

GRAPEVINE

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A Journey into the Unknown?

It has been a full year here at St John's now. We settled into No52 and have claimed the garden space with great joy. I do perhaps need to mow the lawn at some point, but for now the cats, grasshoppers and various insects are enjoying the lush jungle. Much like the growth in our garden, our time of growth during this pandemic has been constant and full of surprising flowers of joy.

The reality of being in this "new to us" ministry has finally begun to settle and with having a more established form of weekly worship it looks like we are moving out of the embattled period of our desert experience. We cannot really compare ourselves to the Israelites who endured forty years of wandering in total reliance on God for

physical sustenance yet we do share the same need for spiritual sustenance. "Our hearts are rest-



less, until they can find rest in you." Augustine of Hippo (354-430). I find myself looking back at the year

and realise that it has been hard work, formation in a very different experience to what I was expecting, but fruitful nonetheless. It has been frustrating at times and yet full of the most amazing grace and deepening friendships. The joyful reality that wherever Christians gather, we are family in the truest sense of the word. Prayer, the heartbeat of how the Church listens to God and moves in the Spirit to reveal the purpose of Love. This has been the best thing the pandemic has brought about, the joyful faithfulness of daily prayer. Psalm 138 v 3. "In the day that I called to you, you answered me; you put new strength in my soul." This is the reality of how God responds to those who reach out to him. I have experienced this in our services, prayer groups, Alpha Online and in personal prayer.

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St John's News

Maybe it's me, but I do feel life during the Pandemic has Groundhog Day aspects. Once again covid cases are rising fast with hospital admissions beginning to reflect this.

BUT deaths are far fewer because, of the vaccination impact which continues to be the really bright star in the sky, enabling legal enforcement of restrictions finally to end.

More and more of us are having the confidence to return to face to face worship, Jesus Kidz, Dubsters and 3dub are also meeting in person.

The **Stay Alert to the Spirit** course, on which we have based our morning sermons and House Group studies, is really challenging us to listen and discern what God wants from us at St John's as we emerge into the new normal.

Clearly there will be changes. Online streaming of our services is here to stay, enabling the housebound to share in worship. Some **business meetings, Compliance and Zoom prayer** will continue to be on zoom. Why? Because it is a really efficient way of people being together without time being wasted on travel!

However, worshipping, singing (yes!) together enables a dynamic which we need and are so looking forward to being able to do.

Most activities needing the Church Hall are yet to restart, probably in September.

The Life Service is developing a unique flavour and style which increasingly, people returning to church, or attending for the first time after Lockdown are finding enables them to engage with God. Preparation, and setting up and down each week is a huge task and we thank God for the Life Service Team who are serving God so faithfully week by week.

It was this team that met the other week to

build the new furniture for **the Crèche**. The cost was wonderfully paid from the Diocesan Children and Young People's fund. By the Sunday nearly everything was in place just awaiting cushions for the benches and, with the freshly cleaned carpet looking so inviting!

The second online **Alpha Course** has just ended. More about that next time!

Toddler Club / Open Door enjoyed a picnic in the park enabling us to touch base with a few of our families. The babies we knew are all toddlers and the toddlers we knew are heading for day school! Eighteen months is a long time in the life of preschoolers!

Our congratulations to **Great Grandma Sheila Hall** and her Grand daughter **Rachel and husband Aaron** on the arrival of Emily.

So, on into school holidays, Staycations and Social Sundays and, we pray, growing freedom.

Till October

Estelle Woodcock

Thank you Shannon

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Looking forward at what will be the new shape of worship and our relationship with the community is a challenge, but it is not insurmountable. We have the work of sharing the Good News. How we go about this will require continual prayer, humility and vision. Our prayer is for God to reveal to us how we can use our gifts, our building and our availability. We need to surrender what we think is important and be prepared to be reshaped and renewed in our worship, staying faithful to the integrity of the Holy Scriptures, to speak prophetically into our society and declare that there is no other name by which we are saved.

John 11:25-26 *Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?'* We all need to answer this question, do we believe that what Jesus says is true and then live accordingly. I find myself looking at the coming days with joy, there is much to do, yet we seek to do it in the strength of Him who created the heavens and the earth. I know we need to live in the light of what each day reveals and surrender our ambitions to God, He will work out His good and perfect will in our lives and we will declare the wonders of His name. May God bless us and keep us in peace.

Rev Gordon MacBean
Curate, St. John's Welling

This year with Shannon has been a lot of fun and there's been lots of laughing! It's been a strange year for Shannon to train as a Youth Leader, but let's face it, if she can do it during a pandemic; she can do it full stop!

It's been wonderful to watch her mature from being one of the 3dubbers having just left the group, to becoming one of the leaders. She is so passionate for Jesus and really wants to help young people have that passion too.

I know Shannon has loved the course she's been on this year and I've had the pleasure seeing her pass on anything she's learned from her course to the young people, who learned a lot from her.

Since being back in the church building Shannon has shown just what a great youth leader she will make in the future. (I'm not sure but I think we may have opened her to the idea of working with kids in the future too lol). Thank you, Shannon. Be blessed!

Linzi Golding

JOBS COLUMN: Simon & Katie

House, undertaking a variety of jobs on the team on a casual basis until venues began to call her direct. From dinners and weddings, she

Canary Wharf, which she enjoyed, unlike her next job in pensions, which was not for her at all. However it was at Sainsbury's that she settled (and met Simon), starting in Woolwich then Bexleyheath, rising to management in Abbey Wood and then Lee Green.

Both Simon and Katie were born and brought up in SE London. Home was variously in Plumstead, Woolwich and Thamesmead. When Katie left school, her first port of call was to study art and design, business and accounts, then specializing in business. However half way through, her brother sadly passed away, which propelled her from study into work instead. Her first official job was for an Events and Catering company, working at functions in venues which included the Royal Albert Hall, Greenwich Royal Naval College and Somerset



After 8 years however, and with two children now at primary school, the long and unpredictable hours following a restructure left her drained and exhausted. The shifts didn't work well for family life, sometimes giving her too much time off during the day when the children were at school then trying to cram in time with the children and homework under pressure when they were home. It was time for another

moved to Morgan Stanley, one of the large US banks, booking out rooms for client meetings in their premises in

were home. It was time for another

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CRiBS News

CRiBS team have been delivering RE lessons in 6 primary schools since the beginning of June. A new syllabus has been introduced this year and we are adapting to include new lessons and workshops to meet the new requirements. We will continue to be flexible to enable us to work in schools who do not adopt it. Our new RE delivery package will go under the new banner of 'REconnect' and start in September. To date 7 schools have booked for lessons for school year 21/22; of those, 3 will be using the new Bexley Agreed Syllabus, 3 have specifically asked for our current lessons, and one will be using lessons we have developed to support the 'Understanding Christianity' syllabus used by a number of CofE schools.

The team have also been busy delivering our 'Moving Up' primary to



secondary transition workshops in recent weeks. This has been well received and 19 schools will have been visited by the end of term.

The Boys Noise and b:You inter-vention teams have been working

in 5 schools including one with a combined Boys Noise/b:You package with 35 boys and girls.

We have continued mentoring a number of secondary schools boys and we have had a positive response from another school considering restarting with our mentors from September.

We are delighted to have received funding for, and to introduce free to schools, the CAP Money Kids (Primary) and Youth (Secondary) courses and are currently taking bookings.

Our application to be a Sponsoring Organisation for EU volunteers was successful and we have issued our first Certificate of Sponsorship to enable one prospective KORU student from September to apply for their visa.

Please keep the team in your prayers as they support local schools.

CRiBS

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change, and she was to follow Simon to his new place of work, working for only two weeks before lockdown, followed by 2 months at home before training began.

Simon meanwhile had begun his working life 10 minutes walk from his home, having spent all his secondary schooling doing a 1.5h travel each way. At 16, his only criteria was close to home, and within 2 weeks of leaving school, he had donned a Sainsbury's uniform and begun work in Woolwich. In all he spent 18 years with the company, 13 in Woolwich and then 5 years in Lee Green, the branch where he met Katie. He too graduated to management there, and latterly trained other managers because he was reliable and trusted, but then came the restructuring, and he was made redundant in 2017, staying on at the last minute to work nights for 8 months training new management

staff. Those 8 months were extremely difficult for continuity of family life, with both Simon and Katie working shifts, and they hardly saw each other with the overlapping shift patterns.

After Simon finished at Sainsbury's, he took a couple of months off to re-group, which turned into 5, and his only criteria for his next line of work was that it wasn't in retail. He found work after only his second ever job interview (interviews aged 16 and 35), and has a more regular work pattern now. Redundancy actually came at a really good time and he no longer has to work at weekends and has some choice in the work pattern.

When we last met up for regular workshop pre-the first Covid-19 lockdown in March 2020, Simon and Katie's work/life pattern meant that Katie had to work two Sundays a month, so wasn't always able to join us on Sunday mornings. This has all changed now, as they are both on 5 days a week

work, with 7 hours a day and core time 10.30am-2.30pm which is very much better for family life as they stagger their hours so they each do one of the school runs with Eliza and George. The weeks of home schooling were a challenge for them both working from home, as they were for so many other families - 2 hours early work followed by 5 hours home schooling for Simon while Katie worked, then swapping at 2.30 so Simon could finish his work day.

Another welcome change has been just how genuinely nice and friendly are their colleagues, and they both feel significant. It is an office and screen based job, so my finding them in Danson Park when not at work is not that surprising, but if you want to find out where they are actually working, you will have to ask them!

Kate Foot

Leprosy Mission Report

St John's you are amazing! Even in such difficult times you have once again dug deep and the amount raised during our fantastic fayre last year was phenomenal but

brom, the Medical Superintendent, passed away suddenly due to Covid along with the hospital's driver, Nitya Mardy. Please pray for the families of these faithful men

they were not fighting this battle alone and were able to treat thousands of people affected by leprosy last year. Over 600 new cases of leprosy were detected, hundreds of surgeries to prevent disabilities took place, and thousands of pairs of specialist footwear and prosthet-



then you gave even more for the food crisis Thank you!

2020 was a difficult year for the team at Purulia. Dr Ujjwal Hem-

Congratulations to Jeff Golding on his ordination as deacon. More next time...



Photo (from left to right) Jeff, Jesse, Kim and Phoebe

who dedicated their lives to serve people affected by leprosy.

Funded by your generous donations, the new Outpatients' Department opened in 2019. Throughout the pandemic, this space has allowed patients and staff to socially distance and receive treatment safely, preventing the spread of Covid.

As the coronavirus continues to wreak havoc across India, you have blessed and protected the patients of Purulia Hospital. Please continue to pray for the safety of the patients and staff at Purulia during this horrific time.

Lockdown restrictions meant that travel to the hospital became very difficult for those in need of treatment, but this did not stop the work. Thanks to your support, the team knew

ics were made for those already disabled by leprosy.

Lamplighters have been back face to face since half term and there has been a steady number of around 20 children each week which has been fantastic! Jackie and Keith have been creative in adapting favourite games to be covid safe and we have all had great fun trying them.

Our end of term Pirate party was sadly low in numbers due to some children having to isolate but pirate party bags went to those who missed out.

We are praying next term will be less disrupted by covid and are looking forward to this year's Christmas Fayre. It's going to be hard to top last year's but I'm sure we can do it!

Alison Read