

GRAPEVINE

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'And God said'

Hello Friends,

I have not seen most of you for two months now and it seems very strange, and although Zoom and virtual church services do go some way to compensate, they are a pale reflection of the real thing. God made us to enjoy and thrive in company and enforced separation is hard, probably harder on those living alone, though I guess those living in homes without enough bedrooms for energetic children must be tough too. However, as I said in my sermon last week God is in this too, longing to walk with us as we live our lives.

I have just started to read Genesis, a book I studied at College, and the creation accounts in the first two chapters are well worth studying to see a bit of God's perspective on this

amazing world. Firstly 'God said': it is God's world, we are His creation and we are in His care, and although in Chapter 3 we see the terrible consequences of sin and separation, we see in these early chapters God's incredible care and compassion, and the rest of the Bible is made up of God's salvation plan, completed in Christ (see John 1:1-5).

Secondly the phrase: 'God saw all that He had made and it was very good.' We live in an amazing world, yes badly dented and damaged by sin, but it is still very good. My prayer is that some of the gains that we have made during this crisis may continue after lockdown, that the care for neighbour may remain, that the unity behind our support for the NHS may spill over into gratitude to others who serve us, that our natural world that has begun to breathe again may be allowed to continue, by

us being more careful and lest wasteful of its resources.

Meanwhile we continue to observe the restrictions and stay away from gatherings, to work from home where we can, and for us as church to avoid our gathering place. This is tough, particularly when faced with illness, death and separation, so do your bit – pray for those in need, remember our mission partners, the 2/3rds world where life is much harder, those who have been bereaved, and our leaders who are navigating through this crisis without a reliable map. Pray they will turn to God and His word for wisdom; He longs to walk with them and guide them too.

God bless,

Adam

Adam Foot, Vicar St. John's Welling and Priest in Charge St. John's Erith

St John's News

Well, if anyone had said in January that I would be writing the following, I would have stared at them in disbelief:-

For the first time in my memory I have not seen any of you in Church for the last eight weeks, or scarcely indeed anywhere else either, except on a screen. For, thanks to Facetime, Messenger, Skype and Zoom we are able to meet virtually, almost more often than we did in those pre lockdown days of misty memory. The weekly routine of recording music and Sunday services mid week has become the norm along with the opportunity to have House Group and pray with others via zoom!

So what are the highlights of the past two months? My list would definitely include:-

- * Worshipping from our settee with St John's Erith and Bishop Ridley
- * The opportunity to worship in other churches; also from my settee
- * Linzi's awesome sessions with our younger members
- * Being able to access Spring Harvest on line
- * Daily Zoom Prayer sessions (If you haven't yet joined one, think about finding one that suits your routine. Altogether over the week over 30 of us are so appreciating being able to pray together.. and there's plenty to pray about!)

* The beautiful weather making daily outside walks and exercise an absolute delight

Family News

We were thrilled to get the news and celebrate with Terry and Jim Golding the birth of their new Grandson, Jesse Judah. We know his Mum and Dad quite well too, Kim and Jeff Golding!

We grieve with and pray for Margaret Smith and Kate Finney and their families on the loss of Don and Roger. Current restrictions have prevented us meeting, to mourn the lives of these two lovely Christian gentlemen.

So, no Big Church Day Out, no exams, no Spark in the Park, probably no holidays to look forward to but we continue this season, knowing the daily presence of the Good Shepherd.

Until August! **Estelle Woodcock**

Uganda 2020

Shortly before coronavirus, we were fortunate enough to visit Uganda again together with Linzi & Alison (who have been before) and 1st timer Roulla and just got back before the pandemic really started. As usual, we were given a great welcome. We were blessed to go on Safari to Murchison Falls where we saw a lot of animals; the crowning glory being a pride of lions walking across the plain which is not usual. We also saw over 60 giraffes (which are my favourite), elephants and buffalo to name but a few. It was sad to see that the Ugandan government has handed over a large part of the national park to the Chinese who are constructing roads and bridges to extract minerals at the expense of the animals.

Our arrival at the school was welcomed as usual by the school band and the whole school waiting to greet us. The weather was mixed, we got several soakings (the rain was torrential but usually stopped after a while). We got some strange looks walking about wearing coloured ponchos! We did the things we usually do – cooking rolls



a children's version of the lion that she had painted the previous year in the headmaster's office and painted some beautiful animals on the walls of the medical room to cheer up sick children who suffer with malaria and are quarantined there. I taught English to two classes. Alison, Roulla and I also did some singing with 30 of the



(over 3000 of them), auditing, writing letters and taking photographs for the charity. Linzi did some drawing lessons of

Gratitude Prayer

A gratitude prayer from "Soul Keeping" by John Ortberg.

A book, full of his insights and Christian wisdom about the soul. On page 175, Ortberg looks at the soul needing to be fed with gratitude, hence his prayer to God recognising His blessings of us. My version reads:

Blessed are you, O Lord, for Jesus Christ, His love, and my salvation.

Blessed are you, O Lord for a beautiful and gifted wife.

Blessed are you, O Lord for lovely children and grandchildren.

Blessed are you, O Lord for family life and good health.

Blessed are you, O Lord for a comfortable home to live in.

Blessed are you, O Lord for food and water and sanitation.

Blessed are you, O Lord for our garden.

Blessed are you, O Lord for the NHS, which saved my life twice.

Blessed are you, O Lord for my literacy and numeracy.

Blessed are you, O Lord for an income which enables me to share with others.

Blessed are you, O Lord for peace, freedom, and dark chocolate.

I invite you to compose your own prayer of gratitude to the Lord for His blessings on your life.

Mike Cosser

oldest girls and they did beautiful renditions of Bless the Lord Oh My Soul and How Great is our God, complete with harmonies.

Prior to our arrival, John took the decision to pave the playground before building the



toilets, mainly because every time it rains, the playground is completely flooded and

Roger Finney

5th January 1943
to
27th April 2020



These are just some personal thoughts from me – as his friend and vicar.

I have known Roger since, as Dr Finney, he taught me maths at what was then Thames Polytechnic (later to become the University of Greenwich) 40+ years ago. He was the best maths lecturer we had by a long way, always wanting us to understand, never trying to show how clever he was. I understand from others that this continued to the end with his sharing his deep faith and understanding of Christianity.

A very generous man, Roger never quite got why others didn't hold on to possessions as loosely as he did (unless it was second helpings!). He supported me in my ministry at St John's for the past 20 years. He helped many people who had material and other needs and never made people feel they were being looked down on. Yes Roger could be blunt, but his heart was bang in the right place.

Roger and Kate met on a Scripture Union camp in 1969 and they were married in 1974. They have brought up a growing family with sons Peter and Andrew speaking of an amazingly supportive Dad, the family now added to with the joining of Clare and Rebecca and grandchildren Lauren, Jacob, Courtney, Kirk and Hunter.

Youth Leader, Church Warden, treasurer, house-group leader, preacher, Roger always played a part in church life. His Christian faith was rock solid, and he faced death with courage, so the reading chosen for his funeral was completely in keeping.

³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ³⁶ As it is written:

'For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.'

³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 8 NIVUK

Roger's funeral was deeply moving but with close family only because of the lockdown. We will have a service of thanksgiving and raise a toast when lockdown is over.

Well done, good and faithful servant,

Adam Foot



the children cannot go out. They have bought all the bricks for the toilets (we saw them in a massive pile) and are ready to commence however Covid-19 has put paid to that and the school is closed which is bad news for some of the children who come from homes that are not good.

One of the highlights was Teacher George's



even gave me 10000 Ugandan shillings for my dancing (£2.50!).

Please pray for them. Everything is closed. A lot of Ugandans are starving either because there is no food or no money. They are not allowed to travel. At the moment there

wedding. Steve was Best Man and I was Matron of Honour. It was a great experience and the way they share everything, and everyone chips in to do something is a lesson to us all. There were 32 wedding cakes and they give them out to everyone who means something special to them. It was a great day. I didn't realise I had to have two outfits to change into as the bride does. Good job I had the foresight to have one made there! The speeches were long.....and there were lots of them and it was very hot. We had a great party too, dancing to 'I want to dance with somebody' about 20 times because I was asked beforehand what my favourite record was!!! Never seen Linzi dance much but even she was bopping away as was Alice! We were exhausted at the end of it but it was great fun. A man



have been no deaths but there are not many confirmed cases at the moment. Whether that is fact or fiction, who knows? Only God knows if we will be able to go next year but we are fervently praying that we can.

Sue Read



Prayer is the key at this time! Daily coronavirus cleaning is part of the routine



at my home, we use separate toilets, different towels and have designated individual marigold gloves. I am required to report for duty at the National Incident Coordination Centre which coordinates the NHS's response to coronavirus in England. I must admit I was anxious about commuting but the buses and trains I

boarded were regularly cleaned and commuters kept two metres apart.

2 Chronicles 7:13-14 states "If I send pestilence on my people, and my people, who bear my name, humble themselves, pray and seek my face, and turn from their evil ways, then I will hear from heaven, forgive their sin, and heal their land." I am so thankful we in St John's Church are having regular prayer times and I encourage us to keep at it. I find Pete Greig's three tips for prayer very helpful: 1) Keep it simple. 2) Keep it real. 3) Keep it up.

Mushi Rahman

Jesus, Covid & Me

Mornings are my worse time – For as long as I can remember I have thanked God for each new day and the Everyday Supernatural Course has resulted in me quoting John 3:16 each morning.

And then I remember what we are going through and it's a new day and I have to get up – Being a person who believes the glass is half full – I rally and am ready for the day.

Our flat has tidy cupboards and our garden is looking okay. We read – Bible – Classics and Fiction. Writing – cards and letters. Texting – everyone. Emailing Robbie, Mike's sister who lives in Australia and our son Alex who lives in Birmingham and others all over the Country. Crocheting blankets – me not Mike! Telephoning not a form of communication I am very happy with but I have spoken to people I have not been in contact with for years.

Zooming, Skyping, Messaging, Face Time – words that 8 weeks ago were not in our vocabulary. We



face time with Em, Ateesh, Ash and Ollie regularly and it's great to hear what they are doing up the road.

We zoom prayer with church most days, we love to worship with you all via the recorded services each Sunday. Thank you to everyone who has made it possible for this to happen.

We pray often and the Holy Spirit is ever present in our flat and we feel surrounded by God's love. We know our neighbours better. Singing on line has been a challenge (thanks to Viv and Richard) and to Doug.

Catching up with tv, watching plays from the National Theatre, ballet and opera from the Royal Opera House and musicals released by Andrew Lloyd Webber.

We take each day as it comes and deal with that day as our Lord has commanded.

"For He will command His angels concerning you, to guard you in all your ways" from Psalm 91.

Jenny Cosser

"What is life like for you in lockdown?" I was asked this question at the start of the lockdown and, coming to answer it now, I realise there are many things that have happened : weeks have passed where, quite literally, we have been surviving, some days minute to minute. As a family we have adjusted. We accept some days are good and own those days that are not. I have not filled the car up for months! Yet we have been filling our spiritual tanks. It has been hard at times as not wanting to press into God at low times means I might not breakdown and cry. We have experienced loss greatly with the children . Yet reflected on us still having them here to love and care for. Enabling us to think about the loss God felt for Jesus and Adam equally . Social media keeps us busy and at times reminds us of the power of gathering even when distant. Church on Sunday has changed, and it is odd but, for the first time in a long time, week after week our family gather to share and celebrate Jesus together as a family unit of four. Normally at St John's I spend my time sat without my family as they or I serve.

I was set up to work from home and now the children are with me daily. Overnight I graduated as a secondary school teacher. I have learnt more about my weaknesses in home schooling Zachary (or trying to). Yet we remain resilient and hopeful. Hopeful that when this virus passes, we will once again meet together because the hardest part of this time has been realising how much we as humans need contact with others. At the core of the

Gospel God created man and all the things for him to rule over, the birds, the sea, animals on land and said he was pleased (Genesis 1:30) but he was not

satisfied with the original image and existence for man , (Genesis 2:20-25). The world was not complete. He saw Adam needed another, different to Adam and complementary. God created a companion completely right in every sense to be the perfect fit for man and show us



today how God reveres relationships, love and care. This is not that we should all think this is the only way to share companionship but shows that God cared deeply, right at the beginning of our existence story about relationship. We are charged with the greatest gift to love one another. Many of us are missing a hug. I dropped shopping off to someone deeply close to me and I got in the car to drive off crying because I could not hug her. Yet the Holy Spirit comforted me and assured me that my hug is in the bank and one day I will be able to retrieve it. God loves us to use this gift to comfort ourselves and be mindful that God is with us.

Ephesians 3:20-21 God can do anything, you know—far more than you could ever imagine or guess or request in your wildest dreams! He does it not by pushing us around but by working within us, his Spirit deeply and gently within us.

Thank you, Roger, for your teaching.

Billy-Jo O'Leary

It's been a busy time for me at IJM UK. Unprecedented times call for unprecedented prayer. This has included: helping with a worldwide prayer meeting; launching our #UnsafeInLockdown prayer campaign; developing new staff care resources based on "Shalom"; chaplaincy 1:1s with staff; leading our quarterly prayer day over zoom, focused on "Hope"; responding to a prophetic call and organising a staff prayer day for victims, survivors, perpetrators, resources and staff. Phew!

On workdays I have continued our spiri-



tual rhythms of daily stillness and team prayer and been able to take a walk most days with Laura and Becca.

Thursdays, Fridays and the weekend have been a real blessing, taking time in our garden and God's creation, doing tasks in the house, reading - currently "Strengthening the Soul of your Leadership" and starting to plough through Christian Theology by Alister McGrath – and weekly quizzes over zoom with family. Busy but exciting times!

Steve Webster

I am very grateful that where Covid has been a changer for and house; time for breaks and to think; some good phone calls and Zoom meetings.

Some positives- nice time of year to be stuck at home; feels like more time; more aware that Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life; working at home is okay and being allowed to focus on important tasks; enjoying the dog's company- and Wendy's; getting loads done around the garden



Some negatives- holiday with daughters cancelled; too much time reading stuff on the mobile; can't go out to enjoy nature so much; temptation to get lazy with prayer and Christian action; church and its community soldiers on, but not easy.

Trying to make "different" positive where possible.

Bob Morris