



GRAPEVINE

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New Year – Ask the Lord of the Harvest...

He told them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. (Luke 10:2)

How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!” (Romans 10:14-15)

Dear Friend,

If you have a bucket of water, your house is on fire and there are three fire-fighters asleep on a bench outside, where do you throw the water?

We are in the Father's business, and we follow the Son's example. Jesus told us to pray to ask the Lord of the Harvest to send out workers. We are both the ones called to ask, and the ones called to go! **We** have to speak to our

circle of friends, family, neighbours and colleagues, because we are the ones in that particular part of the harvest field and no one else is.

So we need to wake up and realise that no-one else is going to do it. We are the ones to show a little bit of courage, and tell them why God is important to us. Simply, “God gives me purpose in life”, or, “God gives me hope, or, “Jesus is there when I'm scared or lonely”. It doesn't have to be much, but we do need to speak. Our actions are important and back up our words, but faith comes by hearing. I know I keep on about it, but don't you want to be described as an owner of beautiful feet?

What is the worst that could happen? You *might* lose a friend (although I doubt it)—but you might just bring someone a step closer to God. If talking about God is hard, try talking about church and

your friends there: the fellowship, the support, the joy of belonging somewhere, of community, of what church is doing in the community...

I want to see the Kingdom of God grow in our community; as a measure of this I believe in Church Growth. I would love to see us growing in numbers, in fellowship, in worship, discipleship and faith.

Who are you going to pray for? Who are you going to invite to 'Just One' on the 8th July at the Emirates Stadium? Are you willing to go with them?

I am asking the Lord of the Harvest to send out workers; I am asking you to respond!

Many Blessings,

Adam Foot, Vicar

St John's News

Apparently 16th January, the current date as I write, is known as Black Monday, the day when people feel at their lowest with Christmas well and truly over, New Year resolutions irretrievably broken and Spring still in the dim distant future. I do hope that grey and cold though the weather may be and whatever 2017 holds, we are able to journey into it confident in the knowledge that the Christmas baby did not stay in the manger but is our living, loving Saviour who has promised never to leave or forsake us.

Our **Advent / Christmas sermon theme** this year was “**Being Prepared**” and I am so glad that together with a few others from St John's, I made the time to go to the Deanery Advent Prayer morning. It was beautifully led by Margaret Wooding Jones and provided a space that really did allow us to prepare for the season (although the Lamplighter Christmas Fayre on 18th November marked the real beginning of Christmas for many!!).

In her evening sermon on 8th January, Danielle confronted the danger we have as Christians of falling into the trap of celebrating Christmas only up to and including Christmas Day, as does the rest of our society. She proposed that maybe after Christmas should be the real celebration time. Food for thought!

The church Christmas cards were bundled up on 2nd December and then delivered by volunteers before the 11th, enabling people to know about the **Christingle Parade**, the first of our services. Over a hundred attended that lovely service at which Beverly explained how the Christian Gospel is encapsulated in the Christingle symbolism. Later that evening a group of us went **carol singing** round John Newton Court, enabling residents there to



experience the real reason for Christmas.

Toddler Club Christmas afternoon was a lovely celebration including a reminder that we too need to be prepared to meet with Jesus.

Carols by Candlelight was a lovely blend of traditional and modern Christmas worship which the *many* visitors clearly enjoyed, enabling them, also, to focus on the real reason for the season.

Messy Christmas on the 22nd December was yet another chance for families to meet together and celebrate. The Christmas Eve **Crib service** has a unique atmosphere as, for certainly the youngest attendees, it is their last event on Christmas Eve before bed, sleep and Christmas morning!

So, the lovely woolly Nativity scene grew as the service progressed (including the shepherd (continued inside...))



RESCUE



RESTORE



RESTRAIN



REPRESENT

Praying for justice

Adam and I attended the IJM (International Justice Mission) Prayer Gathering in November, along with others from St John's and Bexley who we found there when we arrived. It took place at St Paul's Church in Hammersmith, and as we passed the Hammersmith Apollo on exiting the tube station, Adam reminded me that he passed this way only a few months earlier with his brother, when they saw Status Quo for the first time for many years, and now the last (RIP Ricky Parfitt). The event ran from 10am -6.30pm and it contained information, prayer, exhortation and worship.

IJM gathers people in the UK together for a national prayer conference annually, and for that one day they pack a lot in to make the day as worthwhile as possible. They really do want people to be well informed and to pray. It was hard work! As well as sessions altogether with worship, interviews and talks, they had done really well offering plenty of

topics in different rooms in the venue, such as slavery, human trafficking, sexual abuse, cyber-sex trafficking

and having chosen in advance which four to attend, we received input from IJM staff/interns about more specifically what we could pray, and then we prayed.

I'm a person who is used to praying in different situations, and assimilating information quickly to use, but I found it challenging to jump into prayer on each occasion with people I didn't know about situations that were equally unknown, and engage with each situation more than just presenting a list of requests to God. I know that we are instructed to, "Pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests" (*Ephesians 6:18*), but still I found it hard. I suppose this is to be expected, as we were in a battle ground. During one of the four prayer sessions, I took



time out to spend in the quiet room, like a 24-7 Prayer Room, where one could simply spend time with God without praying out loud. There were stimuli to fashion prayer, including a mock-up of a sewing sweat shop, but there was less people contact and more time to think and pray on my own. This was a very thoughtful provision, so thank you IJM (and I did recognise that the floor cushions we share with Bishop Ridley had made it from Welling to Hammersmith for the occasion!).

In fact, as Steve Webster has been heading up IJM UK for the last year, all the masterminding had been down to him to pull the conference together, and I was really impressed. From IJM: "There are more than 45 million slaves across the world today. That's 5 times the population of London. This reality is overwhelming, but we are not overcome. Slavery can end in our lifetime if God's people lead the fight."

Kate Foot

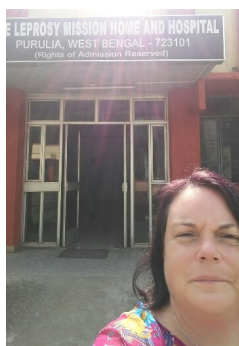
Visiting India

I was recently asked how long I have been a group leader/helper at Lamplighters and I was shocked when I worked it out – I started when Joe was four – so seven years! I still feel like I'm the 'newbie' (which I am compared to Jackie & Keith's amazing 50+ yrs!). Lamplighter evenings are fun and, although they can be challenging at times, I enjoy working with the children.

Last year's fabulous 50th birthday celebrations bought me an amazing new challenge: a trip to Purulia Hospital, India to see the work of TLM first hand! I thought I had learnt quite a bit about Leprosy over the years – a disease hard to catch and easy to cure but which blights the lives of the poor. I wondered why, in this modern world, we still needed TLM, and who they still supported.

The facts are true; leprosy is hard to catch and relatively easy to cure but what I saw in Purulia also showed me just how devastating leprosy can be and how TLM need our support, just as much today as they did fifty years ago.

TLM concentrate their efforts on eleven countries in Asia and Africa although the needs of individuals and communities affected by leprosy vary significantly between the nations in which they work.



with staff in these countries to provide and evaluate a range of projects. These help transform the lives of leprosy-affected people as well as working towards eradicating the causes of the disease.

TLM's work is broad and far-reaching. The combination of a disease which can have a devastatingly debilitating effect on the body and the stigma surrounding it means a unique and holistic approach is required to care for each person's needs.

While in Purulia I was privileged to meet, and stay in the home of, Dr Fam and Dr Joydeepa Darlong, visiting the hospital where I saw the evidence of TLM's difficult and demanding work. The doctors and their team work tirelessly at Purulia Hospital and beyond. They tend to the physical, social, spiritual and psychological needs of each leprosy-affected person they meet. Their reputation for steadfast support, care and knowledge is well-known and thousands of people have grown to depend upon the hospital. Their work is still in great demand.

The doctors work in a very old hospital with basic, dated equipment but they regularly perform modern day miracles. They never turn anyone away and help hundreds every day. These people are *all* processed through the Outpatients Department which is small and gets very crowded and very hot!

TLM's project for 2017 is to 'Transform Purulia Hospital'. They plan on building a new modern OPD for the hospital which will help enormously. I am proud that St John's along with Lamplighters are dedicated to raising as much money as possible for this project and that we have agreed to support Purulia Hospital directly for the next three years. I know this will make a vast difference to the doctors and the lives of many people. Thank you for helping me get to India; it was amazing and so are you!

Love and blessings,

Alison Read



They work closely

'He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.' Psalm 147:3 (NIV)

3dub (14-18ish y.o.)

"This is how everyone will recognize that you are my disciples—when they see the love you have for each other."

John 13:35 (The Message)

This is 3dub's Bible verse for the year, which we have decided to implement into our day-to-day lives. We hope it will allow us to strengthen our relationships with friends, family and Jesus. Thanks to this verse I can see 3dub members becoming even closer to each other over time.

Last term 3dub had the honour of serving at David and Sarah Foot's wedding (and at Jeff's surprise 30th birthday party in January!). It was a wonderful experience not just for those attending the wedding but those who were serving as well. We all got to witness them tying the knot before God and Dave's amazing Barbershop performance which I'm sure impressed us as much as it did Sarah!

During the lead up to Christmas 3dub carried on learning more about God whilst worshipping him. We learnt more about what God's done previously by going into detail about the birth of Jesus.



This taught us that the details themselves are not important but if you see the main message being portrayed then that is all that matters.

3dub also celebrated Christmas together; thanks to the Goldings for hosting! We had a good laugh and played a variety of games, including one which we like to call "The Sofa Game." It was boys vs girls and girls won 2-0 (girl-power I guess!). It's nights like this that encourage us to thank God for giving us amazing youth leaders who

provide comfortable places for us to come together to worship and participate in fun activities at the same time.

We've been truly blessed during the Autumn term and we thank Him for His

infinite love for us. Happy New Year everyone and may He richly bless you.

Luke Merrifield

Men's meal



To celebrate Christmas, the men of Bishop Ridley and St John's came together at the We Anchor In Hope - twenty from BR and forty-five from St John's! The staff were well prepared for the numbers and all enjoyed the occasion. I was the only person to miss out on a main meal due to somebody asking if there were any spares going (that person ate mine, as I was running around making sure all got what they asked for!). We've even been asked back again for next year!

Simon Caddock

Girls' Cell

My name is Ruby Finch and I have been going to Girls' Cell group every other week for about a year. Girls' Cell is currently on a Tuesday from 6.30- 8pm at St John's Vicarage.

Our group leaders are currently Laura and Nina and they both make the evening so much fun. Louise Russell was also a leader but recently left after helping us lots.

I bet you're wondering, what do we all get up to at Girls' Cell?!

We eat yummy biscuits and chocolate while relaxing on the comfy bean bags and sofas. We spend time reading the Bible, chatting and learn new things. Sometimes there are special Bible

related activities which may need us to do some writing! We also have a time to pray before we leave to go home.

When I asked the group what they liked about Girls' Cell they told me that they like the food, learning new things, being able to pray and relax together, and more important is that "There are two lovely people who help us!" (Laura and Nina).

Ruby Finch



This year at St John's in Welling has been magical for me. God has been so close to me and I love him lots. I thank Him for helping me and getting me through the bad times as well as the good times!

The Christingle service was great! We were given candles which represent the world which was lovely. It's great that as a church we can gather together and welcome so many to the various services over the Christmas period. I especially loved the nativity scene - it's so good to remind us of all the people involved in Jesus' early years on earth.

As I look back over the years I've realised that Christmas reminds me of how people have developed their faith, especially seeing so many friends, old and new, at the Midnight Communion service.

It's been a fun Christmas this year, as always! Thanks everyone for helping and supporting me throughout 2016.

Louise Moffatt

St J's News *cont...*

Christmas!

who arrived late...!), the children crowded round to gaze in before going home to bed.

The **Midnight Communion** service allowed many people to begin their celebrations at the very start of the day itself with the **Christmas Morning** service providing the opportunity to give Jesus centre-stage on His birthday. There were other opportunities to celebrate. **Housegroups** had Christmas celebration evenings, the **men's meal** was joint with Bishop Ridley and **St John's ladies** crowded into the 'Nags Head' for our evening out. It has been very good!

Church Family News: Chas and Wendy Cole continue to need our prayers, as do **Lionel King** and **Sammi Strong**. Congratulations to **Louise Mann** and family on the birth of her baby on 15th January!

So, on into the New Year: **Alpha** starts this week as I write, **JustOne** to pray and plan for in July, **SPARK in the Park**, our **Parish Weekend** in September... 2017 is looking better (and busier) already!

God Bless,

Estelle Woodcock

Bexley's 'Winter Night Shelter'

After some six months of much prayer, organisation, planning and arranging the first 'Winter Night Shelter' for rough sleepers in Bexley opened on Sunday 22nd January – Homeless Sunday. It seeks to provide a wholesome hot evening meal, safe, warm and comfortable sleeping accommodation and breakfast for up to twelve male 'guests'. The idea for this project originated from

folk wishing to donate clothes, food, toiletries etc. Several churches, schools, and hospitals have either donated goods or forwarded funds from collections and various events, and so we are again blessed with a good bank balance.

We are working on this project in association with Housing Justice – a

national organisation, both politically and charitably seeking to improve the situation for folk who find themselves in this

predicament for whatever reason. They led two half-morning training sessions for some 120 volunteers at Welling Baptist Church and, in all, at least 35 churches are involved in one way or another.

The guests have to be assessed to ensure that they are going to benefit from what we are offering, and assessments are carried

out by Cornerstone (for those in recovery. See the previous Grapevine, issue no. 25, to find out more!) at Trinity Baptist Church. So it's not just a walk-in-off-the-street set up – 'guests' do have to receive an invitation. We hope to run through to the end of March.

Please pray that:

- All the planned arrangements go smoothly; that the volunteers remember to turn up, and get along with one another.
- We will find and engage with rough sleepers and, wherever possible, help them to move on from this predicament.
- The evenings will run smoothly and safely and for the emotional tugs that will be involved – hearing people's situations, turning uninvited folk away, and then turning the guests out (sometimes into the cold and wet) at 8.15am in the morning.

Thank you,

Melvyn French



Transform Bexley Borough, made up of churches across the London Borough of Bexley. On Monday nights the venue is at New Community Church in Sidcup, on Wednesdays at the Boys' Brigade hall by Christ Church in Bexleyheath, and all other nights at the Salvation Army Hall in Welling. We have been blessed with some 150 people stepping forward to volunteer, many

The Annual Christmas Football Tourney



Twenty-one (plus lots of supporters!) turned up to play at the annual football tournament at Goals on the 27th December!



Hello from Strood!

Happy New Year to all of our friends at St John's. We'd like to thank everyone who's shared and showed their love to us, whether at our Wedding in the Land of Dragons, Blessing at St John's or housewarming in Strood. We don't know what we'd do without your support and prayers. We go could on and on with thank yous, but just a few to particularly mention.

Bev, for everything you and Nan have done to help us, putting up with me for two years and Phil for nearly thirty-two years! Thanks to our amazing Housegroup, especially our leaders Ken and Estelle. Thanks to Ken for being our photographer for both the wedding and blessing, Estelle for praying for us at the wedding, people

who used their musical talents and people who spent time travelling, whether it be 200 yards or over 200 miles. Thank you for your generosity in gifts, money or vouchers. They've been spent well.

Not to bring this to end on a sad note, but we've felt settled and welcomed already at Pip & Jim's Church in Walderslade. We've been asked to be part of the kids/youth work, and may possibly join the band and sound and we're looking forward to joining a small group. We will be back from time to time at St John's, our amazing house group and other St John's events. We love you all and we will keep in touch!

Bye bye for now. Love and blessings,

Lauren and Phil Beaumont

