

GRAPEVINE

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The Truth,...

Thanksgiving for the Thessalonians' Faith

² We always thank God for all of you and continually mention you in our prayers. ³ We remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labour prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Thessalonians 1:2-3

Dear Friends,

Twenty years ago – about today - Kate, Nicola, David and I moved to Welling to join you here at St John's. I know that we have been so blessed to have been able to share the journey for these 20 years, and as your leader I have been incredibly blessed to be part of such a wonderful church family. So echoing the Apostle Paul I give thanks to God the Father for the Wellingtonians' work produced by faith, your labour prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

This faithfulness has been highlighted by your amazing behaviour, love and

generosity during the last 10 months. When a lot of churches have been struggling to keep afloat you have come forward and poured out grace upon grace, giving of your time, talents, care and money. So again with Paul I 'always thank God for you' and have to pinch myself sometimes at how blessed I have been to be the 7th Vicar of St John's Welling!



But then, I guess it is because you know the truth, the truth well taught over the years here, the truth revealed at Christmas and at Easter.

*"Thou who wast rich beyond all splendour,
All for love's sake becamest poor;
Thrones for a manger didst surrender,
Sapphire-paved courts for stable floor.*

*Thou who wast rich beyond all splendour,
All for love's sake becamest poor."
Frank Houghton*

So we follow the example of our Saviour.

I am amazed at how you have cared for each other during Covid-19 isolation, and am confident that you will go on doing so. I am humbled by your response to our food appeal for the world's hungry, for your response to our hall project and now the boiler fund, and last Friday the herculean total raised by the virtual lamplighter fair, far outstripping normal times. So thank you, thank you, thank you!

And (never start a sentence with and!), though it may be a strange one, do have a happy Christmas, sure in the knowledge that the 'little child of Bethlehem' will indeed descend to us and cast out our sin. Jesus Christ – be born in us today!

With love,

Adam

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

St John's News

I think we can all be forgiven if there have been moments over the past couple of months when we feel we have lost the plot. What with the church buildings, restaurants, pubs and shops open / closed. Remembrance outside service on / off,... etc. etc.

Ongoing activities: Sunday worship, Alpha, House Groups, and Zoom prayer have continued throughout on Youtube or zoom apart from Sunday worship which has been in church and online despite restrictions affecting so much of life. The rules keep on changing and arrangements for the next few weeks

are still very uncertain. However even Assemblies have been recorded and sent to schools!

One off special events have been fewer than in normal time. The Online Light Party Holiday Club, wonderfully planned and presented by Linzi during half term, was thoroughly enjoyed by a delightfully enthusiastic group of children. The Remembrance Sunday service so carefully planned by Gordon, Douglas and Adam fell within lockdown 2 and had to be recorded. The online Lamplighter Christmas Fayre has raised an astounding total more even than last year!!!!!!

Family News. And we are so pleased in recognition of his hard work in many

areas of Church life our Vicar is now 'Canon' Adam Foot. It doesn't change anything, or even give him more work but good to know the Bishop realises what a good Vicar we have!

Many Congratulations to Doreen Pride and Jenny Cosser who have recently celebrated significant Birthdays.

Some of us were able to join by zoom, with Louise nee Russell as she and James Huang were married in October. We send Mr and Mrs Huang our love and congratulations.

Happy, Happy Christmas 2020. (Jesus was born at a chaotic time too.)

'Till 2021,

Estelle Woodcock

1st Welling Brownies

Running Brownies through a pandemic has been a challenge especially as we locked down very quickly in the beginning and began to meet virtually over zoom which required Rachel, my other leader, and me to learn new skills. We adapted activities and thought of crafts and games to do via zoom to make it fun and engaging for the girls.



When the restrictions were lifted and we were able to meet again face to face we were delighted and began thinking of the logistics of where and how we could meet safely whilst complying with the rules in place over numbers and venue.

Adam said we could use the church for meetings which was wonderful and so we began meeting the girls in two groups of up to 15 on alternate weeks which has just been so lovely being able to see them all in person and also to finally meet our new girls.

One advantage to lockdown for us has been an increase in our numbers of girls attending Brownies to the point now where we have reached our maximum capacity of 24 girls aged 7-10 years.

We enjoyed packing shoe boxes for Operation Christmas child and attending the remembrance service where Eliza did a wonderful job of laying the wreath on behalf of all the Brownies.

Take care and God bless

Hannah Wood

Open Doors & Brother Andrew

Brother Andrew is the founder of Open Doors, he was born in the Netherlands in 1928, and like all children he was both adventurous & mischievous. At the age of 11, the war had reached his home town and to try to move the killing soldiers on, he would play tricks on them. One of the tricks was to use fireworks when the soldiers were nearby, and then hide. As he was hiding a soldier found him, he was searched and no fireworks were found, however they were hidden in plain sight – they were in his hands!

At 17 and still looking for adventure he joined the Army and was given a Bible as a parting gift. He was ambushed and shot. He was hospitalised and told that he'd now need a cane to walk. One night whilst bored he attended a bible meeting where a man talking about Jesus prayed for him. Brother Andrew laughed but the next day he started to read the gifted Bible and very soon gave his life to God. One day as he stood up, he got a sharp pain in the ankle that was shot. As he put his foot down, there was no pain – he could walk without the cane!

He started to have dreams which were God's plans for Brother Andrew which took him to work in a chocolate factory to spread the word of Jesus, to a Bible study school in Glasgow, he visited communist Warsaw, where being a Christian was difficult as the government arrested church leaders and closed Bible schools. He continued to visit communist countries, and soon realised that there was a shortage of Bibles.

He returned home, he wanted to take Bibles to Christians where it was hard to find a Bible or worse – not allowed!

His friends and family gave him money to buy loads of Bibles and a blue car to deliver them, and his first trip was to Yugoslavia, where it was against the law to have more than one.

With a car full of Bibles he approached the border, he prayed for God's intervention and his prayer was answered. The Bibles were hidden in plain sight in his sleeping bag! (There's a theme growing.) That night Brother Andrew promised God he would deliver Bibles all over the World. He died serving God, helping persecuted Christians.

Today we have a Watch List that includes the top 50 countries where persecuted Christians are still receiving free Bibles.

Brother Andrew's life is in his book "God's Smuggler".

Learn more about Open Doors at www.opendoorsuk.org

Jim Golding

Zoom prayer review

One of the blessings of the pandemic for the on-line participants of St John's has been our zoom prayer meetings. These have been a real delight, a wonderful, inspiring and a onetime chance for each of us to be kept abreast of both the good news and the needy scenarios that we hasten to bring before the Lord Jesus Christ.

Miriam Giles leads zoom prayers on Mondays at 9:30 am have been led by Estelle, and Tuesdays at 11:00am are led by Lesley, and both are usually underpinned by the content of the day's excellent Lectio 365 Devotional, which always culminates with the powerful prayer:

"Father help me to live this day to the full, being true to you in every way.

Jesus, help me to give myself away to others, being kind to everyone I meet,

Spirit, help me to love the lost, proclaiming Christ in all I do and say"

That sends us off, inspired and

motivated. On Wednesdays at 11:00 am we enjoy "coffee with Adam and Gordon", which is a chance to share news and developments and enjoy some communal laughter.

Miriam Giles leads zoom prayers on Wednesdays at 7:00 pm, at present to uphold the online Alpha course, and for other immediate needs.

Thursday's prayer zoom is led by Doug (10:00am), and is usually based on a look at the author and content of a worship song that is about to be sung by our online choir. It is a wonderful insightful session.

Fridays are led by Jon and Julie, (7:00pm) and inspired by local, national and international issues, in their own thoughtful style, and are usually great fun, and enjoyment to end the working week.



Saturday's prayer zoom at 10:00 am is led by Mushi, who has introduced us to the amplification of prayer which comes from the sacrifice of fasting and he adds his own mix of scientific and theological research and discovery.

So, if you can find the time, come and join in, and add your own unique contribution to our delightful mixture of prayers to our great God, who loves us, listens to our yearnings, and responds. Come Holy Spirit.

Mike Cosser

Meet Eucharua

I am Eucharua Asiegbu, from Christ Church Erith. I live with my husband and children in Erith. I am a final year Ordinand at St Augustine's College of Theology and here with you on a three months church placement as part of my ordination training. I am very delighted to have the privilege of worshipping and serving God in this lovely church.



I am not completely new to St John's Welling - I took part in the deanery Growing Leaders training a couple of years ago, which was hosted by St John's. Apart from this, Rev. Adam was of great support to our church as our Area Dean, during my tenure as a church warden in a period of interregnum. We are very grateful, Adam!

The warm welcome I have received from you either in church or via zoom has been amazing and I thank you all. My highlights so far are the daily prayers on

zoom which I find very refreshing. Zoom Coffee mornings are another resourceful fellowship session, and of course I enjoy the inspiring services in church.

Furthermore, it is a joy to be part of the combined service on Sunday evenings. I totally enjoy every bit of my experience so far. I am blessed immensely by the services, prayer meetings and other church activities irrespective of COVID restrictions. I hope God will enable me to convey a blessing too, to you all in this short period that I will serve Him here.

Worshipping during this difficult period of the pandemic could be very uncertain and challenging but one thing is certain: our God is unchangeable and ever faithful. I therefore would like to encourage us all to be hopeful and trust God who is omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient.

Best Wishes with God's blessings, peace, love and grace.

Mrs Eucharua Asiegbu

For me “lockdown” has been a mixed experience. Obviously living alone has meant enjoying my own company more than usual and especially during the initial months, eating all meals without fellowship. However I have learnt many new skills, including recording/editing videos and masterminding the technical challenges with the online choir. I have also used my car much less and walked to destinations wherever possible. Online Pilates has also been fun.



I have often been challenged about my prayer life and I have found the Zoom prayer sessions very encouraging and beneficial – both as a leader and a participant. My housegroup has been a

blessing and in recent weeks we have been chewing over “difficult questions” e.g. “Why does God allow suffering?” from a video series.

The virus emphasises the Christian journey is never going to be easy, and I have many questions that will not be answered in full this side of heaven, but John 3:16 always comes to mind “God so loved the world.....”

Doug Snow

Do you like this view? It’s from my very own prayer room overlooking the small park behind our house. Aren’t I blessed?! Since Covid struck, I’ve had the tremendous joy and privilege of being able to sit here and ‘work’: praying, texting, writing



cards, making calls, zooming and WhatsApping, in order to keep in contact with so many of you! The truth is, I have loved being in lockdown. Indeed, the idea of coming out of it, quite fills me with dread - and I get so much more achieved, without the time constraints of travel between visits! But my biggest frustration has been not spending enough time ‘just being’ with Jesus, in order to take up my cross every day and follow. (Luke 9:23) My prayer in second lockdown is that I will use this God-given gift of time, to deepen my relationship with Him.

Miriam Giles

Jesus, Covid & Me

My Life This Year - Lockdown & Beyond

My life since lockdown, like most people I imagine has been rather like a balance sheet with credits (good things) on one side and debits (not so good things) on the other side.

Firstly my credits:

- Taking time to walk and look around to see the beauty of creation and hearing the birds singing.
- Spending much more time tending the garden.
- Gaining more iPhone skills so I can still communicate with family and friends.
- Being able to re-evaluate what is important in life.
- More time to concentrate on losing weight.



Secondly my debits:

- Missing physically meeting up with others, especially granddaughter Ellie’s 18th Birth day
- Needing to wear a mask in church services and when entering shops.
- Having to think and plan carefully before any outing to stay within the rules.
- Knowing I can’t hug anyone who is really suffering.

Looking at the above, the debits don’t really seem that bad. Being retired we are fortunate not to have suffered reduced income unlike people who are still working. And for older people our social life does not have the paramount importance it does for the younger generation. In future as we go beyond lockdown I hope with God’s help we can all realise we should try to appreciate more of what we already have.

Sheila Clarke



Autumn Alpha

Autumn online logistically, we felt, how could that happen Alpha reared its head as the only lockdown Alpha option as Spring 2020 faded into

Summer 2020 and the possibility of anything pertaining to normal life disappeared over the horizon for the foreseeable future.

Life change is what, over the years, many people have experienced, as they have encountered Jesus through Alpha but

“Holy Spirit, show us what you want”, we prayed in those early planning days and of course He did, via online training, the gathering of a great team, including Mushi with the commitment to manage the tech side, and then, 100% necessary, a lovely group of guests who were completely unphased by this different Alpha. And also 100% vital, His presence in every situation working in hearts and lives as He always does!

Awesome is how we would describe Autumn online Alpha.

Estelle Woodcock
(on behalf of the Autumn Alpha Team)