

ONE FAMILY

NEWS FROM GREYFRIARS AND NEW HOPE • ISSUE 10 • SPRING 2022



IN THIS ISSUE

NEW HOPE • YOUTH TEAM • REST • BAPTISMS
CLIMATE AND NATURE • THE ATRIUM

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Welcome to the spring edition of One Family.

Spring is my favourite season of all and a time of hope as we look to the cross of Jesus and his resurrection.

The writer of the book of Hebrews reminds us that “faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see” (Hebrews 11:1). Over the last few years, we have faced many battles in the world – plague, war, inequality and growing levels of persecution of God’s people around the globe. We are not to be surprised by this. Revelation chapter 6 helps us understand the times we are living in, between Jesus’ first and second comings.

Jesus tells us in the Gospels, “in this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). We are not to be surprised by the troubles around us, but instead to have faith, to have confidence in what lies ahead, in what we do not see. In other words, as God’s people, we are to have an eternal perspective, looking beyond the troubles of this world, to an eternity with our Lord and Saviour. It is this hope, this promise of eternity, that spurs us on to share the Gospel with others and to pray that they too would come to this place of confidence in Christ.

I encourage us all to see the challenges we face in this world through the perspective of Christ’s promise of his return on that day when he will bring justice to all people. As we wait, we are to prepare and get ready for his return and to share our faith with an increased sense of urgency.

David Walker

Vicar of Greyfriars and New Hope



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Do we Care?

**A conversation starter
with Deepa Senapathi**

I love springtime. I love watching the buds and blossoms sprout all over the place, trees long dormant being revived, birdsong that wakes me up in the mornings, and all of Nature coming back to life mixed in with the hope of Eastertide.

This year, however, I found myself worrying a little as snowdrops and daffodils sprouted up even earlier than usual, and then experiencing a sudden, unexpected snow and hail storm on 1 April.

You may think this is all part and parcel of what constitutes “British weather” and surely it keeps things interesting. But the scientist in me sees these as signs of changing climate.

Earlier spring for birds and blossoms might make us feel happier but in truth this is unbalancing the natural rhythms that keep our ecological world in sync. Also, climate change isn't just about global warming and the recent snow flurries in April are just another indication that things are becoming less predictable and that extreme events like droughts, floods, forest fires and heatwaves are becoming more frequent and more intense.

At the start of this year, I decided that I needed to DO more rather than just talk about it or confine it to my professional life alone. For anyone who has read previous articles, you will know that I feel deeply that good stewardship of God's creation and the natural world is a fundamental part of our Christian faith and lives. And James's instruction of being "doers of the word and not hearers only" has been repeatedly echoing in my thoughts. I believe this also resonates with many of you within our congregations.

As a result of my musings, I changed my shampoo and conditioner and dishwasher and laundry tablets, made a decision not to buy clothes I didn't need, tried to figure out options to drive less, and so my list went on and on. I managed to make some changes, but most days it feels like very small baby steps in an attempt to tackle what is an enormous global issue.

The question, however, remains whether tackling changing climate and preserving our wonderful natural world can just be the sum of individual efforts. Each of our efforts is incredibly important, but surely galvanising groups of people into action is as important as the small changes we are all making in our own lives? So the bigger question here is, what can we

‘Can we come together as one church family with a united goal towards being good stewards of God’s world?’

do as a church? Can we come together as one church family with a united goal towards being good stewards of God's world? And if so, how do we do this?

To do this well, I think we need dialogue, discussion and debate. As I've mentioned before, a "one size fits all" approach does not work for individuals and nuclear families but there could be an agreed vision or target that we could work together as the One Family of Greyfriars and New Hope. To this end we are hoping to kickstart some conversations after our Sunday services in mid-May. If you would like to engage in the ongoing conversation, please get in touch.

The idea is to have a conversation over a cuppa and see if we can share ideas on how we think we can protect nature and biodiversity both as individuals and as a church family. We hope this will be just the start of mobilising this wider effort. Only by getting together and prayerfully discerning God's will for us moving forward in this area can we learn how best to look after God's natural world and his creation. So do come along with your questions and your ideas and hopefully together we can start making a difference.

We recently celebrated as a number of people were baptised at the 9.30 and 6.30 services. Here's a photographic record of a great day of joy, and reflections from three of our young people.



"On the day of my baptism I was a bit nervous, especially when I found out the water was so hot in the baptism pool! It was nice that I got to share the day with some of my extended family and for them to see our church and the new Atrium. It felt like I was taking the next step in my Christian journey. I was pleased to tell my friends at school about my baptism and I see it as a way to be more open about my faith."

Boh Clay





"I chose to be baptised as I felt it was the next step in having a true Christian faith and relationship with God. I feel that it is a more tangible and real action, a way for me – that felt quite official – to say I believe. It was also a step of having freedom and truth and motivation."

Hannah Bates



"I got baptised in January because I felt it was the right time on my journey to publicly declare my faith and love for Jesus. The decision to do so came from the comfort I found in God and knowing that I'm never truly alone when going through difficult situations."

Emma Rose



New Hope Update

The last six months have been challenging for New Hope but also a very formative time. As we know from scripture, it is often in the desert places that God forms us and prepares us. Following the departure of Joy Atkins in summer 2021, we have been discerning what kind of person should come and oversee the mission and ministry at New Hope. We focused on two words: community and mission. These two words convey the heartbeat of what God is doing at New Hope.

The community aspect of New Hope is at the core of everything we do. We are a welcoming community, who enjoy sharing our lives together in worship, prayer and in ways that support and encourage one another. The New Hope community is authentic, loving and

sometimes messy! We are a family of believers who celebrate the fact that New Hope is a welcoming, safe space for spiritual refugees and those on the edge of church, who have found healing and family in the community.

Through whole-life discipleship, we seek to grow with God so that we can be people of hope for our town, our workplaces, our social circles and extended families. We are a church that focuses on building friendships, being visible and praying for our neighbours. We do this through our missional activities during the week, as well as through the gift of hospitality.

As the parish develops and changes, we are keen to find new ways to reach out to those who are lonely, marginalised and without faith.



It was decided that, rather than keeping the old title of Associate Vicar, it would be more helpful to name our new leader at New Hope a Community Missioner.

Of the five candidates who applied for the role, we interviewed four and felt a clear sense that David Nyirongo is the right person to lead the New Hope community forward.

David is joyful, humble, pastoral and missional. He is originally from Zambia and is married to Safiya, with three children, Kamran, Judah and Seraphineis, aged between 7 and 14. David has been working in south London and has really good experience empowering and releasing others to lead mission in community. We are delighted to say that the Bishop of Reading has given her approval, so David and family will move to the New Hope vicarage in July and start in September.

Please pray for David and his family as they prepare. And pray for the New Hope community as we welcome David and his family, with joy and thanksgiving.



David Nyirongo

Community Missioner, New Hope

Something for the Summer

There are a host of events happening around the UK over the summer months where you can be refreshed, recalibrated and reinvigorated. Here are just a few...

BIG CHURCH DAY OUT

When? 3-4 June

Where? Wiston Estate, West Sussex

What to expect: A Festival Alive in Technicolour Faith. Join with over 30,000 people to worship together in the company of some of the best Christian artists in the world. Rippling flags, worship anthems, cream teas and beautiful gardens.

.....
bigchurchdayout.com

NEW WINE UNITED

When? 23-28 July (Greyfriars & New Hope week)

Where? East of England Showground, Peterborough

What to expect: This summer we'll celebrate everything God has been doing in our lives, churches and communities. We'll encounter him afresh together and take his blessing back home – to see the nation changed. Impactful teaching, worship, Holy Spirit ministry, community, connection, and transformational encounters with God.

.....
www.new-wine.org/events/united22

WILDFIRES

When? 30 May - 2 June

Where? Wiston Estate, West Sussex

What to expect: Thousands of all ages from different church expressions and communities, hungry to see revival; gathering around Camp Fires that deepen friendships and community; pursuing together Holy Fire through worship, prayer and teaching; and encountering the Wild Fire of the Holy Spirit to take back to our homes, communities and nations.

.....
wildfiresfestival.com

CREATION FEST

When? 29 July - 1 August

Where? Royal Cornwall Events Centre, Wadebridge

What to expect: Gather in the joy of community for four days of music, talks, art, skate and boundless adventure as we spend time with Jesus and discover what it means to live a beautifully wild life of faith. Our 2022 festival theme explores the idea of our story, wonderfully unique, but also messy and complicated.

.....
creationfest.org.uk



KESWICK CONVENTION

When? Over three weeks between 16 July and 5 August

Where? Keswick, Lake District

What to expect: Taking place since 1875, the Keswick Convention offers life-changing Bible teaching, worship and fellowship, with separate kids and youth programmes, all combined with the chance to relax and enjoy the wonder of the Lake District.

.....
keswickministries.org/2022-convention

SIXTY ONE

When? 4-7 August

Where? East of England Showground, Peterborough

What to expect: SIXTY ONE is a God-charged space for students and young adults to prioritise the presence of God, awakening deeper calling and confidence in life's next steps (speak to Sam Brown for further info).

.....
www.sixtyone.space

GREENBELT

When? 26-29 August

Where? Boughton House, Northamptonshire

What to expect: We're somewhere artistry meets activism, the secular meets the spiritual, politics meets positivity. We're somewhere to come together once a year, where we're just as likely to dream up a better world as we are to dance and debate, to pray and to party (ideally all of those things at the same time).

.....
greenbelt.org.uk

DAVID'S TENT

When? 26-29 August

Where? Wiston Estate, West Sussex

What to expect: A 72-hour non-stop worship event where people gather from all around the world, across different denominations and church expressions to worship Jesus. As well as worship, there are teaching and impartation sessions in the breakout tent.

.....
www.davidstent.net/uk-summer-festival

Hello Goodbye

In recent weeks we have seen a few comings and goings

HELLO TO JEREMY WALL

After many years in various finance roles in industry I am excited to be building on my experience as the New Hope Book Keeper and to be joining the staff team at Greyfriars and New Hope as the new Finance Manager. I am looking forward to seeing how the church grows as the site is developed.

HELLO TO ALEXIS WOOD

I'm delighted to join Greyfriars Nursery. As part of the management team I'll be drawing on my financial, company and board management experience. It is my privilege to be handed the responsibility for the Nursery finances from Deirdre Underwood who has given so much to the Nursery over many years. I love playing my part, alongside parents, staff and Greyfriars, in making the motto of the Nursery from Proverbs 22:6 true for our children: "Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old, they will not turn from it."

HELLO TO JO ALDEN

I've had the pleasure of being part of the Greyfriars & New Hope staff team since June 2021, when I began working as the New Hope Centre Administrator. My role has recently grown to also overseeing the admin for DBS applications and safeguarding training for all of our volunteers. I didn't quite realise how many volunteers and teams we have across our wonderful church – so I'm sure I'll be speaking to you soon, if I haven't already!

GOODBYE TO JULIAN ROWLANDSON

Since we arrived at Greyfriars in 1985, Fiona and I have been involved in many aspects of church life; leading a home group and welcome, coffee and tech teams, serving on PCC, worship band, running marriage ministries and church weekends away, village hosting at New Wine, planning new lighting and sound systems and much else. Most recently I have had the privilege of being a member of the staff team working on operations, finance, governance and redevelopment. Seeing phase 1 completed is an achievement that has far exceeded the expectation I had for the space. After 37 years, however, we feel that God is leading us into a new chapter of life. We will take with us many happy memories.



JEREMY



ALEXIS



JO



JULIAN



MEL



CATHY

GOODBYE TO MEL BRIGHT

Since 2017 I've been working as the Safeguarding Administrator for Greyfriars and New Hope. This involves making sure we are compliant with regulations laid down by the government and the Diocese and best practice decided by the church. With approximately 200 volunteers across two sites, it's been a busy role! I've really enjoyed working with the team at Greyfriars and New Hope, and appreciate every volunteer that enables us to do so much in our community.

GOODBYE TO CATHY SUMMERS

Greyfriars has been my home church for over 40 years. I moved from a voluntary role looking after room hire invoices at New Hope to a finance and admin job at Greyfriars Nursery 13 years ago. This grew to include the Bookshop and Coffee Shop finances, and I joined the church staff team in 2017. I have had great fun with invoices and spreadsheets over the years! I will be retiring at the end of May, and look forward to spending more time with Mal, catching up on many DIY and creative projects, and playing and writing more music.



Street Pastors in Reading

**Luke Randall on his
book about the work
of Street Pastors**



In November 2020 *Stories from the Streets* was published, covering the work of Street Pastors across the UK and in Antigua. *Stories from the Streets* offers a glimpse of what it is like to be out for an evening, stories from homeless people, accounts of Rail, Response and School Pastors and much more.

Sally Leonard has been the coordinator of Reading Street Pastors, which was launched in February 2009, for about 10 years. Below are some extracts from *Stories from the Streets* about the work in Reading.

“Reading Festival has been a huge success for Street Pastors, and we have been involved helping out at the Festival for the last eight years. We patrol the campsite, but also have two tents on site, serving refreshments or as places where people can come to chill out. This year we were open 24/7 from the Wednesday lunchtime to the Monday morning. About 30,000 festival-goers came into the tents, which were manned by a total of 125 volunteers, both Street Pastors and people from different churches in Reading. One festival-goer commented on our Facebook site:

‘Hi, I’ve just come back from Reading Festival and wanted to thank you guys so much for being so helpful and non-judgemental. Two of my friends needed help from you and we are honestly so grateful. You do amazing work.’

Summarising her role in Reading, Sally thinks: ‘God has really opened the doors for us in Reading. I have not gone looking for these extra events; they have come to us.

It’s great that people recognise what we are doing and want to use us.

One of the many satisfying things I see in my role as coordinator is that there are more than forty churches working together with Street Pastors. Street Pastors is probably one of the few initiatives where all the different churches work together, whether Catholic, Baptist, Church of England, Pentecostal or whatever. It’s just fantastic.”

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*For more information on the book,
with a foreword by Les Isaac, please
visit www.storiesfromthestreets.org.*

Digging Deeper with God

Two Greyfriars members tell us about a deeper understanding from formal studies

Until recently I would not have been able to write a piece entitled “Digging deeper with God”. This is yet another example of the Holy Spirit working in wonderful ways.

Several years ago I mentioned to David Walker my desire to improve my understanding and knowledge of the Bible. He suggested St Mellitus College in London, which allows a small number of non-ordinands to attend the basic theology course, without needing to do essays and without accreditation – perfect for me. I attended every Tuesday evening for an academic year. A real pleasure and a privilege, I met many interesting people, was exposed to some outstanding theology lecturers, and learned a lot about the Bible.

Since then I've joined Bible Study Fellowship, a US-based organisation founded decades ago by a Scot. Each year in BSF we study one book of the Bible by answering set questions daily, meeting for a one-hour Zoom group discussion weekly, and listening to a half-hour lecture. Once you start digging, it's difficult to stop! I've enjoyed the different perspectives of my two initiatives – the very high level at St Mellitus and the very detailed study with BSF.

Philip Green



A friend recommended a course at St Mellitus to me. My husband Graham's illness and subsequent death put all these thoughts on hold but when I started to think about it again, I was encouraged to apply, which I did! I am doing a one-year “Audit” course, which follows the curriculum for ordinands, but without all the essays, which is a good fit for me.

We have examined the key influences in our lives like tradition, scripture, experience and culture. This enabled me to understand the things which have moulded me and my understanding of God. Recently we have been looking at an overview of the Old Testament and we are about to start an overview of the New Testament, followed by a final module on Evangelism. The college strapline is “Generous Orthodoxy”, which, with my background, I particularly appreciate. Through all this, God has been leading me towards a new and different future.

Deidre Underwood





A Chat with the Youth Team

Each week a wonderful team of volunteers give up their time to invest in the lives of our young people. We gathered together a few of them, along with Youth Pastor Dan Bright, to find out what motivates them

Olivia, a student nurse apprentice, was “pushed into being a leader by Dan” after attending youth nights since she was 16. She immediately fell in love with being on the team because “the kids are so amazing”. Bethany, a primary school teacher, started during lockdown and now loves meeting face-to-face. “It’s such fun. We get to be creative and can all just be big kids together.”

Eleanor joined the GF Youth team last September for the final year of her degree placement studying theology and youth work at Moorlands College. She explains, “part of the reason I do youth work specifically in churches is because I want people to meet Jesus and teenagers are searching for answers. Being able to help them find those answers for themselves is such a rewarding thing”. Will, who is studying furniture design in Oxford, considers it “a great privilege” to be able to shape the future of the next generation.

Working with young people is not without its challenges: the team found that the pandemic knocked back many of them. Eleanor says, “people’s foundations had been shaken and we needed to reassess where we were. Some had struggled with their faith and when

they came back they were not where they had been.” Bethany loves being able to relate to young people because they’re going through something she’s already experienced. “The challenge is when someone comes to me and I haven’t been through it and I don’t know the emotions. It’s so hard to know how to help while making sure they’re leaning on God as their foundation.”

Each of the team also recognise the challenge of working with young people, which is highly relational, when they have only a few hours each week together. Dan explains, “young people are not looking for a doctor to solve their problems. It takes time to build relationships. You need to invest in it.”

There is, of course, great joy in seeing God work in the lives of the young people. Eleanor mentions spending some time with one young girl in 2021, going on walks along the river. “She was finding life hard and needed a space to talk and to bounce her ideas off someone. A year on, she is completely on fire for Jesus.” Olivia sees the youth group as a family and when the youth pray for each other or ask to pray for one of the team, it encourages her faith. “God is working through them in such amazing ways.”

Dan is encouraged to see young people serving on teams on a Sunday morning, becoming part of the wider community. “There’s a good handful of our young people



who, regardless of what Sunday it is, will pick up a welcome sign and stand on the door and smile at people. They get such a buzz and it’s very fruitful in their walk with Jesus.” Bethany has enjoyed seeing them engage more with prayer activities. “The leaders have to do less to get the ball rolling as many of them are engaging with being prayerful.”

In January quite a few of the young people were baptised and publicly declared their faith and trust in God. “It’s such an honour to be part of their journey and to know that God is able to use us like that”.

It’s evident that there is also a genuine sense of community among the team. Will appreciates that even when he’s busy, being around the team allows him to recharge his batteries. Bethany values “lovely supportive people whom I can spend time with outside of youth evenings”, and Olivia says, “I’ve found a family – and where I fit in, in the church”.

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If you’re interested in joining this fantastic team, please get in touch with Dan Bright.



Soul Rest

As he starts three months' sabbatical, David Walker encourages us all to rest

It seems hard to believe that this is my seventh year here! As soon as I began my time as the Vicar of Greyfriars and New Hope I told the wardens that I would take some time to pray in my seventh year, to seek God about his will for us as a church and for me as the Vicar.

The Old Testament principle of Sabbath is so important and we can learn from its application in the Old Testament and from Jesus' rhythms in the New Testament. The word Sabbath comes from the Hebrew Shabbat meaning to stop, to rest, to lay down our agendas and work and to be in the presence of God.

God rested on the seventh day, having "finished the work he had been doing" (Genesis 2:2). The Ten Commandments that God gave

'Sabbath is no longer about one day or one moment in time. It is a pattern of living that draws us into the presence of God on a daily basis'

to Israel includes "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy", for the Israelites to rest and worship God. On the Sabbath, Israel demonstrated its total dependence on God by hanging up their shovels, laying aside their ploughs, and resting from their work.

Having spent time looking at the Sermon on the Mount before Easter, we were reminded



that Jesus fulfilled the law and the prophets. It is for this reason that we read Jesus saying “Come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). The rest offered on the Sabbath is now being offered in Christ.

We see Jesus in the Gospels taking time to get away from the crowds, to be with his father in heaven. To pray. To rest. To listen to God. His ongoing, intimate relationship with his Father was the source of Jesus’ compassion, wisdom and power that we see on every page of the Gospels.

Sabbath is no longer about one day or one moment in time. It is a pattern of living that draws us into the presence of God on a daily basis. As we take time to prioritise our relationship with Jesus, we find that we are given perspective and strength for the challenges that present themselves in life.

I am so looking forward to my sabbatical, which will give me time to be with Jesus, to listen to his words and to pray. I’ve spent some time speaking with a variety of older and wiser vicars who have benefitted from sabbaticals, to find out how I can approach my three months. One vicar told me that after a lifetime of ministry and taking a few sabbaticals, he realises that his aim for a sabbatical is to return more in love with the Lord than when he began. Not only does this seem to be a good aim for my sabbatical, but a good aim for our quiet times with the Lord each day.

I pray that you will all be more in love with the Lord in August than you are now. It seems the way to live by the greatest commandment, to love the Lord our God, is to put him first in our lives and to push back the other priorities that we face, to seek him wholeheartedly. I pray you will be able to join me on this journey of seeking him over the coming months.

Atrium Faces

Here are just some of the people looking forward to welcoming you to the Atrium

BOOKSHOP

Robin Gambles

"I love the Atrium, with its open, flowing sense of space, which speaks of openness of heart and spiritual freedom. A wonderful setting for conversation, not just about the gospel but the wider truths of our faith and life in general."



Marianne Long

"As I like people, books and coffee, the Atrium was the perfect place for me to help out. My mission is definitely the Bookshop and I trust that is where God wants me to be too."



Chris Jeffries

"I like the vision of the Atrium to serve the community and create a welcoming space, and I really enjoy helping in the Bookshop."



Philip Giddings

"I've enjoyed meeting people of all ages, watching the Nursery children and others engaged in craft and similar activities, listening to individuals who just want to talk and so helping people to know Christ and to make him known."



Chris Turner

"I prayed for a while about how the Lord would have me use my time to serve him now that I am not working full-time and I feel very privileged to work in the Greyfriars Bookshop."



Helen Tinker

"The Atrium is such a beautiful place so volunteering there is a pleasure!"



Danial Moini

"What I really enjoy here is the atmosphere: very welcoming, relaxing and a safe space."



Linda Flintoff

"I volunteer on the Welcome desk. I'm there to offer pastoral support, a listening ear, a smile, and prayer if required. I love it!"



Janet Shury

"The Atrium was finished around the time I retired and I have just begun to volunteer. I enjoy helping with whatever needs to be done!"



Sandy Thatcher

"I love working in reception, meeting and greeting people and occasionally praying with them."



WELCOME

Jonathan Thatcher

I assist Thea with Story Time in the Atrium and it's a great opportunity to engage with the children and staff from Greyfriars Nursery, plus it's lots of fun."



Suzanne Davidson

"As a relative newcomer to Greyfriars I've really enjoyed getting to know staff, other volunteers and those using the Atrium".



COFFEE SHOP

Andy Barwick

"My favourite part of working here is getting to know and serve our regular customers."



Rebecca Sharland

"What I really enjoy is how peaceful and beautiful it is. It's such a wonderful place to be."



Jasmine Green

"What I love most about working in the Atrium is meeting new people and serving my community."



Ruta Grainyte

"It's such a warm and welcoming environment."



Kev Dymond

"The staff are all lovely and the customers too! I'm leaving Yeldall on 21 April and I've been asked to work here part-time. I'm so grateful for this opportunity."



Hayley Foster

"I'm originally from Zimbabwe and living far away from friends and family, I have found a loving community at the Atrium."





From Across the River

Penny Cuthbert updates us with news from St John's

It's just over four years since the graft team from Greyfriars joined St John's Caversham and Greyfriars gave us a grant to help us employ a Children and Families Worker. Two years on St John's really began to thrive, with more adults and children joining, and increasing engagement with our community.

Then Covid arrived and scuppered things! We switched to livestreaming a Sunday Morning service from my study and had to work hard to keep everyone connected. But the pandemic also gave us opportunities to think carefully about how we worship on Sundays and what God is calling us to focus on in terms of outreach. Our sung worship is now led by a music group with different musicians playing each week and a good mix of traditional hymns and contemporary songs. We need a Worship Leader to lead this ministry.

Our Children and Families ministry has grown under Anna Clarke's leadership. We now have a cohort of over 40 children and young people, a dozen of whom are at secondary school. We hope now to recruit a youth worker to work across our parish (which includes St Peter's and St Margaret's) to disciple our youth and reach out to those who don't yet know Jesus. In the wake of the tragic murder of Olly Stevens we have been involved in multi-agency conversations about how to provide safe spaces for young people in Caversham and how to combat knife crime. Our youth worker will play a part in that.

Under Nicki Wisdom's leadership we run the Bereavement Journey Course twice a year and have at least one bereavement event each term. We have just launched a St John's Baby and Toddler group on Tuesday mornings in Caversham Hall, and we are trialing a Churches Together in Caversham Messy Church at the Weller Centre on Sunday afternoons. The 3Cs Café, which runs in St John's on Tuesdays, hopes to re-open in May if we can recruit some more volunteers.

All in all, St John's is a very exciting family to be part of – do come and visit. And please pray for us!

REinspired

Sue Rees tells about the exciting work being done by REinspired

I've been a part of REinspired since it was established in 2003 in East Reading. A model now adopted around the country, it is a schools work charity whose purpose is to support and enable churches of different denominations to work together to bring the Christian element of the RE syllabus to life in our schools and to support the spiritual development of pupils.

As well as Christmas and Easter, we offer sessions on topics ranging from Noah for Foundation and Death & Funerals for Yr6 to Evil and Suffering for Yr12. Whatever the topic, our engagement is rooted in the local RE syllabus and schemes of work such as Discovery and Understanding Christianity. Our schools tell us that they value the opportunity to learn about Christianity from the inside out, learning from people of faith.

I am a Team Leader for three primary schools. The sessions we deliver are creative, engaging and designed to suit different learning styles, using discussion tools, craft and drama. We write sessions which are appropriate to the needs of our schools, sharing what Christians believe with "all pupils, every year".

Our sessions are designed to be delivered in person by local volunteers, either in school or in church. The last two years have been challenging, but we have built on our relationships and we have evolved. We now



offer pre-recorded sessions, which will be a valuable resource going forward. However, nothing beats directly working alongside our pupils, sharing what we believe with them, responding to their enquiring minds and learning from them.

Right now, some volunteers are reluctant to return to in-person sessions or have other priorities. Many of our schools have invited us back in person but some are still using our pre-recorded resources. Interest from primary and secondary schools is continuing to grow, a wonderful validation that what we offer is valued. The challenge now is to encourage volunteers who have a heart for children and young people to join in. Our volunteers are a powerful witness to what living in faith looks like in the 21st century. If you would like to know more then come and have a chat with me or Liz Walker.



A New Season Can Bring Transformation

Chris Ledger encourages
us to transform our
inner life this spring



*"What lies behind us and what lies
before us are tiny matters com-
pared to what lies within us"*

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Seasons change. Having said goodbye to dark, cold winter nights we welcome the signs of spring. Bulbs bursting into flower, lighter evenings, and the hope of more sunshine and warmth to come! It's also a time when many of us spring clean our homes and consider new ways to care for our wellbeing: leaving behind the stodgy, comforting winter food and eating more healthily; getting outside more and enjoying God's creation; choosing to take time out for ourselves and so on.

But what about our inner life? Do we give this a spring clean too? Are we aware of areas in our inner world which can be transformed? Are we plagued with the same old negative and critical thoughts that cause us to feel low? "I'm not good enough." "I'm inadequate." "I'm unlovable." We can be very cruel, accusing and condemning of ourselves with disapproval. But this is not how God has designed us to function.

"God has compassion on all He has made" (Ps. 145:9) and desires we show compassion, acceptance and love to ourselves. Jesus said, "Love your neighbour as yourself" (Matt. 22:39). He didn't say, "Love your neighbour instead of yourself." The command to love your neighbour is never given without the command to love yourself (Lev. 19:18; Gal. 5:14; James 2:8). In many Christian circles the emphasis is on the importance of loving our neighbours. There can be an underlying fear that if we love ourselves, we become

egoistical. Assuming love means to accept others as they really are (as God does), to love ourselves is to accept (not excuse!) ourselves as we really are – broken people.

The bible and psychology confirm that a healthy self-acceptance and self-love is necessary to our wellbeing. So how do we go about developing new growth in this area of our lives? Firstly, recognising that our brain yields about 50,000 thoughts daily. It's no wonder scripture says, "Be careful how you think; your life is shaped by your thoughts" (Prov. 4:23 GNB).

Studies have shown that the way we relate to ourselves – whether we talk to ourselves with a critical voice or a kind voice, whether we are accepting and gracious or hostile and condemning – can have a major influence on our ability to get through life's difficulties and our sense of wellbeing. Research reveals that when we adopt a compassionate mind towards ourselves, focusing on being kind and accepting, our brains and bodies are triggered in ways that are beneficial to health and wellbeing.

So, as we move into a new season, let's consider transforming our inner life to love and accept ourselves rather than being critical.

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Chris has co-authored "Insight into self-acceptance", part of the CWR Insight Series. Order a copy from the Atrium Bookshop. Other Insight books on subjects related to mental health and wellbeing can also be found there or at www.waverleyabbeyresources.org.



Redevelopment Update

You will probably have noticed the building that has been growing on the lower part of the Greyfriars site over the last few months. This is Phase 2 of the redevelopment project. Like the Atrium, it is designed to support and enable the Greyfriars Vision of equipping the congregations, reaching out through evangelism and mission, and resourcing the

wider church. The Atrium itself is a fantastic welcoming space which we are seeing used more and more. But it has only ever been half the story.

The Phase 2 building will provide meeting and other spaces spread over three main floors, linked to the Atrium by a broad glazed corridor.

The ground floor is mainly taken up by a large hall suitable for bigger events and activities, with a double-height reception space that will allow people to spill out for breaks and refreshments. Next to the foyer is a kitchen to support the Atrium Coffee Shop and events in the new building. One end of the hall and the kitchen is covered by a mezzanine with a youth space and two meeting rooms.

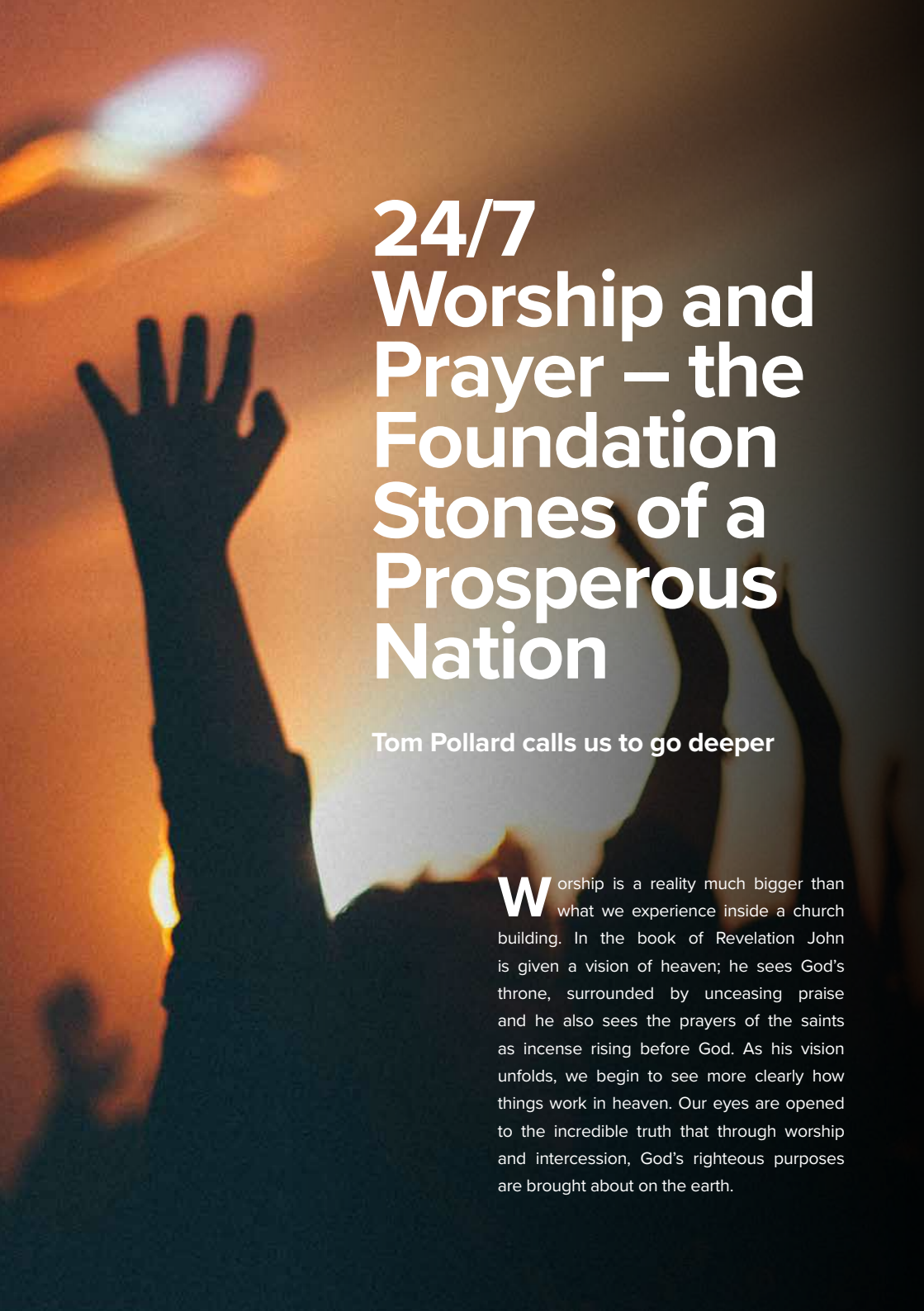
Up the main staircase – and also accessible by lift – the first floor has an open-plan office for Greyfriars staff and two large meeting rooms. The office will free up the rooms in Sackville Street for Christian charities who need offices or counselling space in central Reading.

The top floor of the new building provides two further meeting rooms, together with a more informally furnished lounge area looking up towards the church.

We expect all the spaces to be used at various times of the week for Greyfriars/ New Hope events and activities. But equally we want to see the hall and meeting rooms used by others – community groups and organisations, local businesses, and other churches. We will also have facilities that will allow us to host A Bed for the Night and Street Pastors again. The old Greyfriars Centre saw many groups come through its doors. The new building will give us much greater opportunities for engagement with local communities and those in need around us.

So when will it be open? Progress over the last couple of months has been very good and we are aiming for completion before Easter next year.





24/7 Worship and Prayer – the Foundation Stones of a Prosperous Nation

Tom Pollard calls us to go deeper

Worship is a reality much bigger than what we experience inside a church building. In the book of Revelation John is given a vision of heaven; he sees God's throne, surrounded by unceasing praise and he also sees the prayers of the saints as incense rising before God. As his vision unfolds, we begin to see more clearly how things work in heaven. Our eyes are opened to the incredible truth that through worship and intercession, God's righteous purposes are brought about on the earth.

‘Worship and prayer are more than just Sunday activities – they are weapons we fight with, through which God establishes his kingdom on earth’

This principle is more than just a nice sentiment; it is an enduring reality we see put to the test – and proven beyond doubt – again and again in the Old Testament. Consider the reign of King David. Upon ascending to the throne in Jerusalem, he made 24/7 worship his greatest priority, employing 4,000 musicians to minister before God day and night. What followed was a quite extraordinary time of peace and prosperity in the land, marked by many notable military victories. As the years went by, kings came and went – some wicked and some righteous – but this order of worship remained the ever-present foundation stone of revival.

What David did was, by the earth’s standards, utterly bonkers. Can you imagine if Boris Johnson announced tomorrow that he was going to invest the country’s money and resources primarily into establishing 24/7 worship in the land? There would be a national outcry! What about the military? What about the NHS? What about the schools? He would be derided on all fronts for being out

of his depth and utterly deluded. I can see the mocking newspaper headlines now: “FOR CHRIST’S SAKE! Desperate PM turns to PRAYER in latest attempt to solve the nation’s crisis!”

If David ever felt mocked or misunderstood, he did not let it get to him. So confident was he in the God he had come to know and love through his years as a shepherd boy, he founded his whole kingdom on God’s strength. He was unwavering in his belief that 24/7 prayer and worship is a God-ordained principle for the establishing of a nation in righteousness and prosperity – and he was rewarded as a result.

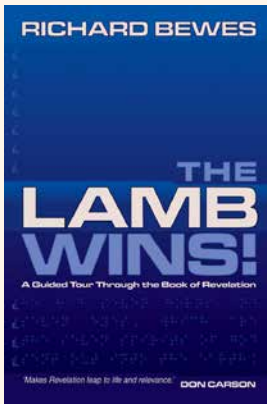
In a time where nations are in crisis and governments are in chaos, we would do well to remember David’s example. Worship and prayer are more than just Sunday activities – they are weapons we fight with, through which God establishes his kingdom on earth. Our prayers have the power to transform nations, direct governments and change the whole course of history – if only we would believe it!

We believe God is calling his church – both here in Reading and across the nation – deeper into a place of intercession and worship. We believe he is raising up Davids all across the land, ones given to him in the secret place, whose prayers will shake nations. As much as we like complaining about world leaders and government policies, God’s answer to a broken and fallen world begins with us, his church, taking our place on the walls and crying out to him for our nation. Let us take this calling seriously, that this nation would return to God and once more be filled with his glory.

The Atrium Recommends



Each issue members of the Atrium team offer a few recommendations. Here are some suggestions from Philip Giddings and Thea Green.

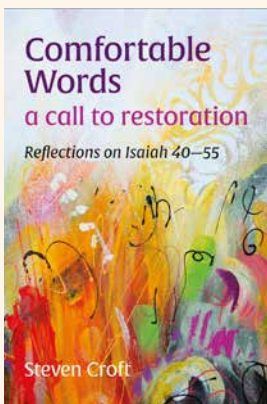


RICHARD BEWES – THE LAMB WINS: A GUIDED TOUR THROUGH THE BOOK OF REVELATION

Christian Focus Publications, 2000

How to make sense of world events as well as the challenges of our own discipleship: not a commentary but a book for personal use and for discussion in a small

group context. A book to inspire and equip us as we listen to what the Spirit is saying to the Church of Jesus Christ today.



STEVEN CROFT – COMFORTABLE WORDS: A CALL TO RESTORATION. REFLECTIONS ON ISAIAH 40–55

Bible Reading Fellowship, 2021

Drawing on Isaiah's message to the people of Judah after the total destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonian armies, Bishop Steven reflects on the Covid

pandemic. Songs of love and forgiveness, of new hope and strength in God to "rekindle courage in the hearts of God's people".

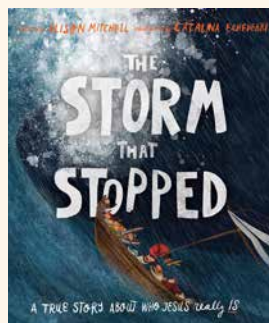


ALISON MITCHELL AND CATALINA ECHEVERRI – THE STORM THAT STOPPED

The Good Book Company, 2015

Are you looking for a new pre-school and infants book? *The Storm that Stopped* is perfect for showing how powerful and thrilling Bible stories can be. Based on Mark's account of Jesus calming the storm, this dramatic story will teach

children about Jesus and his power over the forces of Nature, with a combination of well-written text and engaging illustrations. A must for children, parents, grandparents, godparents and teachers.



CATHERINE HENSHAW GLASS PICTURES

If you are looking for something to put on that gap on the wall or that space on the shelf, come and have a look at the work of Catherine Henshaw, one of our local Christian artists. Catherine

is a glass artist who makes beautiful handmade fused glass pictures in a box frame or free standing. These inspirational works of art would make a great gift for someone special.



Family Around the World

Mission Partner Manny Sharland updates us on Fly Sports Ministry in Kenya and South Sudan

Manny and Grace Sharland, currently based in Nairobi, Kenya, run Fly Sports Ministry. Fly Sports started in Sudan in 2007. During the Civil War, in 2015, Manny and his family relocated to Nairobi and after praying that God would show him the way forward, he was led to a group of footballers who were looking for a new coach.

Fast forward several years and we hear how things are going as Kenya and South Sudan emerge from Covid lockdowns. Manny says:

“In Nairobi, the football and basketball teams have been training hard and building on what we have achieved over the years – coaching these teams has kept me very busy! Football is the main sport played in the country, but there are struggles due to corruption. However, there are many opportunities to reach out to young people through our ministry. At the end of training sessions, we take 15 to 20 minutes to share the word of God and pray, and we also train the coaches to disciple the young people. This is the most important



aspect of our work and we have seen many lives transformed.

I was recently able to visit South Sudan, where the country is making small steps towards peace. It was so good to visit Mundri again, to be able to encourage the teams there, and to see not only men's teams but also many ladies' football teams taking part in competition and friendly matches. Playing football matches is a good way of peace-building and sharing the love of Christ in a troubled land. As well as this, we have been able to begin the process of constructing a small office for Fly Sports on the land we now own.”

Please continue to pray for this important ministry and that many more lives will be changed.



Mission Partner Sam Mutton gives us an insight into the cycling projects he has developed in Kampala, Uganda

What drew you to create the cycling projects?

I have always enjoyed sports, particularly cycling and football. The original plan was to set up some cycling tours and showcase Uganda's beauty. However, just as we were getting ready to start, Covid hit and tourism ground to a halt. I began doing fitness tests with a few Ugandan guys on our bike machine and realised that they are incredibly fit cyclists, despite little or no training. This provoked me to wonder what other talent must be here, and how I could help elevate it and help riders create a career or income through cycling. Four of our riders have earned professional contracts this season!



How have you seen God working?

In so many ways. The training takes place in intense blocks, where riders come and stay with us. We spend time training, discussing how they can improve their fitness, but also how they can be the best version of themselves. God has allowed many incredible conversations with the riders. Perhaps the largest miracle in the last 12 months has been the provision of around 100 acres of land, worth nearly £1 million, for us to use for free through a very generous Christian businessman. The aim is to create a bike park accessible for all ages as a safe place for people to come and ride and enjoy God's creation first hand.

What are the biggest obstacles that we can be praying for?

Corruption is the biggest challenge for our riders. They will compete in a race with a promise of good prize money or international travel, and then these never materialise. It has a real stranglehold on the sport and is something we look to challenge and take on. Secondly, provision of finances for us to develop the land site further. We need to find around £25,000 to complete the first phase of the plan this year. We only have a small budget and need to find further funding through people's generous support.



Giving Thanks

When we think about our call to generosity, it is helpful to begin with the heart of the Gospel. In John 3:16 we read that “God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son”. Giving is at the heart of our faith, our God and our redemption. It is only because of God’s generosity to us that we are able to be called sons and daughters of the living God.

From this starting point, we then read in the Gospels a clear mandate from Jesus for us to be generous. In fact, generosity and giving are more central in the Gospels than so many other topics that we like to focus on as Christians!

A key biblical principle is that “it all belongs to God”. Psalm 21:1 proclaims “The earth is

the Lord’s, and everything in it.” As stewards of all that God has entrusted us with, we are called to give generously, recognising that it is God’s in the first place. It is part of our mature discipleship to live faithfully and responsibly before God with our wealth, practising good stewardship and gratitude as we discover joy in generosity.

We have so many reasons to thank God for his generosity to us as individuals and as a church. Even this year, we have thanked God for his amazing provision of 96% of the finances needed for redeveloping the Greyfriars site. We thank God for the work he has done to draw New Hope and Greyfriars together in unity and heal some of the past difficulties. We thank God for the opening of



the Atrium and the mission taking place to refugees, children from the Nursery and those who are homeless.

We also thank God for the ways in which we are able to support the ongoing ministry and mission of the church through the regular sacrificial giving of so many people. A culture of generosity is essential for a church to develop a sustainable ministry and our giving enables children's work, youth groups, Sunday services, student outreach, Alpha courses and so much more.

We recognise the significant contribution to kingdom work made through the support given to global mission and our Mission Partners under the Greyfriars Missionary Trust, from the leadership training provided

by Richard and Riekje Wallace to those working in the 10/40 Window. To find out how to give to the Trust, which is separate from the main church finances, visit greyfriars.org.uk/globalmission.

Our giving also provides much-needed regular financial support, under the General Tithe Fund, for a number of local Christian charities delivering vital work in Reading. All money given to the church each year is tithed and beneficiaries include FAITH, CCA, Mustard Tree, Yeldall Manor, CIRDIC, REInspired and many others.

All giving to the Redevelopment project is also tithed and grants are awarded to international mission projects and local organisations. Recent recipients of grants from the Redevelopment Tithe Fund have included Nompumelelo Educare Centre, for the construction of a play area and a kitchen refurbishment; Lamb Health, for the repair of hospital boundary wall in north-west Bangladesh; Christian Books Worldwide, to provide books and resources for pastors in the developing world; and Reading Gateway Church, for the recruitment of a Children and Families Pastor.

There is so much to be grateful for. We believe in a generous God, who longs for us to share his generosity with others. Let's express that generosity together to see Reading, and our wider world, transformed by the love and power of Jesus. And we may find that we are transformed in the process.

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*To find out about giving, please
visit greyfriars.org.uk/give.*

A Curated Conversation

In our regular series our curates ponder church in all its diversity

There's no shortage of different types of churches, is there? Forget about all the different denominations for a moment – if we were just to think about Anglican churches like ours, there are 35 examples of church in the Reading area alone. And if you were to look more closely at each one, you'd see they were all very different. Some are bigger, some are smaller. Some are traditional, some are contemporary. Some meet in ancient buildings, some meet in new halls.

With all this variety, perhaps it can sometimes be easy to slip into the trap of thinking something has gone wrong. "Surely", we think, "if we were following Jesus a bit better, we'd be able to work out what church should look like?" But I'm not so sure. There's a quote that I've been trying to find the source of in writing this piece that says something like this: "to reach lots of different types of people, we're going to

need lots of different types of church." And I think that's right.

At Greyfriars and New Hope, we're a family of different types of church and different types of services, aren't we? Some of our services are bigger, and some are smaller. Some are more traditional, and others are more contemporary. Some have a vision to cast a wide net and gather people from all over our region to love and worship Jesus. And others have a vision to do that on nearby streets and with beloved neighbours, loving and serving the people Jesus has placed us alongside. I think that's good. I think that is the way that Jesus intends it to be. I think we support one another in our weaknesses with our own unique strengths.

We're all different, aren't we? God willing, perhaps we can reach lots of different people with the love and power of Jesus.



JOHN

*Here I am, Lord. It is I, Lord.
I have heard You calling in the
night
I will go, Lord. If You lead me
I will hold Your people in my
heart.*

Jesus has been building his church in Reading for all of the years. Since the dawn of time, the Word of God has been calling us. I wonder, have we let him lead us? We are loved and the recognition of God's love is what makes us church. As we gather we express that love and as we disperse into Reading and beyond it's that love that carries us.

If we go back to our Franciscan roots in Reading, the Christ-centred rule of life from the 13th century may lead us to discover aspects of how Jesus builds church. His self-giving mission is the same as we follow him, whether gathered in hundreds and thousands or twos and threes. The point is that he is in it. The question is do we recognise him in each setting? Do we recognise him in each other? Do we listen for his voice calling us to act in the flesh today?

Franciscan Greyfriars looked to contemplation coupled with action. They were

conscious that Jesus is careful with the fringes, with the one alone sheep, with the widow and the disabled, with the individual who is stuck at home with chronic fatigue, anxiety, refugee status – that is where the Word builds church. Might we follow?

Out of daily prayer life comes hospitality, welcome and friendship in serving community; people become channels of God's peace in promoting justice; care for the environment becomes an outworking of worship; study and sharing good news deepen faith. Reflecting *pax et bonum* (peace and the good) AKA Jesus Christ, a transforming love showers our town as we join the living Word in walking humility, gratitude and self-sacrifice. To remind myself of this careful walk I tend to wear shoes that are a bit quirky. I try to look down to look up and remember the great peace I stand within.

Just as you are, you have been invited to be inherently connected to God, most worthy of love – to live within the Risen Christ, the Word of God, part of the Communion of Saints, his beloved church of all us lowly people.

Send us out in the power of your Spirit to live and work to your praise and glory. I will go Lord, if you lead me.



AMY

Alpha Stories

Sam Brown quizzes some attendees of our recent Alpha courses



Ollie and Amber were part of the Students and Young Adults group at Alpha. Amber works in a nursery and Ollie is a first-year Real Estate student at the University of Reading. Here's what they had to say about the course.

Why did you come along to Alpha?

A: To gain more understanding of how God is present in my life and to grow closer to him through understanding his teachings and expanding my knowledge.

O: To get a better understanding of my faith as I think it's important to constantly remind yourself of the facts of Christianity. I also came along to support my friend Ethan who was interested in exploring church.

What do you think has changed for you since coming to Alpha?

A: I can see God working in ways that I couldn't see before, and my thoughts have been expanded by others talking about what he teaches us and what he has done for us.

O: I think it's easy to get caught up in life and all the things going on. It's been useful having time to talk through my faith. It has made me more confident in my beliefs.

Was there a moment that stood out to you from the series?

A: The Holy Spirit episode was key for me, helping me to understand how God works in different ways, even if we don't feel him or see him doing it sometimes.

O: My favourite episode was in the second week when we were shown all the evidence for Jesus' existence. It is stuff that is important for the world to know, as it is compelling evidence in proving that Jesus was the Son of God.

Why would you recommend Alpha to someone who was a Christian?

A: You hear real-life testimonies of how God is working in different ways for different people and also different perspectives to help you be open and learn more about God.

O: Having been a Christian for a while now, I originally thought that I probably didn't need

to hear what was being said. However, Alpha made me realise that there's still so much more to learn about my faith and that Jesus needs to be my priority in life.

Why would you recommend Alpha to someone who wasn't a Christian?

A: It's a very welcoming and relaxed environment and the videos are easy to understand and relate to.

O: It's a brilliant course to bring friends to, especially for students as we love free food! It's a very laid back approach and the Q and A style allows you to ask as much or as little as you like about Christianity. Everyone is incredibly friendly and respectful and even if at the end of the course you're still not interested in Christianity then you'll have learned something and made friends in the process.



Arash and Niloo led an Alpha group in Farsi. They joined us all, and watched the series with subtitles before breaking off into their time of discussion. Majid was one attendee.

Q: Why did you come to Alpha?

At the suggestion of my friends, Arash and Niloo, who had been part of the church and the small group together for some time. I took this opportunity to get to know Jesus better, to experience the Holy Spirit and meet new friends.

Q: Have you noticed a difference in yourself since you attended Alpha?

Alpha teachings helped me to have more love and patience for others and I feel the Holy Spirit more.

Q: What was your favourite episode of the Alpha series?

The episode about the Bible and word of God was significant for me.

Q: What did you think of the Alpha away day?

I felt very good. I felt light and free from the material world when my friends prayed for me.

Q: What was the best thing about being in your group?

I made good friends in my group and we were able to speak and discuss in the Farsi language and I saw the love for Jesus in them.



greyfriars.org.uk
nhccreading.org.uk