

Diary Dates

August

11th Aug Ashford Common Methodist 10.30am
15th Aug St Nicholas Meeting

September

8th Sept St Nicholas Shepperton 3.00pm
15th Sept Staines Methodist 10.30am
15th Sept St James Hampton 3.30pm

Recent research

I have long said that Intergenerational Worship is the 'new kid on the block' and now there is research and theology being done to consider it and define it. I have purchased the first book of it's kind, recently published called, *'Being an Intergenerational Church'*. (As I write I've only had time to dip into the forward but it has already put a smug smile on my face.)

The dual authors, Farrant and Philip write:

We believe that God is calling us to be an experiential church; a church where the emphasis for those of all ages is on encountering God rather than learning about God.....

In the church's new story, everyone, children and young people included, will be equipped with the tools to read and wrestle with Scripture for themselves, recognising that all (not just those with theological training) have wisdom and insight to share. No longer will people be excluded from participating in certain aspects of church life because of their age, but rather are wholeheartedly included, especially when it comes to celebrating the sacrament of Holy Communion. This new story involves engaging together in ancient Christian practices in fresh ways, so that all ages are able to encounter and experience God.

Men's breakfast

I was invited to speak at the Men's breakfast at St. Andrew's Baptist Church recently and shared my faith journey. Needless to say that I shared it in my own particular style and most wouldn't have recognised it as a 'Testimony'. It seemed to be well received from conversations afterwards. Regardless of the speaker what's not to like about a cooked breakfast!

Toddlers

The final round of visits to groups before the Summer is now complete. The theme was 'Sharing' and I enjoyed opening my picnic basket to produce 5 small bread rolls and 2 fish (all plastic!) So it won't come as a surprise when I tell you that I then used a big book to tell the story of the feeding of the five thousand. A song about Jesus being our friend and a puppet who helped us think about what we could share concluded the brief presentation.



It will be October before I see any of these groups again. I don't visit in September as it takes a while to get everyone back into a rhythm and settled.

Each group was given a personalised leaflet with the themes and dates for my visits next year. So the process starts all over again! I'm now committed to 9 groups and there's the possibility of 1 more.

Finances

As FACT comes to the end of another financial year the Trustees and I are aware of the goodness and generosity of God through his people. Thank you to all of you who have given, regularly and one-off gifts. We receive no statutory funding and charge for very little of our work so that money won't be an obstacle to working and supporting smaller churches, toddler groups etc.

We want to say a big thank you for the positive feedback by some supporters to the recent letter asking for you to increase your support. As I write, it is a big unknown who has given and how much. It isn't too late to do so if you haven't done so yet.

Perhaps you could speak to someone at your church about making FACT a Mission Partner and supporting us each month. I'll continue to research possible grant making trusts. Then I'll compile an application to them in the hope that we might raise funding that way. To be honest it's all too often a lot of work for little gain, but it's part of my role.



Faith Awareness in Children Trust

Practising Shabbat principles

It's that time of year once again where things come to an end, they stop, or more accurately they are paused for a while, as come September the starting pistol is fired to commence another frantic year of activities and engagements. I confess that I'm reaching that point, which so many of you who live according to the academic year will also be reaching, where I'm running on vapours. There's not a lot left in the tank and I'm in need of a rest, a break, a holiday or should that be a Holy-day. Rhythms and patterns of living have changed drastically over the last half century. The 7 day week has diminished in society. More people are working shift patterns that have no relationship to a single week. We have 24/7 access to the wonders of the internet where we can buy and sell, engage in social media, rearrange our finances and watch every form of entertainment according to our unique set of interests. It never stops, never turns off, never pauses but is always there ready to take our time and effort. Convenience is the buzz word and stillness has become unknown and unpractised.

In Jewish families, come sundown on a Friday, they will attempt to pause from the world's noise and embrace Shabbat. During this time before the sunset on Saturday, they will remember the story of creation from the Torah where God created the world in 6 days and rested on the 7th day.

To our detriment, our society today has lost that weekly flow. So, I try to find other ways to pause and be with God. I have enjoyed times of retreat within monastic communities over the years, especially if I'm there on a holy day. These are feast days and are often celebrated with something special to eat or drink. I've sat with monks quaffing a can of beer with our evening meal to acknowledge that the plain fare we're eating is now elevated to being a feast.

For many of us Holy-days, whether each Sunday or on other times set aside to remember the ministry of God through named individuals have become lost and they are all too often reduced to being just holidays. We are good at finding rest for our bodies, our minds, our emotions but not for our souls.

In August, as the pattern of life pauses, I will take a holiday. I will step aside from the ordinary busyness and find another busyness that will encourage rest for my body, mind and emotions. I will also try to make space to Shabbat, to remind myself of the God of creation who rested from His work and saw that it was all very good. This type of rest isn't measured in what is done, said, thought, or felt but in gentle stillness where we actively choose to be in the presence of God. These moments may be short and often interrupted by the other forms of rest but if full recuperation is to be found and experienced then they are vital.

Happy Holydays

A newsletter to keep supporters informed, inspired & involved.

Issue number 166 August 2024

FACT enabling children and households to reflect on the Christian Gospel

Intergenerational Worship

As we conclude our third year of Intergenerational Worship with churches it has finished on a high.

At the end of June I delivered the final training session for St Peter's and then the final service in the middle of July. The vicar informed me that this service has seen the congregation grow from thirty to seventy in 2 years. They now have a core team who can deliver the services and are taking more and more from me. During the autumn I will be offering support and materials as they continue forward. Eventually these will stop as well.

My observation is an obvious one, in that, these things only work when the church 'owns' it and supports it and invests time, energy, passion, prayer and finance! When it's done to them and for them without them making it theirs it dwindles and dies. It was good to have had the chance to say goodbye and they responded by gathering around me to pray for the continuing ministry of FACT in other

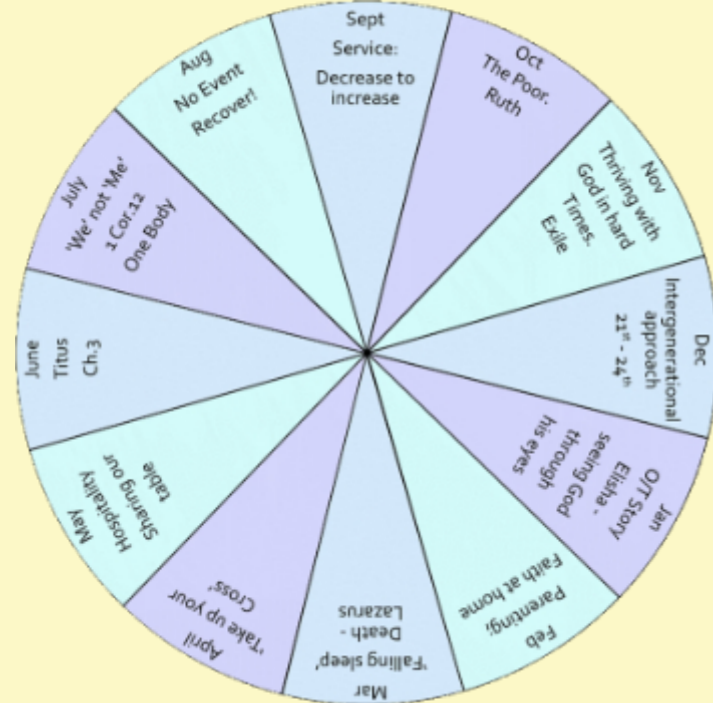


Staines Methodist is a church that I have a long history with. I helped establish their Messy Church and then their Toddler group, Minnows. Both have moved forward and are thriving. I visit Minnows each half term when I'm doing the rounds to all the other Toddler and pre-school groups.



Early in July I attended their morning service as a way to prepare the congregation for the changes that were coming to their morning services in the autumn. It was great to do a Q&A session with Avril, a member of the church and well known to me and possibly some of you reading this. (She was our Senior Schools Worker from a few years ago) The feedback on the morning was one of excitement and anticipation.

Flyers were given out with the challenge to everyone to consider whom they might invite.



churches. Such a generous thing to do. Thank you! At the end of June I attended St James, Hampton Hill to deliver their first Intergenerational Worship. This was a taster and the programme starts in full in September. The circle above shows the themes for each month that will be used with all the churches but personalised to their particular situation.

Seeing the whole picture

Over recent months I have started to work with Ashford Common Methodist. Every church is unique and this one is no exception. The fabulous thing about them is not only do they see and want my help in trying a new approach to some of their services but they also see that they could develop deeper links with groups that already exist and use their premises. So, I approached the Pre-school on site and have visited them with my usual presentation of a story, song and puppet. This has developed into me booking them for a visit each half term starting in September. Alongside this I have visited their Boys Brigade Company on 2 occasions. They have met at the local school and used their fields for games. I have done the 'Devotions' at the end of the evening and tried to use these times, firstly, to offer a thought about God and secondly, to introduce myself to the boys and the helpers with the hope that when I do an Intergenerational Service in August they might come and bring others who live with them in their household.

The first evening I spoke about trust and did a simple trust exercise. I also took my 'Flaming Bible' (yes it really does have flames that lap from it) The second evening I talked about not holding grudges and letting things go, as God does when we say sorry!



The church is cleverly doing some joined up thinking about who and how they might encourage people to come to this new venture. The desire is to offer other Sundays over the next twelve months and gently build relationships where people can encounter God in each other and what is offered in the services. The strap line verse below is the same as last time, not because I forgot to change it but because it's what I'm seeing God do at this time.



When it doesn't work!

I've written about so many situations that are working well, not without their issues and trials, but they are moving forward. It would be unfair and wrong not to recognise that sometimes things don't work out as hoped. So what happens in those situations? Firstly I'm not into blaming. Every time I set off to do something new, failure is always an option and when it happens it simply needs to be acknowledged, considered and move on from. I have been working with St Nicholas Church for over 2 years and there have been some high points but also some low ones. It's been a struggle to establish a rhythm and a core group in this new venture. The Rector and I desire to try and find a way forward but we haven't been successful, yet. We haven't given up, and I want to try and understand better what is needed and also what is desired by the current congregation. Need and desire are very different things. A different approach may be useful and I'm open to thinking outside the box to help them develop their outreach to new households while supporting those that already attend. Over the Summer the Rector and I will be taking stock of what is achievable, what else might be tried, while being open to the possibility of bringing it to an end.

My theology would say that I have no ministry of my own. I attempt to join in with what I see God is doing and graciously calling me to join in. That's echoed in John 5:19.

So Jesus explained, "I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself. He does only what he sees the Father doing. Whatever the Father does, the Son also does."

Wisdom is trying to see and know what that might be in this situation. What is God doing at this time and in that place? Does He want me to join in or am I an unwitting hindrance? Do we push forward with perseverance or step away and take another road?



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.

Isaiah 43:19