



St Luke's News

April 2024
Number 279

Jesus Bursting from the Grave



“Death could not hold you, the veil tore before you,
You silenced the boast of sin and grave.
The heavens are roaring the praise of your glory
For you are raised to life .”

Brooke Fraser and Hillsong Worship

This is a verse from the worship song, *What a Beautiful Name*, which we sing at St Luke's; it expresses the extraordinary event of Easter Sunday – Jesus rising from the dead on the weekend that changed history.

As we look around the Cassiobury Estate, we see Spring bursting out all over. Suddenly, blossom is everywhere, leaves are coming out, bushes are fully leafed and the weather is warmer and the evenings longer. The long, dark days of winter are over. For me, this expresses the events of the Easter weekend. On Friday, Jesus dies for the bad in our world, that is sin, all of it – including mine and yours. On Sunday, He conquers death and the hold of evil over this world is defeated. How suddenly it all

happened and it can happen for us today. Jesus wants to break into our lives and transform us.

The risen Jesus wants to be included in our lives today, defeating sin, conquering evil, filling our lives with life – life in all its fullness. Resurrection life, although it will be fully experienced with Jesus beyond the grave, begins here and now.

In this season of Easter, my prayer is that many encounter the risen Christ. With the apostles it took three years to grasp who Jesus really was. One of the ways many have discovered Jesus is through the Alpha course. It gives to those who have faith, a chance to brush up on the basics of faith, but to many it's a place of asking questions, discussing answers and encountering Jesus. Why not try it this Spring? A new Alpha course begins on the 18th April (for more information, see page 10).

May God bless you this Easter season and fill you with the new life that Jesus brings.

Yours in Christ
Rev Michael Norman
Vicar of St Luke's



Prayer

FOCUS

Tuesdays 8:00pm every week by Zoom (details from church office), apart from 2nd Tuesday in the month which is in person, in the Chapel

Prayer for Children & Youth

Thursdays 11:15am in the Chapel (during term time)

Hour of Prayer

Fridays 10:00-11:00am in the Chapel

Services at St Luke's Church

Sunday

8:00am Holy Communion Service

This is a said Communion and is held once a month in the Chapel at St Luke's. All are welcome.

10:30am Morning Service/Holy Communion Service

This is our main morning service, and is currently available live-streamed on YouTube. All are welcome, and there are usually children's groups and a crèche for younger ones. The details in the calendar below may change.

5:30pm Encounter - Informal Evening Service

This service includes worship, a talk and opportunities to be prayed for.

Tuesday

10:00am Holy Communion Service

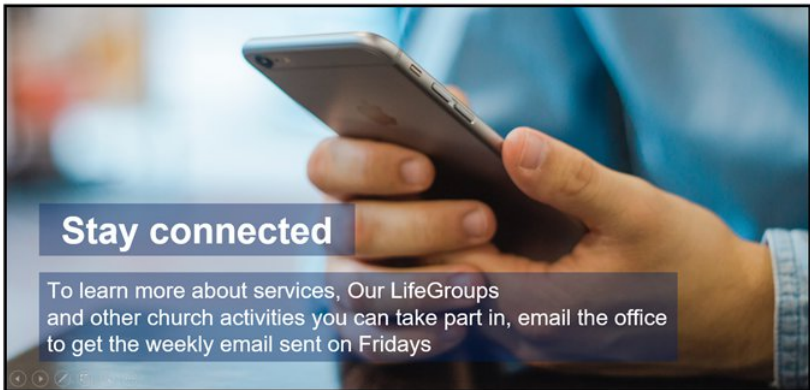
We also have a weekly Communion (or Service of the Word if the Vicar is unavailable) at 10:00am on Tuesdays. This is a lovely, reflective service with a couple of hymns, followed by community tea and coffee.

April	8:00am	10:30am	5:30pm
Sunday 7th		Morning Worship	Encounter
Sunday 14th		Family Communion <i>Called to discipleship</i>	Encounter <i>The ruthless elimination of hurry: The problem</i>
Sunday 21st	Holy Communion	All-age Morning Worship <i>Called to be family</i>	Encounter with Holy Communion <i>The ruthless elimination of hurry: The solution</i>
Sunday 28th		Family Communion <i>Creating community</i>	Encounter <i>Spiritual disciplines: silence and solitude</i>

Note: The forms of service and sermon titles may change.

May	8:00am	10:30am	5:30pm
Sunday 5th		All-age Family Communion <i>Making disciples</i>	Encounter <i>The ruthless elimination of hurry: The Sabbath</i>
Sunday 12th	Holy Communion <i>APCM address</i>	Morning Worship followed by APCM <i>APCM address</i>	Encounter with Holy Communion and prayer for healing <i>Healing: Life in the Spirit 1</i>
Sunday 19th Pentecost		Family Communion <i>Mission Sunday</i>	Encounter with prayer for healing <i>Healing: Life in the Spirit 2</i>
Sunday 26th		Morning Worship <i>The Word of God 1</i>	Encounter <i>The ruthless elimination of hurry: Simplicity</i>
June	8:00am	10:30am	5:30pm
Sunday 2nd		Family Communion <i>The Word of God 2</i>	Encounter <i>The ruthless elimination of hurry: Slowing down</i>

Note: The forms of service and sermon titles may change.



Discipleship

After Easter, we will be looking at the theme of discipleship in our morning and evening services.

In the morning, we will be basing (most weeks) on Reverend David Watson's book, *Discipleship*, which, although written in the late 70s, is a classic teaching on this subject and extremely relevant for today. David writes about the weakness of a Christian faith stating:

“... it is because Christians in the West have largely neglected what it means to be a disciple of Christ. The vast majority of western Christians are church-members, pew-fillers, hymn-singers, sermon-tasters, Bible-readers, even born-again-believers, or Spirit-filled charismatics – but not true disciples of Jesus. If we were willing to learn the meaning of real discipleship and actually to become disciples, the church in the West would be transformed, and the resultant impact on society would be staggering.”

We will begin looking at this challenging topic soon after Easter, continuing through to the summer holidays. The series will be interspersed with a few Sundays celebrating our mission partners and the life of our church, holding our Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM) and welcoming Tolu as our Curate in June.

In the evening, we will be fully earthing discipleship in the 21st Century, and in particular in 2024, by basing our 12 weeks of teaching on two books by John Mark Comer. The first six weeks will look at *The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry* and the second six weeks on *Practicing the Way: Be with Jesus, become like him, do as he did*. This series will dovetail well with our morning sermons.

We will also be continuing to offer prayer for healing in the evening on a regular basis, around twice a month.

Michael Norman
Vicar of St Luke's



Diary dates coming up

April

- 6th & 20th Breakfast Club
- 12th Cameo + visit to Carpenter's Park Garden Centre
- 13th Alexander Ardakov Piano Recital, 3:00-5:00pm
International recitalist performing works by Beethoven
Free entry, donations welcome
- 14th Sunday afternoon recital, 3:00pm, Nina Cook & Rita Fryer (mezzo soprano & piano)*
- 18th Spring Alpha course starts, St Luke's, 7:30pm
- 20th Fairtrade Quiz Night, St Luke's, 7:15pm for 7:30pm
- 26th Friday Club Tea Party, 2:30pm

May

- 3rd Cameo + bluebell walk, Ashridge
- 4th & 18th Breakfast Club
- 9th Ascension Day Service at St Peter's, Bushey Mill Lane
- 9th-19th Thy Kingdom Come Prayer Campaign from Ascension Day to Pentecost
- 12th Annual Parochial Church Meeting
- 13th Creative Space, 7:30-9:00pm, Dry clay modelling (tbc)
- 18th Alpha Awayday at Christ Church, Chorleywood
- 31st Friday Club Tea Party, 2:30pm

June

- 1st, 15th & 29th Breakfast Club
- 8th Creative Space, 10:00-11:30am, Informal bring & share craft and chat
- 9th Sunday afternoon recital, 3:00pm, Amy Naddermeier & Jeremy Cooke (Flute/Piccolo & Piano)*
- 14th Cameo + talk by Gerard Casale on Water Aid
- 28th Friday Club Tea Party, 2:30pm

July

- 6th Creative Space, 9:30am-noon, Mosaics + Breakfast
(Book in advance; cost £8)
- 13th Breakfast Club
- 14th Sunday afternoon recital, 3:00pm, Miranda Westcott & Mark Packwood (mezzo soprano & piano), Barber's *Hermit Songs**
- 26th Friday Club Tea Party, 2:30pm

* *Sunday afternoon recitals: Free entry, donations welcome, followed by light refreshments.*

Regular groups at St Luke's Church

Children/Youth Groups (evenings, term-time)

Urban Saints	Tuesdays	6:15–7:30pm	7–11 year olds
Base	Thursdays	6:15–7:30pm	11–14 year olds
K2	Tuesdays	7:45–9:00pm	12–15 year olds
RISE	Thursdays*	7:45–9:00pm	14–18 year olds

* Meeting intermittently so check with Neil and Lydia for dates

Breakfast Club

Every other Saturday, 8:30–10:00am

For more information, speak to Lydia

Cassiobury and Nearby Community Choir

Wednesday evenings, term-time, 8:00pm in the church

For more information, speak to Jeremy C

Come And Meet Each Other (Cameo)

Friday evenings, monthly (usually 2nd Friday of the month)

For a programme, speak to Jos or Pam W

Creative Space

Craft activities for women, monthly

For more information, speak to Pam N

Friday Club

Monthly, last Friday in the month

For more information, speak to Janet G

Knitting Group

Monthly on a Monday morning

For more information, contact Di via the church office

Prayer

FOCUS, Tuesdays, 8:00pm: every week by Zoom (for log-in details contact the church office), apart from 2nd Tuesday in the month which is in person, in the chapel

Prayer for Children & Youth, Thursdays, 11.15am, term-time

Hour of Prayer, Fridays, 10:00-11:00 am

Toddlers (term-time)

Thursday mornings, 9:30–11:00am

Thy Kingdom Come 2024

9–19 May

Thy Kingdom Come (TKC) is a global ecumenical prayer movement that invites Christians around the world to pray from Ascension to Pentecost for more people to come to know Jesus.

Since it began in May 2016, God has grown TKC from a dream of possibility into a movement which unites more than a million Christians in prayer, in nearly 90% of countries worldwide, across 85 different denominations and traditions- so that friends and family, neighbours and colleagues might come to faith in Jesus Christ.

Every person, household and church are encouraged to pray during the 11 days in their own way.

It is our hope and prayer, that those who have not yet heard the Good News of Jesus Christ and His love for the world, will hear it for themselves and respond and follow Him.

Specifically, we again invite each and every Christian across the globe to pray that God's Spirit might work in the lives of 5 people who have not responded with their 'Yes' to God's call.

Whether you have joined in 'Thy Kingdom Come' before or not, we invite you to take part and join in.

"In praying 'Thy Kingdom Come' we all commit to playing our part in the renewal of the nations and the transformation of communities."

Archbishop Justin Welby



THY KINGDOM COME

Reflections on the Mission Week



The Wycliffe Hall team had a packed week at St Luke's! Kicking off with a quiz and fish and chips evening with the congregation, joining you for your Mothering Sunday services and all your uniformed groups, life groups and youth groups throughout the week, visiting schools, the YMCA and Peace Hospice, door-knocking in several roads in the parish, helping to host *Live at St Luke's* (a battle of the bands style evening), going out with the street angels, hosting a Q&A, preaching at services, sharing testimonies at events, praying for and with you and being fed incredibly well by all our kind hosts. Phew, what a busy week!

It was a formative time for us as a group. We were inspired and encouraged by the prayerfulness of St Luke's and your waiting on the Lord, with groups meeting to pray before every service and also praying in the morning of each day for all the upcoming events and people involved. We were also excited to see a wide team with lots of people being involved in leadership and serving the Church.

As a team we loved the international meal, hearing some incredible life stories and better understanding what it is like to live in Watford and the surrounding area, as well as incredible multicultural food and hearing testimonies both from our own Pengling about her conversion to Christianity and from the conversations this sparked on our tables.

Sophie said, "I loved going into the Christian Union at Watford Boys. We had a full classroom of engaged 11–16 year olds – Christians and some of their friends. The group asked loads of great questions that David and I gave a good go at speed-answering, then played a great game that we were terrible at. Thanks so much to those who facilitated this!"

Jacob said, "I had a great time at *Live at St Luke's*. The youth bands were great and Neil does such great work with teenagers both in school and at St Luke's."

A massive thanks to everyone who made us so welcome during our time with you. Please be assured of our prayers for those of you we got to know and for your continuing mission on the Cassiobury Estate and across Watford.

The Wycliffe Team

An Invitation to Spring Alpha

Curious about faith?

Alpha is a safe space to ask questions and explore faith and what it means to be a Christian. Got questions? Try Alpha – come and join us to ask those questions and explore your curiosity. At each Alpha session, you'll be hosted in a small group and watch an episode on a different question of faith – then you have a chance to share your thoughts and hear what others think. There is no question too simple or complicated to ask!



Enjoy dessert, coffee and tea each week. No charge.

Where: St Luke's Church Watford

When: Thursdays at 7:30pm till 9:00pm

Start date: 18 April (for seven sessions)

What are the topics?

Week 1: Who is Jesus? (18 April)

Week 2: Why Did Jesus Die? (25 April)

Week 3: How Can I Have Faith? (2 May)

Week 4: Why and How Do I Pray? (9 May)

Week 5: Why and How Should I Read The Bible? (16 May)

Week 6: How Does God Guide Us? (23 May)

(Note: No meeting on 30 May as it is half-term week)

Week 7: What about the Church? (6 June)

In addition, there is an 'Alpha Awayday' at Christ Church, Chorleywood, on Saturday 18 May where we will explore topics such as:

- Who is the Holy Spirit?
- What does the Holy Spirit do?
- How can I be filled with the Holy Spirit?



To book your place on the next Alpha course, please sign up by scanning the QR code, email office@stlukeswatford.org or tel 01923 246161.

Hope to see you soon!

The Alpha Team

Watford Foodbank Update

In 2023 Watford Foodbank had its busiest year ever giving out over 7,500 food parcels to single people and families in crisis in the local area. This averaged over 600 parcels a month.



As a result of the cost-of-living situation, the welcome donations we receive via churches, schools and supermarket collections are not keeping up with the amount of food we need to send out. Consequently, we are having to purchase a significant amount of food to make up the shortfall, and in February this year purchases of food amounted to 40% of what we gave out to clients. We are seeking to address this situation but any extra food donations will be gratefully received (there is a basket in the Gathering Area at St Luke's) and any money donations will be much appreciated (see the QR code below).

In January, Andrew Tranter stepped down after 11 years in his voluntary role as Foodbank Manager, and we appointed our first full-time paid Manager, Jane Havlin. Jane previously worked at the Best Western White House Hotel in Watford as Deputy General Manager, but felt that after 27 years it was time for a new venture. She is a member of the Soul Survivor Watford congregation, and says, "I feel honoured and privileged to be in a position to serve the Watford community".

We are expanding our work in co-operation with Citizens Advice Watford with grant funding to enable more advisors to respond to our freephone foodbank voucher line and provide clients with advice about benefits, debt relief, etc. We also hope to introduce a scheme to provide a talking therapy service to those of our clients with mental health issues, often arising through the worries associated with the choice between eating or heating. We have recently expanded the space available at our warehouse off Imperial Way and are re-organising our operations to enable our volunteers to work in a more efficient manner.



We are very thankful for the donations and financial support given by members of St Luke's, and would value your continued prayers for our work, and especially for our new Manager, Jane. For more information about your local Foodbank, visit watford.foodbank.org.uk.

John Bishop

Watford Ocean Warriors Junior Relay Channel Swim for Rennie Grove Peace Hospice Care

In October last year, six of Watford Swimming Club's most courageous swimmers battled with tides and jellyfish to swim the English Channel and reach France.



The junior Channel relay team, which includes our son Felipe (Team WOW, see photo), are aged between 13 and 15 years old. They trained hard in lakes and the sea through all weathers to prepare for this huge challenge.

Channel swimming rules stipulate that only a standard costume, one swim hat and goggles may be worn. Wetsuits are not allowed. The water temperature ranges from only 16C to 18C, so to acclimatise they had to take cold showers and swimming long sessions in cold water.

The Channel Swim was organised to support the Peace Hospice which provides a vital service not only for end-of-life patients but also helps patients to manage their symptoms and alleviate pain, and provides companionship and spiritual guidance.

The Watford Swimming Club's experience of the Hospice's fantastic work extends to many people but in particular to an incredible lady and fellow Channel swimmer, Jody Jones, who benefited from the wonderful support of Peace Hospice Care.

This is how the story of their Channel Swim unfolded on the day:

*Team WOW are GO! Monday 2nd October 01:00 in the morning
Swimming the channel is hard, waiting for the weather is next level...
But now it's almost show time! Our escort boat is Louise Jane 2.*

*08:42 We're on our way!! The waiting paid off. The weather has
been kind so far and we're just over half way.*

*They made it! Team WOW swam the channel in a time of 9:40:29.
This astonishing time was achieved by swimming fast and the skill of
Andy King, the Pilot of Louise Jane 2. The weather forced us to go on
a large spring tide, and he calculated the start time based on the*

*kids' swim speed he'd measured during their training swim.
Everything went to plan and we finished precisely on Cap Gris Nez.*

We hope you can help the hospice continue to improve the lives of others. The total raised to date is £13,331.34 + Gift Aid. The JustGiving page is still open so further donations can be made using this link: <https://www.justgiving.com/page/wow-1691595899771>.

Jeremy and Wera Irvine

Fairtrade Quiz Night

Saturday 20th April
St Luke's Church Hall

Doors open at 7:15pm for a 7:30pm start

Tickets cost £5 per person
Up to 6 people per team

Nibbles will be supplied
There will be Fairtrade prizes

For tickets please contact
Fran Davies by message on 07909 904872
or email snigernarf@hotmail.com

Quiz Night proceeds support the work
of the Watford Fairtrade Town Group



Vacancy for a New Watford Open Doors Advocacy Representative



The next general election will see boundary changes for the Watford parliamentary constituency and South West Hertfordshire. My home in Abbots Langley will then be in South West Herts rather than Watford.

MPs have a responsibility to serve their constituents so I will become the Open Doors Advocacy Rep for South West Herts. I'm still very happy to be the Open Doors lead person at St Luke's Watford but I believe the Watford Advocacy Rep role would work much better with someone who lives within the Watford constituency boundary.

As St Luke's Watford has developed an affinity with Open Doors over recent years, I think it would be worthwhile to see if a church member would like to apply for the role. I realise it could alternatively be someone from another church in Watford.

Has this stirred something in you?

Maybe God is speaking to you about this role of standing up for our brothers and sisters in Christ. For more information about the Advocacy Rep role see the Open Doors website page: www.opendoorsuk.org/act/volunteer/advocacy-rep.

I'd be very happy to share the experience that I've gained with any potential candidates for the role. You are welcome to talk with me at St Luke's, or contact me on 0777 999 1551 or 01923 350596, or email me at john@petermagnusdesign.co.uk.

Thank you to all at St Luke's for your continued support for the persecuted church and Open Doors.

John Williamson



Partnership Fund Appeal 2024

"I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel"

Philippians 1:4-5

The St Luke's Church Partnership Fund was set up in 2018 to carry on the work of the Thanksgiving Fund which between 2007 and 2017 raised £175,000 for construction projects around the world as a thank you to God for our wonderful new church building.

The Partnership Fund aims to continue to develop partnerships with churches and Christian organisations at home and abroad through funding building and other projects. Literally we want to *build partnerships around the world*. As well as sending money, we want St Luke's members, wherever possible, to go out into the world to visit the projects we support, to share fellowship with our brothers and sisters in Christ, to encourage and be encouraged.

Nireekshana

We have a long-established partnership with Nireekshana HIV/AIDS & Leprosy Clinic in Hyderabad, India. Nireekshana is part of the ACET UK international family of Christian organisations providing education and care for those at risk of HIV and AIDS.

The founders of Nireekshana, Drs Sujai and Lavanya Suneetha, are good friends of St Luke's, and have been to visit us on several occasions. We have previously raised over £30,000 in two appeals (most recently in 2012) to enable them to extend their clinic and purchase vital medical and laboratory equipment.

Nireekshana has over 2000 HIV/AIDS patients and 400 leprosy patients registered with them, and provides treatment, laboratory testing, sexual health education and family support to the patients and their families, both from their main clinic and through satellite clinics in nearby villages.



Drs Lavanya and Sujai Suneetha,
Directors, Nireekshana HIV/AIDS &
Leprosy Clinic, Hyderabad, India

They have now outgrown their current premises and have been working on a building project to create a new purpose-built clinic



The new purpose-built Nireekshana Clinic building, currently an empty shell

and community centre to provide facilities for both treatment and health educational programmes. A large grant from a UK-based trust has funded the bulk of the construction work, which is progressing rapidly, but additional funds are required to complete the construction work and equip the building. They have asked St Luke's to consider supporting this project.

Our target

There is no fixed target but we would be looking to raise at least £15,000. This would make a significant contribution towards completing the project and would help to provide critical medical support to a community stigmatized by diseases that are both preventable and curable.

Can you help?

If you would like to make a gift to this project, please either:

- use one of the Church envelopes, marking it for the Partnership Fund (if you are a taxpayer, please sign and date it so that we can reclaim the tax) or
- make an online bank transfer:
Account name PCC St Luke's Watford
Sort code 20-91-79
Account no. 70687472
Reference Please state state that the donation is for the Partnership Fund.

Please remember to complete a Gift Aid form if you are a tax payer

If you would like to know more about the Partnership Fund please contact me: billmiller2@ntlworld.com.

Bill Miller
Chair, Partners In Mission Committee

News from some of our Mission Partners



Dear friends,

I hope you have had a good start to 2024! I have some encouragements and some significant challenges and disappointments to share. However, we know that both the highs and lows of ministry are in God's hands!

In early February, we held our Lunar New Year International Dinner. We had 11 students attending, and a good number of volunteers which meant that everybody was able to be part of a conversation. Although 11 students was fewer than we saw at our International Dinners last term, I felt very encouraged after the event. Please pray for follow-up for many of these students, particularly for J, a Christian struggling with culture shock, as well as three students who were completely new to us. Please pray that we would see many of these students at future events and that we would be able to continue building on the conversations had over food at this dinner.

We struggled last term to engage with the students we had connected with in the Autumn term, with International Corner having no students attending until our Pancake night, in addition to having to cancel two of the three outings we had planned due to lack of interest. It was a draining time as a lot of work was put into the events and we have seen little fruit from them.



Lunar New Year International Dinner where international students can enjoy a free meal and conversation

After polling the students in our WhatsApp group, I found that Thursday evenings are not ideal for those who have an interest in joining International Corner. Some students have other society events on that evening, or they prefer to work on weekday evenings, meaning they have the weekend more free to socialise. I am therefore in the

process of thinking through a different evening for International Corner, as well as what may need to be changed in the format to make it more of a priority for students.

In the midst of this discouragement, there have been encouragements from individuals. I still meet regularly with R, as well as more occasionally with other students. We have also been hearing encouraging stories from our Local Link hosts as they come alongside their students and befriend them. Please pray for these relationships to keep growing, and that we would see these individual students coming to know and trust in Jesus for themselves.

Prayer points

- **Please pray for wisdom as I think through changes for International Corner.** Please pray that changing the day would enable more students to come along.
- **Please give thanks for the opportunities I have had to connect with staff in accommodation blocks and working at both universities.** Please pray that meetings I had during the Spring term would lead to further opportunities to partner with them.
- **Please pray for me as I continue to work on our financial situation.** Finance has been a problem for the last year, both for myself and for the Lancaster centre. It was decided recently that, given the current deficit, I should temporarily drop down from 24 hours to 21 hours a week. Only a couple of hours after this decision was made, an anonymous gift came in for my support. God is still providing and encouraging us in our work as we reach out to the 5,600 international students in Lancaster. Please pray that the reduction in hours will not impact too much on the work in Lancaster or on my wider responsibilities as North West Cluster Leader.

Thank you so much for your continued support and prayers!

Sally Miller
Friends International, Lancaster Branch

News from Clive and Andrea

Thank you for your prayers for our return to Nepal. Our travels went well and we've certainly hit the ground running. Clive was invited to join the INF Palliative Care Team on a 3-day field visit. He is supporting the

communications team in gathering suitable photos for reporting/ publicity, and helping them to become more proficient in 'participant-led, ethical photographic story-telling' (see photos).

On his return to Pokhara, Clive was asked to provide similar support to a 3-day INF programme for children with disabilities, and their parents. This included a fun day out on a local cable-car – but can you imagine trying to get wheelchairs onto revolving cabins!! Not only that, at the top of the ride, the lift wasn't working so INF staff had to carry patients and wheelchairs up a steep stairway!! It's a stark reminder of what is probably a daily challenge for many people living in a place like Nepal.

Last week, in a little tea shop, we met a couple of people who were singing the praises of *Sachchai*, a syncretistic expression of 'church' where there's a focus on healing based around selected passages in the Bible. People of different faiths attend – but there's no need to give up any traditional religious beliefs or practices to become followers. It's the easy path – a combination of whatever bits of different religions you like – not surprisingly, services are packed. We feel compelled to find out more because this is likely to impact the local church more than any form of persecution. Please pray for the church, that it will respond in a way that continues to draw people to the 'narrow path' of the truth.

Our time is already feeling like it's been worthwhile because of the progress made through face-to-face meetings, and we're looking



forward to the opportunity to reflect and ‘take stock’ at INF’s 2-day retreat in a couple of weeks. The theme is: *In Christ there is no Us and Them: the Biblical call to cross-cultural unity*. Please pray that it will be a blessed and special time for the team.

Our main personal challenge at the moment is Andrea’s visa renewal (current visa runs out on 13th April). There’s been a change of government, so all senior officials are changing; this could affect visa processing, along with INF’s work, as new relationships will need to be made. It’s most likely Andrea will need to go to Kathmandu at least once (for an interview at the labour department and processing at immigration). Please pray that the process will be completed on time – and won’t require travel in the middle of the retreat!

Thank you for your prayers – and also for praying for the health of our loved ones while we’re away.

Love and blessings,

Clive and Andrea

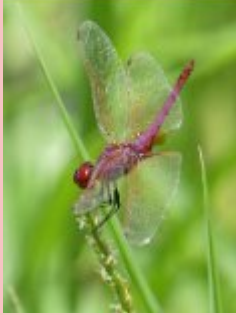


Dear friends,

How are you? If you’re anything like me, your answer to that question will depend a lot on when you are asked! In February, I wrote that I felt overwhelmed when I returned to Malawi. It felt as though everything was moving too fast and that I was behind. I am very thankful that looking back on the last month I can see God’s hand on the various events, and he has given me times to rest in Him and take stock.

Last week I had a quiet morning in the garden of a friend, which was just what I needed – space to breathe deeply and to stop for a while, spending time in worship. I also enjoyed a morning bird walk with others from the Wildlife and Environmental Society of Malawi by Mudi dam, a reservoir in





Blantyre. Other events have continued apace but I'm learning to take one thing at a time and be thankful for what each brings.

The Creation Care and Christian Mission course at All Nations has now finished. It was a brilliant course and came at just the right time for me, fitting in with the way God has been leading me. I'm now looking forward to working with a new colleague in SIM, who will be the Ministry Point Person for Creation Care and Stewardship.

Each week I'm meeting with another missionary here, Volker Glissmann, to work on a Theological Education by Extension course on the whole Bible story. I'm really enjoying the challenge of working on this each week, and the stimulating discussion we are having as we develop it.

I've recently had a lot more face-to-face meetings than usual, and this has been good for me. A couple of weeks ago I went to the Board meeting of Chisomo Theological and Vocational Training Centre. It's a privilege to be able to work with them. And I did enjoy the location of our meeting, on the banks of the River Shire.

I can hardly believe that it's Easter already. What a wonderful time for the church to proclaim Christ! As I look at different situations I'm often reminded of the need for good Biblical training and discipleship so that the church may be rooted and built up in Christ, to face today's challenges and reach out to others with the gospel.

Prayer points

Please join me in giving praise for:

- God's leading for areas to focus on.
- The All Nations course on Creation Care.
- The encouragement of face-to-face meetings and working on specific projects.

Please pray for:

- Preparation of a resource on the whole Bible story suitable in this context.
- Chisomo and EBCoM as they train leaders, and conversations I have with them and others.
- People who will not have a good harvest this year due to the weather conditions.

In a world where there is so much bad news, may you know the hope and joy of our crucified and risen Lord this Easter time.

With love in Him,

Ruth Guinness
ruth.guinness@sim.org
P.O. Box 136 Blantyre, Malawi

Update from the Gelsthorpe family in northern Japan

“Truly this man was the Son of God!” *Mark 15:39*



Easter outreach

Praise God that we had lots of opportunities to share the gospel over Easter:

- Wednesday 27th: Meditative prayer evening
- Friday 29th : Easter Garden making and craft event for adults
- Saturday 30th : Easter Café Special event with baking for children and craft for adults
- Sunday 31st : Easter Day Service with lunch together and craft event for Sunday School children and chocolate hunt.

Please pray for those who were challenged by the preaching of the gospel and for the follow-up to these events. We have a team of three

ladies from the Philippines staying in the church. **Please pray** that they will work well with the church and that God will encourage them and use them in Hanamaki.

University applications and homeschooling

Praise God that Grace has received three offers from universities so far. She is now waiting to hear about her application to be considered a home-side student (to avoid having to pay double for her tuition as an international student). **Please pray**



Church ladies' lunch

that the universities will complete their assessments soon and look favourably on her situation.

Isaac's first Maths AS Level exam is on 28th April. **Please pray** for good revision for him as he works through past papers in the remaining weeks.

Caleb is now aiming to finish his GCSEs a year earlier than originally planned. **Please pray** for good progress for him and for Sarah as they work through his material at a greater pace.



Grace, Isaac and Caleb with Em at Em's leaving lunch

Em

Thank you praying for Em, a member of our staff team from the Philippines who has been in Hanamaki since the summer of 2023. **Praise God** that she safely returned to the Philippines on 14th March to care for her elderly mother. **Praise God** that she has been able to build close relationships with many of the regulars at our weekly English classes. **Please pray** for a good transition for her back into the Philippines and for her to be used mightily by God at home. **Please pray** that, as we meet with some of those she was studying with, we can continue to talk to them about the gospel and see them approach faith in Jesus.

New team members coming in May

In mid-May, we are looking forward to welcoming Rachel Dexter and Lisa Moniello to our church staff team. Rachel is from the UK and is a long-term missionary in her first term. After graduating from language school, she will complete her training in Hanamaki. Lisa is a short-term missionary from Italy. She will spend six months living in the church and supporting the ministry here. **Please pray** that both of these ladies will thrive in Hanamaki and will have lots of opportunities to share the gospel with people. **Please pray** that we can find a suitable apartment for Rachel within walking distance of the church.

Encouraging church members to read the Bible

Every year we aim to meet with all the regulars at church individually to ask how we can pray for them. We ask the Christians about their walk with Jesus and the non-Christians how we can encourage them to find out more. Several church members struggle to read the Bible every day. **Praise God** for the seminar on daily Bible reading we could

hold on 16th March. **Please pray** that those who attended will be encouraged to read the Bible every day. We have also made Bible reading schedules available and talked more about Bible reading in the Sunday sermons. **Please pray** that our church members will read the Bible every day.

Thank you for praying for us, please let us know how we can pray for you.

With love from

Mark, Sarah, Grace, Isaac and Caleb
OMF Japan

The Gelsthorpes are working for OMF leading a church plant in rural, northern Japan.

Matsuzono Cho 1-11-40, Hanamaki Shi, Iwate Ken, Japan 025-0066
mark.gelsthorpe@omfmail.com
sarah.gelsthorpe@omfmail.com

Praise God for Lillian's operation success!

After several cancellations, Lillian has had her eye operation. The eye is open at last after so many years of a painful closed eye. Thank you for praying for Lillian over so many years. Please continue to pray for Lillian's recovery.



Jos Lawrance
PIM



Lillian post op on the ward

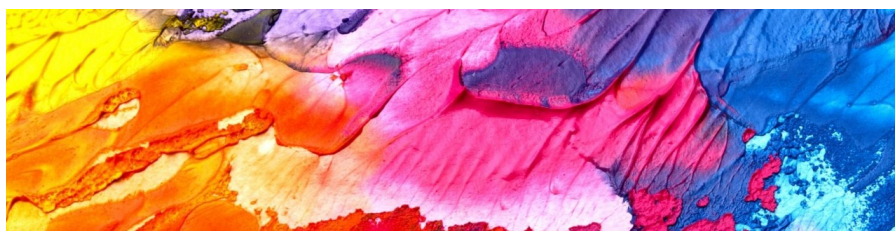
Jeremy is Running the London Marathon 2024

Jeremy is joining Team Alzheimer's Society at the world-famous TCS London Marathon on Sunday 21st April to raise funding to provide help and hope for people affected by dementia.

Go to his fundraising page to find out why he's running:

www.justgiving.com/fundraising/hogarth-runs-to-london-2024

or scan the QR code:



URBAN SAINTS

Tuesdays 6:15pm - 7:30pm in Church Hall

7-11 year olds



Esther – The Play with Songs

2024 kicked off with our very own St Luke’s Church spectacular production of *Esther*.

No expense was spared when procuring some of the best acting talent in Watford! The play was written and produced by our Reader, Pam Norman.



As many will know, the Jewish festival of Purim is celebrated each year, to remember the saving of the Jews from a plot by the Royal Vizier, Haman, who sought to destroy them. Queen Esther was able to use her position and influence to thwart Haman’s plot. The account of this can be found in the book of *Esther*, chapters 1–10 in the Old Testament of the Bible.

The production took place in the morning services over 5 weeks in January and February. In each instalment, popular song tunes were sung by members of the Cassiobury and nearby Community Choir (CanCC), with new lyrics skilfully crafted by Pam.

A matinee was performed on Saturday 17th February to show the complete production and the audience loved it! There were plenty of boos and hisses when Haman appeared on stage. Pam was presented with a bouquet at the end with the thanks of everyone for making it all happen (see photo on next page).

The costumes were provided and supervised by Charlotte Prosser. Twenty-seven members of St Luke’s took part (adults and children), technical support was given by Tim Whittaker and the AV team and many other people were involved in props, scenery, make-up, stage management, etc.



What fun we all had being a part of it. A full cast and production list is given on the next page. Many thanks to everyone involved. It chased away the January blues for the cast and audience.

The whole production team worked hard to bring together this dramatised version of the book of *Esther*, keeping as close to



the original account as possible, though some artistic licence was used. For the original unabridged version of the story, read the book of *Esther* in the Bible!

Jeremy Cooke

Party planners

Orla
Jake
Sophie
Adrienne C

Esther

India
Kate D-B

King Xerxes

Kevin S

Karkas

Chris O

Queen Vashti

Sophie

Mordecai

Dean T
Andrew R
Bill M

Memukan

Andrew C

Wise men

Jacob
Joshua

Palace cat

Jessica

Servant

Ivor
Maria R
Michael N

Attendant

Maria R
Sophie
Cleo

Secretary

Kate D-B
Ivor

Bigthana

Adrienne C

Teresh

Bethan

Hegai

Colin Davies

Ashra

Jacob

Nebo

Joshua

Haman

Terry S

Darius

Jess T

Cyrus

Harriet

Biztha

Edna W

Zeresh

Maria R

Plants in the audience

Jeremy H
Andrew C
Andrew R

Understudies

Jeremy H
Fiona C
Fiona L

Costumes

Charlotte P

Props & Scenery

Neil B
Charlotte P
Andrew R
Lydia D
Kate D-B
Christine S

Dressers

Christine S
Katie O
Pam N

Sound & Vision

Tim W
Lydia D

Prompter & Assistant

Christine S

Stagehand

Andrew R

Make-up

Edna W

Music

Jeremy C
Jeremy H
Pam N
Can CC

Writer, Director and Producer

Pam N



CanCC

Cassiobury
and nearby
Community
Choir



Wednesdays from 8pm
@ St Luke's Church, Watford

Anyone welcome of any musical ability to join.

Feel free to turn up on the night, or contact
music@stlukeswatford.org 01923 246161



Friday Club Tea Parties 2:30pm at St Luke's

Apr 26th

May 31st

June 28th

*Now all you people
At work bench and sink
Stop all your business
Have time to think.
Who else on his birthday
Is put back in a cot
That was only part one
Now read the lot.*



Some Highlights from the Wycliffe Hall Mission Week

Fish and Chip Quiz Supper

The Quiz Supper held on Saturday 9th March was the first event of the Mission Week and gave the team from Wycliffe Hall and St Luke's Church members an opportunity to meet and get to know each other.

Each Wycliffe team member joined a different table for a quiz that did not require any great general knowledge. Instead, we were tested on our knowledge of chocolate with samples of well-known brands to taste, we explored the church building in a quest to answer various trivia questions, we battled to build the tallest structure out of marshmallows and dry spaghetti and were challenged to recall information we'd heard earlier in the evening! The half-time interval of fish and chips gave a welcome interlude in which to chat and get to know each other.

The photo shows the marshmallow/spaghetti tower built by Kevin S, Tim W and team, which in the face of fierce competition between teams, was claimed to be 15 metres high! Its height was disputed in the judging when the ruler came out but its supremacy was hard to dispute – it was an impressive structure and the team was duly awarded a box of chocolates to share.



The evening was a great ice-breaker. Thank you to all who helped to make it such an enjoyable start to the Mission Week, particularly Bill & Susan and Beth.

Yvonne Wilder

70s Night at the Essex Arms

Members of the Cassiobury and nearby Community Choir (CanCC) went to the Essex Arms on the Wednesday of Mission Week to host a night filled with 70s hits, from Carpenters classics to the funk of Stevie Wonder.

The event drew people together to either sing along or simply enjoy a nice soundtrack to go with their evening grub. It also gave the visiting team from Wycliffe Hall an opportunity to introduce themselves.



The interval in the programme gave us a chance to lubricate our vocal cords at the bar. For me personally, the whole evening was a wonderful breather in the midst of a busy mission week, and thank you for the surprise Birthday cake!

The CanCC has been meeting for almost two years and has been going from strength to strength, building up a large repertoire of gospel, pop, film, Christmas and now 70s songs. It's impressive to see how the choir can tackle whatever is thrown at them, and we have big plans for the year ahead, including a possible summer concert (look out for a 'save the date').

We are always open to new members – just come to any of our rehearsals on Wednesdays at 8pm and be prepared for a rigorous audition! (just kidding – friendly faces only). We welcome anyone of any musical ability.

Over the years, we have built up a good rapport with the Essex Arms and hosting these singing nights has been a great way of bringing the church and local community together.

Some of the choir's highlights from the 70s night:

"Helen in her 70s gear! Great atmosphere in the pub. Good to hear from the Ordinands. *Mamma Mia* always goes down well with the punters!" *Lesley*

"I enjoyed the energy of the choir and that we had people in the pub singing and some dancing along too." *Caroline*



"Caroline's solo was awesome!" *Mutlu*

"Very heartwarming musical occasion in our favourite friendly local pub." *Tim*

Jeremy Hogarth

Live at St Luke's

The idea of offering local youth bands a venue, and the opportunity to play live in front of their friends, is not a new one in Watford. 'Live at the Barn' ran successfully for several years as a joint church youth project and gained a fantastic reputation for nurturing and supporting young people from the local area.



The Wycliffe Mission Week gave the opportunity to re-imagine the concept and 'Live at St Luke's' on the Saturday evening saw three teen bands from local schools entertain an enthusiastic crowd.

We started the evening with the polished jazz/funk sounds of *D'oro*, were treated to a stripped-back acoustic set by Luke and Natalia, and finally *Leach* (our 12-year-old heavy rockers) ended the evening in style. The event encouraged many young people to enter a church for the very first time and many great conversations followed.

Most important of all, foundations have been laid to grow this event into an amazing venue for outreach. The vision, if given the green light by the church, is to have young people involved in all aspects of the half-termly event, from running the sound, lighting and cafe, to the publicity and welcome teams. We have many more bands keen to play in the future and also hope to create a St Luke's Youth 'house band' who can introduce elements of worship to the event and would further cement musical youth involvement in our church services.

This is 'first contact' engagement with a group of young people we would not normally connect with as a church. It is about building relationship, and we are clear that our motivating factor is Christ's call to love and to care.

I cannot thank Jeremy, Tim, Lydia and Beth enough for all their hard work, along with the rest of the youth and Wycliffe teams. Please pray this incredibly exciting new venture is richly blessed! Watch this space!

Neil Brookes
Youth Director

Men's Breakfast

On Saturday 16th March, over 30 men of St Luke's and their guests, gathered in the church hall for a Men's Breakfast. A huge spread of bacon and sausage butties (with alternative veggie options), cereal, fruit and yoghurt was provided.



Our speaker for the morning was David Hall, a third year Ordinand at Wycliffe Hall. David talked powerfully about how he was called to train for the ministry, and of the importance of prayer in his life, along with examples of ways in which God had answered prayer – although sometimes in unexpected ways!

David is due to start as a Curate in the summer in Hereford diocese, and we wished him well in his future ministry.

This was the first Men's Breakfast we have held since pre-Covid, and we intend that it should not be the last! In addition to Breakfasts, we are also hoping to get some other Men's events off the ground in the coming months, including a possible Skittles evening and a BBQ and, if we can persuade the Vicar, another Wine tasting! If you would like to be included on the mailing list for these events, please give your e-mail address to either John Sills or myself.

Also, just to mention that there is a Men's Bible Study every Friday evening in the Youth Lounge at 7:45pm. It's a great place to share fellowship and explore the scriptures. For more details contact Simon Trundle or John Sills.

Bill Miller

If you would like to give to St Luke's by bank transfer, the details are:

Account name PCC St Luke's Watford
Sort code 20-91-79
Account no. 70687472
Reference Please state if the donation is for a specific appeal,
eg Santa's hampers, Foodbank, etc.

Please remember to complete a Gift Aid form if you are a tax payer

LADIES CAMEO CLUB

Spring/Summer 2024 Programme

April

Friday 12th
10:30am

Meet in car
park, St Luke's

**Trip to Carpenter's
Park Garden Centre**
Cameo + event

Lunch in the
Evergreen Restaurant

May

Friday 3rd
10:00am

Meet in car
park, St Luke's

Bluebell walk
Ashridge
Cameo + event

Coffee at the
Monument,
Lunch at The
Greyhound pub,
Aldbury

June

Friday 14th
7 for 7:30pm
Church Lounge

Water Aid

Talk by Gerard Casale

Bring your friends and neighbours!

For more information, email: Jos (jocelyn_lawrance@hotmail.com)
or Pam (pamela.willis@btinternet.com)

We're on Social Media

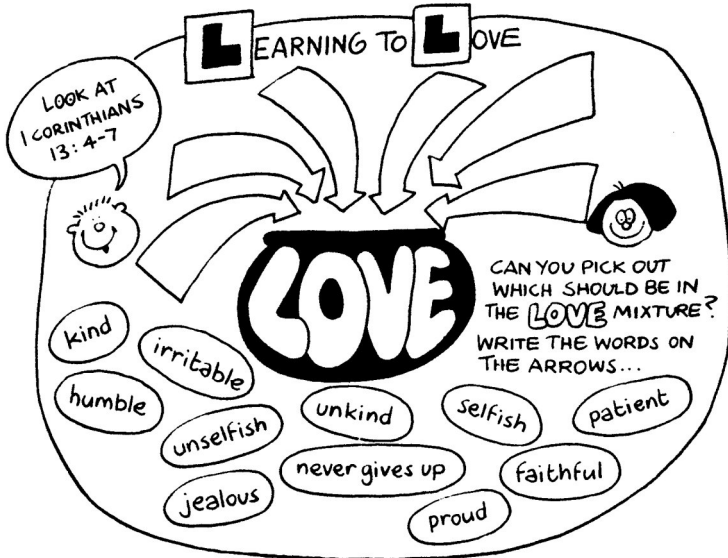
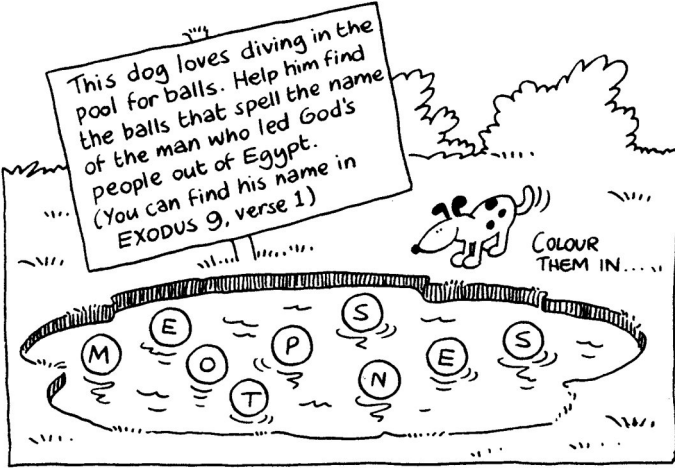
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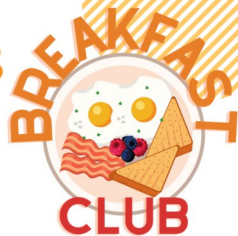
Instagram: 📷

[@stlukeswatford](https://www.instagram.com/stlukeswatford)

Children's Page



Alternate Saturdays



8:30 - 10 AM

Bacon, Vegan Sausages, Pastries, and Cereal
Table Tennis, Mini Snooker, Board Games, Crafts, and Fun!



All pre-school
and primary
school families
welcome!

FREE!

23rd Mar
6th April
20th April
4th May
18th May
1st June
15th June
29th June
13th July

TODDLERS AT ST LUKES

**THURSDAY
MORNINGS
9:30 - 11AM**
in the church hall



**Donation at the
door:**

£1 per adult
50p per child

free tea and coffee
but bring your own snacks!

for more information talk to Lydia at children@stlukeswatford.org

You are welcome to submit an article for the next edition of St Luke's News which should be no more than 450 words. We may edit articles for clarity.

Please email articles to the Church Office: office@stlukeswatford.org

If you wish to receive St Luke's News regularly, either delivered to your door or emailed, please contact the Church Office (246161). Large print is also available. Alternatively, please let us know if you no longer wish to receive it.

The magazine appears on our website, www.stlukeswatford.org

Vicar	Michael Norman
Readers	Dave Clarke
	Pam Norman
	Wendy Somerville
Reader in Training	Simon Trundle
Ordinand	Tolu George
Music Director	Jeremy Cooke
Youth Director	Neil Brookes
Children & Family Team Leader	Lydia Davies
Administrator	Beth Burns
Worship Leader and Media Administrator	Jeremy Hogarth
Church Wardens	Susan Miller
	John Williamson
PCC Lay Chair	Richard Waddington
PCC Treasurer	Martin Kirk
PCC Secretary	Vacancy
Safeguarding Officer	Mary Bowen

Please leave a message for any of the above on the Church Office answerphone – 01923 246161

Website www.stlukeswatford.org

Email office@stlukeswatford.org