



GRAPEVINE

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Intimacy with God

You have searched me, Lord, and you know me... For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made.

Psalm 139 v1; vv13-14

Hello there,

It's that time of year where many of us are embarking on new stages of our lives, perhaps bringing with them new challenges. A new term has arrived, some of our young people have started new schools, others have left for university. For some it may be a new job or perhaps even retirement. Each stage of our life can be a challenge, but as Christians we have the knowledge that we face each of these challenges with God. The God who knows each of us intimately, he was with us at the very beginning of our existence when he knit us together in our mother's womb and he is with us always.

Some of the St John's family went away on a church weekend to Ashburnham near Battle. We had a wonderful time learning how to grow in intimacy with God. Intimacy is what we call the experience of really knowing and being known by another person. If we have an intimate friend, they are someone we feel very close to; they probably know us at a deep level. It would be very difficult to get to know someone if we didn't spend time with them talking and listening. The same is true of with God; we need to spend time with him. How often we keep talking and forget to listen.

One of the blessings of the weekend was having some time to do just that. For some of us this can be a challenge in itself: how often in our busy 'doing' lives do we have the time to 'just be' in God's presence? It is a real gift to be given time with God. We all have our own way of being in God's presence. For me, I enjoy walking, taking in all the wonderful creation around me, getting away from the distractions that take my focus away from God. For others, it

may be sitting still and soaking up His grace. What is so great is that we are all individual and experience things on different levels and in different ways. God knows us so intimately that he meets us where we are and speaks in ways he knows we will recognise. It's so important in our hectic lives to invest in time with Him, whether that's first thing in the morning, on a commute to work, whilst walking the dog or in the bath. When we spend invest this time our relationship with God becomes deeper.

For those of us for which this new term is one of challenge, my prayer is that in seeking an intimate relationship with our living heavenly Father God, you will receive his peace; that you will have the courage to face this new stage with renewed strength, in the knowledge that you are fearfully and wonderfully made by the creator God who knows your challenges and holds you close.

Love in Christ,
Danielle Pearson-Smith (Curate)

St John's News

Memories of **SPARK in the Park** are already receding but before they fade we need to say loud and clear that it was another excellent week during which we were able to share faith and fun with many families. I was going to say, 'in our community', but it was interesting to discover how far families had travelled to be with us: Gravesend, Lewisham, Woolwich, Devon and Manchester! My best memory... that multi-coloured gunge!!

3dub joined with other local groups going to **Soul Survivor** and by all accounts had a wonderful time allowing faith and friendship to grow. Back in July, '**Inspire**' had a good day at Burrswood Healing Centre. This much appreciated group is now well into its second year.

Just after SPARK we had to say goodbye to **Nina Doll** our lovely CRiBS Gap Year student, but we are already getting to know **Fiona Kramb** who is with CRiBS and us

this year and has already successfully weathered the Church Weekend after only eight days in England! It gave her an opportunity to meet and make many new friends!

We then had to say goodbye to lovely **Louise Russell** who is working with the L'Arche community in France for the next year. My housegroup, Girls' Cell, Inspire, Dubsters, Messy Church, Worship Groups, Jesus Kidz... have all so appreciated your gracious and wise input, flute playing, accompanied by an infectious smile and chuckle, and will miss her enormously.

We were saddened and shocked to hear of **Alan Haines'** sudden death early in August but were so glad to know that Stephen Broadie was with him and the family when he died. We continue to pray for Ann and the family as they face life without Alan. Many apologies to **Claire Levent** for managing to omit her in the list of those confirmed in June, but equally inefficiently, including Luke who wasn't!

This is the season for change:

- **Adam** is about to take up the role of Area Dean (not sure what that entails? Try and find out without asking him!!).
- **Natasha Cook** is our new church administrator, from 13th September.
- **Nicola Foot** is working with IJM as well as completing her Masters.
- **Sean Hill** is starting at university and **James Belsham** is beginning a gap year in Germany. **Rachel Belsham** is back in Welling after completing her MA.
- **Ruby Finch, Casey Watson** and **Joe Read** are settling into secondary school and **Rosie Dowsett** and **Katy Coates** into Reception.
- And by the time you read this, **Danielle** and **Wendy (Carr)** will have been ordained Priest and Deacon respectively!

Let's pray for them all as they adjust to changes in routine and responsibilities.

So on into Autumn, **Alpha**, and doubtless new challenges. Till December (yes really!), **Estelle Woodcock**

fun. I
also did
a range
of craft
activities

A large crowd of people, mostly children and families, sitting on a grassy field for a community event. Many are wearing yellow shirts, and some are holding signs. The background shows trees and a clear sky.

Towards the end of the week I found it a struggle keeping my moral up - I think due to sheer tiredness - but everyone was really supportive and told me that if I needed time out just to let them know and they would cover for me, which was really nice.

Overall I thoroughly enjoyed the whole experience as part of my journey into exploring Christianity and I hope to volunteer again next year.

'A massive THANK YOU for an amazing week. Both kiddies have had so much fun, made some lovely things and are very sad it's over. Thank you to everyone who worked so hard to put this on - we all feel hugely blessed by you all.'

'Very well organised and lots of info available if wanted. My boy loved it and asked to go again.'

Hannah Wood

Drawn to
a close



For many years, I have heard stories of awful injustice around the world, and eventually my anger at it and desire to see it stop was too much to simply be something about which I heard or prayed. It needed to become work. And so, in addition to studying for my masters in International Human Rights Law, I started working for IJM at the beginning of August.

A few weeks ago I was

What sickening, disgusting behaviour. Thank goodness that the Holy Spirit moved his people to act to end the slave trade. And that's what he's continuing to do now: moving his people to pray and to act to bring an end to modern-day slavery for those unprotected by law.

Come and pray with us on the 4th November. Prayer is tipping the scales on to the side of justice.

Over the eight years I have seen players change and mature both from my team and others'; seen the impact of the 30-40 teams and churches who regularly play in this league on the community; seen the evolution of Christian football; and made good relationships both within my team and with other teams.



Robert Still

PRAY to end slavery. **For good**



INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE MISSION'S
NATIONAL
PRAYER GATHERING

ST PAUL'S HAMMERSMITH
SATURDAY 4TH NOVEMBER 2017
10AM - 5PM

JOIN US: IJMUK.ORG/NPG



Louise at L'Arche

I'm spending a year living and working in a L'Arche community in France for adults with learning disabilities.

When there's too much for me to process, and therefore write coherently, I'm tempted not to write at all for others to read. I'll never be able to capture the essence of L'Arche, but here are some of my thoughts after my first month.

- Everyone's characters are vivid here - residents and assistants alike - like in a well-written novel. It's a product of a well-developed culture of valuing people as they are, weaknesses included.
- I love French food. We eat well, with 2-3 courses for lunch and dinner. Meals are a ritual which bring us together as a community - a concept with strong



roots in both French and Christian tradition.

- Operating in a foreign language is truly exhausting and has been a real knock to my confidence. Every time I open my mouth, I make mistakes. I don't like making mistakes. It is gradually getting easier - both to understand what's going on and to make mistakes!
- God is helping me so much, every day - it's almost tangible. He turns my anxieties and fatigue into a joy and a sense of adventure as I anticipate how He will turn around each daily challenge.
- I've just about learnt how to follow the Catholic Mass service in French. It's our tradition to hold hands for the Lord's Prayer within the L'Arche community, and I love that we automatically do the same in services out at the local churches. L'Arche is

Catholic in foundation, but ecumenical in its welcome. I'm looking forward to leading some storytelling and prayer in the daily morning prayer times.

- This is a place of welcome. The residents are called *personnes accueillies* - 'welcomed persons' - but it is in fact they who show the most beautiful welcome to the new assistants every year.
- I'm out of the boat - my comfort zone - and you helped me get here. I was overwhelmed by the amount of love and encouragement shown to me by you as my Church family whilst I was making my decision to go and before I left. Thank you so much.

If you're interested in finding out more, a film all about L'Arche, *Summer in the Forest*, was shown in UK cinemas earlier this year and is now available to buy and stream online - I recommend it!

Louise Russell

St Werburgh's Derby

For those of you who don't know me, I'm Estelle Woodcock's son, Andy Bond. My wife Rachel and I were members of St John's for a very long time before I went to train for ordination. We, along with our kids Tibby and Caleb, got to join you on the parish weekend which was great and a number were asking what we are now up to, so here's a little update:

I have just finished my curacy at Holy Trinity SE20 in Penge and we are now part of a team planting St Werburgh's Church in the centre of Derby. St Werburgh's was a church that was built in the 1700s and once had a thriving congregation in the mid 20th Century. However the building became a burden and in the 1980s the congregation was joined and moved to St Alkmund's Church. The building was sold off. St Werburgh's was deconsecrated and used as an indoor market and even a Chinese restaurant but for the last 7 years has been entirely closed. It is in the centre of the city, a short walk from the cathedral and next to lots of restaurants and clubs.

Fast forward to 2017..... The Church Commissioners are the trust that manages all the Church of England's historic investments. They have billions of pounds under management; however there is a stipulation that monies cannot be used

to privilege one generation over another and that the monies always have to be available to fund the ministry of the CoE. However, there has been recent recognition that as a denomination we are in a hole and there are significant monies being released to dioceses for mission projects (i.e. not for just mending a church roof or to prop up a struggling church). A couple of years ago Ric Thorpe was installed in a newly created post as Bishop of Islington and one of his roles is to oversee the creation of new worshipping communities - including fresh expressions of church and church plants.

One of the main players in this Church of England movement of starting (planting) or grafting (significantly resourcing an existing church) is Holy Trinity Brompton (HTB of Alpha fame) and churches in its network. Up until about 8 years ago HTB had planted a number of churches in London and then they had a go in Brighton where St Peter's was planted. Since then there have been major plants into many English cities and St Peter's itself (and others) has started planting. The aim is to plant churches which then themselves plant churches. This term the HTB network is starting 5 new churches: Crawley, Coventry, Fiveways in Brighton, West Molesey and DERBY!!!!



And so Rach and I join a team of 22 (including children) starting this church in Derby.

We launched on 17th September and had an

incredible turnout of friends, local church members and potential congregation. Our aim: "We want to build an authentic community, which is Christ centred, that plays our part in transforming the city and beyond." We fully recognise that there are some great churches already in Derby, we are not coming in to "save the city" and God is already at work here, so we want to join in with Him and His mission to this city.

As a family we are excited about moving to a new place, being close to the peak district and not feeling as claustrophobic as in Penge! At the same time, it is the furthest north we have ever lived, Tibby is having to change schools and we will be quite a distance from family and most of our established friends. We would of course be grateful for your prayers as without prayer and the power of the Holy Spirit, the money, the resources and the network are a waste of time!

If you would like to follow what is going on do check out stwderby.org (under construction) or on Facebook, Twitter or Instagram.

Andy Bond

Church Weekend

The 2017 Parish Weekend Away was a great experience for me. I hadn't been since the last time Andy and Margaret were leading, which was many years ago, and I still remember their series on Hebrews 12, 'Run the Race', which I think goes to show that the teaching from them was brilliant. It was yet again this year!

I enjoyed it more this time around: mingling with different people at each meal, worshipping at the top of my voice from the corner of the hall where my chair was strategically placed to give me room to move and groove, spending an afternoon doing crafts (more on this later), and enjoying alone time with God, which may have been an order from Margaret but was absolutely amazing! I enjoyed the extra challenge of not being allowed to talk to anyone except God for a whole hour - I nearly blew it when I wanted to thank someone for holding a door open for me! I enjoyed judging the Lego robot competition at the church family fun night,



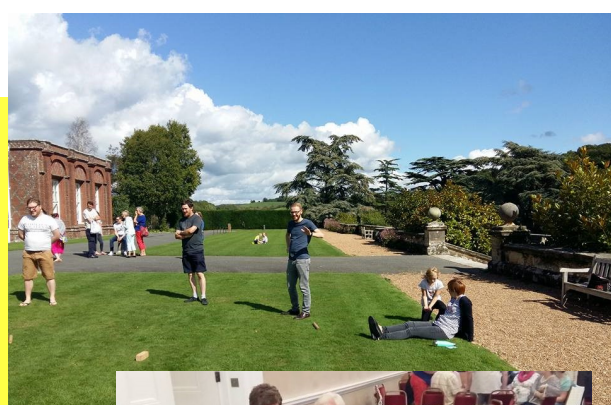
and I cannot forget to mention the dress up phase: what a fabulous Eve Doreen made!

Saturday afternoon was either free-time or craft-time and obviously I chose craft. We could decorate bowls or plates and for me this was another opportunity to communicate with God as I best hear God through creative means. The kingfisher I drew on the inside of a bowl to accompany John 7:38 ended up being only the beginning of a bigger project God had in mind for me.

A definite highlight was having the privilege to pray for the next phase of Andy and Rachel Bond's lives as they have had such an impact on my walk with God. I think that doing this at the end of the weekend really sums up the family aspect of the church weekend away. I really encourage others to come along next time and grow closer to God and one another.

God bless you, my lovely family.

Linzi Golding



Soul Survivor

This year was my first time at Soul Survivor and I was not a Christian at the time. I had no idea what to expect. The thought of two services every day sounded quite boring, but once I got there I realised it was going to be special. The services were by far the highlight of my experience. There were thousands of people singing, dancing and worshipping and it was the most inspiring thing for someone who had not yet found faith.

The services also included prophecy from Mike Pilavachi. I had heard of prophecy before but it sounded impossible until I saw it for myself. The third section of the service was prayer. People who received prayer reacted in different ways; some laughed, some cried, some felt at peace, some shook and some fell on the floor. Again, I had heard of this before but it was something I had to see for myself to believe. Seeing these things convinced me once and for all that God is definitely there, because between the prophecy and prayer, there is no way this could be faked or coincidence.



One of my favourite parts of Soul was getting to really bond with people from 3Dub, the youth leaders and people from other youth groups. We made some really strong friendships which have lasted since we have got back home. I can't wait to see God's plan for all of us in the future, and can't wait to go back next year!

Sophie Banks

Our housegroup

We are the Wednesday housegroup led by Ray and Val Gompers. Our meetings change location quite frequently so that we can cater for those in the group who need childcare. Ray and Val are incredibly dedicated to the care and growth of every one of us and go out of their way to support us all, including running a little taxi firm on Wednesday nights!

Ray keeps us all challenged in the study with his never ending surplus of knowledge and we take twice as long as other housegroups to complete a study series because we do half a study and still finish close to 11pm! Eek! Sometimes, we don't do a study at all and spend the entire evening lost in worship and prayer; it all depends on how the Holy Spirit leads us. We are known to our loved ones as 'the cake eaters' due to our need to meet over tea and cake!

We have a Whoseapp group (sorry, inside joke - WhatsApp) where we are in frequent contact, sharing our prayer requests and stories of where we have seen God moving in our lives. We have a simple but funky way to reveal the night's location (see image).



For a long time Ray was the only man in the group surrounded by women: Val (obviously), Carol, Caroline, Lena, Louise and Linzi, but we now enjoy the company of Dave and Abby. Yes, Ray now has another man in the group, although the women can still chat as if they're not there!

At a housegroup meeting you can enjoy Bible study, prayer, cool stories of God's awesomeness, singing worship and most definitely laughter (normally because Linzi has said something inappropriate or something nobody else understands!). Please come and join our warm and caring group; we'd love to see you! You don't need to bring your own cake.

Ray & Val's Housegroup

