

Diary Dates

14 th Apr	St Nicholas 3pm
18 th Apr	Trustees meeting
18 th Apr	St Peters 10.30am
7 th May	Tiddlers Toddlers
8 th May	Little Fishes Toddlers
9 th May	Little Tots Toddlers
10 th May	Minnows Toddlers
12 th May	St Nicholas 3pm
15 th May	Laleham Church Playgroup
16 th May	Seedlings Toddlers
17 th May	Playtime Toddlers
19 th May	St Peters 10.30am
22 nd May	Footprints Toddlers

Trustees

The last newsletter, once again, made a plea for new Trustees. We also created some posters and flyers that we offered to churches, our toddler contacts, in a church magazine and at services. That small campaign has borne some fruit, which to continue the analogy, is still not fully ripe! However, I did have a couple of enquiries and one possible new member for the board of Trustees.

Firstly, thank you for those who acted after the last newsletter or from one of the other ways that you might have heard about our urgent need.

Secondly, please continue to pray about this issue and continue to act on our behalf.

Finally, if every time you see this or hear about and it and it continues to gnaw away at you then relieve that discomfort and get in touch to start a chat and see where it might lead. Perhaps it's you that should be stepping up and stepping in at this time!



Trustees come in all shapes and sizes!

Can you see yourself in this role ?

A newsletter to keep supporters informed, inspired & involved.
Issue number 164 April 2024

Blog recommendations

In recent months I have tried to widen my reading and listening. I have previously mentioned the website seenandunseen.com which has a range of short articles with a Christian perspective on a myriad of current topics. New stories and comments are added almost on a daily basis. The ones that make me think the most tend to be the ones that don't always sit comfortably with my perspective and so challenge me to think things through once more. That either leads me to alter my thinking or to re-enforce my original position. One of the pluses of this is I have found myself reading about issues and areas of thinking that I would not normally come across.

The other form of engagement has been through listening to blogs. This one, [A Foggy Day on Olympus](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r5Pn9a2oVrg&list=PLPPV6o8NhhEOzupmT4bIYIPkTGSYwZ6GI&index=3) can be found on YouTube and has been very helpful for me in gaining a better historical understanding of Jews in history and in particular, antisemitism.

I didn't realise how anti-semitic the great German reformer, Martin Luther, was!

If you are reading this online from our website follow the hyperlinks, if you have a hard copy I have placed the links below so that you can type them into your preferred computing device.

Why not dip your toe in the water?

seenandunseen.com

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r5Pn9a2oVrg&list=PLPPV6o8NhhEOzupmT4bIYIPkTGSYwZ6GI&index=3>

New church contacts

I'm constantly on the lookout for new opportunities to work with churches. Since the start of the year I have made contact with four churches, one is an old friend returning to talk about Intergenerational Worship, another wants to start a conversation about FACT's support of their monthly joint service, one is brand new. The third one came via a couple attending an Intergenerational Service recently and wanted to know if FACT could do it at their home church. An initial meeting has paved the way for that to start to happen. Finally, I have been invited to speak to the 'Seniors' at a Croydon church on, 'The work and ministry of FACT and mission today'.



Faith Awareness in Children Trust

Caleb's spirit and his reward

One of my favourite characters in the Bible is Caleb. He was one of the 12 men who spied out the land of Canaan when the Israelites first came across the 'Promised Land'. Joshua is the main character in this story and Caleb is his side-kick. He and his mate Joshua brought back good reports to Moses of the land on the other side of the Jordan while also setting out the obstacles and possible difficulties that would face them once they had crossed over. So, a realist but with the much needed counterbalance of being an emboldened follower of God. I can only wonder at his disappointment or even devastation when the perceived wisdom of the majority prevails, that it would be too hard and dangerous, leading to the outcome that God pronounced that the Israelites would wander in the desert for a further 40 years until all that generation had died except for Joshua and Caleb. Caleb has to live through those years of disappointment and wasted opportunities fully knowing it wasn't God's desire for His people.

I wonder if I would have coped with that?

Second time around, they do move into the land of milk and honey and fight their way past multiple tribes to conquer and possess the fertile ground promised to them by God. Each of the 12 tribes of Israel are allotted areas to live and Caleb gets the mountains of Hebron. Hundreds of years previously, this was the mountainous area that Abraham chose to settle in after splitting with his nephew Lot, who took the choicest parts of the fertile valley. In the time of Caleb, Hebron was the domain of the 'Anak' people. The literal translation is 'Giant' people. These were the people they had encountered 40 years previous. These are the people that scared the 10 spies while Joshua and Caleb believed in a God who could defeat giants in life, real and metaphorical!

Moses never entered the land of Canaan as a result of listening to the 10 spies who only saw the problems and not the opportunities. It was Joshua and Caleb who crossed over and fulfilled God's original intent. Scripture records God's view of Caleb at that time.

But my servant Caleb, because he has a different spirit and has followed me fully, I will bring into the land into which he went, and his descendants shall possess it. (Numbers 14:24 ESV)

Numerous translations use the expression that he had a 'different spirit'. He must have stood out from the rest. He wasn't a dreamer, in the sense of being a romantic escapist, he could see the real hardship and difficult issues of occupying the promised land. This different spirit meant he was able to live through the ordinary and sometimes tedious elements of life. In his case literally 40 years of meandering aimlessly! His spirit was one that said yes, now let's work out how! The impossible is possible if we but listen to what God is asking of us. That's not the same as saying it will be easy but it will be Godly.

As for Caleb's reward, at first glance it might seem harsh to be given the wastelands of Hebron that were full of giants having spent years helping clear out the fertile areas for other tribes to enjoy and prosper in. Caleb's reward wasn't the destination but the daily intimate journey with a God who he **followed fully**. Quite a challenge to our thinking of today in the western world, where the idea of entitlement, status, health and wealth are used as measures of Godly blessing. Caleb understood all he needed to do was to 'fully follow' God in the everyday stuff while dreaming the big dreams that He had called him to. I guess the same applies to us.

FACT enabling children and households to reflect on the Christian Gospel

The latest news about the Time2share@home project is good! We are still trying to press forward with it's development on a number of levels. Everyone we show our boxes to simply love them and get the concept. However, in reality they are best described as, 'home made' or 'prototypes'. Both these terms acknowledge they are rough around the edges! People are quick to admire and endorse the concept but gently suggest, with what feels like feigned praise, that 'we have achieved a huge amount with the limited resources at our disposal.'

I couldn't agree more!

So I'm excited to say that we are moving forward having engaged a graphic artist who is developing the look of the contents of the box and the logo.

(Let's be honest and recognise the current logo is awful!) The new logo is still being refined but I hope to be able to show that in the coming newsletters.



This picture of a female figure of first century Palestine is the latest draft of the style we are hoping to use through out our story boards.

The draft Jesus isn't ready to show yet, but I'm equally excited by how he looks. (rereading that last sentence sounds so wrong, a 'draft Jesus'!)

Standardising the look of all we do will elevate the whole product and we hope, help in it's marketing.

We are continuing to work through the ideas of app design, where we will be able to use these new graphics. There are a few possibilities that are very embryonic. Once they have been fleshed out some more then we will present them. This is just to let you know that things are still moving forward!



This half term has seen me visit the eight pre-school settings once again, this time with the simple story of Easter. I use a Big book that I've made up and this page, shown above, sums up the essential Easter message in what the angels are saying.

(I tend to avoid the need to explain 'Substitutional Atonement' to these three year-old's and their carers.)



I like to ring the changes with the puppet I use, so this time I have taken Lady Roweena along with all her pearls, styled hair and rimmed spectacles.

All to often parents and Grandparents tell me that she reminds them of someone in their own family. Now that's a scary thought!

Amongst the fun there's an uncomfortable reality for our local churches, which is that these children and their carers are highly unlikely to be anywhere near a church this Easter to hear the principle story of our faith. They won't know the main characters or the sequence of the Easter Triduum let alone the significance or impact on them and the world.

So, FACT is grateful to be able to offer a glimpse of the risen Jesus to around 250 children and carers. In what we do we hope that they might encounter God in a way that is accessible to them.

Remember, less than 3% of the population attend church regularly and regularly is deemed to be once a month!

March has seen two churches receive the latest I.W. Service. The theme was, 'Shepherd and sheep' and we focused on Psalm 23 and John 10, but there were also had echos of the Pascal lamb and Easter.



Sheep often get a bad press and are considered stupid, but are they? This card was used at each table to prompt a discussion and aid our thinking around the theme.

Following on from listening and joining in with a fairly old song from the back end of the last century called, 'I just want to be a sheep', we made our Sheep cards that had celebrated our desire to be a sheep with Jesus as our shepherd.



Post it notes were used during our prayers and stuck to a board with a giant heart on it. {1.2m x 1.0m}

It's such an encouragement and spectacle to be able to pause and see the visual impact of so many prayers offered from so many who simply identify as a sheep in Jesus flock. There are no prerequisites such as age, ability, or knowledge to being a sheep with Jesus the Good Shepherd.

Finally it just leaves me to say, 'Baa, baa, baa!'

In April we will unpack the theme of, '**Barnabas, Encourager and giver of 2nd chances**'. If it wasn't for Barnabas' self-effacing encouragement to include and promote Paul we might never have had so much to read in the New Testament! Their story wasn't plain sailing but the quiet humble faith of Barnabas makes a huge difference to Paul and to his own cousin Mark, who traditionally is known as Mark the Evangelist who went on to found the Coptic church of Egypt!

Look out for reports in the next newsletter of what we did and the challenges we undertook.



I'll also tell you what this flower is all about!



Training for Churches

- What is Intergenerational Worship?
Is it just the latest fad?
- Why do we need to change the way we are currently doing church?
We don't have any families so do we need to worry about it?
- Isn't it just 'All Age' worship by another name?

These are some of the the spoken or not so subtly inferred questions I have encountered about Intergenerational Worship and I would love to unpack the answers to them with your church. You may find you are already engaging with elements of I.W. but there is undoubtedly more to learn and do. You may be shocked to realise how important this approach to worship is to the existence of church as we know it today.

Get in touch to start a conversation and find out how this might unlock development and growth of your congregations without it being yet another thing to add to the long list of things already stacking up in front of you.

As the time drew near for him to ascend to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem. Luke 9:51