

# GRAPEVINE

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## Be Courageous

<sup>1</sup> *Father, hear the prayer we offer:  
not for ease that prayer shall be,  
but for strength that we may ever  
live our lives courageously.*

<sup>2</sup> *Not for ever in green pastures  
do we ask our way to be;  
but the steep and rugged pathway  
may we tread rejoicingly.*

<sup>3</sup> *Not for ever by still waters  
would we idly rest and stay;  
but would smite the living fountains  
from the rocks along our way.*

<sup>4</sup> *Be our strength in hours of weak-  
ness,  
in our wanderings be our guide;  
through endeavour, failure, danger,  
Father, be thou at our side.*  
*Love M. Whitcomb Willis circa 1859*

promised an easy walk as Christians. We are promised a Saviour who walks with us in our hour of need. Our need of Him has become more apparent as the pathway has become more steep, rugged and rocky, and our human resources have been stripped away.



water from the rock when they were dying of thirst. It has been remarkable how God has carried us through the pandemic, though losing loved ones along the way.

The signs that we are coming out of the pandemic are around us – who knows, it may be safe to sing in church by the next issue of Grapevine – but one thing we know: wherever we are, our loving heavenly Father will be by our side.

This week we begin our series – Stay Alert to the Spirit, which comes from the Jesus Shaped People stable. Do join us in person at 10.30am, or online, and if it suits you more do consider the new Life Service which is at 4.00pm except on the first Sunday of the month.

God bless you – be courageous,

**Adam**

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

Don't you just love the name of some of the old hymn writers? This hymn penned in the 1850s has been a reminder to me during the past 16 months of trial that we are not

Moses knew God walking with him as he led the children of Israel through the desert, and knew the power of His presence (Numbers 20:10-13) bringing

## St John's News

I am writing this in the week following the very first **4pm Life Service**. Doubtless in the weeks and months to come, others more qualified will be sharing their thoughts and reflections. Suffice to say, as we leave lockdown and move into a new chapter, how good to be starting something completely new .. a service styled and timed to encourage and enable more people to worship God on a Sunday. Nearly 60 people came to this first one and I know that the hope and prayer of the team leading is that God will grow this congregation into an authentic Jesus shaped community. We pray the same!

From **Palm Sunday** people have been

returning to worshipping in church, over 60 each Sunday for the last few weeks and it was wonderful to be able to celebrate **Easter** in Church with other Christians and even go outside and **SING** two Easter hymns in the bitter cold!

The live streaming, however, will definitely continue enabling worship from home where needed.

Since schools returned to normal functioning we have been doing recorded **Assemblies** but look forward to going back in person before long.

A second **Online Alpha** is well underway—so good!

In his talk at the **APCM** Adam said how key **Prayer** is in the life of our Church with daily Zoom prayer times, including Saturday morning which Mushi now themes each week. Gordon lead a re-

flective Prayer journey recently which was both challenging and helpful.

As I write we are in the middle of our **18/6 prayer week** joining in with **THY KINGDOM COME**. There are so many opportunities to spend with the KING of KINGS, what a privilege.

As Church Family, we are mourning the deaths of **Monica Harvey, Enid Overton and Fred Kaul** but can only rejoice that they are now absolutely safe, restored and happy with Jesus Himself.

How lovely to be able to report on life beginning to be more normal. What will be happening by August?! Till then keep praying and keep safe, rejoice and be thankful for living in a country where vaccinations have been so efficiently rolled out.

**Estelle Woodcock**

# Open Doors—What we do...

in Myanmar, financial support to widows



Sadly Christian Persecution is rising, some due to Covid, but mostly because the World looks the other way. Open Doors is working hard to bring this to the Media, whether through lobbying our Government or pressure on World Leaders to change. If you are not familiar with the "World Watch list Rankings" created by Open Doors, please look on the notice boards in Church or visit [www.opendoorsuk.org](http://www.opendoorsuk.org).

Last year **4,761** Christians were **killed** for faith related reasons.

Open Doors is making a difference.

Last year £654K was given to provide 1.8M Bibles and Christian books to countries that prohibit or difficult to obtain.

Open Doors contributed £3.3M to Leaders & Churches to receive training on Leadership & Discipleship, Trauma Care & Survival courses, some aimed especially at women & young girls who are at higher risk.

Nearly £4M was provided to community development projects, livelihood training to provide rescued Christians with new skills, new jobs. Last year £719K helped persecuted Christians with Emergency Relief, Community Development, Educational Need and Medical Care – that's double the number of the previous year!

Hope for Middle East is just one long term project which enables families to return to areas that were affected by war and bombing, to rebuild their lives with new skills & hope. Sadly the project has had to change as now it's a battle to survive as Covid tightens its grip and every effort is on food & aid getting through.

Open Doors has helped thousands of children through camps

in Nigeria to help with school fees, to providing over 15K of children's Bibles to Bangladesh. They provide safe homes, education, most importantly freedom from persecution.

Prayer is crucial, the more people that pray, the louder it is, I've started to post on media the Daily Prayer in the hope that more people will read it.

I've only "scratched the surface" of what Open Doors does, maybe a future Grapevine will go further.

As I wrote this, I cried! How can there be such suffering 2,000 years on from when Christ Jesus died for us...?

Please pray.

*Father "Thank you" for sending your Son to set the benchmark for "Humility".*

*Our Lord showed us how to treat others in the World regardless of how he was treated.*

*Teach us to be more like Jesus and show the World that there is an alternative to persecution, killing, abuse and war.*

*Give us the strength to say "No More Persecution" and Faith to make it happen.*

*Father bring **Hope** to those currently persecuted and ensure they retain their **Faith** in the knowledge they are **Loved**.*

**Jim Golding**

The "St. John's Parents Group", is exactly as the name suggests, a group for St John's parents. We currently meet once a week on a Thursday at 8pm via Zoom and have been doing so since 25th of February.

A couple of months back Billy-Jo O'leary contacted me with the idea for the group. She suggested that herself and her husband Dominic, and my husband Charles and I should start a group for parents. The aim was to create a safe space where parents could openly and confidentially share the highs and lows (of which there are many) of parenting during lockdown. It would be our job to facilitate conversations whilst being active members of the group. We want to make it clear that we are in no way claiming to be any sort of experts on the subject of parenting! (As anyone that has witnessed me trying to coax our two year old son Charlie into playgroup would certainly testify!) As it says on the notice that we use to advertise the group, "we are all in this together", and we wanted to make sure that the parents of St. John's know that

## St. John's Parents Group

they are not alone and that we are all struggling!  
When we started the group, we originally decided that we would meet fortnightly.

However, after the first meeting we all agreed how great it was to get together and be able to talk about how tough life can be with little ones and with ones not so little! So, we decided that it would be better for the group (with ourselves very much included) if we met weekly.

One thing that we've found really special is that because the group meets via zoom it means that two parents (if they wish) can be present with no need for a babysitter! Before lockdown where zoom has become the norm, something like this just wouldn't have been possible!

We have had members join from 8 households. The group is still very much open to new members and we would love any parents from within the St. John's family to come along. It's really informal. We share, we laugh, we cry, we pray. It would be great if you, our church family could pray for those who haven't yet made it to the group, but could benefit from it. I know that Charles and I have found it to be a real blessing."

**Alex Barlow**

ST JOHN'S  
PARENT GROUP

**EVERY THURSDAY @ 8PM**

Zoom code: 820 5645 5783

Passcode: Parents

"WE'RE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER!"



A safe place to:

CHAT-LOVE-LAUGH-PRAY

and support one another

SEE BILLY-JO & DOMINIC O'LEARY OR ALEX & CHARLES BARLOW FOR FURTHER DETAILS

# Church Mission Society, mission partners, Peru

Early into the pandemic the phrase “we are all in the same storm but not in the same boat” circulated, highlighting that everyone around the world is affected by Covid-19 but not everyone and every country is as well equipped to deal with it as others. Many across the UK have suffered terribly because of Covid-19 and so it is right to celebrate that the UK is surging ahead with its vaccination programme bringing hope of an end to lockdowns and restrictions. However, other countries around the world face a very different future.

Here in Peru vaccines have begun to arrive in the country but the roll out is currently very slow, certainly running into 2022 and quite possibly beyond. Restrictions have had to be loosened as people need to work to survive. Intensive care units continue to have to choose who will occupy any freed-up beds as demand far outstrips supply. As many have to be treated at home, oxygen tanks are at a premium and often families struggle to source one before having to camp out in queues to pay for oxygen in short supply.

ply to refill them. Sadly, official numbers of Covid-19 deaths are shocking. As we all navigate this Covid-19 storm, what should our response be?

Do we ignore those who are less fortunate than ourselves or feel guilty that we are better off than others? Or are we moved to action, just like the Good Samaritan in Jesus’s parable (Luke 10:25-37)? May Jesus’ words move us to prayer, to compassionate help (maybe giving towards vaccines for poorer countries) or to challenging the injustices in our world that allow such disparities to continue (maybe lobby your MP for change).

**Paul Tester**

**Photo: Paul and Sarah Tester, with Sophia (8), Emily (6) & Annabelle (4).**



**They are Church Mission Society mission partners in Lima, Peru, supported by St John’s Welling. Paul leads CMS’s mission development in Latin America and Sarah is supporting the girls**

**who are now into their second year of online school.**

## home for good

This year alone, the London Borough of Bexley needs 20 new foster carers to be able to meet the needs of the 220 children in the care of the local authority. Many of these children will have experienced neglect or abuse, all have experienced the trauma of being separated from their families. Each of them deserve the stability and care of the right foster family, and the right setting where they can be encouraged to thrive.

We know that the need in Bexley is mirrored across the UK. Fostering services need to recruit more than 8,000 new carers across the UK this year to meet the needs of children entering care, and as of September 2020, there were 2,030 children waiting for adoption in England. Home for Good is passionate about finding a home for every child, particularly those who wait longer than others for the home they need; children over the age of four, sibling groups,

children with disabilities or health needs and children of black and minority ethnic heritage will often wait the longest.

We believe the Church is ideally placed to ensure that every child and young person has the loving home they need. Our Biblical mandate to care for the vulnerable, extend hospitality and seek justice compels us to action. Through opening our homes and hearts to children and young people in care, and through our churches becoming a welcoming and supportive community to all looked after and adopted children and the families who care for them, we can make a transformational difference.

Children in care are amongst the most vulnerable people in our society. They need advocates. They need champions. They need families.

To learn more about our work in the London Borough of Bexley, or to find out more about how you can play your part for vulnerable children, contact Billy-Jo at [billyjo.oleary@homeforgood.org.uk](mailto:billyjo.oleary@homeforgood.org.uk) or visit [www.homeforgood.org.uk](http://www.homeforgood.org.uk) online.

**Together we can find a home for every child who needs one.**

**Billy-Jo O’Leary**

# Privilege of Zoom Prayer

Recently, I have been thinking about what a privilege it is to be able to pray.

**The daily zoom pattern is usually:-**

- **Praise** - using a Psalm to help us praise and thank God for particular answers to prayer.
- **People** - those we know in particular need, those in National life, our children and young people. All of us!
- **Places** - schools, hospitals countries in particular need, our Mission partners, local businesses, etc.
- **Positives / Potentials** - the 4pm Service, all our Church services, Alpha, Assemblies, vaccination roll out, easing of lockdown, etc.

**On Monday, Tuesday and Friday:**

we tend to use Lectio365 as our framework.

**Wednesday:**

particularly prayer for the Alpha group which is later the same evening.

**Thursday:**

Douglas usually chooses a hymn as a basis for prayer.

**Saturday:**

Mushi usually leads us in focussing on a specific theme: our Mission partners, the Economy, Alpha, the 4pm service, etc.

So, I encourage all of us, and our House Group members, to be people who pray both individually, and together; to keep praying and noting down how God is answering. May I encourage you to let us know any prayer needs you would like us to pray about?

Below is an excellent Prayer for each of us and for our Groups:-

**Ephesians 1:17-19**

*<sup>17</sup> We keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. <sup>18</sup> I/we pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, <sup>19</sup> and his incomparably great power for us who believe.*

With love always,

**Estelle Woodcock**

**St John's, Welling gas pipe repair.  
Has anyone got a funny caption....?**



# A Notwithstanding Meditation

Anxiety and depression, body shame, low self-esteem, an addictive personality and autism have characterised my lifetime's mental health. And additionally, my recent stroke (a temporal lobe bleed), has left me blind on my left side; sight impaired. Also, I am seventy years old and have been allowed just one period of exercise owing to the pandemic and lockdown.

But when you give your life to God, He fills you with so much positivity that you can be used notwithstanding your deficits.

Every morning I walk over the road, say 'come Holy Spirit', and I change from a lamb to a lion. Jogging off with the joy of the Spirit upon me, laughing. This has happened, daily for eleven months.

Since May 14<sup>th</sup> 2020, I have had numerous contacts on the former golf course at Burstled Woods, and have had many rejections, a very few of which have been offensive.

It is a wonderful form of validation from God, that He is with you. He runs beside you, no matter how ridiculous that may seem, because you are just you after all.

God is great at logistics; you meet those He knew you would meet when both of you were in the womb. There are no accidental encounters, it's all God ordained.

I tell them I am a Christian, ask if they are, and give my journey to Christ testimony. I invite them to Alpha, pray the sinner's prayer, and bless and validate their life. Everyone needs their life validating don't they? It's great fun and I laugh after a contact, as God is using me, a sinner. It makes my day, impacts their day, and fulfils my life's purpose. So, bring it on.

**Mike Cosser**

