

## Diary Dates

### June

9 <sup>th</sup> June	St Nicholas 3pm
12 <sup>th</sup> June	Footprints Toddlers
13 <sup>th</sup> June	Seedlings Toddlers
14 <sup>th</sup> June	Minnows Toddlers
16 <sup>th</sup> June	St Peters 10.30am
17 <sup>th</sup> June	Laleham Church Playgroup
18 <sup>th</sup> June	Tiddlers Toddlers
19 <sup>th</sup> June	Little Fishes Toddlers
20 <sup>th</sup> June	Little Tots Toddlers
21 <sup>st</sup> June	Playtime Toddlers
29 <sup>th</sup> June	St Peter's Training 9.30am
30 <sup>th</sup> June	St James Hampton Hill 3pm

### July

1 <sup>st</sup> July	Boys Brigade 7.45pm
14 <sup>th</sup> July	St Nicholas 3pm
18 <sup>th</sup> July	Trustees meeting
21 <sup>st</sup> July	St Peters 10.30am
22 <sup>nd</sup> July	Boys Brigade 7.45pm

### August

11 <sup>th</sup> Aug	Ashford Common Methodist 10.30am
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## New Trustees

Before you skip onto the next column and read about Steve, our latest Trustee, can I plead with you once again to consider if you or someone you know might be the next Trustee to get on-board with FACT.

I honestly think that we are entering one of the most exciting periods in the history of FACT. That's not to down play some of the phenomenal ministries that have already occurred but things are starting to bubble and stir. It reminds me of that rousing verse, Isaiah 43:19.

***For I am about to do something new. See, I have already begun! Do you not see it? I will make a pathway through the wilderness. I will create rivers in the dry wasteland.***

If there was ever a good time to be part of the Board of Trustees, it will be over the next few years.

## Trustees

I am delighted to be joining the Trustees of FACT and hope to make a useful contribution to this important work.

I first came across FACT about twenty years ago and 'rediscovered' it on moving back to Ashford four years ago and meeting up with my old friend Simon. I grew up in this area, trained as a teacher in Brighton and taught in secondary schools for five years before training for ordination in the C of E. Thirty-five years of full-time ministry followed, in Lancashire, Surrey and Suffolk. Throughout my time in parish ministry I always kept a foot in education – both children's and adult. Somewhere along the way I also married Liz, had three daughters and, more recently, three grandchildren!

I had intended, in retirement, to renew my childhood passion for fishing, but instead I'm at Ashford Table Tennis Club two or three times a week, and the rods remain in the shed. On the subject of fish, however, I have four enormous ones (an Oscar and three Silver Dollars, for the aquatic geeks) in the lounge (yes, in a tank).

Liz now goes to PCC meetings (at St Hilda's) while I stay at home, which is a marvellous role reversal! But I do keep my hand in by taking services now and again.

FACT, it seems to me, has a broad appeal across denominations and traditions, and what could be more important than nurturing the seeds of faith in young children? Long may it continue. **Steve Brian**



**Editors comment:** Steve sent me 2 photos, one very serious and the other one not! You can guess which one I used.



## Faith Awareness in Children Trust

# Jesus in the marketplace.

Over recent decades there has been a growing number of books and resources aimed at supporting Christians to live and share their faith with those they encounter in their everyday life outside of the 1 hour they spend in church on a Sunday (and that might not be every Sunday!). There's an ever evolving language that is used to describe this encouragement to mission: 'Whole life worship', 'Front-line Fruitfulness', 'Jesus in the marketplace' and many more.

I heard of one preacher who is reputed to have suggested that people should, 'Pop Jesus in their pockets' as they left church so He would be with them in the coming week! I have sympathies with what they were trying to encourage but I confess that image made me squirm!

While there is a growing emphasis on mission and sharing of our faith in simple everyday situations there is also a growing conversation around the future of church as we currently experience it.

I was left wondering following a conversation with a retired minister recently. We chatted about the future of the church in general, and after a lifetime of serving in a church they said quite bluntly, 'Stone Church is dead!' by which they were referring to the idea of the static building with all its processes as being the primary place from which all Christian engagement flows. Neither of us could offer a coherent vision for what the future might look like but it felt like there was something in this idea.

Ten years ago, a previous Archbishop of Canterbury, George Carey, famously said,

***"We ought to be ashamed of ourselves. We are one generation away from extinction and if we do not invest in young people there is going to be no one in the future."***

The statistics tell a story of decline in church attendance with closures already happening at the local level and which will certainly happen at denominational levels before the end of the decade. Of course, no-one believes it will happen to them as they look around at their full church, and they wonder what all the fuss is about. There are churches that are growing, to which I shout, 'Praise God', but they are not the norm.

I was reminded by stories of the early church, meeting in homes and in the market places. There is a tendency to view this through rose tinted glasses. The idea for Christians of the Cross being a place of victory was laughed at by the powerful. Hence, Christianity was very attractive to the poor, slaves and those for whom life was hard. People scattered because of fear of persecution. The cruel Emperor Nero, would erect crosses in his garden, crucify Christians, paint them in tar and set fire to them so they could be living torches at his garden parties! Being a Christian in a world that despised weakness was a very dangerous thing to confess publicly.

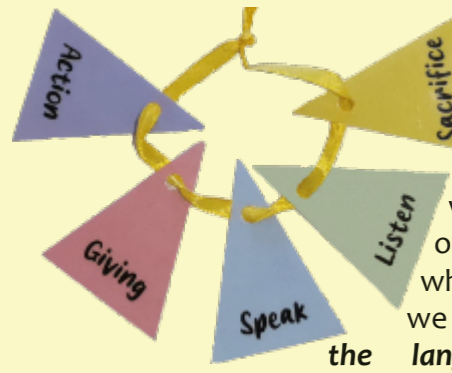
These followers of Jesus lived their faith out in the market place. They met up to support each other, to worship, to share and to learn. That took them back out into their everyday situations where they lived out their faith with the wider world. They were the people that entered plague ridden towns to serve the dying and many of them died because of the plague itself. Being known for their sacrificial lifestyle was attractive to many while being costly at the same time. Early church buildings were places that enabled worship and teaching, not places to hide from the world. Faith happened in the home, when they ate together, in their work place, and on the street corners. Perhaps 'Stone Church' needs to recapture it's purpose before it disappears.

A newsletter to keep supporters informed, inspired & involved.

Issue number 165 June 2024

FACT enabling children and households to reflect on the Christian Gospel

## Intergenerational Worship



In May we took the opportunity to engage with the story of Pentecost. We were able to mull over the idea of whether as Christians we were, **'Speaking the language of those**

**around us'**. We thought about the different ways we could share our faith in a world that is hungry to hear but in which we often feel inadequate to do. We each arranged our 5 triangles in an order we felt was best for us to achieve. The easiest approach on the top and the hardest at the back. This laminated set was small enough to pop into a wallet or purse to keep them handy and act as a prompt to have a go. At each church the tables were buzzing with chatter about everyone's different ideas.

In June we will consider the story, often referred to as the 'Widow's Mite'.

It's one of those well known stories that needs handling with care as it's easy to read things into it that are not actually there in the text. In context this story comes after Jesus has condemned the Temple authorities for the way they conduct their financial processes and how they 'steal' widows' homes from them. So widows were on Jesus' mind as he gathered his disciples to him to watch what was going on. We are not told whether she was paying her Temple taxes or making a 'Free will' offering. Nor are we told how she was feeling. The text simply tells us that Jesus observed her and the rich as they gave. He didn't condemn the rich and their large donations nor commended the woman and her small offering. He just noted the proportional difference.



In the service we will use the latest Cadbury's advert in which a little girl is ready to give all that is valuable to her; a plastic coin, 2 buttons, a plastic ring with a pink gemstone, and finally and most importantly, the little blue unicorn. All so her mum can have a bar of chocolate.



I confess, I couldn't resist using this headline next to this picture for the talk.

**'Would you give up your blue unicorn for Jesus?'**



2 Corinthians 9:6 helps us understand the way in which we should approach our giving.

**Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.**

### Encouraging signs

An Intergenerational approach in worship (that isn't All Age!) is proving to be a fruitful way of enabling unchurched people to cross the threshold and fully engage in the all that is offered. At one service recently none of the usual households were able to attend. 🤔

However, 3 new households came along because the usual attenders had passed on the advertising flyers to them. Even in their absence, they were confident about what they would experience and so invited them. 😊

July will see the final round of services for this academic year. Next year's themes are on the drawing board and I hope to be working with 4 churches every month.

## Toddlers

As I write I'm coming to the end of another round of visits to toddler and pre-school settings. As usual I'm not sure who has enjoyed them more, me or the children and carers / staff. This half term's theme has been, 'WOW! - Creation' The children love the big bright pictures and we explore what's on each page.



**Their job was to look after God's world.**

As we near the end of the story I ask open questions about whether we do a good job of looking after the world as God asked us to do. Even at their very young age they have learned that we don't, but they can also now know that it was God's intention that we should, not just a good idea!

This image below, used with permission, was taken from a video that I was sent of a toddler visit in April. Obviously, I'm flying like a bird and this little girl was just enthralled with the music and actions. The picture says it all.



Sheer joy!

## Finance

FACT's fiscal year mirrors the academic year. So we are now fast approaching our year end in July. Soon a new forecast will be created and agreed by the Trustees for the year commencing 1<sup>st</sup> August. To compile it we will have considered our possible outgoings and hoped for income. Expenditure can often be reasonably well forecast and allowances made for possible 'extras' but income is not as knowable as we might wish.

Like so many small charities, we have an ageing supporter group, many of whom have been giving to the work and ministry of FACT for years, if not decades! We are extremely grateful and do not take them for granted.

However, in recent years we have seen a steady increase of some of these faithful people pass away and as a consequence, their financial support has suddenly been lost.

We will be writing to our supporters in the near future setting out the challenges and needs, and asking for their support. This article is a forerunner to that letter and I hope it might make you pause to consider your response to our ongoing needs.

For simple ways to give visit our website and follow the numerous links. If you want to make an immediate response having read this you could scan the QR code. That will take you directly to our donation page where you can choose to give a one-off gift or better still set up a regular giving pattern. It's easy and straightforward, taking a few minutes of your time, but know that it will make a difference.

Don't forget to Gift Aid if you can and let us know so we can complete our records.

Thanks,

*Simon*



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