



ST JOHN'S NEWSLETTER

December 2018/January 2019



The County Durham Environment Partnership Award winners are ... Find out the results inside this Newsletter, as well as more news and dates to save!



BARNEY WRITES



In common with (eventually) all full-time parish clergy in the Diocese I have just spent a week away as part of a small cohort on: 'Ministerial Leadership for Growth - a course for change' ('MLG' for short). Funded by a special grant from the Church Commissioners, MLG includes two clergy residentials and then a follow-up day (attended by laity from the parish). In between times, we are (each in our separate parishes) expected to develop a Mission Project Plan, drawing on what has been learned during the residential weeks.

During the course of the week (which is built around time spent in small groups reflecting together on scripture and experience) we took time to (re)discover aspects of contemporary culture in our present time of change, aspects of ourselves (what is our characteristic instinct, style or response in different situation) and aspects of mission in the life of the church: all in the hope of helping us to discern what God is calling us to and how we might more effectively be missional leaders in today's church.

I have been encouraged to consider that our parish's work with and in Bearpark might form the 'Mission Project Plan' as far as this parish is concerned. Why Bearpark and not Neville's Cross? - might be a fair question! Our work around Bearpark is the fruit of several years' thought and prayer, emerging in part from a sense that, as the statistically 'least deprived' parish in the diocese, we cannot fulfil our calling to serve (in a diocese explicitly committed to addressing Poverty) until we better connect with our (statistically far more deprived) near neighbours.

I believe that as we do our best to discover and deepen new relationships through this link, we will find God speaking to US. I hope that it will help to transform the way we relate to our whole locality as a church; I believe that it will renew our core calling to serve God in Jesus name, here and now. Please continue to hold this endeavour in your prayers.

Barney

NEWS... NEWS... NEWS... NEWS... NEWS... NEWS...

MABEL BEST - RIP

It is with sadness we record that Mabel Best, as very long-standing member of St John's, died on Monday 26th November. We give thanks to God for her life and service and extended our condolences to her family and friends.

May she Rest in Peace and Rise in Glory.

BAPTISM

The Church was delighted to welcome Felicity Kate Holmes and her cousin Gregor Duguid Ferguson with their families and friends at their Baptismal Service on Sunday 25th November. We pray God's rich blessings on these children and on all who love and care for them.

CONGRATULATIONS

... At the County Durham Environment Partnership Annual Award Ceremony on 8th November, RE-F-USE was awarded an 'Outstanding' Award for their social enterprise cafe in Chester-le-Street and for their inspirational work in taking food which would otherwise be discarded and turning it into nutritious meals and smoothies. Re-f-use have provided lunches at the Ecofest in recent years and operate on a basis of 'Pay as you feel it's worth.' Mim Skinner from RE-F-USE is pictured on the far right on the cover photograph.

Congratulations also to Sam Slatcher, a member of St John's, who started working with Syrian refugees on a music project earlier this year, through the charity Durham City of Sanctuary. A Choir was formed and through music they shared their stories of fleeing a country of violence and seeking refuge in the north-east.

In mid October they performed in the Cathedral to an audience of 170 people. Working with Sam they recorded an album in November which

is available from www.samslatcher.bandcamp.com for £10 and have a tour planned in March for Newton Aycliffe, Stockton and Newcastle.

'For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me' Matthew 25 34-40

Also in the photo is the Ecofest Committee, Margaret, Paul, Alison and Sarah which received the Runner-Up Award at the ceremony. The Church and the local community have enjoyed and supported the Ecofest for the last 10 years with a focus on environmental issues ranging from water, trees, energy to energy. We look forward to the 11th Ecofest next year on 9th June – Book this date in your diary.

MORE CONGRATULATIONS

We send good wishes and congratulations to Rev'd Michael Rusk, formerly a Vicar at St John's on his engagement to Dr Aileen Tincello.



'Open Door Cafe'

In November we had great pleasure in welcoming visitors from Singapore, Adriel's parents and sister, and their friend, a retired clergyman who had worked in Japan and Singapore but now lives in Scotland. We were fascinated as they told us about their church in Singapore, with 500 children and over 1,000 adult members! You never know who will call in to "Open Door". Adriel was awarded a BEng (Hons) from the Open University last year, but waited for his family to visit to be presented with his award. Many Congratulations!



Church of England Children's Society Collection Boxes

If you have a Collection Box please hand it in to Janet Hughes or to a Church Warden who will pass it on to her, and if you are gradually filling a Christingle Candle with coins, please bring it along to our Messy Church Christingle Service at 4pm on Sunday 24th December. With many thanks to all who support this very worthwhile charity.

The Big Quiz November 2018

This was a fundraising event organized by the Tearfund charity. St. John's was one of the 498 churches and other venues taking part across the whole of the UK. We managed to raise £370 for the Tearfund and are allowing ourselves to call the evening a success!

There was a good mix of ages, members of the congregation and friends from the community, all of whom were amazed to hear that there were **24,117** people taking part in the quiz nationwide. We had 43 participants in 7 teams. There were joint winners with 42 points out of a possible 60 on 6 different topics, including History, Geography, Food and Drink, Music, Film & TV and Sport Questions such as:

"The name of the actor, who played Fancy Smith in Z Cars and who is the voice of Grampy Rabbit in Peppa Pig?"

"Which Grand Slam did Bjorn Borg win the most times?"

How do you think you'd have done? Come along next year 16th November 2019 and join in the fun!

Many thanks to everyone involved!!

Abby and Kath

Mothers' Union

At the November meeting our Youth worker, Abby Clark, spoke to us about her work, in this Parish, and with other Youth workers in the Diocese. It was especially good to hear of the setting up of Prayer Stations in local schools. In October our Diocesan President, Kathleen Wilson reminded us of the beginnings of MU, in 1876, as a gathering of Mums in a Rectory living room ---- this has grown to a Global organisation of 4 million. Our Central Object states we are "United in prayer and worship." In the Wave of Prayer in December, Durham is prayed for by all members, along with our Link Dioceses in Namibia, Kenya and Nigeria.

So often prayer leads to action. MU are campaigning to raise awareness of, and call for an end to gender based violence. This 16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM campaign against gender based violence takes place between 25 November (International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women) and 10 December (International Human Rights Day.) MU nationally will be holding prayer meetings and special services to highlight the campaign. In Durham Diocese MU will be witnessing to this issue with a Prayer Walk on Friday 30th November at 11am, starting in Millenium Place in Durham city.

We are so aware today of the need for prayer----which brings us back to Abby! How encouraging and vital is her enthusiastic and imaginative work with children. We give thanks and pray for her and other Youth workers in the Diocese.

Our next meeting is on 10th December at 1.45 when all are welcome to our Christmas meeting followed by refreshments. We wish everyone a blessed Christmas season.

Dorothy Terry

The PASADA

The Pasada is on its journey round homes of members of the congregation from the beginning of Advent until Christmas Day. If you wish to host the Pasada and invite family and friends to meet them, please book an overnight stay on the Rota on the Foyer noticeboard.

Neville's Cross Community Choir

The Community Choir's Christmas Concert will be held on Friday 7th December at 7.30pm in St John's. All are welcome.

The choir will also be taking part in Durham Vocal Festival, singing with other community choirs in the Cathedral on Friday 1st February.

Rehearsals are on Tuesdays 7-9pm and resume again on 8 January. New members are always welcome.

Coffee and Carols

Tuesday 18th December 7.00-8.30pm in church. Drop in for hot drinks, mulled wine, mince pies and to sing carols. Do invite friends and neighbours.

"Open Door" is an informal community cafe held in the Church Centre at St John's 10am -12noon on the first and third Wednesdays of the month with music from pianist George Hetherington. Future dates: 5 and 19 December, with carol singing on 19th December, and next year on 2nd and 16th January.

During October's Café Church we were looking at Paul's letters to the Churches, and the question was asked; What would be sent to St John's? Here is one suggestion:

Dear St John's,

Be encouraged! Take time each day to remember the things you each do well and all the positive interactions of the day.

Remember things that make you happy, like licking jam and honey and making sand castles.

Remember all the people who care about you or love you.

Use all the positives to help you reflect God's love.

Messy Church

The next Messy Church is on Sunday 23rd December 4 – 6pm when we will make Christingles before the service which will be followed by tea. All welcome, whether you have a child or not, but children must be accompanied by an adult.

THE FAIRTRADE STALL

...will be available on December 9th and January 13th.

Science and Religion Book Club

The next meeting will be on 10th January 2019 at 7.30, if you would like more details please contact Tom Shanks, on tom.shanks@durham.ac.uk

Catherine Lee – St John’s CMS link missionary

In early November St John’s welcomed Catherine Lee, our CMS missionary worker in Taiwan. Catherine shared some of her experiences during a shared supper in the church on Saturday evening, visited St Edmunds Church in Bearpark, her home church and preached on Sunday morning at St John’s. We thank God for Catherin’s ministry and continue to hold her in our prayers.

GOD’S OPEN DOOR

In the weeks before Advent the lectionary readings for Morning Prayer are in the book of Revelation, and this year I was particularly struck by the references to ‘open doors’ in the early chapters.

Look, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut. (Rev. 3 v.8)

This is not just a call to be faithful in witness and outreach in a context of opposition but it is a promise from God that he will open doors into that world and provide the opportunities. The church in Philadelphia is called to take heart and ‘**hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches**’.

After this I looked, and there in heaven a door stood open! And the first voice ... said, ‘Come up here and I will show you ...’ (Rev. 4 v.1).

Here the door is open into heaven and John sees a vision of the glory of God’s kingdom and of the worship of heaven. We pray regularly in the Lord’s Prayer for God’s kingdom to come, and recently from Ascension to Pentecost we have joined the international prayer novena: ‘Thy Kingdom Come’. Can we catch this amazing vision that John describes here? Can we find ways to share this kingdom vision?

Listen. I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me. (Rev. 3 v.20) This is the angel's message to the 'tepid' church at Laodicea. There is a door, but they need to open it; they need to make the effort to respond, to encounter Jesus and to receive from him. Then perhaps the doors will open for a witness that is creative and positive, and not merely 'tepid'.

They – and we – are called to work in partnership with God.

Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? (Isaiah 43 v.19) I have been struck also by this verse from Isaiah which comes in the Morning Prayer Canticle in the weeks before Advent. As we have been thinking in the PCC and in the church about our opportunities for mission and outreach, it is exciting to realise that God is indeed opening doors and setting before us all sorts of 'new things'. We are discovering many ways in which we can reach out to children and young people, to our community, and to our neighbouring parish at Bearpark. And God invites each of us to decide how we are going to respond, how we are going to 'open the door', how we are going to be involved with these 'new things', and to explore what it might mean for us and for St John's. So, let us rejoice in God's word and how it speaks to us and encourages us.

Jo Cundy

GROWING YOUNG LEADERS

Andy Harris, the Diocesan Youth Leader, Abby, our Children and Youth Worker, (CYW) and other CYWs spent Saturday morning with 19 young people from across the Diocese on a monthly training course 'Growing Young Leaders.' They spent time talking about different aspects of leadership and then enjoyed a wonderful time of worship, with many of the youth contributing with their musical talents. Please remember all these young and older leaders in your prayers.

Whithaugh 2018!

22 young people and their leaders set off on Friday 19th October for an action packed weekend of fun, laughter, mud, worship and Bible teaching at Whithaugh Park in the borders of Scotland. Great time



was had by all engaging in various activities including: team challenges, low ropes course, zip wire, campfire, hunt the leader, t-shirt dying and much more. Our focus for the weekend was the book of Colossians, exploring how we



can live out the Gospel in our everyday lives. We certainly saw the gospel lived out in many ways throughout the weekend as the young people supported one another, served each other, engaged passionately in worship and challenged themselves in many ways. My prayer is that faith will continue to grow amongst these young people, we are already seeing the fruits of our time at Whithaugh through the strengthening of friendships and a sense of community at both Dive and Deeper and we pray for God to continue his good work in us.

A Day at Minsteracres

Twenty people gathered at Minsteracres Retreat Centre in November to think about 'Grace.' Revd Nicky Chater led the day which considered the 'Offence' of grace, the Generosity of Grace and Opportunities to experience Grace in our lives. The following two articles have grown out of the day.

Gracious Disagreeing

This was to be titled “disagreeing agreeably”, a phrase I have liked the sentiment of for many years! As “Grace” was the theme of the recent Parish Away Day it has now changed! I am not sure that I have always succeeded in being gracious or agreeable when disagreeing, but it is what I aspire to. We live in a time and culture where freedom of speech is valued and everyone is encouraged to have their opinions. The news is full of voices that disagree and with opposing opinions. The Referendum has produced division within the country and the media are quick to respond, always hungry for news that has edge. I am deeply saddened by the animosity expressed over Brexit. The situation is complex but personal attacks do not help. Knowing how to pray at such times is hard. I have found myself praying for God’s mercy on us all. I hope we are spurred to pray and have a heart to heart with God. I am reminded of the words Jesus used during his agony at Gethsemane as he faced crucifixion, “Not my will, but yours”. The challenge at the heart of prayer is often to reach that place of handing over our ideas and trusting God. Sounds simple, but can be extremely hard. It’s all too easy to assume God is on our side, holds our views and that others are wrong. Humility is required when praying and when graciously disagreeing!

How do we cope when we hold strong views and passions run high? How does the Christian encouragement to “speak the truth in love” work out in disagreements? Firstly I guess we have to acknowledge that on many issues knowing the truth is not easy. I struggle when “experts” speak passionately and eloquently, yet contradict each other. Who do you believe? What is the truth? And love, how do we keep loving? Love is often not how we feel when we disagree with another – it may be irritation, anger, scorn, impatience... need I go on? (Please note I am not suggesting anger is wrong, but how we express it can be. Jesus got angry...but that is another topic!) Our emotions are stirred and how much importance we have invested in something may affect the intensity of our emotional reactions (eg. If I don’t really mind

if I sit in church on a pew or a chair I will not feel strongly about either position, but for others this issue matters!). Jesus encourages us to love, even our enemies. Sometimes it can be a challenge to love our nearest and dearest! No wonder we need God's help to see others as He does. Our view of people will impact how we behave towards them. Asking for the grace to see others as God does would seem a helpful prayer. The more we see beyond our differences to the things that we do have in common eg.our shared humanity, the greater chance we will treat others as we would hope to be treated ourselves.

I am encouraged at St John's that there is space and respect for a range of views. Where discussion can be open and gracious we can learn from each other. Long may this continue! Down history many splits in Christianity have arisen following disagreements. There remain several issues today that Christians disagree on- Brexit being just one! Learning how to disagree graciously seems a skill vital for our time, as is the ability to live with the tension of differing views. We may have opportunity to exercise this in the coming days in the UK as the sorting out of our relationship with the EU continues. What seems clear is that Brexit is not going away soon! Christmas too can be a time of tension. Let's remember that God's grace is always available to help us graciously disagree and together let's move into the New Year putting our trust and hope in Jesus, the vulnerable Christ Child, and giver of all Grace - and keep our heart to heart prayers going!

"May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all." 2 Corinthians 13:14

Joy Cook

Vision, Gifts and Grace

Christmas and Epiphany are times for gifts, and for the joy of giving and receiving; New Year is a time for having new vision and planning new things. And 'all the time' is a good time to be conscious of God's grace and his blessings in our lives. So what vision / gifts / grace might 2019 hold for St John's church?

We are a church with lots of potential, lots of plans, and we want to make the most of our resources. What resources? Well . . . it's quite simple really . . .

People – God has given to each of us gifts and talents, and blessed us with his grace. As we thank God for the way he has touched our lives with his grace, let us consider how we use our time and talents in his service, and what else we might offer to God.

Prayer – it is as we set aside time to read, study, pray, and give time to God and time to sharing our experience of God with each other, that we are able to discern God's will, to see things happen and to realise the visions and plans that we have.

Pounds – committing ourselves to share God's grace and be involved in vision and outreach can be costly. The cost is not only in how we live and what we do, but realistically money is a practical necessity to make a lot of things happen. We need to be generous stewards of the money that God has given us.

So it is all about the wonderful Grace of God in our lives – grace that we have received, and grace that we want to share – and using the '3Ps' to enable our vision and plans to become reality and to see God's kingdom come and grow.

SERVICES IN DECEMBER and JANUARY 2019
MORNING PRAYER Mon & Tues 9.15am
MID-WEEK COMMUNION SERVICE 7pm THURS

Sunday 2nd December Advent Sunday

8.45 Eucharist (Book of Common Prayer)

10.30 Eucharist Service with groups for children 0-14yrs

6.00 'TASTE' - Leaving for Advent Carol Service at the Cathedral

Sunday 9th December (with Fairtrade Stall)

8.45 Eucharist

10.30 Eucharist Service with groups for children 0-14yrs

Sunday 16th December

8.45 Eucharist (Book of Common Prayer)

10.30 Cafe Church with the Nativity

Sunday 23rd December

8.45 Eucharist

10.30 Joint Eucharist Service with St Margaret's at St John's.

4-6pm Messy **Christingle** with tea

Monday 24th December Christmas Eve

4.30pm Crib Service **at St. Margaret's**

7.30pm Carol Service with mulled wine and mince pie at **St. John's**

11.30pm Midnight Mass at **St. Margaret's**

TUESDAY 25th December

CHRISTMAS DAY

10.00 Christmas Morning

Eucharist at St John's

with seasonal children's activities.



Sunday 30th December

8.45 Eucharist

10.00 Joint Eucharist Service at St Margaret's.

Monday 31st December

6.15 Durham Churches Together New Year's Eve Procession, leaves the Market Place at 6.15pm for the Cathedral's New Year's Eve Service at 6.30pm.

Sunday 6th January Baptism of Christ

8.45 Eucharist Service (Book of Common Prayer)

10.30 Eucharist Service with groups for children 0-14yrs

6.30 'TASTE' tbc

Sunday 13th January (with BAPTISM and Fairtrade Stall)

8.45 Eucharist

10.30 Eucharist Service with groups for children 0-14yrs

4—6pm Messy Church, with activities, Worship & Tea

Sunday 20th January

8.45 Eucharist (Book of Common Prayer)

10.30 Eucharist with groups for children 0-14yrs

Sunday 27th January

8.45 Eucharist

10.30 Café Church

6.30 'Shalom' an ecumenical service with quiet prayers for healing

*Wishing you all
the Joys of the Christmas Season
and a
Blessed and Peaceful New Year!*

CONTACTS

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