

GRAPEVINE

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Join us and make Jesus your star..

been years for you. Maybe the star isn't shining as bright – the

So reads our Christmas card. What draws you to celebrate Christmas? Is it, like the shepherds, the call of the angels? Maybe because of so many revisited Christmases it is more of an echo of angels heard in the carols played in the shops, on the radio. Do you, like the shepherds, 'hurry down to Bethlehem'. I know it can be hard to get excited once more. Maybe that is because we have lost the wonder of the truth – as Betjeman wrote 'That God was man in Palestine.' Now that is worth another look, another 'hurry down to Bethlehem' to gaze in wonder at the miracle of God breaking into our lives in our frail form to shatter history and make a way for the future.



amazing thing is His love for us shines just as bright as when that star was first lit. If knowledge has driven us to seek Jesus, it must be love that keeps us in his presence: "to be in your presence, to sit at your feet, where your love surrounds me, and makes me complete, this is my desire O Lord".

So how many shopping days to Christmas? Better question is how am I going to use Advent to get me ready to meet the King of Kings born in a stable so on the 25th we can 'awake and meet the happy morn'.

evidence – drawn by the star that keeps you looking. It took them years to search and find, and maybe it has

Happy Christmas – have a good one.

Adam Foot

St John's News

Well, that summer seems to have gone. So here we are at the end of Autumn which around St John's seems to have been particularly busy in Advent, with Christmas just around the corner. Special courses have included the continuation of Everyday Supernatural and Alpha Youth, the first taking place in St John's most Monday evenings and the second at Bexley Christian Life Centre, where a group of 30+ young teenagers from a number of churches have been meeting each Sunday evening from 5pm. Both courses are enabling and encouraging a living faith in a Living powerful God, the best way anyone can possibly live!

The Morning Sermon series on Ephesians has also been challenging us to put our faith into practice... no wonder this Autumn has been busy!

Special services have included Healing, Harvest, Remembrance and Memorial. These have all encouraged those of us who manage to worship regularly and those who have come especially to a service, to encounter God's love, truth and peace.

Special events have included two for families with Primary aged Children: the Light Party on Halloween when they were able to celebrate light rather than darkness, and the Home for Good Film Night which combined food and fun with fund raising for Home for Good.

The Sunday afternoon of October 28th found the church hall turned into a tea room in which a tea party was taking

place, hosted by those of us celebrating significant birthdays during 2019 and our guests? Everybody at St Johns who could make it!

Family News: Many of us were delighted to join with Pete and Dawn Smithers as they celebrated their wedding on October 5th.

Some of us had the sad privilege of attending Jean Martin's funeral (Jean was much loved by Messy Church and Jesus kidz until ill health prevented from her from attending anything).

Christmas will be all around us by the time you read this... what an opportunity to share who and why we celebrate!

So Happy Christmas and Happy New Year!

Estelle Woodcock

EVERYDAY SUPERNATURAL

Living a Spirit-Led Life
without Being Weird

So we have come to the end of this course – but what was it all about?

“Most of us believe in God’s power. Yet few of us see evidence of His supernatural gifts in our everyday lives. What are we missing?”

Relying on the Holy Spirit isn’t weird or full of hype, it’s for anyone who wants to know God more fully. Everyday Supernatural followed a “small group study” based on the book by Mike Pilavachi and Andy Croft and explored what the Spirit-empowered life looks like for every Christian. I say “small group study” but we actually consistently had 53-60 attending over the 10 week course.

The format was a simple framework to allow space for God’s presence and for us to practise moving in the power of the Spirit. Each session began with an extended time of worship where we sought the space and permission to openly worship how the Spirit led us. On some occasions God moved during the worship and we spent longer, just resting in His amazing presence and receiving from Him. We then broke up into small groups of about 10 to discuss what we had read in the book over the previous week and sought to follow this up with “homework” practice over the ensuing week. The final part of the evening

was an extended time of ministry that took different forms, sometimes just waiting on God, other times praying for each other or practising hearing God speak and sharing words of knowledge/prophesy.

God moved gently but powerfully amongst us, often in different ways each week and we were able to grow in the gifts of the Spirit and put them into practice.

Topics covered included:

- The power is in His presence
- Being filled with the Holy Spirit
- Praying in Tongues
- Hearing God speak
- Praying for Healing
- For the sake of the world – taking it outside the church.

It’s been an amazing 10 weeks seeing how we have grown together, encouraged each other and stepped out with courage and in obedience. God has been so faithful to His promises. We now need to be faithful in sustaining the supernatural and continuing to grow closer to Jesus.

Steve Webster

Youth Work

My new role is awesome!

It’s a strange situation to be back in the first role God gave me to serve in when I first became a Christian. I’ve been overwhelmed with how many other people also felt the job was for me and encouraging me to go for it and praying for me continually.

It’s been a thrilling ride already with Youth Alpha on the go at the moment. I love seeing the young people minister to one another. They were already amazing before we went on the YA weekend away, but every single one came back changed! There was a shift in the atmosphere and God grew us all!

For me personally, it has been a beautiful and humbling experience to be part of the Youth Alpha worship group and



be led by one of the youth, who has an amazing gift in worship evangelism!

It is an absolute privilege to be part of their lives and someone they choose to share their lives with; the highs and the lows.

Linzi Golding

looking at many different options, I bumped into Greg, who had just completed the Soul61 and I was amazed at hearing the stories of how God worked in everyone’s lives while on the course. I instantly felt that Soul61 was the place for me, so I tested this through prayer over the next couple of months, to see if this was where I was called to be and God told me it was.

The course came with a rather hefty price tag as well as living expenses and mission trips, so to fund the Course I had to fundraise like mad and put full faith in God that if He wanted me on the Course, the money would come. To raise the money I ran the Spartan Trifecta Obstacle Course Races and asked for people to support and sponsor me for the gruelling races. Across the 3 races I raised enough money for the base Course and a mission trip as well as most of my monthly living expenses. Over the year I would really appreciate and be grateful for your continued prayers for me in this new venture and that I really grow in my walk with God.

I would really like to thank you for the support and love you have all given me and I will really miss all of you.

God Bless,

Boaz Moody

Soul61

I (Boaz) will be starting the Soul61 Gap Year Course on the 26th October and will be living in Watford for the next 10 months. Soul61 is a Christian Gap Year based at Soul survivor church Watford, where I will be trained to be a Christ like leader, grow in my faith and become the man God made me to be. The Course has 2 major parts, the teaching and the placement: we have

2 teaching days a week doing various studies and exploring biblical leadership and we also have 3 placement days a week working in the church. I am really praying I am chosen for the youth work placement as I feel this is where I am called to be.

I decided to do Soul61 because a couple of years ago I was at a Soul Survivor Festival, when I really felt God calling me to leadership within the church, so I thought the best way to do this was to do a Christian Gap Year. After

Everyday Supernatural feedback 30 Seconds

What an excellent course – looking at the work of the Holy Spirit. God has so much that He wants to give us. Over seven weeks we looked at the Holy Spirit, Prophecy, Speaking in Tongues (watching Lesley speaking in tongues for the first time was amazing) and Healing.

God's gifts are to build us up and help us to love others more and talk to them about our faith and beliefs. Thank you to Steve and Laura Webster and to all our group leaders for giving their time and energy to wonderful evenings. I am sure the Lord has more for us all.

Jenny Cosser

I enjoyed this course very much, it was just what I needed and encouraged me in my daily walk with the Lord. I read the book on the train, and got inspired for the day ahead. I thought Steve led the course very well, and top marks to him for bringing it to our Church. Keith led the worship time sensitively and beautifully as always, and our small group discussions were just right, thank you Julie, who led our group.

I do believe that God speaks to us in a still small voice, and that we receive intimations and urgings from Him. Thanks to Mike Pilavachi and Andy Croft for sharing their expertise and encouragement.

The Holy Spirit turned up for us, but I felt it most on the final session; it doesn't seem to turn up for me in large groups, more one on one seemingly.

Mike Cosser

What a wonderful evening of fellowship, worship, discussion and ministry in the Holy Spirit. The time of worship wonderfully led by Keith McGill was out of this world and, as Steve reminded us, this is what it is like to be in eternity. It was somewhat painful to break for discussion on both the material and practice in the study book. A time of ministry followed with an outpouring of the Holy Spirit reminiscent of the time of the 'Toronto Blessing' back in 1994. Steve's sensitivity in receiving what God wanted to do each evening was just wonderful. My car just floated home in the evenings. I look forward to further use of the Gifts of the Spirit here at St John's.

Graham Condy

Lamplighters

What I really like about being on the Lamplighter team is spending an hour and a half on Friday evenings having fun with 5 – 11 year old children.

Playing games like skittles - battleship - parachute - beanbag and beetle helps to keep me young!!

The children have so much fun but at the same time learn about the work of the Leprosy Mission. They learn how leprosy affects people's lives so we have "L" shaped boxes to save our pennies to help but we also pray to God and sing songs of worship.

We have particularly been helping Purlia Hospital in India raising funds to help them build a new outpatients block and toilets.

We have special fund raising events like our famous Christmas Fayre where we raise as much as £2000 in an hour!!!

Our motto is – TO LIGHT THE LAMP OF LOVE FOR THOSE WITH LEPROSY.

If you would like to volunteer to help on Friday evenings with us, please speak to Jackie or Keith Mackley.

Thank you!

Pat Thomas

Remembrance Sunday

This year we celebrated Remembrance Sunday on November 10th, with a short preliminary service where we gathered around the Memorial Cross and where our uniformed organisations placed floral wreaths followed by Melvyn French playing "The last Post" and "Reveille" on his bugle, and following eleven chimes of our Church Bell, a two minute silence was observed at 11:00am.

We are very blessed at St John's by a beautiful church with an amazing backdrop of mature trees, which creates a timeless and delightfully retrospective English atmosphere, which delights the soul, and creates natural thankfulness. Fortunately, this year, the weather was dry, and it was a delightful Autumnal morning. Many people stopped as they passed by in the park and stayed to show their respects.

The casualties of both world wars and all other conflicts since were honoured and remembered with worship, due reverence and prayers. For our tomor-



row, they gave their today, and we never forget their bravery, sacrifice and determination. May our lives show due respect for this present which is their gift to us. Thank you, Lord, for

your amazing sacrificial love and kindness to us. Thank you on Remembrance Day, and every day of our lives.

Mike Cosser

Dawn & Peter's Wedding

Zero's Party

On 5th October 2019, surrounded by family and friends, Dawn and Peter were married. Dawn made a particularly moving entrance into the Church, in a stunning wedding dress, to the song 'The Rose'. The ceremony was beautiful. The

wedding breakfast guests enjoyed a fabulous Hog Roast. The evening speeches were heartfelt. And the evening entertainment of barn dancing was enjoyed by all. Simply a wonderful, wonderful day.



Congratulations to those who celebrated their 'big zero' birthday in St John's Hall this year.



PVR Housegroup

We did think of entitling this article the 'PVR Collective' as our approach here at Park View Road (PVR) is one of encouraging all to share and contribute. We are currently at 13, 7 women and 6 men and include 4 married couples. This term 8 different people were asked to lead an evening from the Lifebuilder Study series on the Holy Spirit. In addition the men have traditionally made and served the drinks and the women tend to supply cakes and biscuits so even that is shared. It is fair to say we are mostly 'mature', in years and Christian faith, but that doesn't mean that each week there is not something new to learn about God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It might be a way of looking at a familiar Bible passage that brings a new insight or hearing someone bring a completely different interpretation to a verse or chapter and there are always new challenges and joys to share with one another and bring to prayer. We try and have a balance of sharing, teaching, worship, prayer and practical applications and keep a weekly diary, very grateful for the annual

summary that reminds us how God has answered our prayers. We have members with Baptist and Free Church backgrounds as well as those who know their Archdeacons from their Rural Deans. We are really well led in music and sing enthusiastically from old and new genres. The sharing and praying



for one another is important as we have got to know each other's circumstances over the years together and enjoyed deeper fellowship and the feel of an extended family. We have found challenges in getting older as more time is spent in hospital visits and

treatments and a little more discussing aches and pains, however as we are becoming less tied up in paid employment we have found our other responsibilities have increased. There are still some parents to visit and look out for, children (18 of them at the last count) and grandchildren (over 25 between us and rising) to care about and sometimes for. With current work patterns among the under 50's and the changing demography of the church there are more areas of service in and out of the church for which there are no retirement ages. We support one another in all this and try to remember to pray for one another. We aim to build in a meal once a term - sometimes a fish and chip supper and other times a 'bring and share'. We have also watched films together and once even went bowling! We also try to share a communion at least once every year. Our challenge is to be a welcoming group which is committed to grow in faith and love. We do not want to be too comfortable and set in our ways and neither do we want to be cliquy or exclusive. There is always room for another one on the sofa.

Kate Finney