



St John's Brooklands
Extending God's welcome to everyone

Summer Letter

Richard writes...

We have now been gathering in person on a Sunday since July last year and whilst it has been delightful to see familiar faces and a number of new ones, I still feel a sense of frustration that Sundays are not what they once were. I miss seeing everyone and enjoying a coffee afterwards!



I am conscious that there are many faces that I have not seen for over a year now and that may be for all sorts of reasons, but if you are understandably feeling cautious about returning then please be assured that I look forward to seeing you when you feel able to come back. There is no rush, you need to find your own pace, but please be assured of a warm welcome when you return: there is room for you in our pews! If in the meantime you'd like to receive Home Communion, please don't hesitate to get in touch and I'll be delighted to pop around and visit you!

As most of you will know our family of 3 became 4 in November. This has spurred me on to do some reading about parenting. When I picked up *Belonging and Becoming* by Mark & Lisa Scandrette I was struck immediately by the opening line on the cover: 'renew your imagination for what family life can be'. In the first chapter they highlight how *a thriving family lives from a vision*. As they unpack this, they provide seven dimensions of family thriving:

1. *Purposeful*. A thriving family lives from a deep sense of purpose and a positive vision of the future that it can articulate and use as a guide for decision making.
2. *Rooted*. A thriving family enacts household rhythms and policies that are life giving and that support the family's shared purpose.
3. *Receptive*. A thriving family cultivates awakening to God's care and the larger story we are all part of by embracing life-giving spiritual practices and making conscious ethical choices.

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4. *Connected*. A thriving family relates with love and respect and pursues healthy ways to connect, communicate, navigate conflicts and have fun.
5. *Responsive*. A thriving family embraces each other's belovedness, holds their brokenness and supports their growth.
6. *Resourceful*. A thriving family lives abundantly, using resources wisely and practicing gratitude, trust, contentment, and generosity.
7. *Productive*. A thriving family celebrates each person's uniqueness and supports the development of skills and capacities to serve others and pursue the greater good.

As I read this book, I was struck by just how pertinent it was to where we are at as a parish as we move out of lockdown and begin to emerge into a post-pandemic world. As I read this book, I found myself adding in the word "church" before I read the word "family". As someone has said: "The church is not a place to attend but a family to belong to". This reflects the fact that in the Bible the church is frequently described as a family. As I read *Belonging and Becoming* I found myself asking how what I was reading shed light on how we can become a thriving church family.

The first thing is to make sure that we live from our vision. Our parish vision is to be a family who is *extending God's welcome to everyone*. This vision helps to guide us in our decision making. As we slowly emerge into a post-pandemic phase of our church life, we have an opportunity to think through how we become a thriving church family growing in faith together.

In practical terms this means two things in the short term: the first is that we are moving our Sunday morning service from 9.30am to 10.00am. This will make it easier for a wider variety of people to join us for public worship. This service is called **Together @ 10** to indicate that this is a first step in allowing our whole church family to gather and connect with God together.

The second thing that we're doing is providing various opportunities during Autumn 2021 and the Spring 2022 to discern together what the future of ministry at St John's will look like as we seek to meet the needs of our local community and see God's kingdom grow. The first step in this journey is to invite everyone in our parish to share their initial thoughts with the PCC. As such I've included a Parish Survey with this letter and it can also be downloaded from our website. The results of this survey will be discussed by the PCC at our meeting in September and we'll produce a timetable for the process going forward.



Whilst it is easy to spend a lot of time focusing on Sunday, we need to give more thought about what areas of ministry we begin to focus on during the week as we seek to live out our faith.

In the Book of Revelation St John the Divine recounts one of his visions:

“Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal...On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.”
Rev. 22:1-2

These verses are the inspiration for our parish vision and logo. These verses invite us to consider how we can bear fruit in our lives and bring life to those living in our community? Where can St John become a healing presence in the life of our parish? This is picked up towards the end of the survey and I have provided a few suggestions, but they are by no means exhaustive! What are the physical *and* spiritual needs of our community and how can we get involved to bring life?

One area of ministry that has been on my mind has been our ministry to the lonely and isolated and this is where **Good as New** has played such a vital role at St John’s over the years. Having spoken with those who have been involved with this ministry there is a real passion to see it continue, along with the realistic assessment that on a practical level we’re unlikely to be able to replicate what we once did. As restrictions relax, I hope that come September we shall be in a position to start up our community coffee morning on Thursdays which seeks to provide a caring place for people to connect with each other.

I hope this helps provide you with a picture of where things are heading over forthcoming months and I’ll be in touch again in the Autumn. Over the page you will find an invitation to pop along to the vicarage for afternoon tea. I hope to see many of you there!

Richard

Revd Richard Sherratt

0161 973 5220 | vicarbrooklands@gmail.com

 @baguleystjohn |  @BaguleyStJohns

<https://linktr.ee/stjohnsbrooklands>

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You're invited! *to Afternoon Tea* *at the Vicarage*



4th August @ 2.00-3.30pm

25th August @ 2.00-3.30pm

We'd love to welcome you to our garden to enjoy tea and some homemade cakes!

There is no need to book.

Just turn up and there will be a chair waiting for you!

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