

GRAPEvine

grapevine@stjohnswelling.org.uk www.stjohnswelling.org.uk 020 8303 1107 editors: David and Nicola Foot

View from the Vicarage

*No love that in a family dwells,
No carolling in frosty air,
Nor all the steeple-shaking bells
Can with this single Truth compare -
That God was Man in Palestine
And lives to-day in Bread and Wine.*

(Christmas by John Betjeman)

amazing grace gift of relationship with God.

We will hopefully be blessed with times of fun and celebration with family and friends, but do make sure you celebrate with your church family, to worship Christ – God made man – and to enjoy the peace on

earth that comes from knowing God is in control.

This should provide a welcome break from the hopelessness and sadness that fills our news.

This Christmas, enjoy unwrapping this present from God, wherever you are.

God bless you,

Adam

Dear Friends,

We approach a most wonderful time of year – when we celebrate the amazing truth that God chose to dwell on earth, to change the judgement of a law based system which we cannot live up to, to the



CHRISTMAS BLESSINGS

Sunday 10th 5pm Christingle
Sunday 17th 6.30pm
Carols by Candlelight

Christmas Eve
10.30am Nativity
6pm Crib Service (1/2 hour)
11.30pm Midnight Communion

Christmas Day
10.30am Family Carols

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The Hope of Christmas

Service included two adult Baptisms and Sophie Banks and Abby Still re-affirming their faith.

I have already mentioned Harry Hall's death. Harry has played a key role in St John's life for many years; it is hard to

speak of him in the past tense and accept that we won't see him again this side of Heaven. We continue to pray for Sheila and the family.

As I write we have just had Remembrance Sunday when we remembered those who sacrificed their lives in war, those who have died particularly this last year, and brought our shoeboxes filled with Christmas gifts for children we will almost certainly never see but many of whom are the victims of current wars. With Remembrance Sunday over, Christmas is just on the horizon... Thank God we know and can celebrate the Reason for the Season!

So, till 2018,

Estelle Woodcock

Festival, rather strange but it enabled the Jesus Kidz groups to think about Harvest rather more in depth than a Parade allows. How do I know? I was there!

Evening Alpha is drawing to a close with members wanting to continue on their journey with Jesus. On a practical note, it has been so good to have some new cooks helping with the meals. The morning Alpha group is rescheduled to start in January - exciting times!

The Family Light Party on October 31st was a great evening of fun, focussing on the light that Jesus can bring to each one of us. Catering from the vestry WAS a challenge (Cubs and Beavers were using the hall) but it was achieved with efficiency and good fun. The November Transform

St John's News

I suspect many of us will remember October 2017 as the month of many concerts... well two to be precise, and both in honour of Doug's 60th birthday. On his actual birthday he gave us an excellent concert concluding with the Hallelujah Chorus which he dedicated to Harry Hall who sadly died later that same afternoon. Then, on the Saturday the best kept secret of the year was finally revealed as Peter's incredible work of training both a large choir and orchestra culminated in a concert for, not by, Doug during which his interests and life were highlighted with the various musical items! It was such fun with Doug entering into the spirit of the occasion waving a small flag as the orchestra played music from Thomas the Tank Engine.

We have recently been challenged by sermons on International Justice Mission with Steve and Street Pastors with Kate. We celebrated our first non-Parade Harvest

Dubsters

As Louise Russell followed her calling to France, I have taken on my own calling, stepping into being a Dubsters' leader. I continue to be so encouraged by our young people, whose unwavering faith and love for God helps me to be challenged, to be enthusiastic and, in seasons of doubt, to step out of a very safe and comfortable boat.

In November Dubsters' member Issy from All Saints, Belvedere was confirmed and this term we have welcomed three new members. We also enjoyed being witnesses at the baptism and reaffirmation service, whilst baking sweet treats for those who came. We have covered friendship, forgiveness and the power of light over darkness, enjoying a treasure hunt in the dark church!

With Christmas fast approaching, Dubsters have started looking at how Christ's death and resurrection, power and grace can be found threaded through the story, 'The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe' by C.S Lewis, where it is always winter but never Christmas. We have started by reading about Edmond and his temptation, whilst

trying NOT to eat sweets! In the coming weeks the story will help remind us that God loves us even in our weaknesses and, like Aslan the lion, he suffered, died and rose again because of his great love for us. It's a great story!

I have recently been reading about Joshua and how even though he trusted God, he couldn't overcome Amalek and his people alone. Through the character of Joshua we know that humility, courage and faith can empower Christians to become great leaders. By serving God through fellowship and prayer we can encourage friends, family and those in our care to grow in faith. Joshua's experiences teach us that we should never walk the path of God alone. Joshua needed God but he also needed his friends and comrades! I believe that as leaders and young people we can learn a lot from Joshua and his experiences.

I cannot begin to explain how exciting it is when God's meets with us in the hall! Please continue to pray for us, that we can build even closer relationships whilst continuing to praise God and welcome Him to work in our church hall and in our lives.

Katharine Rose

TOFFs



In October 2015 Mike and I moved to the South East from the Midlands. We felt God was calling us to St John's and we started to attend on a Sunday. I liked the sound of TOFFs (for the over 55s), which happens on a Wednesday afternoon once a month except for the month of August. So I went along. The group has a speaker or an entertainer each month and we seem to eat often which I love. Greeted on the door by Sylvia Costi, Terry Stewart and Yvonne Kaul, who keeps an overview of what is happening, ably assisted by Fred. I love the camaraderie and I tend to sit wherever there is a space but mostly with Joan, Val, Barbara, Georgina, Anita and Diane. The group is friendly and we can always find something to talk about. We have a thought for the day each time we meet and often people from the fellowship do this spot even if they don't come regularly to TOFFs.

If you are over 55 and would enjoy a Wednesday afternoon in the company of some really lovely people why not give TOFFs a visit? 2pm first Wednesday of the month in the Church hall. I can guarantee a very warm welcome. Yvonne, Terry or Sylvia would be able to tell you more about TOFFs and let you have a programme of what is going on each month.

Jenny Cosser

Back home

Three months ago I had to say goodbye to St John's and to England and make my way back to Germany. I had a wonderful time during my gap year with you and I was really sad to leave.

Back in Germany, I started to study, "International HR Management" at university and I am really happy there. I have made lots of new friends and I really like my courses. My church welcomed me warmly and we're thinking about me become the person who translates our Sunday services for English speaking church members, which is a great task for me!



I am happy that coming back to Germany wasn't as hard as I expected at all, but I still miss St John's, CRiBS and my host family and friends a lot. It's great to still hear about you and what's going on on social media! Hopefully I'll be back to visit soon and I am excited to see you all again!

Nina Doll

Tyndall Road



The Tyndall Road Housegroup came into existence fourteen years ago when the group needed to relocate – Harry Hall offered his house. In the first few years the membership varied as people moved away and three members formed a new Housegroup after leading an Alpha course. However, for about the last ten years the group has stayed fairly static and currently has ten members (Harry and Sylvia Costi, Sheila Hall, Roger and Trish Large, Haydn and Chris Moyle, Steve and Barbara Rouse, Doug Snow).

Sadly, Harry Hall who was a member since the group's inception died last month. Harry played a key role and produced much thoughtful input into the Housegroup, always being willing to challenge a view with which he disagreed and sometimes upsetting the apple cart with a controversial thought. He was happy to lead from time to time. We are pleased the material the Housegroup are studying this autumn term ("Making Good Sense of the Bible") came about from Harry's detailed research back in July.

The format of our meetings is fairly standard, with refreshments at the start; notices; study; prayer. Prayer includes going around the members to see if they have any specific needs or requests. For a number of reasons, the last year has been particularly challenging for the group, and we prayerfully wondered whether the group should cease. But a change of evening to Thursday and not meeting on the last Thursday of the month, has given the group fresh impetus.

An article on about our group would not be complete without mentioning laughter – yes we are not always a serious group! Most weeks hilarity occurs at some point. As they say, "a good laugh can be compared to a mild workout, as it exercises the muscles, gets the blood flowing, decreases blood pressure and stress hormones, improves sleep patterns and boosts the immune system."

Finally, our study this term has reminded some of us of the following chorus:

*Read your Bible, pray every day, pray every day, pray every day.
Read your Bible, pray every day, if you want to grow.
If you want to grow, if you want to grow,
read your Bible, pray every day, if you want to grow.*

Doug Snow

60 Not Out...

It was some months ago that a few of us first discussed the possibility of throwing a surprise 60th birthday concert for Doug, an idea which rapidly captured the enthusiasm of many within the church. However, as the wheels started turning it became apparent that careful planning at every stage would be necessary to realise our vision – which included finding alternative venues for rehearsing the choir, not to mention securing an audience whilst simultaneously keeping public knowledge of the event concealed wherever possible!

Of course, the man himself remained blissfully unaware of such activity taking place and in fact on several occasions inadvertently contrived to derail our plans – not least by selecting many of the items earmarked for the surprise concert for his own celebrations in June!

As a result, with a modified running order in place and scoring underway, attentions turned to securing performers for the big day. Naturally with such an ambitious programme in mind some additional instruments were required for the Concert Band and local guests were hired to supplement musicians from within the church, notably saxophonists Josh and Luke (signed up after their impressive playing during the Marriage Course party) whilst flautist Juliet discovered she was

taking part when her own mother volunteered her services!

Recruiting numbers for our extended choir proved more straightforward, as many past members of the Singing Group expressed an eagerness to return and help pay tribute to our guest of honour. As the big day started to loom large on the horizon the number of people who came forward to offer their services in whatever capacity was required was incredibly touching and serves to underline just how highly Doug is regarded by those who know him.

And so it was that at 1.30pm on Saturday 14th October, with all the planning and rehearsals complete, the stage was set with the eyes of both performers and audience alike trained on the door waiting in

anticipation for Doug to appear... the atmosphere that erupted and the applause which accompanied his walk down the centre aisle went on for quite some time!

With both the audience and guest of honour in place the concert kicked off as Doug, with composure slowly returning, watched events unfold with no small amount of curiosity having been denied access to the program! The first half, which encompassed a wide range of musical styles, included a beautiful rendition of 'Locus Iste' by the choir and memorable version of 'Thomas The Tank Engine' by the Brass Quintet whilst Park Street stole the show with their barbershop medley which incorporated some of Doug's favourite hymns.

The atmosphere upfront was vibrant, with the band full of energy and the choir smiling throughout – meanwhile Simon and Luke did a fantastic job dashing backwards and forwards removing and replacing stands and microphones in between items. We need never have worried how our endeavours were being received by the guest of honour as stories emerged the next day of his flag-waving escapades during the Pomp and Circumstance in true 'Last Night of the Proms' fashion!

The second half was structured to represent a celebration of Doug's work and ministry, complete with participation from the man himself. It goes without saying that he was more than happy to oblige,

conducting the choir for 'Sing Lullaby' and joining the Concert Band for an unforgettable performance of (what else?) the Toccata by Widor. There was even time for some encores, including a rousing rendition of Happy Birthday – which set everyone up nicely for the delicious selection of cakes awaiting in the hall, thanks to Wendy and Yvonne for organising the catering and decorations which added to an already special occasion.

By his own admission, it has taken our guest of honour many weeks to come down from Cloud 9 (his own words!) and Doug has frequently remarked at length on what a 'splendid affair' the concert was so thank you to each and every person who contributed in some way towards making the afternoon such a success!!



Playgroup

Playgroup has had a very busy term so far. We have settled in lots of new children and had great fun. In September we held a big Coffee morning to raise money for MacMillan cancer research. In October we all went to Danson Park for our Autumn Walk and followed it with another coffee morning which was well attended by parents and visitors.

This month we are going to hold a coffee morning to raise money for Children in Need and we will be dressed in Pudsey style! On 6th December we are going to do our Nativity play to all of the parents and carers which will be great fun! We will finish the term with a visit from Santa and a Christmas party :)

We continue to teach the children how to pray and we learn stories from the Bible as well as singing worship songs.

Thank you to the people who continue to support us every week and to the Playgroup Council for all their hard work.

God Bless,

Julie Stedman and the Playgroup team



Moving to Welling

Hello my name is Fiona. As most of you know by now, I am from Germany. I live in the west, in a city called Essen. I'm 18 and I graduated from school this year.

When I thought about what to do after school I felt like going straight from school to university wasn't the right thing for me so I decided to look into what I could do on a gap year. This is when I found out about the CRiBS gap year programme. CRiBS is an organization that teaches RE in primary schools, alongside work in secondary schools and intervention work with children through their b:You and Boys Noise which can help children to grow emotional stability and learn how to control and understand their feelings. When I read the programme I felt like it would be a perfect opportunity for me to serve God and to grow more in faith. I am also thinking of becoming a teacher so everything seemed to fit perfectly.



I decided to give it a try, said goodbye to my family and friends and flew to London. And now I am here in Welling, living with my lovely and caring host family. Besides my work with CRiBS I am also working here with St John's. Currently, I am helping in 3Dub and Girls' Cell. I am also involved in Messy Church and Jesus Kids. I help with preparations or organising food and sometimes I'm just there to support.

I'm really enjoying my time here a lot and am thankful for all the lovely and kind people God has sent me. Thank you to everyone who has made my first few months so enjoyable. It was a great help for me as I was able to settle in quickly. I am looking forward to the next months and am excited to see what God has planned.

Thank you!
Fiona Kramb

Roulla and Joe

Roulla was born in the Greek side of Cyprus and lived there until she was 14. Her dad moved to England when she was 3, leaving her mum looking after 6 children. Her mum worked HARD, but in order to get enough work they moved to the capital Nicosia. After 2 of Roulla's older siblings moved to the UK, her mum visited, then moved here with the younger children on 15th September 1971.

Roulla's first job was part time in a Wimpy Bar. From this she moved into full-time work at BHS in the shoe department for 4 months, and from there into the office of a building firm photocopying plans and delivering post for 2-3 years, with a short spell working for a wholesaler in East London. Her brother-in-law trained her as a dental nurse, and before that she worked in the New Covent Garden Market office.

Roulla met her first husband at English classes. Her 2 daughters were born in '84 and '86, and while they were young she worked in a pre-school for 16 years and then as an LSA (Learning Support Assistant) for 10 years in a primary school, both in Peckham. She has just dropped back to part-time. I asked what Roulla liked about her work. She said seeing how young children develop and learn, and knowing that you helped them to do that.

Roulla and Joe live in Grove Park, where Joe lived for 15 years before they met. When he first met Roulla, she lived in Rotherhithe (having been brought to Alpha by a friend here) and commuted to St John's. I asked how she found that. "It's hard to become part of the community and keep up with people, what's going on and feel connected. If I went to a local church,

that might be easier. Where do I belong? In some ways I still feel like a foreigner!"



Meanwhile Joe, who was born and brought up in Malta, started his working life in the Maltese Navy, to which he signed up for 5 years. After 3, he was offered redundancy or transfer to England, being a Commonwealth citizen. He chose the latter and fulfilled a commission in which he travelled to Gibraltar and Morocco on HMS Fife. He had always wanted to travel and had made his early career as a Navy Chef. After discharge, he spent 6 months looking for work in Malta before deciding to move to England, arriving on 21st Sept 1971.

The first work he found was as a chef in the Grand Metropolitan Hotel near Clarence House in Victoria. Hotel kitchens have more segregated tasks in the kitchens than in restaurants so are not so chaotic, which suited Joe well. He worked at the Grand Met for 6 years, initially renewing his work permit every year until the Home Office decided after the 2nd renewal that he could have a 3 year permit and could work in another company and be free to move around.

It was while he was in his next job in a Hotel in Maida Vale that he met his first wife in a pub in Victoria. They had 3 daughters and 38 years of happy marriage before she was diagnosed with a brain tumour in 1998. She was operated upon and spent 9 months with treatment at Kings before a

Knitted Poppies

Last year at Craft Club we knitted our poppies to wear for Remembrance Day. Then early this year I heard from fellow members of the Church of England Flower Arrangers that they had knitted poppies for displays in their various churches.



So, not to be outdone, I suggested to Sheila Clarke that we do likewise and appeal to knitters in the congregation and Craft Club to knit poppies for us. We wanted 96 altogether to represent each name on the war memorial. Doubts were expressed as to whether we would get the number we wanted. BUT we appealed, gave out patterns and the wool (which the Craft Club provided) and by the week before Remembrance we had received 145 poppies! The extra ones were quickly sold for the British Legion appeal.

We made a display by tying the flowers onto a piece of fishing net placed over a length of artificial grass which was then laid over the small communion table. It was doubtless admired by the friends at the Remembrance Day services and no doubt it will be used again. THANK YOU again to all those who so diligently knitted.

Doreen Pride

further operation took half her mobility and she moved to a nursing home in Sidcup where Joe could visit her every day. She finally passed away in 2000.

Joe was a chef until he had to provide for a wife and child, when he looked for better paid work. He found it with London Transport, first as a train guard (for a week!) then a platform guard (now station assistants). After 3 years he was promoted to Foreman and moved from station to station. Did he enjoy it? It provided for the family! He stayed there for 38 years and progressed to Station Supervisor (now managers), and despite antisocial hours he took whatever extra hours were offered to him. He now enjoys retirement, especially working his allotment.

Joe met Roulla in Surrey Quays Tavern in Rotherhithe pub when Roulla walked in with a friend. They married in 2013 so now have a blended family with five daughters and two grandchildren, mostly, but not all, in the UK. Joe still has relatives in Malta whom he visits from time to time, and they enjoy overseas travel together. Roulla is a member of a St John's housegroup, and Joe joins them on occasions.

Kate Foot