



ST CHRISTOPHER'S 'CATCH UP CHURCH' NEWSLETTER

Sunday 20th June 2021

NEWS UPDATE



Roof Work

Most of the roof has been re-covered this week, which is great news. The new sections are looking smart.



Malcolm's thank you gift.

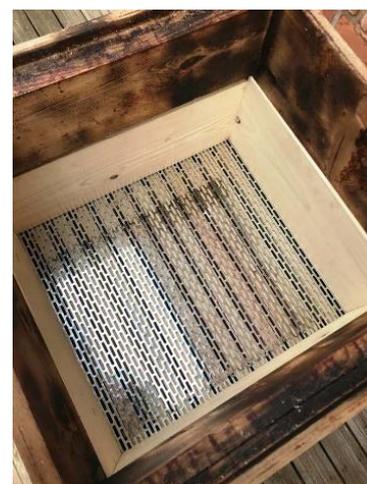


It was lovely to have Malcolm with us on Thursday, and to present him with his 'thank you' gifts, in recognition of all that he has given as church treasurer. I think he was a little lost for words!

Bee Hive

The new beehive is nearly finished, it just needs painting.

Darren has made the beehive himself, based on one that was bought – very impressive!



Requests for help

Since requesting help with a few things, someone has volunteered to be our new GDPR officer, and another person has offered to help edit the magazine. GREAT. 😊

We have also received help with the gardening from some volunteers. THANK YOU EVERYONE.



BIBLE READING – 1 Corinthians 9: 19-23

Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE – by Peter

Sharing our Faith – Theme 2 'Persuasion'



All things to all people

Do you change your behaviour around different people? I expect we all do to some extent. This can be seen as something negative if it stems from our personal insecurities, or a desire to receive everyone's approval, but for St Paul it was something positive – he wanted to win as many people as possible for Jesus. When he was with other Jews, Paul would act like a Jew, following their food laws and other customs. But if he was with non-Jews, he would eat whatever was served up! His primary goal was to persuade people of the truth of the Gospel, and he was happy to adapt his behaviour to fit in with different people if it served this end.

Paul says that he 'made himself a slave to everyone.' He went to great effort for others, often at considerable personal discomfort to himself, out of love and a desire to lead others to faith.

When People Notice

St Paul's way of life would have provoked a response. When it comes to sharing our faith, we too can expect others to notice and on occasions respond if we, by our actions, are living as salt and light in the world. Being honest, we are probably more comfortable with the idea of sharing our faith through our actions than we are with having to say something. The trouble is, if people know that you are a Christian, on occasions they may ask you about it. They might ask you what you got up to at the weekend. Do you mention church on Sunday morning, or do you gloss over that bit?

And besides, how will people discover the love of Christ for themselves if nobody tells them? Will they understand the message just by our actions alone? Unlikely. If it is true that God cares deeply about the lost being found, shouldn't we desire to share our faith when we are given the opportunity, with words as well as actions?

When people bring us their questions

As a young man, I didn't appreciate at the time that I provided a strong Christian witness simply by being one of the few young males who was willing to declare myself a Christian. At school I attended the Christian Union sometimes, admittedly because I fancied the blonde girl who ran it! (The lovely Jane...) Whatever my motivations, you didn't go to the school CU if you weren't willing to be known as a Christian.

I had a close friend at school called Paul Stanaway. I've found this old picture of us looking like real goofy teenagers!

Paul's mum took him to church when he was younger, but his dad was an atheist. When we were in the sixth form, Paul used to argue with me during our free periods about whether or not God, Jesus, and Christianity was real. This went on for some time. Looking back, I think he was probably trying to decide whether he thought his mum was right, or his dad.



I don't know what I said to Paul – I can't remember – but eventually he was persuaded. And the thing about Paul is, once he makes up his mind about something, there is no going back.



Paul had wanted to join the army. After his Christian conversion at the age of 16/17, he decided that he would become an army chaplain; and today he is! He is an army chaplain in New Zealand, where he has married a New Zealand girl and settled down. It was a long training process, starting with his ordination training in the UK, but Paul was completely focused on his chosen career.



When we miss the opportunities

I would like to tell you that my life is full of examples of where I have shared my faith persuasively, and people have become committed Christians, but the truth is that sometimes I have blown it. There have been times when I have been given the opportunity to help someone on their faith journey, and I've fallen short; because I was embarrassed, tongue tied, or maybe just not that bothered. I find these words of Jesus rather challenging:

"If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels." (Mark 8:38)

Why would we be ashamed of Christ? Are we not proud to say that we belong to him?

A couple of years ago I was saying my prayers one evening, and the memory of someone came to mind. In my early twenties I was involved with amateur dramatics, and I got to know another guy of similar age who ran the sound and lighting in the theatre. I will call him Andy, though this isn't his real name.

I attended St Thomas Church in Lancaster, and for a few weeks Andy came to church, and he sat down next to me. I didn't think much of it, and I didn't pay him much attention. Then after a few weeks, Andy stopped coming. It is only more recently that I've realised Andy was seeking God at that time in his life. And not only this, but he had seen me as another young guy who was a committed Christian, and he wanted to develop a friendship. Yet I was too self-absorbed to notice him.

It was not a nice feeling when this memory came back to me, along with the realisation that I had failed to help Andy find or deepen his faith when I had the opportunity to do so. I know that God forgives me, but I never want to feel that feeling again. It is OK to be clumsy, and it is OK to be a bit inarticulate, but may we not be guilty of indifference when God cares so much about the lost being found.



When God makes it easy for us

When I attend training days with the bishop sometimes there are questions posed about how we are going to reach out to people who don't come to church, and how we will connect with those who show little interest. These are good questions to ask; however, should we not first work at sharing our faith with those who approach us wanting to know? Let's start by sharing the Christian message with those who are interested, and those who are asking the questions. Try praying that God will give you the opportunity to share your faith with someone, and I pretty much guarantee that such an occasion will arise.

I will finish on a positive note. I am going to embarrass Sarah Jenkinson at St Christopher's. Sarah rang me in 2015 enquiring about a christening for her child Freya, who at that point had not yet been born (very organised). And then she said to me, "*I have not been baptised myself, and I'd like to work out what I believe.*"

I wish people would say this more often! We took the time with Sarah to discuss what Christianity was about, meeting over three or four evenings, and she was baptised along with Freya the following year.



It feels great to be involved with people's faith journey, not missing the opportunities when they arise. God calls every Christian to play their part in sharing the Good News, which is in fact a real privilege. We *can* share our faith; it begins with us just being ourselves and telling our own story. If we can convey, however awkwardly, that having a faith and following Jesus makes a difference to us, then others may discover that God is able to make a difference in their life too.

Prayers – written by Jim Berry

Lord God, we come to you in our prayers now, because in you we find our hope,
our joy, our peace and the strength to begin again.

We come to you Lord because in Christ you first came to us.

We come to give you thanks and praise as we give you our hearts and lives.
May Christ be lifted up, so that people everywhere may know his love and power.

Lord in your mercy; **Hear our prayer.**

Grant our Church Lord, such love for others,
that we might share your love with them and build up our community in love.
In today's reading Paul shows us a willingness to adapt his methods but not his message,
and to do so in whatever way is necessary to win others for the gospel.
Paul's ministry of reconciliation took him beyond the comfort of his home preferences,

enabling him to see things from the perspective of others.

Lord help us to come alongside people in the light of their own culture and identity, that we might win new people for the gospel in this place, and bring them to a faith in Christ.

Lord in your mercy; **Hear our prayer.**

We pray for our nation, for Elizabeth our Queen and for the leaders of all nations.

We pray for governments around the world and particularly those who are genuinely seeking the best for all their people.

We think of those world leaders who carry heavy burdens of responsibility and for those whose blind prejudice prevents them seeking true and lasting peace.

May the authority of Christ's name challenge those who know him, and those who do not.

Lord in your mercy; **Hear our prayer.**

Father we pray for those who suffer through illness, for those whose lives have lost all their fitness and strength and whose joy in life has been sapped away, for those whose sickness is life long and cannot be cured and for those who suffer and care for them.

We continue to pray for those who are suffering due to the current Covid Pandemic.

We pray for any we know who are sick and for any who mourn the loss of loved ones.

May they know the love of God who makes them whole.

Lord in your mercy; **Hear our prayer.**

Lord, implant your word of truth in our lives, your love within our hearts,
and the message of Christ upon our lips.

We commit ourselves to be open to you and your will, and to live and speak to your praise and glory and for the building up of the Church of Jesus Christ,

Merciful father, **accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen**

