

Living St John's



JUNE 2010

Welcome to Living St John's!

Living St John's is a termly publication which is available to all members of the congregation. It aims to strengthen relationships between church members by introducing members of the congregation, giving information about forthcoming events and updating church members on events that have happened. Anyone can contribute by contacting Clare Ames at stjohnswalton@dsl.pipex.com.

Mildmay

As one of our four charities Mildmay is well supported by St John's. The charity works with those suffering from AIDS both in the UK and abroad in Eastern Europe and Africa. The Charity offers treatment for AIDS sufferers as well as counselling and care for those living in its shadow. The incredible work of this Charity cannot be doubted yet support for the Charity in recent years has dropped significantly amid a stigma towards the cause. It may shock many of you, as it did me, to know St John's is Mildmay's sixth biggest giver. AIDS is affecting the lives of 33.4 million people worldwide and takes the lives of over 8,000 people every day. John 10:10 reads "I come that they may have life and life in all its fullness" and Mildmay works towards making this a reality. As one of its main supporters I really hope the profile of this incredible charity can be raised at St John's. Mildmay can be better supported by our congregation by us holding it to the Lord in Prayer and supporting any events that may be forthcoming.



Sophie Hudson

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Youth work

St John's youth work has seen a great year. It is so inspiring and such a testament to the work of the Lord in our parish to see so many young people at St John's every Sunday morning.

TIG and BIG TIG are still growing and we continue to try and make Sunday mornings fun, even when everyone is sleepy! We are also still having a great time with TIG Friday, the youth club on a Friday evening, where we regularly see our young people come to watch films and play pool. Over the last few months we have also invited Stonededge Chapel's youth group to join us on some of our events, which has almost doubled our numbers.

We are off to Soul Survivor for our fourth year, although we have opted to go to Soul Survivor Stafford as it is a little closer to home!

This year I have been doing some youth work at St John's and I have been so blessed to have the opportunity to work with some amazing young people and leaders. Youth work isn't easy; it takes a lot of time and planning and I believe there is a huge need to keep looking forward to and praying for a permanent youth worker at St John's as it would be a real blessing to our young people's work.

At the moment I am working on running an Alpha Course at Brookfield School and also running a Be Inspired course with our young people at St John's. Working at St John's shows me just how great God is and is testament to his work among our congregation and the commitment of all those who help. I will certainly miss it in September!

Sophie Hudson

From Walton to Africa – What a Journey!

During my formative years between the ages of 4 and 19 I lived in Walton parish and decisions that I made at that time have taken me to many diverse places including Addis Ababa, Abuja, Montego Bay, Khartoum and Djibouti. The pivotal event in my life took place when I was 15. At an evangelical meeting in the village of Stanton in the Peak, I made a personal commitment to Christ and my life was transformed. I was there with a choir from Stonedge Wesleyan Reform Church and we were providing the musical items for a series of meetings led by an evangelist. I remember discussing with my friends on the way there that this evangelist was not going to get me out at the front, but God had a different plan. As we sang our final song “Jesus is passing this way”, I knew that He was passing that way and that he was inviting me to follow him. I have never regretted that decision and the Lord has never failed me in spite of the fact that I have often let Him down and failed Him. Thank God for His unconditional love!



*Margaret and
John Bown with
Grandson, George*

My new commitment to follow Christ caused me to think about the future direction of my life and having prayed about what I should do, I became a Police Cadet at the age of 16 and fell in love with Margaret Self. At the age of 66 I am still working alongside the police and still in love with Margaret Self, although she changed her name to Bown when we were married nearly 45 years ago.

Margaret and I were fortunate to be in a group of a dozen or so young people at our church who were equally committed to Christ and were challenged to tell others about our new found faith. We had what we thought was a brilliant idea to go around the Peak villages with a horse and cart, preaching from the cart, but decided against it due to a lack of horse and cart! Eventually we settled on running a beach mission for a week at Lowestoft. Take into account that most of us were teenagers with very limited experience of preaching and you will realize that the event was a real step of faith.

We hired a camper van which was used both as transport and residence and bought an old van for just a few pounds as additional transport for the three of us who had to work on the Saturday morning, and the van played a significant role in our prayer life during the week. I remember well stopping at Long Sutton

because a swing bridge was open to allow shipping to pass. We did not see many ships at Stonedge, so we got out to have a look -

difficult for me because I was sitting in the back of the van with all the luggage

for the team. Having viewed the ship we got back in the vehicle which refused to start.

We diagnosed the problem as fuel starvation and after cleaning the fuel system, we proceeded on our way for a few miles when we stopped again and repeated the process. The trouble was that the distances between stops were getting shorter and the time required to get the engine going again longer until we ground to a complete stop. Having exhausted all our mechanical skills, we decided that we would have no alternative but to pray for the van. Believe it or not the van then started immediately and took us the remaining 80 miles without a flutter. Every time during the week when we started to feel that we were doing well the van would stop and drive us back to prayer. After that the beach mission became an annual event for five or six years, but we did not take the van as it broke down when we got back and was scrapped!

We are still in touch with people who came to Christ during that first mission. What an adventure it was! Someone said "Man's extremity is God's opportunity" and I would certainly testify to the fact that stepping out in faith and taking on difficult tasks is good because it makes us realise how much we depend upon God and His gifts.

My career in the Derbyshire police took me around the county and further afield over a period of 32 years. Being the village policeman at Stoney Middleton and covering a number of villages on a bike was a memorable period. Margaret and I ran a youth group at the local chapel and our house was always overflowing with youngsters. One of them was a real challenge to me and his mother at the time and he got into some really difficult situations. However, he is now a local preacher and a real proof of God's saving power. One of the young ladies from our group at that time has been a missionary for many years.

Life in the police however, was not all roses and sunshine. I worked in the CID at Chesterfield in the 70's a period when Sir Robert Mark (Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police) declared that the CID was institutionally corrupt. I found it extremely difficult trying to do my job honestly and effectively alongside some others who were prepared to tell lies and fix evidence. Just for the record, the introduction of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 and other changes have actually transformed the practices of CID officers in more recent years.

At various times in my career I occupied training roles, including three periods of secondment to Home Office establishments at regional and national levels. In those institutions I established Christian fellowship groups and I am still in

touch with one of the young men who attended. Well he's not young now actually, he has also retired from the police and is pastor of his church, and has two grandchildren. That makes me feel old because when he was a police recruit I was a police sergeant with 13 years police service.

Despite leaving school at the age of 15 years with no qualifications, I did quite well in the police retiring in 1992 when I was a superintendent and Head of Training for the Derbyshire Constabulary. I did undertake academic studies in my spare time and amongst other things obtained a masters degree in criminology. All of this I trace back to that commitment to follow Jesus in 1958.

Retiring at 49 I started a new career working as a Training Manager for a large commercial organisation and later became HR Manager for the same company. It was whilst working for them that I was asked to recommend trainers for a project at the Ethiopian Police College in Addis Ababa, and I put my own name top of the list.

I worked in Addis Ababa with two colleagues for the best part of four years and it was a fascinating and rewarding experience. Most of you will have heard of our near death experience when Margaret and I, along with my colleague Blair and his wife, were blown up by a terrorist hand grenade in a restaurant. The hand grenade exploded just a few inches from my legs and people are not supposed to survive such an event. That I did is simply due to God's protection, as I had 37 significant wounds and according to the surgeon lost about 50 per cent of my blood. At one stage I was convinced that I was dying and said my farewell to Margaret. She just took my hand and said to herself the words of a hymn that came into her mind. "How sweet the name of Jesus sounds in a believer's ear, it soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds and drives away his fears".

Just last year I went back to the Ethiopian Police College and was delighted to see the positive developments that have taken place since we completed our work there in 2000. It is now a Degree-awarding institution and trains police officers from across East Africa. This is in sharp contrast to what it was like when we commenced our work in 1996.

I have also worked long term with the police in Nigeria where they have a well-earned reputation for corruption. Working in six pilot states we were able to see a year on year reduction in the level of police corruption and in improving the service delivered by the police, but it was extremely difficult. I remember well a very senior officer threatening that he would have a curse put on

me by the juju man if I continued to challenge corruption! Well, if God can save me from a hand grenade, he can also protect me from the juju man!

There is a lot more of the story to tell, including working in Jamaica and Sudan, but I don't want to write so much that it puts you off reading, so ask me about my other adventures and I will tell you some of it.

John Bown

My Favourite Bible Passage

by Philippa Lockwood

One of my favourite Bible passages is Colossians 3:12-17. Andrew and I had it read at our wedding because I thought it contained such fantastic advice about how to get on with other people.

If everyone lived in this way, the world would be a much more harmonious place! The bit about singing particularly made me think about Andrew, as I knew that my life with him would be full of song.

Colossians 3 : 12-17

¹²Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. ¹³Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. ¹⁴And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

¹⁵Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. ¹⁶Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. ¹⁷And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.