toyshop in Woolwich, Woolworths sweet counter, Dewhurst accounts, a wet fish shop, gardening, and lastly Asda checkout for 14 years which she loved. She is good at talking

and helping people. More recently, she volunteered in the Chapel at Queen Mary's hospital, assisting three wards. She spent many occasions sitting with dying patients, and with relatives in the Chapel of Rest at the Crematorium. This team has been disbanded but she continued to volunteer on Wednesdays for several years.

In 1979 Edd and Twink had moved to Lincolnshire to run a kennel, starting a smallholding instead. They had a large farmhouse with lots of land, and slowly took on animals including 4 dogs, pigs, sheep, goats, rabbits, a horse and chickens. It was a hard but good life; they have lots of stories (ask if you're interested), but after 3 years they missed their family too much and returned to live in Welling.

Edd had a stroke in 1995 and was forced to retire early at 55. He was running commercial vehicles from a Plant Agent company in Dartford with cranes weighing 65 tons and lifting 80. He loved his work, had even worked as a barrow boy selling Christmas trees from the back of a lorry during slack times in the early days. It was after retirement that Edd and Twink stayed with friends who ran a small site for Christian caravan weekends, and found themselves in a marquee with worship music playing. Neither of them had been complete non-believers, and on this occasion they found themselves both crying and laughing. They made their way to St John's, and in Twink's words, "for the first 4 years I could not stop crying." This has been the experience of so many. Twink was baptised not that long after.

Kate Foot

It's your calling day

My name is Sharon Finch and I have been attending St John's for the last nine years. After a major operation on my brain in 2014, I believe that I felt a calling to learn more about my faith but was unsure why. After trying to ignore it for a while, praying and speaking to a good Christian friend, I had a chat with Adam and attended an **"It's your calling day"**. I felt apprehensive as to what the day would entail, but it was so good to learn that a calling from God can come in many forms and in the end I enjoyed the day.

This led me to applying to study the Foundation in Ministry course run by Rochester Diocese and I started in September 2015. Studying seemed an impossible mountain to climb because I had not come from a good educational

background and I was still healing from my brain surgery - the course was definitely adventurous! Paul says in Philippians 4:13, 'I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me', and without Jesus working through me, I can honestly say I would have given up at the first hurdle!

The course modules have been varied in looking deeper at topics such as, 'Mission and Ministry,' 'Bible and Belief' and, 'God's word in the World.' It is run one evening a week and occasional Saturday mornings at a church in Orpington and more recently at The Benedict Centre in West Malling. There is an essay and writing reflections on different theology methods for every module, which can be used as tools in any future ministry. I have had many firsts, like

Messy Light Party!

Thank you so much to the amazing team who help make Messy Church happen each month. You're all stars! And a particular thank you to those who brought about another great Light Party on the 31st October, this year Star Wars themed!



preparing and leading worship for my fellow students, helping to prepare a Service of the Word (putting together a service), and at the end of November 2016, I will be taking part in a debate on a challenging subject facing the world today.

I have been kindly supported by many of the St John's family and I feel so blessed that I am a part of such a loving network. So, if you think that God may be asking you to explore his calling on your life, speak with a trusted Christian friend, ask them to pray with you and who knows...

Sharon Finch