

Looking to the future

Many of you will be aware that at the end of the summer I am stepping down from my role in FACT. I am retiring! There is a host of very good reasons for me doing this now, not least that I'm convinced that is what God would have me do at this time.

The Trustees have been aware of this situation for some time and they have been working hard to allow my finishing to be a good one, while considering the future of FACT.

As is often the case with these situations, there are more questions than answers! Clearly they are considering all options while being attentive to God's voice and direction in this time of change.

There's a dynamic at play which will be familiar to people of faith. Put simply, we can only know that which is knowable, but we desire to allow space for the unknowable to become known!

A quick glance at the diary in the adjacent column shows that the next Trustees meeting will be at the end of April. At that meeting we will make decisions about the path that FACT will take as I finish and what will happen after I have left. So there will more information to come in the next newsletter.

In the meantime, will you join us in praying for God's continuing presence in the decision making process.

April

5th Apr Easter Day!
8th Apr North Hillingdon Methodist 6.00pm
12th Apr North Hillingdon Methodist 9.30am
14th Apr Ashford Common Methodist 5.30pm
19th Apr Ashford Common Methodist 10.30am
23rd Apr Spiritual Mentor meeting
26th Apr Staines Methodist 10.30am
30th Apr Trustees meeting pm

May

6th May North Hillingdon Methodist 6.00pm
7th May Little tots Toddlers
10th May North Hillingdon Methodist 9.30am
11th May Laleham Playgroup (am)
12th May Hope Church Hounslow Toddlers
14th May Towntree Pre-school (am)
15th May Minnows Toddlers
17th May Ashford Common Methodist 10.30am
18th May Playbox Pre-school (pm)
19th May Tiddlers Toddlers
20th May Footprints Toddlers
21st May Seedlings Toddlers
22nd May Playtime Toddlers
24th May Staines Methodist 10.30am
25th - 29th Half Term

Diary Dates



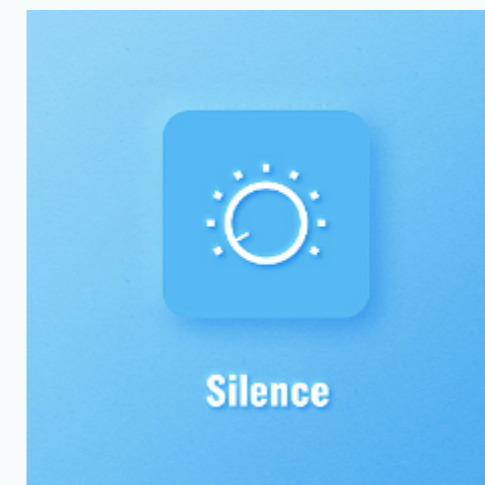
Faith Awareness in Children Trust

Silence is more than the absence of noise

When you are going to take on a challenge or commit to something it's often useful to make it known more widely, and in so doing make yourself accountable to others!

Last time I wrote that I was about to attempt the discipline of pausing and focusing on 10 words presented as computer icons during Lent. As I now write, I have managed 7 so far! They have proved useful as a simple prompt to take a few minutes out and redirect my thinking and attention onto God.

I have done my own research and exploring around each word including looking at biblical references. This icon showing a volume dial that is turned down became the source of lots of different ideas.



To start with I thought it was about being quiet and making no noise, but I soon discovered that that was impossible. Noise is never absent! Silence is more about creating a space in which you can be heard or hear others.

Twelve men were sent by Moses into Canaan to spy out the land. They reported what they had seen and whether they thought it was wise to cross over the River Jordan, Caleb spoke up, *He quieted the people before Moses, and said, 'Let us go up at once and occupy it, for we are well able to overcome it'.*

The classic story of Jesus rebuking the storm as he sailed across the lake comes to mind. That command was to be silent, to be still. His words could be translated as, **'Enough!'** I suspect many a fraught parent has used that word in a raised tone of voice to bring some semblance of order back to a frantic situation in the home!

At the end of Acts where we read of Paul visiting Jerusalem and his arrest by the Jewish authorities, there is an interesting turn of phrases used by Luke. He writes, *'When they heard him addressing them in Hebrew, they became even more quiet.'*

So, there appears to be degrees of quiet! It's not that there was an absence of noise, but a greater attention being given by those listening.

Silence is about choosing to turn down the volume, perhaps literally but definitely metaphorically. To resist distractions in order to create an inner space to be heard and to hear. Put simply, we call this prayer! A conversation with God. Not necessarily with words, but with thoughts, or emotions, questions or ideas. However, we need to practise the art of stillness, of just being present in the moment, of being silent.

I stumbled across some thoughts from the 'Desert Fathers' of the 3rd and 4th Centuries. John Cassian, was quite extraordinary and has had a profound effect on Western Christianity down the centuries. I liked this quote, *'It is impossible for the mind to remain undisturbed by thoughts, but anyone serious about the matter can certainly permit them entry or drive them away, and although their origin does not lie entirely under our control we can choose to approve of them and to adopt them'.*

I have enjoyed these icons and the space to ponder.

The trap of reading what I think it says rather than what it actually says!

Once again, it looks like my attempt at perfection has evaded me! An eagle-eyed supporter took far too much pleasure at my expense in telling me that they had found 2 typos in the last newsletter! They did it with a wry smile and also added that they had really enjoyed the content.

I was elated that there were only 2 typos and not more.

For the record, this is not a new competition I'm starting, asking you to write in and let me know about misspellings, grammar, homophones or poor syntax!

You have to recognise,
'I's just right it as I's speaks it!!!'

It's not all Worship services and Toddler groups!

A considerable amount of my time is spent on the very necessary 'behind the scenes' administration of the charity and its day to day functions. Recently if you had dropped into the office you might have found me on the floor with multiple parts of our printer scattered around me as I attempted to return it to a functioning state! This scene was repeated on a number of occasions over a two week period. Eventually, after a couple of visits from an engineer and numerous parts bought online and then fitted by myself (to keep the costs down) the issues were solved and printing has resumed once again.

The expression, 'Jack of all trades and master of none comes to mind!'

A newsletter to keep supporters informed, inspired & involved.
Issue number 176 April 2026

FACT enabling children and households to reflect on the Christian Gospel

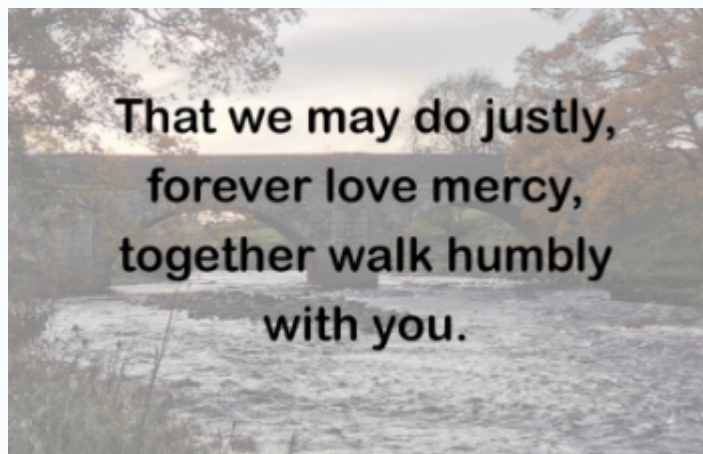
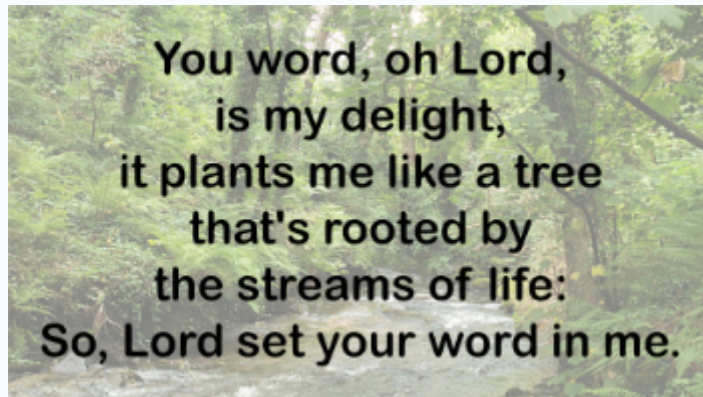
Intergenerational Worship

Pre-Schools and Toddlers

The Intergenerational Worship in February followed the theme of, **'New ways to worship at home'**. Congregations were able to experience one set of cards from the **'Time to Share at Home'** boxes as they gathered around a table. The feedback from people, from the youngest to the oldest, was all very positive and more than 10 boxes were given away to be used in people's homes.

In March the theme was loosely based around the title of **'Waiting in Lent'**. The key text was Isaiah 61: 1-4 and we picked up on the last part of the reading. **'They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, to display his glory.'**

2 songs helped develop the theme through their words, the images behind the words, and the style and tempo of the music. The 2 screen shots below from the songs help to demonstrate this.



Music and plain background videos can be purchased (for very small amounts of money) from <https://resoundworship.org/songs>

Take time for a deep dive into some excellent new worship songs that may enhance your own church service experiences.

The activity personalised the idea of being righteous oaks for God's glory. Everyone was able to make a cup mat which had their own name written onto it.

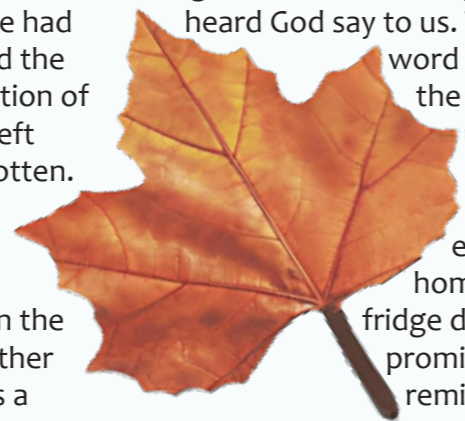


One neurodivergent boy was totally absorbed in activity and very quickly produced multiple mats for friends and family which meant he could use the laminator again and again! As I left the church at the end of the morning this boy strode up to me and said, **'Simon, this has been my best day ever!'**

At the same church a father approached me with a huge smile on his face and with his cup mat in hand he informed me that, **'This is coming with me to work tomorrow to sit on my desk, Thank you'**.

The 6 minute talk unpacked 'Righteousness' which played its part in embellishing all that was done within the service, including what was sung, listened to, created and prayed.

We used leaf shaped post-it notes to write a few simple words including our names and responses to what we had heard God say to us. We also included the recognition of things left or forgotten. These were taken during the week, or they were stuck onto a large board at the front of the church with a picture of a tree on it in an act of prayer.



I mentioned in the last newsletter that we had a good supply of boxes created by the 3 'Mega Volunteers'. I decided it would be sensible to pause production for a while and so I thanked them and suggested that if or when we needed more I'd be back in touch. They were all happy to come back if needed. What I couldn't have known was that within a week of that conversation I would be contacting them to organise their return due to a developing relationship with a new church!

I was very excited to have made contact with the local Salvation Army Corps and following an initial visit in which I shared about, and showed off, the boxes, I left having promised to supply them with 25 for their 'YP Celebration' in May!

I will be meeting up with their team leaders in the near future to chat through how the boxes could also be used with the children and young people in their Sunday morning groups.

As I go to print a total of 72 boxes have been created by the 'Mega Team' since we started in the autumn, of which 44 have been given away, 4 are in my car and the 25 promised will soon be ready to pass on in early May. Production will soon increase our stocks. So, don't miss out as we will be working hard to fulfil all requests.

Below is another one of the brilliant illustrations from a set of cards in the box. You may recognise the story. Luke 15:9 tells you what happens with the friends and hence the need for Party Poppers that we supply!



March saw me attend eleven groups. It's always wonderful to be able to share the Easter story using a big book embellished with bold coloured pictures and narrated with simple language that captures the attention and imagination of both young and old alike. I was also able to show off my musical movement skills (It would be an exaggeration to call it dancing) with a song that invited everyone to clap, move, spin around and wave their arms. To conclude the party atmosphere I allowed my friend, (and theirs) Chatty Charlie, to bring his wisdom to bear on the Easter story.

In April I will be visiting them again to do the Creation Story. The focus is on the emotion of Wow!



Children can often hold big concepts that are beyond comprehension better than adults who, with all their knowledge, all too often get bogged down with 'how' and forget 'who'.

I will enjoy singing the 'Thank you song' that mentions various animals and has accompanying actions to suit. I have another big book of pictures to help remind everyone what we are singing about.



So, snails that slide, mice that hide, frogs that leap and bats that sleep. I've recently adjusted my presentations due to the government changes to

funding of free places at pre-schools. It has meant that there are now fewer older children at toddler groups and more babes in arms plus those who really are toddlers in name and movement.



Be still, and know that I am God!