

St John's United Reformed Church in Northwood

In Touch...our monthly update

January 2012



2012, A SIGNIFICANT YEAR

2012 will be a significant year for St John's. It will be a year when a greater level of detail finds its way into our development planning. Ideas, for so long in gestation will come closer to fruition. It will be exciting; it will be rewarding too, of that I have no doubt at all. Like Mary, and Naomi we will be challenged to relinquish any notion that we are barren; yes...those journeys and ours are one!

Most times a good journey has a clear sense of both of origin and destination. What you find at the destination can shift, of course, but the name on the destination tag remains the same...unless you were traveling by Virgin from London to Glasgow last week...they simply deleted all trace of the planned trip: Leaves on the line...and some trees too, apparently. I trust we are not the kind of church that leaves pilgrims stranded when the winds blow.

On our first Sunday of 2012 we travelled, in large numbers to St Martin's in South Oxhey. It was a wonderful opportunity to look forward in the company of friends, but also to look back and recall a shared history. As we shared bread and wine, we drank from a goblet commemorating the first baptism (March 3rd 1907) in St John's, albeit the St John's we know today had yet to be built...it was at development planning stage. This important gesture of travelling, albeit a small distance, said a great deal about the scope of our journey. Our worship reflected a very human set of concerns and shared hopes; there was a powerful sense of being at home with one another.

The following Sunday our Church Secretary shared his thoughts about the journey we share. He delved into a history rich in gold, frankincense and myrrh. It is reproduced at the end of this newsletter and I hope while it kindles memories, it also inspires hope and trust in the journey to come. I hope we will allow John's words to inspire and inform our prayers in the coming months.

As part of the development planning process, Synod invites congregations on the cusp of investing in the future, to draft a Mission Statement. The Elders and members of our planning group have given much thought to this. We have decided to call our Mission Statement, simply: "Our Journey". It is a simple but powerful statement that we hope will inspire reflection in the *St John's at home groups*. The Elders hope the statement will be studied alongside the Charter for Compassion that I spoke of some months ago. If you have misplaced your copy over Christmas, more will be distributed over the next few weeks. I will be introducing "Our Journey" in our worship in the coming weeks. To those who say it's not all about bricks and mortar...well imagine a journey without those things at the end. But of course to journey is nothing if there is not about that journey a purpose, a philosophy and an ethos, a faith too. The journey is also about the people we share it with. Let us bring these gifts, and people, even more closely together in 2012.

James

CHURCH FLOWERS

I would like to thank all those who helped decorate the Church for Christmas either by donating money, foliage or more especially their time. I think we had a record number helping on the Saturday morning - I hope you all enjoyed yourselves and will come again!

A special thank you to Chris Giles and her Brownies as well as their parents, many of whom came to help on the Saturday morning and then joined us on Sunday morning for the service of lessons and carols. I'm sure you will agree that the "pew ends" looked really lovely.

I am once again very grateful to the very small band of people who came to help dismantle it all again after Christmas.

The rota for 2012 is on the notice board in the Anniversary room. Please consider adding your name. If you would like to make a donation to the flower fund, please see me.

Lorna

PRAYER BOX

The team at Wild Goose Websites often prays, not just for our own needs but also for all those who are part of the community of St Johns. We believe God is loving and compassionate towards all people. As the old hymn says, the Lord is "slow to chide and swift to bless".

We would be delighted to pray specifically for people's needs in a simple and easy-to-access way. When people are going through tough times especially, there is something amazingly encouraging in knowing we are being prayed for and that our life situations are being lifted up to God. So with the kind permission and help of St Johns we are instituting a small "prayer box" next to the notice board (near the church office) where people can write down their prayer needs, post them in the box and know that someone is praying for them. Prayer requests can be for anything - healing, jobs, emergencies, family/friends, a specific need, or for peace. Items of thanks and praise can also be written down and posted in the box.

We'd like to thank James and Laura for assisting us in this, and we hope many congregation members, community groups and visitors to St Johns will make use of the prayer box and that it will be a blessing to many.

Jon Harris
Wild Goose Websites

WEBSITE

Just a brief reminder to take a look at the website www.urcnorthwood.org ; under 'Reflections for Our Day' we are presently hosting two 'You Tube' clips which we hope you will take a look at. One is of the URC Multicultural centre in Southampton. The other is about the Charter for Compassion which we will be studying in our St John's at Home Groups. You will also regularly find new poems under 'Poem For The Week'

STJOHN'S GUILD DIARY DATES

Thursday 2nd February 2012, 2.30pm, Anniversary Room:
Update on Orphanage in Zimbabwe, Margaret Hancock.

Thursday 16th February 2012, 12.30pm for 1.00pm:
'Soup/Sandwich Lunch', Followed by speaker from Water Aid.



Northwood Live at Home Scheme have been given a lot of non perishable food items (mainly soup) to distribute to our members. We have done this and still have a fair amount left over. If you know of anyone who is unable to get to the shops (particularly if the weather changes for the worse) who would appreciate a food parcel please let us know. Unfortunately we would not be able to deliver the food parcel to the person concerned but would certainly be happy for anyone to come and collect the parcel from the office.

Thank you

Linda, Live at Home Scheme Manager

Wednesday Lunch Dates, 12.30 – 2.00pm ,St John’s Hall

25th January, Chinese New Year themed Lunch with Songbird Chen Wang singing traditional Chinese Folk songs.

1st, 8th, 15th, 22nd & 29th February,

Cost £6.

To book or find out about becoming a member call 01923 842 494.

[THE PATH OF LOVE, MUSIC BY SONGBIRD CHEN WANG](#)

The above concert in aid of the Northwood Live at Home Scheme will be held in the Church at 7pm on Saturday 4th February 2012. For further details see either the notice board or the events page at www.urnorthwood.org

Tickets include a glass of wine and canapés and are available from both the Live at Home Office on 01923 842494 and the Church Office 01923 829166.

Cost £8 in advance, £9 at the door, £5 for Students.

[‘JOURNEYS AND CHOICES’, JOHN WISE, 8TH JANUARY 2012](#)

Journeys and Choices.....we’ve heard quite a lot about journeys and choices recently...the journeys of Naomi and Ruth that provided the focus for our worship during Advent....the journeys of Mary, Joseph and the young child Jesus...and now today the journey of the Magi....In many ways all these journeys share some common features....Just like the other journeys, the journey of the Magi was a journey of faith....a journey into the unknown...with encounters with the unexpected...I’m pretty sure the Magi did not expect the star to lead them where it did, nor that they would need to find another way home! Quite remarkably they seem very quickly to have come to terms with the unusual places and challenging circumstances which confronted them!

Over Christmas we have sought, in the representation that stood on the glass table at the back of the Church to entwine our own journey as a congregation with those Biblical journeys. For we too are participants on a journey of faith....a journey that we did not start, and one that will not end with us....a journey that will constantly place choices before us...choices where, like Naomi & Ruth, we cannot understand or predict what all the consequences of our decisions will be.

So as we pause at the start of a New Year, on this epiphany Sunday, I would like to reflect for a few moments on our journey and suggest that we may have something to learn from the Magi.

For the Magi’s journey was not simply a leap of faith ...It was also a decision informed by their awareness and appreciation of the past. They recognised the Star for what it was in part at least

through their knowledge and understanding of what had gone before. Theirs was a journey based in more ways than one on “bearings”drawn from the past to guide the future.

But what bearings can **we** draw from **our past** to guide **our future**? As I look back over the past 100 years or so it seems to me that there have been a number of consistent themes....each re-interpreted by successive generations to meet the circumstances of their time....that have guided and shaped our life as a congregation.

Firstly a constant tradition of care and reverence for the buildings and fabric of St John’s....a determination to maintain, improve and hand on the inheritance of the church....This began with the building of the church itself.... and has continued through the building, maintenance and adaptation of our halls and facilities... the building of Tara.... additions to the fabric and beauty of our sanctuary, with communion tables, a panelled apse, a carved cross, stained glass.... and the creation of the side chapel.

Most of this would have been impossible without another traditionof exceptional generosity and fundraising....which began with the ten year campaign to fund the church building....and has continued unbroken through the financing of the church halls and Tara... a constant stream of generous gifts and legacies.... the introduction of the Free Will Offering Scheme..., and more recently the 2005 Centenary Fund...all of which continues today week by week with the exceptional generosity which you all as a congregation continue to show to St John’s.

From the beginning St John’s has also sought to make its premises available to support local community needs....a particular theme here has been education.... beginning with the foundation of Northwood Preparatory School in our vestry....a long relationship with Northwood Boys Club....the Northwood Hills Children’s Fellowship which members of our congregation ran from the 1930’s to the 1960’s..and the more recent provision of learning, playgroup and crèche facilities by ourselves and other in our premises. The premises of St John’s have always been open to others, and our Community Canvas is testament to how we in our turn are maintaining this tradition.... Nor, on a larger scale, should we forget the use of the Church as a First World War hospital....the opening of the halls to provide comfort, shelter and fellowship to the London Scottish regiment and east end refugees during the Second World War....and the initiative and support from St John’s that led to the creation of St John’s Court.

St John’s too has often been at the forefront of ecumenical activities and relationships with other local faith communities....our use of Emmanuel Church for worship in 1917-18 was an unprecedented arrangement at that time.... For years we provided impetus and leadership to Churches Together in Northwood....it was an initiative and funds from St John’s that led to the founding of our daughter Church, St Martin’s South Oxhey...and in more recent years our offer of hospitality to the Orthodox Jewish community while their new synagogue was under construction began our work to establish relationships with other local faith communities.

All of these events provide us with “bearings” to help us guide and interpret our future as our journey continues. It will always be a journey of choices and challenges, influenced by changing local circumstances. Above all it will always be a journey of faith....and therefore a journey powered by the force that has inspired every generation in St John’s... our prayer, worship and commitment to the Gospel of love and service.

Perhaps I can do no better this morning than to end with words based on the thoughts of our former minister, John Mackelvie, written over 30 years ago, as he too mused on the future of St John’s.
**“But this I know. So long as we exalt the name of Jesus, and proclaim with winsome sincerity His Gospel, the lamps of St John’s will not grow dim. So long as the people we encounter are attracted to the Galilean way of life, and are able to see Christ walking not on Genessaret but on Thames, the fellowship of St John’s will not grow cold.
Lift up your hearts Go forward into the New Year in His strength.”**

