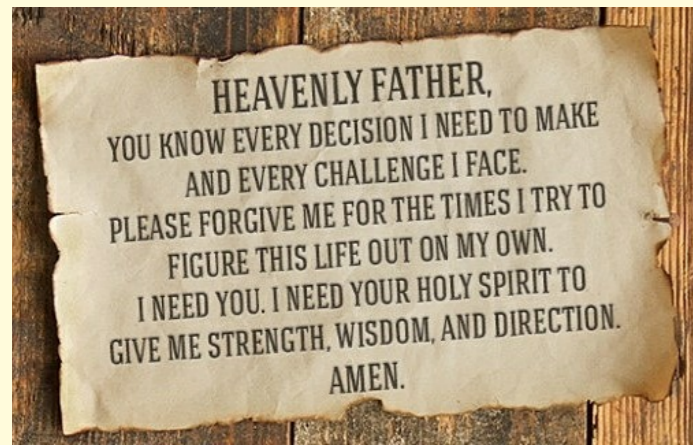


Prayer Tuesdays

At the end of August, I initiated a new prayer regime at the office. I mentioned this in the last newsletter. Every Tuesday I get into the office a little earlier (8.15am) and spend time in prayer. There is something extremely powerful and helpful in starting the day in this way. It isn't an easy discipline to establish but it has been good to sit quietly and be in the presence of God. My desire is to listen to what God would want me to pray, to pray in His will, rather than have a previously written list of thanks, praise, and needs. I'm not sure I achieve it all the time but it has been very interesting to see that as I attempt to focus on God my mind is drawn to pray for certain people, churches, schools, projects and the particular parts of the ministry of FACT. It is those situations or individuals that often cross my path that week.

There is an open invitation to anyone to join me for 20 minutes / half an hour. Nothing difficult or clever in the format. A candle, comfy chair, spoken prayers or silent prayers are all that is done. Why not decide to make it once in a while. It would be helpful to know if you are coming so I can leave the door on the latch. I'll even put the kettle on as well.



Summer Break

It was good to take some time out during August to recoup and relax with my family on holiday. Thanks to everyone who asked if I was taking care of myself. Your concern is appreciated. A family holiday that took in the sun, sights, French markets with cheese and the occasional drop of wine or beer all combined for a relaxing break.

Fund Raising letters

The relentless, yet vital, need to find funding for the ministry of FACT has continued. In recent weeks we have been writing to grant-making charities seeking their support. It takes time and skill to craft a 'good' letter and I am grateful for the support and input of one of my trustees who has expertise in this area. This is not a quick process but an exciting one to do, because as I write and tell them about all that FACT is doing I get more and more excited and passionate about things. It reminds me of all the great things we do and offer. That passion needs tailoring to the needs of what the reader requires to hear and understand. So it's been good to have someone alongside to reign me in! Please pray for the funding needs of the charity, pray for the success of the applications, pray for new and appropriate sources of funding and dare to pray about your own giving. What would God say to you about that?

Langley Harvest Celebration

On Saturday 23rd September I took part in the Harvest celebration with the Langley Churches as they hosted an open-air event for their local community. There were a good number of people who came to support and many to take part. Local school choirs sang and there were presentations from charities that were supported by the event. I brought a simple Christian message through a story, song and of course one of my 'friends'. This time Jan Carlo Fizzy-Cola was on hand to help us think about saying sorry. The danger of outside events in the UK is, of course, the weather.

Saturday was the first real rain we have seen this month and the heavens opened. Needless to say I found the Tea Tent and took refuge while the staging was made ready.



Faith Awareness
in Children Trust

FACT, Peterhouse, St Peter's Close
Staines, Middlesex TW18 2ED

01784-457601
office@thefact.co.uk

 www.facebook.com/FACT.FaithAwarenessinChildrenTrust

 www.thefact.co.uk

I don't belong to a normal family!

This headline was the opening statement in a recent conversation with a mum. The reality is that none of us belong to normal families, yet there seems to be a pressure on family units today to conform to some historical stereotype that isn't the norm anymore (and never was!) So long as we try to match up to it we are destined to fail again and again.



You might think that a simple head count of who lives with you will tell you who is in your family but, so often today we are part of multiple households, especially for children. It's

more common now to have 2 dads or 2 mums but in different places. It's not unusual to have grandparents living with you or taking an active part in the day to day running of the home. Our households might include lodgers who are necessary to help pay the mortgage, friends or colleagues who need to stop for a while, short-term romantic entanglements, blended family members from 2 or more previous families making up a new unit, childless families, single person families, the list is seemingly endless and if I haven't mentioned your family then don't feel you are subnormal!

As we all look at our 'family' we may struggle to match up with anyone else who looks exactly the same. This could feel odd or awkward and lead us to look for the ideal or model unit to copy, but they are a caricature that doesn't exist.

When I think about families or perhaps more accurately households, I think about the characteristics that would be helpful and healthy and those which could be unhelpful and destructive. Isolation and loneliness are issues in families, even when there are a lot of people about. Low self-esteem is a growing issue where people have little sense of self-worth or value. It's easy to focus on the negatives in our lives and not the positives. Families need to be places of love and acceptance, places of safety and stability, places to try, fail and try again, environments in which to thrive and flourish. A good first step would be to spend less time comparing ourselves to what everyone else is doing and saying.

When I look at many of the families in the Bible I see many dysfunctional aspects and I am amazed that God could still use them. However, that's the lesson we need to hear today. The mess of our family life is the place that God is present and active. He doesn't see things as we see them and doesn't judge us as we so often judge ourselves.

Rapid technological changes have fuelled the loss of the art of face to face communication. Why not aim to have a time where screens / phones are set to one side and allow a space where a chat can take place. It may feel uncomfortable at first but worth persevering with as there are many benefits to be had from this simple act.

Simon

A newsletter to keep supporters informed, inspired & involved.
Issue number 131 October 2018

FACT enabling children and households reflect on the Christian Gospel

Toddler Groups

It's been a great start to the new academic year visiting an increased number of toddler groups. Once each half term I will be visiting:

Buggies and Bikes at Staines Congregational Church on a Tuesday and Thursday.

Seedlings at Staines Baptist Fellowship on a Thursday.

Minnows at Staines Methodist Church on a Friday.

Daisy Chain at St Peter's Church Chertsey on a Tuesday and a Thursday.

Cheeky Monkeys at The Well Staines on a Tuesday.

This half term we have thought about saying thank you for the many things we eat, especially bread. I have revealed objects from one of my many special bags then told a story, before singing a song about saying thank you. To finish, it will come as no great surprise, I use one of my many 'friends' to embed the theme. This time I took Chatty Charlie who needed help with this idea of saying thank you. Fortunately, the carers helped him out while the children stared on with mouths open in wonder and amazement.

There is the added bonus of chatting with carers and the children over refreshments in an informal way and opportunities to listen and encourage them in the all they are doing in their family situations.



The photo shows the action of 'mice that hide' during the song. Question, why is it all the adults do the actions while the children look on bewildered?



Time to Wonder



The end of the last term saw us relaunch our **Time to Wonder** project to great effect. So at the start of this term I have been contacting schools, churches, and volunteers to attempt an ambitious programme for this year.

It was a huge encouragement to me to have 9 volunteers attend a training evening held at the FACT office at the beginning of September. We looked again at the core values of Time to Wonder.



Everyone went home with a new, simplified manual and story booklets to aid their preparation for when they will be involved in sessions during the year. One school and church have already been linked up, St. Paul's Egham Hythe with The Hythe Primary School. Plans are afoot for 2 classes to attend in November.

I am spending lots of time chasing schools and churches at present to aid in making those connections. This is all time well spent.

If you would like to know more about volunteering for this, or you are a church who would love to host **Time to Wonder**, or a school that I haven't contacted yet, then get in touch. I'd love to chat further and answer any questions you might have.



Time to Share at Home



It's been a long time in the making, but it is now here and ready to be used. The final part was to consider the packaging and we are pleased with the simple, sturdy, compact boxes we sourced. As I write there are three churches seeking meetings to see the finished material with a desire to purchase and use it amongst families which they have contact with.



My two office volunteers may have the pleasant challenge of having to create more sets of cards etc and make up more boxes than we have currently. I know they are ready and willing to take up the challenge.

A simple letter outlining what **'Time to Share at Home'** is all about, including costs has been written. One part reads,

*The premise is that the simplicity of the six stages: **In, Wo, Do, Be, Hi and Go** act as points to move through a time that will allow all ages the possibility of encountering and discovering God. This time together could be as brief as ten minutes but, on occasions, could take longer, if so desired.*

As each household uses the material the responsibility lies with them as to whether they do it as intended. We have no control over what might happen for them and it is in this messy, unpredictable state that God so often chooses to work and reveal himself.

New Trustees

Following the article in the last newsletter about the need for new trustees it has been encouraging to see 2 people engage with me about the possibility of becoming trustees.

The next Trustees meeting is on the 8th October where we hope to elect one of these people and all things being equal they will take up the role of Treasurer. In the next newsletter, there will be a brief cameo of that person.

The other individual is also keen to join the board of trustees but the timing will mean that they will probably come onboard in January.

This is all very exciting for the health and development of the work and ministry of FACT.

Don't dismiss yourself as someone who couldn't join the team simply because two others have stepped forward. There is still room for others to offer their talents and skills. If you have been musing things over, why not get in touch and have a chat as we are still looking for at least one more new trustee.



Could this finger be pointing at you as the next trustee?

This is an exciting time for the work and ministry of FACT. My Sabbatical at the end of last year was instrumental in the decision to make the changes that we are working hard to bring about. Changes that will keep our ministry at the cutting edge and take us into new areas yet uncharted.

This would be a good time to be involved in the governance of the charity with challenges and faith steps that need to be engaged with.

So what are you waiting for? Get in touch and let's drink coffee, eat chocolate biscuits and see where we might end up.

Simon

**Then Jesus returned to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them.
And his mother stored all these things in her heart.** Luke 2:51