

MARCH 2019

st.stephen's
twickenham

THE MONTH

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LENT



JEZ BARNES, VICAR

ADDRESS THE EXCESS

The goal of following Jesus is to become like him. And the reason that matters is because to become more like Jesus is to become more truly human. So, becoming more truly human – our truer God intended selves - is the goal of following Jesus. ‘The glory of God is a human being fully alive’, as St Irenaeus famously wrote.

Lent begins on Wednesday 6 March and is a season to consciously engage with the spiritual disciplines of praying and fasting. Not in a spirit of making ourselves miserable, but as part of our journey into becoming more truly human through Jesus.

One way to creatively engage with Lent this year is through Tearfund’s resources. (Tearfund are one of our Global Engagement partner organisations at St Stephen’s.)

Tearfund’s Lent journey this year is called ‘Address the Excess’ and is based on this thought:

“Your life is a beautiful, sacred gift. Yet the world keeps trying to tell you that you aren’t enough, that you need to add more to your life: more success, more money, more stuff. Lent is an opportunity to clear out the clutter, strip away the excess and rediscover the holiness at the heart of life.”

Why not join me in signing up for Tear-

fund’s daily devotionals during Lent this year (www.tearfund.org) and get creative in taking some small steps forward with Jesus into becoming more ‘fully alive’ this Lent.

REMEMBERING SONJA

You’ll have noticed the new bench in our church garden which has been commissioned and designed to help us remember Sonja Arnold, our associate vicar who died last year. After Sonja’s cancer diagnosis in March last year, a group of her female friends – the ‘guardian angels’ – prayed and supported Sonja tirelessly until she died in May. The PCC invited the guardian angels to decide what would be the most appropriate way for us as a church to have a tangible

reminder of Sonja, and this beautiful bench is the result. Next month’s edition of The Month will share a little more of the background of why this design and wording was chosen.

As we enjoy the bench – reminding us of Sonja who loved to come alongside others and who always took time to sit and be with people – we can be thankful to God for her life and for our memories of her. Plans are being made for Bishop Graham to be with us on a Sunday in May to lead us in a moment of prayer in the garden as we give thanks for Sonja, one year after her death. That will take place as part of a bring and share lunch to which the whole church is invited. Watch this space for confirmation of the exact date in due course.

With love, Jez



MONTH OF SUNDAYS

BY HUGO FOXWOOD, CURATE

In March we will continue our series on John's gospel, 'Portraits of Jesus.' We'll be seeing what a divisive figure Jesus becomes, as he challenges the tradition of his day and somehow avoids arrest – at least for the time being.

And we'll also see the extraordinary miracles of food provision and walking on water, signs that pointed to Jesus' divinity, but also that called to mind Israel's historic liberation from the political and financial superpower of its day. Making these connections between Old and New Testament can unlock valuable insights. N.T. Wright argues that one of the apostle Paul's concerns was that if the Christian faith lost its connection with Judaism, then 'the Jesus movement would turn itself into a kind of private spirituality, less concerned with the kingdom of God on earth as in heaven and more concerned with cultivating ones own spiritual interiority...a private religion that would no longer pose much of a threat to the principalities and powers...' (p. 322, Paul, A Biography). In this sermon series, we hope to avoid that risk.

On 17 March, we'll interrupt the series to focus instead on small groups and their important role in church life. In a big church like this, joining a small group can often be a key way to feel connected, and to work out with others about what a life of faith really means in practice. If you have a story to share about the difference that being in a small group has made to you, then please contact hugofoxwood@st-stephens.org.uk or 020 8892 5258.

SUNDAY 3 MARCH

9am HC // **Healing on the Sabbath** // Jez Barnes
 10.30am IS // **Healing on the Sabbath** // Jez Barnes
 6pm IS // **Healing on the Sabbath** // Matthew Purves

SUNDAY 10 MARCH

9am MW // **Feeding the 5,000** // Jyoti Banerjee
 10.30am HC // **Feeding the 5,000** // Jyoti Banerjee
 6pm IS // **Feeding the 5,000** // Emma Dobson

SUNDAY 17 MARCH

9am HC // **Life Group Sunday** // Hugo Foxwood
 10.30am IS // **Life Group Sunday** // Hugo Foxwood
 6pm IS // **Life Group Sunday** // Jez Barnes

SUNDAY 24 MARCH

9am MW // **Walking in the Storm** // Tina English
 10.30am IS // **Walking in the Storm** // Tina English
 6pm HC // **Walking in the Storm** // Helen Booker

SUNDAY 31 MARCH

9am HC // **If Anyone Is Thirsty** // Philip Cobb
 10.30am IS // **If Anyone Is Thirsty** // Jez Barnes
 6pm HC // **If Anyone Is Thirsty** // Jez Barnes

SOMETHING FOR THE FAMILY: BUT HOW WAS YOUR DAY?

BY EMMA DOBSON, CHILDREN'S PASTOR



'How was your day?' 'What did you get up to at school?' 'What did you learn at Kids Church?'

We ask children these kinds of questions all the time as we try to gain insight into their lives and although it is rarely our intention, we sometimes find ourselves inadvertently

becoming 'the interviewer' with a one-way flow of questions. A simple way to combat this and draw out more conversation is to imagine that the questions have been reversed – even if they haven't yet! Share with your child some of what you did today, what did you enjoy or find difficult? What are you

particularly thankful for or wish you could do differently? After church why not share what you learnt in the service or explain how you enjoyed connecting with God. Not only does this encourage a two-way conversation, it's also a great way to model to your children the things you are trying to teach them and give them windows into how your life with God looks. Sharing this kind of information with your children might spark conversations you may not otherwise have had and is likely to increase their confidence in sharing with you too. If praying with your children before bed is something your family do, then you might like to use a similar technique here. Rather than simply asking for their requests; try sharing your prayer points too and pray alongside them. Again, this simple act of explaining what's going on for you is an amazing way to help them see how you connect with God and will encourage them to explore how best they connect too. Only share what you feel is comfortable and appropriate, but you might like to give it a go and see how you get on!



PRACTICAL THEOLOGY COURSE

MONDAYS MONTHLY // STARTING 13 MAY

BY BRUCE VINEY & MARI PIETERSE

The Bible is the best-selling book of all time and it is therefore probably no surprise that it influences so many aspects of our lives, both in secular and Christian societies.

How often do we still identify today with what people in the 1st century felt and thought? How is that possible? It is also quoted out of context more than any other book. 'Women should remain silent in churches' (1 Cor 14:34); it must be true, it is written in the Bible. If we follow what God says we will get rich 'For I know the plans I have for you, 'declares the LORD, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you...' (Jer 29:11). It must be true it is written in the Bible. Theories on how to read the Bible range from treating every word as literally true, across the spectrum, to treating the Bible as something of the barest passing interest. Of course, it is not actually one book, but 66 books and these are made up of a mixture of narrative history, genealogies, chronicles, laws, poetry, proverbs, parables, letters, sermons, biographies, prophecies, worship, and apocalyptic revelation. So how should we as Christians approach this extraordinary collection of books we call the Bible?

How do we connect with God and ourselves amongst the pages? How do we use the Bible as God intended for us, which is to inform and guide our lives and to speak to others who are interested in what we believe? In April 2019, we will be starting a practical, Bible-based theology course taking place over the summer term. We will explore the context in which the author wrote the book and what theological message they intended to convey. This will be a practical course, where we will look at how we can apply this to our lives today through themes that help us understand who we are in Christ, and how scripture equips us for life and mission. Is this for you? Christians of any age in Christ are very welcome to participate in the course. It will particularly suit those who have a hunger to study the Word of God more deeply and have already begun to study, either on their own or in small groups. It is important to note this is not a Life Group or a fellowship as we use the term in church (of course we hope that Christian fellowship will flow in and from our study, but that is not its main purpose). Instead, this is an opportunity for us to study together, focusing on biblical themes

from an exegetical point of view. What was the political, social, and moral or any other context in which the author was writing? What was the author intending to convey? How does this apply to us now? We hope that each session will be led by the Holy Spirit, to help us further develop our understanding of God's Word in a state of Christian love and hope. The ethos of the course will be about participation and respect for others' opinions and ideas. We will ask attendees to bring their own perspective on the material covered per session – so there will be an expectation that we read and do some work outside of the course. We are all there to learn – and we hope that participants will want to co-lead some of the sessions from time to time. The course will take place once a month on Mondays over the summer and autumn terms, running on 13 May, 10 June, 1 July, 9 September, 7 October, 11 November. Look out for updates on the church website and services over the coming weeks. So, should women know their place and keep quiet in church? Does the Old Testament still have relevance to Christians today? Come and find out!



Annie Davison

As a fairly strong, independent person, living on my own, who takes all worries, anxieties hurts and disappointments to the Lord for help and advice, I didn't feel (rather selfishly) the need to be part of a group. I have very supportive Christian parents also, so what more could I wish for. Well the Lord wanted more for me. With a suggestion here and a nudge there, I was welcomed into a thriving group. I can honestly say it's an experience I have not encountered before. It was quite humbling. Here I was in a group of Christians all with their own troubles and concerns but united by the thirst of wanting to learn more of the Bible and how we should deepen our relationship with Jesus. We are on a joint media group, one message reaches all, a lifeline in times of great need, a prayer chain all over London focusing on a call for help or having our spirits raised by good news. We are all vastly different, in age, nationality and Christian experience but we are all unified by our love of Christ. What a joy and an honour I feel to be part of such a family. What took me so long?! We have had some hilarious times together also, not least of all when we put 50g of extra hot chilli into a con carne instead of 5g! That sent us all into a flat spin trying to save the Drop-in guests from passing out.

Liz Thomas

Our group, Aroma, enjoy our outings. Last term a group of us went on a wonderful visit to All Soul's Langham Place to hear the inspirational Stuart Townsend. On the first Sunday of Advent we went to an Advent carol service at Guildford Cathedral and all loved the experience. The previous year we went to the 80th birthday concert for John Rutter at St Paul's Cathedral and some of us went to a quiet day at Burnham Abbey. We also enjoy theatre trips and welcome other-halves and friends who may want to join us. We are soon to be doing the cooking and serving for Drop-in and love this opportunity to chat while preparing veggies and then to have the privilege of serving the food to our guests later on.

LIFE GROUP SUNDAY 17 MARCH

Small groups are at the heart of many churches and at St Stephen's we see them as a key part to building relationships, growing in faith and equipping one another for the Christian life. Across our services on Sunday 17 March we will be profiling Life Groups (our small groups) and hope you will feel inspired to join one, if you don't belong to one already. To whet your appetite, we have asked a few of those who head up or are part of a Life Group to paint a picture of what you can expect.



Luc Herren

In the course of a year, we have discussed New Testament wisdom passages, cooked for homeless and vulnerable adults at Drop-in, read a book together ('The Disciple' by Lucy Peppiatt) and supported a course for people interested in the Christian faith (Alpha). A great mix of head, hand and heart stuff, action and contemplation – the beautiful variety life holds out for us.

Christina Wood

There are two things which work very well for us. Firstly, eating together every week, which serves to build relationship (and often laughter), and secondly, sharing our prayer requests on a WhatsApp group. After the weekly meeting, I send out a list of prayer requests and then during the week, we message each other, as and when things arise, for which we'd like prayer support. It's also especially useful to update each other when it's Central Prayer or Half Term the following week and we are not meeting.

Jeannie Mee, Louise Messer & Les Taylor

About two years ago the Aspire Life Group had expanded so much that it had outgrown the home in which it usually met, so the difficult decision was taken to multiply into two groups: the Aspire Group and the Inspire Group. The two Life Groups continue to meet at the same time (daytime, on alternate Thursday afternoons) but in two different homes of members, and follow different study topics, while still adhering to the same basic plan for the meetings: opening with a time of worship and prayer, followed by a study led by different members, and then a time of individual prayer in small groups. The two Life Groups continue to work closely together on a number of activities, such as cooking for Drop-in dinners and preparing the church for the Christmas meal for the Drop-in gathering. The two Life Groups also enjoy joint social activities together, with a celebratory Christmas lunch in mid-December (complete with Father Christmas distributing Secret Santa gifts!) and an end-of-term summer garden party. The Aspire group is currently studying the book of Philippians and has recently undertaken regular prayer support for the work of Bob and Becky Faber in Bulgaria. The Inspire Group has just finished studying the material in Lucy Peppiatt's book, 'The Disciple', and they are active in supporting the work of group members Roseline Nodoro (with her trips to Zimbabwe), and Les Taylor (with his trips to Romania). New members are welcome in both these Life Groups.



Yvonne & Philip Rodgers

We are a small, high-maintenance group each of whom have significant problems which we all pray over and share. We always pray over national or foreign crises e.g. Brexit, Somalia or Venezuela, beyond these we hardly lift our eyes beyond needs within the group. However, in these problems we experience many answers to prayer and rejoice over these together. At the moment we are studying the book of James which has proved a challenge for all! We always enjoy our fifth Tuesday when we have a meal together and often watch a film; last time we watched one of the Icon series which we had recorded - Einstein, Curie, etc - also very challenging! We meet at two venues and everyone always welcomes and cares for new guests. Due to our life situations, some of us find it difficult to get to church but are nevertheless committed to the Lord.



WOULD LIKE TO MEET... DAVID

HOW AND WHEN DID YOU COME TO ST STEPHEN'S? I started coming along regularly in 2014, after being invited by a friend, I wanted to go to a service with a few more young people.

WHAT SERVICE CAN YOU BE FOUND AT? Normally, I'm at the 6pm service.

WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR FAVOURITE JOB? The one I do now as a police officer in the Metropolitan Police Service. I'm pretty new to it all, but it's been an absolute whirlwind, dealing with different situations every single day.

SHARE ONE WAY GOD HAS BEEN WORKING IN YOUR LIFE? Through my current job, I get to see everything that goes on in life that you'd be unlucky to experience in a normal 9-5. It really has opened my eyes to how much we need to love more and the desperate need for common sense.

WHAT'S THE SCARIEST THING YOU'VE DONE? I spent five months in India for a mission trip. I was pretty confident up until the point I got on the plane to go there and it started moving. Thankfully, God was looking out for me and put some wonderful people in my life to help me.

DO YOU SERVE ON ANY TEAMS AT ST STEPHEN'S? I've just started serving on the worship team, and I also try to help where I can on the Missions committee and the Global Engagement breakfasts.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE TV SHOW? Black Mirror, it's a show that always leaves you a little bit disturbed by the end, but somehow it keeps me hooked.

IF YOU HAD A SUPERPOWER, WHAT WOULD IT BE? I'd want to control time, just so that I could get a couple more hours of sleep!

Seniors Ministry 3 March to 6 April, 2019

VENUE: CENTENARY ROOM IN CHURCH.

Monday 4

12.30pm Monday Lunch Club

Wednesday 6

2pm Chairobics

Thursday 7

10.30am Seniors Life Group ('The Sower')

Monday 11

2.30pm Monday Fellowship with speaker Philip Cobb

Wednesday 13

2pm Chairobics

Thursday 14

10.30am Service of Healing and Encouragement

Monday 18

12.30pm Monday Lunch Club

Wednesday 20

= no Chairobics =

Thursday 21

10.30am Seniors Life Group ('Take Sides')

Monday 25

2.30pm Monday Fellowship tea & cake

Wednesday 27

2pm Chairobics

Thursday 28

10.30am Service of Healing and Encouragement, with Communion and Bring & Share lunch

April

Monday 1

12.30pm Monday Lunch Club

Wednesday 3

2pm Chairobics

Thursday 4

10.30am Seniors Life Group (Mark: The Kingdom Grows)

2019 ELECTORAL ROLL RENEWAL

BY ANNIE NOTMAN, ELECTORAL ROLL OFFICER

Every six years the electoral roll for The Church of England must be completely renewed, and 2019 is the year! The Electoral Roll is the basic list in every parish of all those entitled to vote on elections within the Church of England.

To be on the roll you need to be aged 16 or more, live in the parish or be regular worshippers in the church. All members must reapply for membership otherwise their names will be deleted. This means that St Stephen's must prepare a new roll.

Those of you currently on the electoral roll will receive an email along with a new application form attached. In addition, all those currently on our database will also receive an email and application form to enable everyone who wishes to join the roll. Paper copies of the form will also be available in the Centenary Room. Completed paper forms can be left in the appropriate box or brought into the office. Please return your completed forms by Sunday 14 April if you wish to be included in St Stephen's electoral roll.

If you have any questions, please contact me on annienotman@st-stephens.org.uk or 020 8892 5258 (my hours are Tuesdays 8am-3pm, Thursdays 8am-4pm and Fridays 10am-3pm). As a member of St Stephen's electoral roll, you are welcome and encouraged to join us at the APCM, on Monday 29 April. This is our Annual Meeting where we celebrate the previous year of the church, vote for PCC members/Church Wardens and discuss the business of the church. We'd love to see you there!



GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT

SOMA IN SOUTH SUDAN

BY JOHN WATSON

Back in January, a couple of members from St Stephen's (along with some others) travelled with SOMA, one of our Global Engagement partners, to South Sudan for a short-term mission. Read on to see how it went.

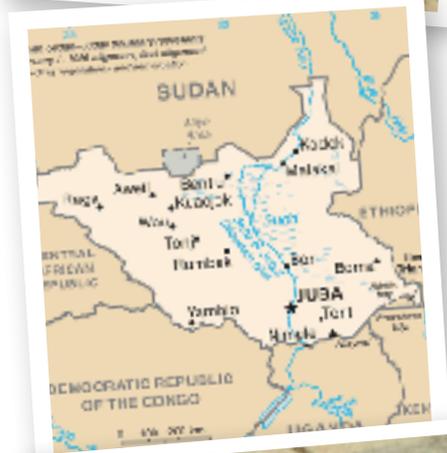
It was potentially an unnerving start to our mission when our small Cessna plane, due to set off from Juba to Bor in South Sudan, was surrounded by some 40 soldiers and police, most of whom were brandishing automatic weapons. We discovered that we had the Governor of Jonguei Province on board as well as an escaped prisoner who had been rounded up and was on his way back to Bor! Then add a further hour's delay due to lack of electricity in the control tower! Quite amusing but also a reminder that the situation is still tense in this new country and it would be easy for some misunderstanding or incident to upset the fragile peace. Les, Mike, Alastair and I set out for South Sudan on 20 January 2019, flying first to the capital Juba via Addis Ababa and then to Bor, finally arriving at the village of Makol-Chuei on 22 January, some 30 km to the north. The diocesan cathedral there was chosen as the venue for our main five-day conference and we soon settled into our mud huts (tukuls) and got to know the delegates. The focus was on training senior clergy to train others through the CPAS Growing Leaders programme in the relatively new Athooch Diocese. Some 25 senior clergy, mainly Archdeacons, attended and, under Les' guidance, we all contributed to the different modules and sessions. The Dinka clergy have enjoyed little formal education, but the teaching was understood and very well received. They added 'remember us when you are back in England' and 'we need a follow up course' in their feedback.

Of the 79 churches in Athooch Diocese, some 15 are in the refugee camps of Northern Uganda, having fled during the crisis in late 2013 (when a hostile army of blood thirsty citizens from another tribe swept through the area), so the task of training others is a very challenging one for the conference delegates. Bishop Moses, who is only 42 years of age and was installed on 18 January 2016, is a real servant leader and has a seven-year vision for the development of the Diocese. The area is 80% Christian and he would like to see Christians leading the much-needed development of health care, education and entrepreneurship in his Diocese, as well as in the churches.

We visited a local school, where the solar panels had been stolen during the crisis, also the beginnings of a clinic with very few drugs to deal with the expected increase in illness during the coming rainy season. Bishop Moses also spoke of the purchase of about nine sewing machines which are being used to stimulate small business development through a micro-finance initiative which involves the recycling of loans after six months. He is keen to establish his own office in the centre of this very rural diocese so that he can keep an eye on the outworking of all these initiatives. We have all been hugely supported by, and very grateful for, the army of personal intercessors who prayed for us before, during and after the mission. We were aware of at least 25 members of St Stephen's and another five were regular worshippers from earlier years; a total of perhaps 80 personal intercessors.

SOMA sees intercession as 50% of the effort and value of the mission and we certainly felt this to be the case. SOMA's Kate Brankin was a great support, living in Juba during our stay and relaying mes-

sages between the team and our four personal intercessor coordinators. We all felt privileged to be part of the team and have returned with an increased willingness to move outside our comfort zones to further God's kingdom in needy places like South Sudan.



NOTICES **AND** EVENTS

CENTRAL PRAYER

Tuesday 12 March 7.45pm in the church
Join us as we pray and worship together.

Saturday 2 March
9.30am – 11.30am

A drop-in playgroup for
dads to enjoy time with their
children (0-5's welcome)



Monday 18 March
7.45pm in the church
'Freedom in Parenting:
Trusting God With
Our Children'
Speaker: Rachel Bedford



SALVO FOUNDATION // FOUNDATION COURSE WEEKEND

FRIDAY 29 MARCH (7PM-9.30PM) TO
SATURDAY 30 MARCH (10AM-9PM)
CHELSEA METHODIST CHURCH SW3 5TX
BOOK ON FOR JUST £50.
FOR MORE INFO, VISIT
WWW.SALVOFOUNDATION.ORG/SALVO-BASIC-COURSE

SOUND TRAINING EVENING

Monday 1 April 7pm in the church

An introductory evening to church sound.
Open to anyone over the age of 16. This is not
a commitment to join the team, just a taster.
Let us know you're coming or find out more at:
www.st-stephens.org.uk/worship

AND FINALLY... WIT, IF NOT WISDOM

If you ever get cold, just stand in a corner for a bit.
They're usually around 90 degrees.

