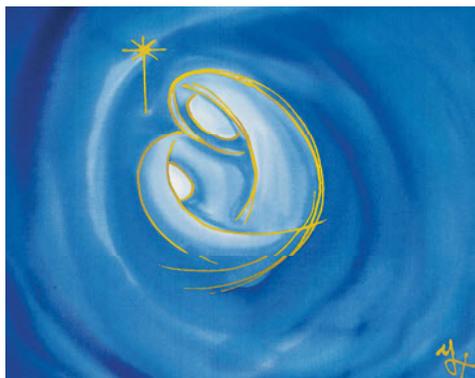


# St. John's Church Record

November - December 2012



The Lord himself will give you a sign.

The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Emmanuel

Isaiah 7:14

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## FIT FOR PURPOSE?

(Adapted from a sermon preached at United Evening Worship, Christ Church at Whetstone, 7<sup>th</sup> October 2012)

As we celebrate the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the United Reformed Church's original union, I wish to ask the question: are we fit for purpose? And I want to break this question into four parts.

### 1. Do we believe God is fit for purpose?

The author of Psalm 8 believes that God is glorious, and majestic. He believes that God created the heavens and the earth, and sustains all things in life. Babies and infants spontaneously praise God, and in so doing create their own defence against enemies. The author of the Letter to the Hebrews believes that God is the One who speaks his life-giving Word. He spoke through the

prophets and in this final age has spoken to us in his Son. The Son is the radiance of God's glory, the stamp of God's very being, and sustains the universe by his word of power (Heb 1:1-3). In other words, God is great. God has the power to help and to save. God has revealed this power to help and to save in his Son.

One of the features of life in the developed world is that because of mechanisation, technology, a relatively high standard of living, and medicine, we think we don't need to rely on God any more; we tend to reduce God in stature and think that everything revolves round us. We want a god with whom we are comfortable. This thinking has also influenced us in the Church: worship becomes about *me*, and about meeting 'my needs'. By contrast, the author of Hebrews believes that God is centre of life, and argues that not everything is subject to humans (Heb 2:8). Despite all the developed world

has achieved, we are still susceptible to disease, extreme weather, economic crises, and relationship-breakdowns. Only God has the power to sustain us through these difficulties. God is always fit for purpose, but we only realise this when we humble ourselves and trust him.

## 2. Is the way we proclaim the gospel fit for purpose?

The author of Hebrews writes that Jesus suffered death so that, by God's gracious will, he should experience death for all humankind, and bring those who trust him to the fulfilment of their humanity in glory (Heb 2:9-10).

As many no longer believe that God has power to help or save, so they also believe they no longer need God's help or need to be saved. The language of 'sin' is becoming increasingly incomprehensible. People want to feel 'good' about themselves (and blame others when they don't feel good about themselves)!

The Christian understanding of the human self is that we each have a flaw that runs through us. We believe this is the most realistic way of understanding why, despite our good intentions, we mess things up and hurt one another. The centre of the gospel is the good news that Jesus, as God's own Son, identifies himself with our human condition, yet without himself succumbing to the power of this flaw. His death on the cross becomes the universal moment when God deals with sin (the flaw) once and for all: not allowing sin to separate the sinner from God but in the resurrection, overcoming the breach of sin and reconciling humanity with God. If the gospel we proclaim does not in some way reflect these essential truths of the

significance of Christ's cross and resurrection—that is, our dying to sin and resurrection to new life in Christ—then our gospel is not fit for purpose.

## 3. Are our buildings and facilities fit for purpose?

Many of our church buildings were constructed before the use of the motorcar became widespread. As a result, most do not have adequate, or any, car parking. Many of our buildings were constructed before there was recognition that worshippers might wish to be comfortably seated, warm, hear, require level access, or need to use a toilet! And although many of our buildings have been partly adapted for some of these purposes, most are in significant respects unsuitable. Of course, the same criticism can be levelled at many of the parish churches and virtually all cathedrals: they are in many respects totally unsuitable for use by all but the able bodied and hardy! But what many parish churches and cathedrals have—that most United Reformed Churches do not have—is a loyal group of worshippers willing to put up with inconveniences because of the particular experience of worship that attracts them.

The United Reformed Church should not attempt to compete for those looking for 'heritage' or 'hype'. We need to regain confidence in Reformed worship that seeks God simply and straightforwardly and that engages with life's realities. Our advantage is that we have the freedom to worship in buildings that are accessible and comfortable. Such

buildings do not have to be ugly. There were some visionary church leaders in the new town of Milton Keynes who decided that rather than each constructing a separate building, they would combine their resources and build an ecumenical church in the new town centre. The result is the Church of Christ the Cornerstone. It was built by an ecumenical partnership of Anglicans, Roman Catholics, Baptists, Methodists and the United Reformed Church. The church building has



Church of Christ the Cornerstone

both the aesthetic beauty of a basilica-like dome that lifts the spirit, combined with the accessibility and comfort that makes it a pleasure to be in. If this is what five separate denominations could achieve, surely it would be well within the reach of five United Reformed Church congregations in Barnet—if we combined our resources and shared the vision—to build a new place for worship and community that is both beautiful and fit for purpose?

## 4. Are we as Christian believers fit for purpose?

All I have advocated will not achieve anything unless we, the Christians who constitute the United Reformed Church, are fit for purpose. The strength of our predecessor

Congregational, Presbyterian, and Churches of Christ churches was their strong sense of local identity and commitment. This, combined with a committed lay leadership and the ability to respond quickly and effectively to local need and custom, was what made our churches flourish. However, the weakness of our predecessors, exacerbated by we their successors, is a lack of interest in anything beyond 'my church' (URC worshippers are the least likely to seek out a URC place of worship when they move to a new

area) and a weak belief in the gospel. What is perhaps hardest of all to accept is the reality that a group of mainly over-seventies are very unlikely to attract many under-thirties. There is—much as we try to resist it—still a strong sense of 'like-attracts-like' among the human species. If the United Reformed Church narrows the scope of its mission to become a religious 'Senior Citizens Club', its decline would seem to be guaranteed. We must appeal to all ages.

To be fit for purpose: let us trust God; let us be bearers of Christ's love in our interactions with others; let us express our belief in the gospel by being willing to die even to our existing ways of being church; and let us ask God to resurrect new life and fresh vision within us and among us.

Julian Templeton

## ST JOHN'S FELLOWSHIP - SEPTEMBER



On the 19<sup>th</sup> September Margaret Rogers visited the Fellowship to tell us something of "The Magic of Peru", which she had visited in 2004. Margaret started by telling us that the coast of Peru and particularly the capital Lima is influenced by the Humboldt current which has the effect that Lima is shrouded in mist for 9 months of the year, as it was when Margaret started her holiday. One of Margaret's first visits was to a convent which had at one time been very wealthy and was, as a result of this wealth, ornately decorated and contained many beautiful objects. However, at some stage the number of girls wishing to become novices declined sharply and consequently the convent was in danger of having to close. Rather than closing, it was decided to allow visitors to view the convent and as a result it is now a big tourist attraction and still continues as a convent although with rather less strict rules than previously. [TVs allowed in bedrooms etc. etc.]

Margaret described and showed us slides of one area of the country where the people build rafts of rushes which grow in the water nearby and live on these floating rafts. Not only do these "islands" have homes built on them but some of them also have churches and schools.

other places, in Peru and between 17 and 28 grow in an outer shell on a tree. When the ball shaped shell is ripe [how do they know ?] the shell is broken open and the nuts harvested by using a mechanism which is just a little bit more sophisticated than the nut crackers found in most homes in the UK.

## The Magic of Peru

One of the lakes which Margaret visited had a fairly large boat plying across its waters. Margaret explained to us that this ship had been manufactured in Britain and exported to Peru in "flat pack" format and reassembled in Peru.

For those of us who have never given a second thought as to how and where brazil nuts grow, Margaret had the answer! They grow, amongst

Margaret mentioned that for most of her trip she was living at an altitude of over 8,000 feet above sea level. This meant that she had to take care not to over exert herself. Apparently, people who are born and live their lives at this altitude have about 20% more red blood cells to cope with the lack of oxygen in the air. When these people descend to sea level they have similar difficulties to the difficulties which the rest of us experience at high altitudes. All in all a fascinating glimpse into a far away country which I'm sure is little known to most of us.

Ray Hopwood



## ST JOHN'S FELLOWSHIP - OCTOBER

At our October meeting we were pleased to welcome Richard Pople from the RSPB to talk to us on the subject of The Birdwatching Bug. His talk was illustrated with slides of Birds from the UK and overseas. The term for a dedicated Bird spotter is Twitcher. These are people who will travel miles to view a rare bird. Often birds from as far away as North America find their way to our shores and their arrival causes great excitement in the Twitching community. Sometimes dozens of spotters will turn out to view a single bird. Richard was an excellent speaker and we were encouraged to keep our eyes open for the birds in our locality and to put out food for the birds especially if we have a cold winter.

Ken Sutherland-Thomas

### St John's Fellowship Programme for November & December 2012.

In November we are fortunate to have a presentation from Andrew Poulter on Church Music, which he has subtitled "Making a Joyful Noise: Church Music Through the Ages". Andrew has for many years been the Organist at the Methodist Church in Gospel Oak, in addition he has a degree in music and has studied various types of music over many years. The evening promises an



enjoyable presentation of pictures, recordings and even a little live music, tracing the changes in church music to the present day.



In December the Fellowship will have a packed evening, including our AGM, a Christmas meal, along with some entertainment in the form of a seasonal quiz. So make a note in your diaries, get your Christmas thinking caps on, and please join us to get your Christmas celebration underway.

### GOODBYE TO GRACE KIRBY

Since Rosemary and I started helping to organise the coffee mornings and cream teas at St Johns 13 years ago one regular stall at these events has been the 'Save the Children Fund' stall run faithfully by Grace Kirby. As you may have read the Barnet branch of the charity has now closed and Grace has decided to retire after many years of service selling cards and small gifts to help raise money for Save the Children Fund. So our next Coffee Morning to be held on Saturday 17th November will be your last chance to support this good cause at our events and also say goodbye to Grace. All our other regular stalls will be there and we will open for business at 10.30am until 12 noon. Admission will be 80p Adults 50p children, as always funds raised by admission and church run stalls will be split between the North London Hospice and church funds.

David Paul

### WEDDINGS AND CHRISTENINGS AT ST. JOHNS

I am writing to ask if any member or friend of St Johns has any photographs of weddings or christenings held in our church over the last 50 years they would be willing to lend/copy to be used in an exhibition about St Johns history. Also does anyone have any film or video of events at our church they would be willing to loan for copies to be made, if you have please let me know.

David Paul

# DOCKS, DICKENS AND DASTARDLY DEEDS



All Hallows Church on Tower Hill

Early in September about 20 of St. Johns members and friends made their way to All Hallows by the Tower church for what we still think of as "The Toc H Walk", although these days the money received from participants goes to the Friends of Khasdobir, a charity working in Sylhet, Bangladesh.

On arrival we were each given a map, a Course Commentary, and 20 questions to be answered as we worked our way from All Hallows to Limehouse Basin and back. Skirting the Tower and its many tourists, we made our way to St. Katherine's Dock and admired the expensive yachts moored in the marina there. There has been so much rebuilding in this area that some of us had difficulty finding our way to the next site, where we had to note the occupation of John Rennie as described on his memorial. So we continued past pubs, churches and docks until we took a rest to eat our

picnic lunch by the river, in King Edward Memorial Park. By this time our party had split into smaller groups, as not everyone walked at the same speed. Suitably refreshed we continued to our furthest point east, Limehouse Accumulator Tower, and having noted its purpose

went down to the riverside and started our return journey, pausing only to watch the Limehouse Swing Bridge open so that a yacht could enter the Basin. Then we passed (yes, really) famous pubs including, The Grapes, the Prospect of Whitby and the Town of Ramsgate - where Judge Jeffreys was captured as he attempted to flee the country. On a



more cheerful note, we admired the large (2 metres high) sculpture of a herring gull in Narrow Street, Limehouse, and were pleased to find a pleasant community café which provided welcome cups of tea.

And so we made our way back to All Hallows (and more tea), noting types of anchor and sundial as we went. We were blessed with dry weather and looking for the answers to the questions certainly made the walk more interesting. Thanks are due to Valerie and Andrew Mills for once again organizing the St. Johns contingent.

Hugh Martin.





On the 10<sup>th</sup> of November, the Chipping Barnet foodbank opens its distribution centre at the Salvation Army Corps, Albert Road. We're very pleased to report that the larder of the foodbank is full-to-overflowing with donated food! David Paul, St John's foodbank coordinator, will advise us when donations of food will be required, and a permanent foodbank box will be situated in the Sanctuary. Please pray for the foodbank as it begins its service of offering emergency food to those in desperate need. Note that the

foodbank is not a walk-in service for all-comers. Only those who have been issued with a foodbank voucher by a professional familiar with their circumstance will be entitled to emergency food. There will be limited entitlement (3 food packages maximum) as the foodbank wants neither to encourage dependency, nor to be abused.

Those who viewed a recent television documentary on a foodbank in Coventry (*Britain's Hidden Hungry*, BBC1, 30 October) will be aware that, regrettably, there are some who will take advantage of the generosity of foodbanks if proper controls are not enforced. What was even more shocking in the same documentary was the unscrupulous preying on the desperation of the poor by 'pay day loan companies'. The interest rate charged by these loan sharks is in the vicinity of 4214%!!! No, I did not add an extra digit to this figure: it is the quoted APR charged by wonga.com and it is

not untypical. Regrettably, the Church's relaxation of its historic opposition to usury places it in a weak situation to oppose this exploitation. Nonetheless, if the Financial Services Authority (soon to become the Financial Conduct Authority) can make High Street Banks refund mis-sold payment protection insurance, it is a scandal that it allows pay day loan companies to cash-in on, and further impoverish, the poor and the desperate. One of the services the foodbank volunteers will offer is signposting those in debt to appropriate advice and services. However, rather than merely treating the symptom, if there are any who would be willing to develop a strategy and campaign to tackle the cause (exploitation by users), please make contact with me.

Julian Templeton

## OPEN CHOIR REHEARSAL

November 9<sup>th</sup> at 8:00pm in the Small Hall

Richard and the usual members of the church choir were pleased to be joined in our practice by six visitors on Friday 12th October. After our usual warm up we practiced the hymns and songs which had been chosen by Andrew and Valerie for their service the following Sunday. Richard helped us to get the tunes and timings right before going on to teach us a new hymn from New Zealand which Julian will be using in our worship soon. We then practiced 'El Shaddai' ready to be sung as an anthem in the Sunday service-

several times, actually because the syncopated rhythm was quite tricky. If Richard had told our visitors at the beginning that they would be singing in four parts by the end of the evening perhaps they would have been concerned, but he proceeded to teach us Tallis's Canon. A lovely piece which, as an evening hymn we had not sung for some time. first verse unison, second in two parts and the final verse in four parts- what an uplifting way to finish the evening of singing before saying the Grace to one another.

Thank you Richard for all you do for and with the choir and for planning the content of the open choir rehearsal.

If you are sorry you missed this then your next chance is on Friday 9th November at 8pm in the Small Hall when we will begin practicing carols for the Carol Service. Hope to see you then!!

Meg Hardie

## Prayer - Some Suggestions on how we can talk to God

Our service on October 28th was led by Sal Bateman and she left spoons for the door stewards to hand out as we entered . Being given an item on entering church is always intriguing. The spoon, Sal revealed was an aid to help with prayer. After the service she was asked to share her thoughts for the St. John's Record (PE).

If, like me, you can find it difficult to talk to God, or get bogged down in the same routine of prayer, some acronyms may be useful to assist our prayer life. There are many ways of praying, the following are some that I have used or come across – but they are only suggestions - there is no 'correct method'. Prayer is like personality, unique to each of us. Experiment and see if you find any of them useful, if only for a change from your normal routine. Above all, enjoy being drawn closer to God.

**Teaspoon:** TSP – Thanks, Sorry, Please.

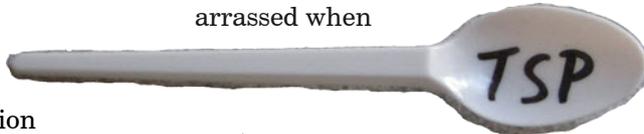
**ACTS:** Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication

**PAPA:** Present, Attend, Purge, Approach (As this is more unusual, I have included a more detailed explanation:

*Present* yourself to God without pretence. Be a real person in the relationship. Tell Him whatever is going on inside you that you can identify.

*Attend* to how you're thinking of God. Again, no pretending. Ask yourself, "How am I experiencing God right now?" Is He a vending machine, a frowning father, a distant, cold force? Or is He your glorious strong but intimate Papa?

*Purge* yourself of anything blocking your relationship with God. Put into words whatever makes you uncomfortable or embarrassed when



you're real in your relationship with Him. How are you thinking more about yourself and your satisfaction than about anyone else, including God and His pleasure?

*Approach* God as the "first thing" in your life, as your most valuable treasure, the Person you most want to know. Admit that other people and things really do matter more to you right now, but you long to want God so much that every other good thing in your life becomes a "second-thing" desire.

**PRAY:** Praise, Repent, Ask Yield

**CHAT:** Confession, Honour, Ask, Thanks

**JOY:** Jesus, Others, Yourself

One final pointer I was given, in trying to find space to pray:

**SILENT** is an anagram of **LISTEN**.

Sal Bateman

During the service Sal had asked for any ways to help with prayer. Alison Bond had mentioned the use of the fingers as an aid. Each one representing a different need for prayer. The only problem was that Alison like the rest of us could not quite remember what each finger represented! However, I did find some different suggestions one of which is..



**Thumb** (people who are close to you)  
**Index Finger** (people who point the way)  
**Tall Finger** (people in authority)  
**Ring Finger** (people who are weak)  
**Little Finger** (your own needs)

# CHILDREN'S PAGE

**NATIVITY WORD SCRAMBLE - UNSCRAMBLE THE LETTERS TO FIND WORDS FROM THE CHRISTMAS STORY .....**

1. STRA \_\_\_\_\_
2. MAGREEN \_\_\_\_\_
3. MYAR \_\_\_\_\_
4. SEPHE \_\_\_\_\_
5. DOEYKN \_\_\_\_\_
6. AEGLIN \_\_\_\_\_
7. JPHOES \_\_\_\_\_
8. JSSEU \_\_\_\_\_
9. KIGSN \_\_\_\_\_
10. STBALE \_\_\_\_\_
11. PEEKNNRIE \_\_\_\_\_
12. BHTRI \_\_\_\_\_
13. MALEC \_\_\_\_\_
14. LHEHTEEMB \_\_\_\_\_
15. DPREHSEN \_\_\_\_\_



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**CUT OUT AND COLOUR THIS NATIVITY SCENE.**



# Advent, Christmas, Epiphany

**Carol Service**, 16<sup>th</sup> December, Third Sunday of Advent, 6:30 pm

The Choir, directed by Richard Harvey and accompanied by Dr Robert Manning, will lead a Carol Service with Advent and Christmas Anthems and Carols. Illuminated by candlelight, this is one of the special services of the year.

**Fourth Sunday of Advent**, Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> December, 11:00 am

Paul Elsdon, will lead an all age service

**Christmas Eve Carol and Communion Service**, Monday 24 December, 11:30 pm

By popular demand, Julian Templeton will lead a Christmas Eve Carol and Communion service for those night owls who want to be first to see in Christmas.

**Christmas Day All Age Carol Service**, Tuesday 25 December, 10:30 am

Julian Templeton will lead an all age 45-minute service celebrating the birth of our Lord.

**1<sup>st</sup> after Christmas**, Sunday 30 December, 11:00 am

Worship led by Richard Harvey & Brenda Sandford

**Epiphany**, Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> January, 11:00 am

Julian Templeton will lead a Service of Word and Sacrament celebrating the Feast of the Epiphany, the manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles.

**Minister's Absence**

Please note that Julian and Laura will be away on holiday in New Zealand from the 7<sup>th</sup> January to the 7<sup>th</sup> February.

Change of address: Mrs Peggy Crocket 3 Ravenscroft Cottages,  
Grasvenor Ave., Barnet EN5 2DA

## MANY COLOURS

Dear Friends,  
I should be glad to hear of anyone, or anyone you know who is interested in embroidery. I have a quantity of skeins of embroidery "silks" (stranded cotton) in many colours, and I should like to pass them on, to someone who would make use of them.

Thank you,

Mary Michael

## CHORAL SOCIETY

ST ALBANS



On Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> December St Alban's Choral Society will be presenting a Christmas Concert of Music and Readings at Marlborough Road Methodist Church, St Albans.

The concert will include the second performance of Richard Harvey's carol suite 'This Endris Night'. If you missed hearing it the first time around you may like to take this opportunity to hear it this time.

Besides christmas choral music and readings there will be audience carols. Tickets: SACS Ticket Line 07884 231958 or see Richard.

## Calendar of Church Events

### November

Wed 7	7:00 pm	Nosh & Natter, 10 Leicester Road
Thurs 8	2:30 pm	Faith Sharing in a European Context, Memorial Room
	8:00 pm	Finance Meeting, Vestry
Fri 9	8:00 pm	Open Choir Rehearsal for Carol Service, Small Hall
Sat 10	10:00 am	Chipping Barnet foodbank opens, Salvation Army
Sun 11	10:45 am	Remembrance Sunday Worship led by Tony Alderman & David Paul
	8:00 pm	Soul Food led by Julian Templeton
Tues 13	8:00 pm	Elders' Meeting, Vestry
Thurs 15	2:30 pm	Faith Sharing in a European Context, Memorial Room
Fri 16	8:00 pm	Choir Practice
Sat 17	10:30 am	Coffee Morning, Hall
Sun 18	11:00 am	Worship led by Julian Templeton, followed by Church Meeting
Mon 19	1:30 pm	Little John's Toddler Group
Wed 21	8:00 pm	St John's Fellowship, Andrew Poulter: Church Music, Small Hall
Thurs 22	2:30 pm	Faith Sharing in a European Context, Memorial Room
Fri 23	8:00 pm	Choir Practice
Sun 25	11:00 am	Worship led by Andrew Summers and Helen Snider
Mon 26	1:30 pm	Little John's Toddler Group
Tues 27	8:00 pm	Prayer and Discussion, 37 Greenhill Park
Thurs 29	8:00 pm	Men's Group Curry Evening, Railway Bell Pub, East Barnet Road

### December

Sun 2	11:00 am	Advent 1, Worship with Holy Communion led by Julian Templeton
Mon 3	1:30 pm	Little John's Toddler Group
Wed 5	7:00 pm	Nosh & Natter, 10 Leicester Road
Fri 7	8:00 pm	Choir Practice
Sun 9	11:00 am	Advent 2, Worship led by Alison Bond and Alison Cousins
	3:00 pm	Causeway
Mon 10	1:30 pm	Little John's Toddler Group
Tues 11	8:00 am	Elders' Meeting, Vestry
Fri 14	8:00 pm	Choir Practice
Sun 16	11:00 am	Advent 3, Worship led by Julian Templeton
	6:30 pm	Carol Service
Mon 17	1:30 pm	Little John's Toddler Group
	8:30 pm	Men's Group, Railway Bell Pub, East Barnet Road
Wed 19	6:30 pm	St John's Fellowship AGM, Meal and Quiz, Small Hall
Sun 23	11:00 am	Advent 4, Worship led by Paul Elsdon
Mon 24	11:30 pm	Christmas Eve Carol and Communion Service
Tues 25	10:30 am	Christmas Day All Age Carol Service
Sun 30	11:00 am	1 <sup>st</sup> after Christmas, Worship led by Richard Harvey & Brenda Sandford

### January

Sun 6	11:00 am	Epiphany, Worship with Holy Communion led by Julian Templeton
Mon 7	1:30pm	Little John's Toddler Group

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