

# Cross Connect

Sharing life  
and faith

## Accounts of Jesus' birth should stir us into action

**JOHN BIRCHALL**

**T**he Christian faith has at its heart this truly astounding claim: that God has stepped into our world in the person of Jesus Christ. This should shock us because no other world faith makes any similar claim. Many people today feel that God is distant and uncaring. The accounts of Jesus' birth point us to the exact opposite. God has come close. He has entered our world because he cares deeply for us.

Sometimes we can slip into feeling that Christmas is about going through the same old family routines year by year. If we enjoy the routines, that is fine, but if they are painful, then it can seem as if Christmas is a festival to endure or avoid. However, if we stop to ponder the truth of God becoming a human being, then Christmas cannot fail to be exciting.

In the 16th century Martin Luther put it like this: "The mystery of Christ, that He sunk Himself into our flesh, is beyond all human understanding." Will you let the truth of Jesus' birth stir you at a deeper level this Christmas?

As well as surprising us, the truths



we celebrate at Christmas should stir us into action. If we have grasped how deeply God cares for our world then we will be eager to look for practical ways to show that care to people around us. This edition of Cross Connect is full of ways that members of Christ Church can get involved in practical care in our local area. We want to proclaim good news and be good news.

If we are not surprised by the truths that we hear over the next weeks, and if they don't prompt us to action, then we have missed the meaning of Christmas. My prayer is that the truth of Jesus' birth will lead us to a greater celebration of God's love than ever before and a deeper commitment to share that love with those around us. ■

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# Building update

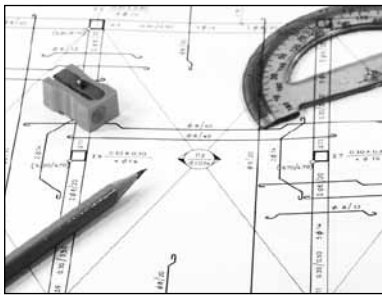
THE LATEST NEWS FROM THE BUILDING DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

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## DAVID LUFF

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In the September edition of Cross Connect I said that the church's architect had prepared outline designs for the development of Christ Church which include a one or two storey 'hall' in the grounds alongside the north wall of the church. Inside the church the proposals envisage the removal of the current internal partitions and turning the worship area around to face east, and includes the possibility of two



storeys constructed, broadly speaking, above the area of the current lounge. You'll be pleased to hear that the plans also provide for a new kitchen and a much needed new toilet block.

The architect is carrying out a feasibility study into these outline proposals and this involves consulting with the planning authorities at the Diocese and at Kingston Council as well as with the Victorian Society and English Heritage.

The Building Development Committee is pleased to report that, following a visit to the church, the Diocesan Advisory Committee has informed us that they are generally very supportive of the proposals. This is excellent news and by the time you read

this a group from Kingston Council will also have visited the church. We look forward to hearing the views of the planning department on the architect's outline proposals before Christmas.

John intends to talk about the vision for the building and give an update on the proposals one Sunday in February. After that there will be an opportunity for everyone to meet the architect and hear his thinking before he moves on to the detailed design stage.

Let us thank God for our continuing growth at Christ Church and pray that the bodies we are consulting will allow us to adapt the church building to meet the needs of our ministry in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. ■

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# Treasure in heaven

AN UPDATE OF THE CHURCH FINANCES

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## JOHN BIRCHALL

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*"Many rich people threw in large amounts. But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins worth only a fraction of a penny."*

Mark 12: 41-42

When Jesus was training his disciples, money was a big issue and how much people should give seems to have been hotly debated. Some people seemed to have fallen into the trap of giving

in an ostentatious way. Jesus commends the poor widow for giving more sacrificially than any of the big givers.

"They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything – all she had to live on."

As the PCC financial year comes to an end in December, we are anticipating a shortfall of approximately £9,000. Whilst we are tremendously grateful for the generous giving throughout the year, it would

be encouraging to finish the year having met our income target of £162,000.

As well as looking for some to review their regular monthly giving, we are praying that some would be able to make one off gifts to ensure we balance our income and expenditure for 2011. If you are able to help with any gift, please do get in touch with the treasurer via the church office. What a privilege to be able to give towards work that will last into eternity. ■

# Olympics

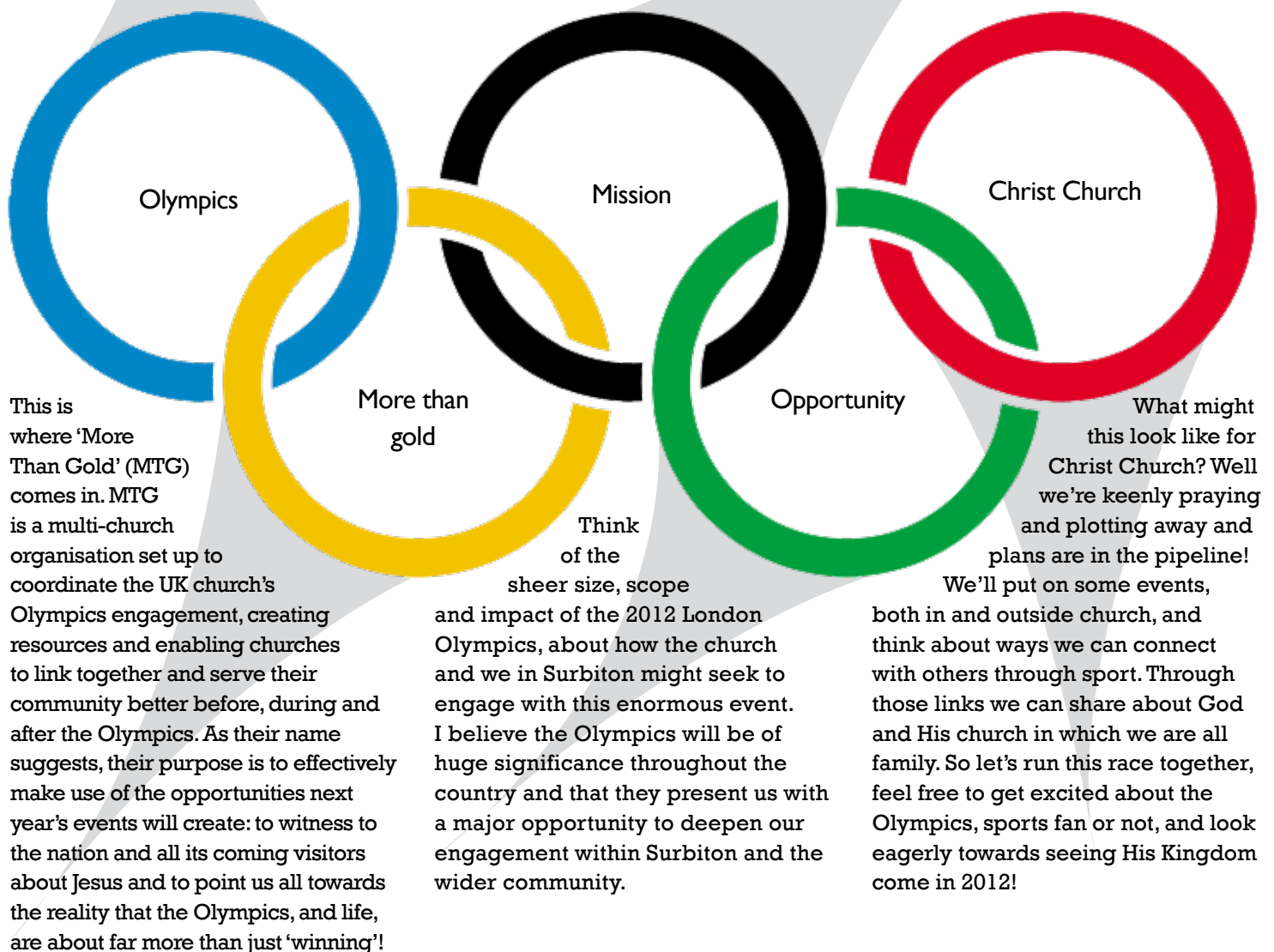
LOOKING AT THE OLYMPICS FROM A DIFFERENT ANGLE...

JAMES YELLAND

**U**nless you've been living with your head under a particularly large rock, you'll have spotted the Olympics looming large on the 2012 calendar! Love or hate it, it will impact upon your year, so Jim takes a look at what all that sport means for you, for us at Christ Church, our local community and nation.

"When the Olympics are held in another country, they're a sporting event which might affect your TV watching habits. But when they're held in YOUR country, then they're a cultural and societal event which will affect your whole nation and community." This quote I heard during the summer, its significance and implications, has rattled around my brain for weeks!

Do you ever feel like you don't really have a 'mission field', somewhere God has placed you? Do you think you're not 'doing enough' for the Kingdom? Do you feel bad that you have interests and activities (even sporting ones) in your life and that these are somehow 'unworthy' pursuits? Stop and think again! The reality surely is that wherever we are, whatever our passions are and whatever we are drawn to, there is the mission field God has placed us in. A place where we're surrounded by others who need to hear about and know the love of God. As a church and followers of Jesus, we need to know this truth and work out ways we can be effective in these areas of our lives.



# Always an Open Door

CROSS CONNECT ASKED MEMBERS OF OPEN DOOR HOW GOD HAD WORKED IN THEIR LIFE.

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## JUNE BOWERS

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I have been coming to Christchurch for 80 years, first being brought to the evening service by my mother when I was three. I was confirmed and married in Christchurch and the building has been like a second home as I grew up in the old Alpha Road and attended Christ Church School which was located on the corner of Britannia Road and Alpha. In my teenage years I tended to pop into church but it didn't mean much to me. It was when I had my own children that I took them to an early morning Children's Church service. It was through

these services that I came into a living relationship with Jesus. These services were intended to give the children an opportunity to be involved by choosing hymns and readings but a good number of the parents gave their lives to Christ. For twenty one years I worked alongside Rev David Frazer as parish administrator. So this again gave me a very close connection with all that was happening in Christ Church. Around fifteen years ago Hilda Leng who was a key person in the life of Christ Church was taken by a friend to the Ritz Hotel for tea. This gave her the idea to form a friendship club for older people where

“Open Door is not just about talk and tea. Several people have come to know Christ, although we don't push evangelism, but simply show love where we can.”

afternoon tea would be provided around nicely set tables to make contact with the older members of our community. That is how Open Door started. Those who come have a chance to talk and enjoy company on alternate Thursday afternoons. One old lady said to me when she was leaving “I won't talk to anyone now until I come back to Open Door as I live on my own”.

Open Door is not just about talk and tea. Several people have come to know Christ, although we don't push evangelism, but simply show love where we can. People coming are always amazed that they don't have to pay for the tea, but those of us who have organised Open Door over the years feel that providing the tea and a place to meet is part of our service for the Lord. ■

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## JENNY LAUNDER

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I first saw God at work in Christ Church in June 2001 after I had been here for a number of months. I had a massive heart attack and was not expected to live. Hilda Leng immediately gathered eight people to pray for me. My homegroup – mostly in their

20s – came to visit me in intensive care as did Hilda.

“One lady told Hilda she wished it was every week and she is still attending although in her late 80s and widowed and apparently remembers me looking after her husband in Surbiton Community Hospital.”

late 80s and widowed and apparently remembers me

Throughout my 2-month stay in hospital a number of people, quite a few from Open Door, visited me. One lady told Hilda she wished it was every week and she is still attending although in her

looking after her husband in Surbiton Community Hospital. Another comment from a lady who was quite ill and attended the hospital was that “I couldn't get over how kind people were to me and that they came to visit me.” Another lady's cancer has returned but she comes to Open Door when able and appreciates phone calls and assurance that we are praying for her. We try to see people coming to a personal faith and relationship with Christ. ■

# Finding the missing piece

SARAH ATKINS DESCRIBES A COURSE SHE HAS RECENTLY BEGUN

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## SARAH ATKINS

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**H**ave you ever had the sense that your life is a jigsaw puzzle with a big hole in the middle of it?

There are lots of good things in my life and by and large I am quite happy, but I have always had a nagging sense I was made for something other than the job I have been doing for the last 25 years.

I have had that feeling for a long time, praying often for guidance and God has been on my case! I have been seeing small pieces fit into place over the last few years. One of those pieces has been a course I started this September run by Southwark Diocese (the Church of England geographical “county” Christ Church comes within). I don’t know yet where it will lead but I believe God has a purpose and am trusting in his timing and guidance and in the meantime I am loving learning and meeting new people!

The course is for 2 years (2 hours on a Tuesday evening plus a few residential weekends) and aims to equip students to work within their churches, under the supervision of their vicar, to help people facing difficulties in their personal lives. We all face enormous pain and trauma in different ways throughout our lives – illness, death,

debt, relationship difficulties, loneliness, poverty, lack of purpose, mental or emotional illness, emotional or physical abuse to name just some. A church, the people who make up the church, often want to help but don’t know how to, or are afraid of doing the wrong thing and all too often end up doing nothing because they feel so ignorant.

This course aims to give me the tools and training to have a go, as well as it is possible, to help in such difficult situations. With the help of God, through his Holy Spirit, I believe we can all experience the healing his love brings. Officially, if I pass, I will be a SPA (Southwark Pastoral Auxiliary) and I think I

‘This course aims to give me the tools and training to have a go, as well as it is possible, to help in such difficult situations. With the help of God, through his Holy Spirit, I believe we can all experience the healing his love brings.’

even get a badge and get to be commissioned by the Bishop!

So far I have just done the first module. This is called “God, Self and Ministry” and is aimed at understanding differences: how our view of God is formed and differs from person to person; how we develop (differently) as individuals; how society and cultures are formed and differ; what values and attitudes are and how they differ; and the importance of hearing someone’s “story” (and telling our own, when appropriate).

I have really enjoyed (when I learned to relax!) taking a step back from “doing” and exploring and reflecting on

resources from a wide range of sources. Initially I felt a bit out of my comfort zone but the other students (17 of us) are so open and friendly there is already a strong sense of being a unit and valuing everybody as they are. There are some wonderful characters and the sessions are lively and fun as well as thought-provoking.

Later modules are on: the Bible and pastoral care; loss and change; ethics; caring in the community; safe-guarding; active listening; praying with others; spirituality and more...

I am looking forward to doing a placement too (20 hours voluntary work). A variety of organisations offer us placements – prisons, mental health hospitals, maternity hospitals etc. and I think I will learn a lot through that practical experience. Later in the course we also do an in-depth research project in small groups on an issue people face, such as addiction, depressions, suicide or similar. We will give a presentation to a group from all our churches on this so if you are interested do let me know and I will invite you when the time comes.

I am very grateful to John for suggesting this course to me and the PCC for supporting me – and I hope I will be able to serve God and our community better for having done it.

If you too feel you haven’t yet found your final jigsaw piece I encourage you to keep asking God to lead you to it and would be happy to pray for that with you! ■

# Who is Dave Davis, really?

AN INTERVIEW WITH CHRIST CHURCH'S NEWEST STAFF MEMBER, DAVE DAVIS

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## KATE M<sup>C</sup>NAB

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**KATE M<sup>C</sup>NAB:** WHERE ARE YOU FROM AND WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN DOING UP UNTIL NOW?

**DAVE DAVIS:** I grew up in Bristol (or Brizzle as the locals pronounce it!) before moving to Guildford where I studied at the Academy of Contemporary Music. During my third year of studying, I met my wife Sarah at our local church. She made an immediate impression on me by driving us into a ditch during our first week of knowing each other!

After graduating I spent time as the Worship and Communications Intern at St Stephen's, before moving to Universal Music Group to work in e-commerce.

**KM:** WHEN DID YOU BECOME A CHRISTIAN?



Dave with his wife, Sarah.

## Five things you may not know about Dave:

1. I love pizza and will bake them from fresh on request!
2. I love Disney Pixar films! (Especially *Cars*!)
3. I often wear odd socks
4. As a youth leader I once dressed up and performed as a member of 90's girl group *All Saints*.
5. I have a hamster named Sprout.

**DD:** I grew up in a Christian family, going to church and Sunday school, but it wasn't until I went to the youth festival Soul Survivor that I actually took a step of faith and accepted Jesus into my life. I was sitting in the main meeting during a time of sung worship, with 10,000 people around me singing the Delirious song 'I found Jesus' when I realised that I definitely had not! So I responded to the call to come forward and become a Christian.

**KM:** WHAT MADE YOU DECIDE TO APPLY FOR THE JOB AT CHRIST CHURCH

**DD:** I felt God was challenging me about how I lived my life and viewed my career. I had always been involved with worship and communications in my church life, but had always made it clear to God that this would

be my 'voluntary' work, my 'giving' as it were. And I felt Him challenge this attitude, saying 'I want you to let me decide how you use these gifts' – and so I took a step of faith and applied for the job!

**KM:** WHAT EXCITES YOU MOST ABOUT THIS ROLE?

**DD:** Spending time in God's presence and worshipping Him through music is, for me, so exciting. It is, amongst many other things, a time where we can bring our hearts before God, be changed by Him, and be re-envisioned for His glory. It is through times of deep worship and encounter with God that we can be united in His vision for us as a church and in our mission to the community around us.

**KM:** WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES WILL BE?

**DD:** One of the biggest challenges we face in worshipping God is remembering that He is far bigger than we can comprehend. We must therefore aim to reflect the rich traditions of the Bible and the richness and diversity of God's character.

From a communications perspective, we must balance the need to communicate the Gospel and the life of the church in a way that is accessible not only to the current 'digital' generation, but in a way that is accessible to the whole community around us. ■

# Christianity Explored

A LOOK AT HOW GOD HAS AFFECTED THE LIVES OF A FEW CHURCH MEMBERS THROUGH THE CHRISTIANITY EXPLORED COURSE.

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## JESS WEBSTER

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**M**ark Chellum is married to Liz and they have a 3-year old son Alden. They lived in Bromley before moving to Berrylands 4 years ago to be closer to friends and family – Mark grew up in Epsom.

**JESS WEBSTER: WHAT MADE YOU DECIDE TO COME TO CHURCH?**

**MARK CHELLUM:** I used to go to church every week with my mother when I was small. However, my mother passed away when I was 10 and with my father being from a Hindu background we stopped going to church.

When we moved here, Liz and I wanted to get a better feel for and get involved with the local community so we came to one of the Christ Church Christmas services a couple of years ago. The church simply had a really nice feeling about it and we left feeling more in touch with our local community and that's why we came back.

**JW: WHAT PROMPTED YOU TO DO CHRISTIANITY EXPLORED?**

**MC:** My wife did Christianity Explored before I did and enjoyed it. She told me that it was about St Mark's Gospel. Having been to religious schools all my life I had studied St Mark's Gospel and actually specialised in it for my GCSE in Religious Education. I was therefore interested in looking back at it, discussing it further

and getting other people's views and opinions on it.

**JW: CAN YOU PICK OUT ANY CHALLENGES THROUGHOUT THE COURSE?**

One of the challenges I found in the course was regarding sin and the forgiveness of sin. It was interesting to learn about not living your life with God as being the most serious sin. I also found 'the gift' an interesting part of the course.

**JW: CAN YOU IDENTIFY ANY WAYS THAT GOD HAS BEEN WORKING IN YOUR LIFE?**

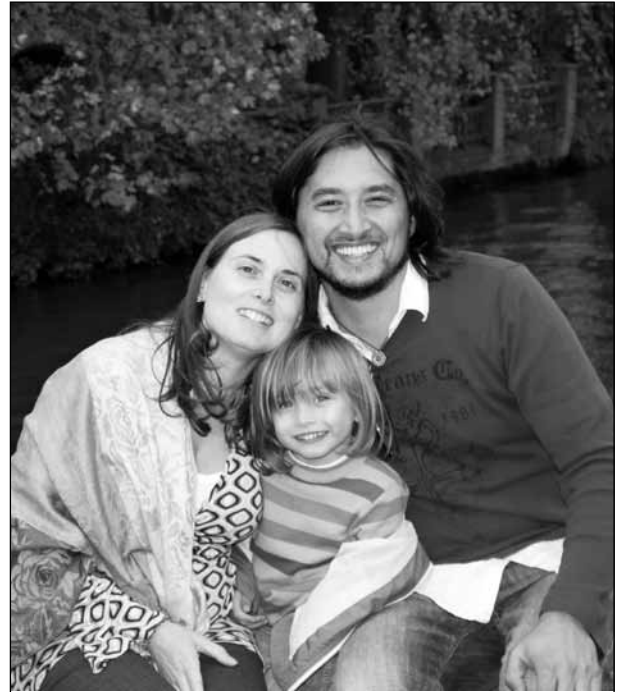
All people are created equal, but are so different at the same time. Especially after becoming a parent you learn more about people's values and their different approaches to life. I feel that God's influence in my life has helped me to accept people as they are and not be so quick to judge them.

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Rachel, a primary school teacher and Chris Smith, a social worker, have been married for 6 years. They met when studying at the University of East Anglia "too long ago to mention"! They have lived in the area for 18 months and friends and family live nearby.

**JW: WHAT MADE YOU DECIDE TO COME TO CHURCH, AND WHAT WAS IT ABOUT CHRIST CHURCH THAT MADE YOU DECIDE TO STAY?**

*Mark, Liz and Alden Chellum.*



## CHRIS AND RACHEL SMITH:

We had started attending a local church where we used to live, and on visiting found Christ Church. We found it to be very friendly and fun with great teaching and preaching.

**JW: WHAT PROMPTED YOU TO DO CHRISTIANITY EXPLORED?**

**C&RS:** It was a good opportunity to reconnect after doing an Alpha course 18 months earlier and feeling that things had drifted and to meet more people at Christ Church and find out how it ticks.

**JW: WHAT DID YOU ENJOY MOST ABOUT THE COURSE?**

That it provided an opportunity to dedicate time to one specific gospel of the Bible, to discuss and learn more in a group.

Chris and Rachel Smith.



We particularly enjoyed the opportunity to ask more questions about grace.

**JW:** CAN YOU IDENTIFY ANY WAYS THAT GOD HAS BEEN WORKING IN YOUR LIFE BEFORE, THROUGHOUT AND AFTER THE COURSE?

We found Christianity Explored to be a very positive experience and it has provided an increased awareness of how God is working in our lives all of the time – both in the everyday and within larger issues – and it has encouraged us to work at developing our relationships with God. ■

# Make a deposit at the Foodbank

KINGSTON FOODBANK GOES LIVE ON 2 DECEMBER

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## PAUL PICKHAVER

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**K**ingston Foodbank will open its first distribution point at Kingston United Reformed Church on Friday 2 December. Initially the centre will be open each Friday from 11:00am – 2:00pm.

Kingston foodbank is the 111<sup>th</sup> Foodbank to open as part of the Trussell Trust's UK-wide foodbank network. The Trust works with local churches and communities to open foodbanks providing emergency food to local

people in crisis.

Hidden hunger is an issue in Kingston today with some families struggling to put food on the table. For people on low incomes, a sudden crisis like redundancy, benefit delay or an unexpected bill can mean going hungry. Kingston Foodbank will be working with front line care professionals and services to meet the immediate need whilst the agencies put in place solutions and further support.

The foodbank works on a simple model. Non-perishable

food is donated by the public, sorted and stored and then distributed to people in crisis by a voucher system. Vouchers are issued by front line agencies and exchanged at foodbank distribution points for 3 days' emergency food.

Churches, schools and the local community are getting behind this initiative and nearly 4 tonnes of food has already been donated to meet needs in Kingston.

Front line agencies are welcoming this new crisis intervention support. ■

Please visit [www.trusselltrust.org/](http://www.trusselltrust.org/) for more information or email [info@kingston.foodbank.org.uk](mailto:info@kingston.foodbank.org.uk) to find out how to get involved.

# A home for the homeless

A LOOK AT THE WORK OF KINGSTON CHURCHES ACTION ON HOMELESSNESS AND THE WINTER NIGHT SHELTER

## GRAHAM FAIRBAIRN

In 1993 Kingston Churches Action on Homelessness (KCAH) started its vital services for those in Kingston who find themselves without a home. 55 churches across the Borough work together through KCAH to face the problems of homelessness in Kingston. KCAH aims to relieve the distress of homeless and potentially homeless people by the provision of service and resources such as advice on issues of housing, welfare benefits and hostel placements or temporary housing for motivated single homeless people in Kingston.

One vital service provided through KCAH working with a number of churches in the Borough is the Winter Night Shelter. Rachel Makin is a member of Christ Church and part of the KCAH team. She is responsible for coordinating the Winter Night Shelter. Rachel reflects for us on some of the realities of homelessness and the churches' response.

## THE WINTER NIGHT SHELTER

"It could be you....!" is a slogan more commonly connected with the National Lottery than with a Night Shelter but in Kingston, much more so than in central London, it is quite applicable. Guests at our Night Shelter last year included a doctor, a college lecturer, a librarian and a care worker (who managed to get and keep a job in Feltham during the period she was staying in

the Shelter!). One of the things people who volunteer at the Shelter often comment about is how it has challenged and revised their perceptions of what sort of people become homeless.

The Kingston Churches Winter Night Shelter will be starting its 4th year when it opens on 1 December. Fourteen different local churches across the borough run the Shelter for 3 months in twelve different venues, teaming up between different churches and with the wider community (e.g. Churches pairing up with a tennis club or school). It presents us to the public as "the church" meeting the needs of the poor, rather than different churches practising and operating in isolation, and enables non-Christians to encounter church by serving alongside us.

Over the 3 months we provide accommodation to between 40 and 60 people who are homeless or vulnerably housed, (i.e. they may in some cases be sleeping rough on the streets, but are more often being put up temporarily by friends or even acquaintances, in cramped accommodation, with no security of stay, and often not much welcome). We provide our guests with a delicious evening meal, a warm, safe bed for the night, and breakfast. At one point last year I felt very despondent, as it seemed so little to offer in the context of the huge issues facing some of them. But, in fact, it is a huge deal. Being provided with a warm,

friendly, personal welcome day after day is a big change for someone who may be marginalized, ignored, or outstaying their welcome for the rest of the year. And having 2 good meals a day makes a noticeable difference to the health and feeling of well-being of an alcoholic. For the volunteers too, putting the Gospel into practice, making a difference in the world about us, helping people change their lives for the better and giving them hope and dignity, will challenge your preconceptions and will change your life – come and join us!

## VISION FOR THE FUTURE

KCAH working in partnership with St Peter's Norbiton have developed an exciting project where any homeless and vulnerable people in the borough will be able to find shelter, food and friendship on a permanent basis all year round on the same site at St Peter's.

The concept under the name of "Project Joel" is to build a community based on hospitality and compassion on the St Peter's site, offering a whole range of services for homeless and vulnerable people. Friendship, food, spiritual nurture, therapeutic activities and opportunities for learning new skills are all part of the vision for the centre. It is also envisaged that the centre will provide a new home for KCAH offices supplying an enhanced resource for the homeless in Kingston all year round. ■

*If you want more information about KCAH check out their website at [www.kcah.org.uk](http://www.kcah.org.uk) or for Project Joel: [www.kcah.org.uk/joel](http://www.kcah.org.uk/joel)*

***Thank you to all those who have signed up to help with the night shelter at Christ Church. Volunteers are still needed for the early morning and night shifts. Please contact Rachel and Andy Smith ([rachel.giles@zen.co.uk](mailto:rachel.giles@zen.co.uk)) or sign up on the hatch.***

# If Nobody Speaks of Remarkable Things

THE SECOND IN A SERIES EXPLORING HOW CHRISTIANS EXPRESS THEMSELVES THROUGH FICTION

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## SARA UPSTONE

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Jon McGregor is a contemporary author of three novels, the first of which, *If Nobody Speaks of Remarkable Things*, is our choice for this issue's book feature. Born in 1976, McGregor is the son of a vicar; he has spoken at the Greenbelt festival; his work is reviewed in Christian publications such as *Third Way*, a publication for which he also wrote as a reviewer. Yet God is not immediately apparent as a subject of his work. *If Nobody Speaks of Remarkable Things* is not really even a story in the conventional sense. A kind of prose poem, the novel centres

around one fateful day for the inhabitants of a Northern city street, and the consequences of that day for one young woman in particular. Told in fragments and without much of the description, dialogue, or names you would expect from a work of fiction, it is a challenging and unconventional read.

So where, you might ask, is God in all of this? In his book *Contemporary Fiction and Christianity*, Andrew Tate refers to *If Nobody Speaks of Remarkable Things* as 'a condensed, Walt Whitmanesque narrative of urban epiphany and a celebration of the miraculous possibilities of the quotidian' that embodies a trend in contemporary writing he calls 'miraculous realism'. Put more simply, Tate is drawing our attention to McGregor's celebration of everyday city life as filled with miracles. These 'miracles' range from the novel's delight in ordinary events, to the common miracles of life and childbirth, to rarer events such as angels and resurrections. What is important is how McGregor's novel sees all of these as equally miraculous. What we see and experience everyday is God's glory at work, in the here and now, in the seemingly mundane and trivial. God may appear only rarely in the novel by name, and usually only as an unconscious cry in a moment of panic or trauma, but He is there on every page of the book as His creation is celebrated for all its wonder. If you question why McGregor spends pages

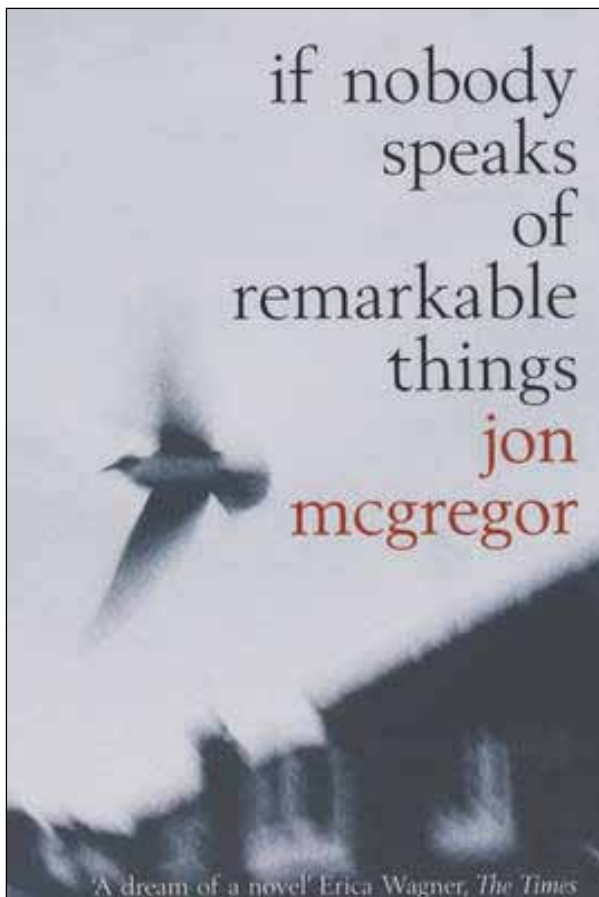
describing rainfall, or the everyday lives of a group of unnamed inhabitants of one street, then this is why. The rain is God's miracle. The lives being led, however banal, are God's creation in action. And we need to speak of this wonder, this miracle of life, to keep its power alive. It is a call to Evangelism: to speak of the impossibility of all we have without God as its source.

In the passage of the novel from which its title comes all this is made clear. A young girl, whose mother died tragically in a fire, asks her father about the existence of angels:

"He says my daughter, and all the love he has is wrapped up in the tone of his voice when he says those two words, he says my daughter you must always look with both of your eyes and listen with both of your ears. He says this is a very big world and there are many things you could miss if you are not careful. He says there are remarkable things all the time, right in front of us, but our eyes have like the clouds over the sun and our lives are paler and poorer if we do not see them for what they are.

He says, if nobody speaks of remarkable things, how can they be called remarkable?"

When I chose this book for this issue, I did not know the theme was going to be God's work in our community. When I found this out, I felt like my choice was less my own, and more God's will. It was a reminder to me of how God acts in our lives in small, easy to miss ways. Because McGregor's book speaks to



this theme in quite profound terms. On the one hand, his novel validates our belief in the power of prayer, and the possibility of life-saving, full on, transformative miracles (I don't want to give away how). His novel allows us to believe that we can see God working in such a way on our own streets, in our own homes, in our own families, in our community. That we shouldn't see the miracles that those living in Jesus'

time witnessed as simply something consigned to history, but as evidence of the power of God we can still see and experience today. Yet, equally importantly, the novel reminds us of how we see God in our communities every day even if we never experience such dramatic interventions. That we can see God every time we connect with another human; every time we look out of our windows, or go for a walk,

and experience the wonder of nature; every morning we wake up and are blessed with the gift of life. Perhaps most importantly, we see God in the goodness of others. And when we are the one's giving that goodness, we are living God's will and announcing His glory. If we, in our community, can speak of remarkable things, be them full scale miracles or everyday wonders, then we do glory to God. ■

# Church voices

JUNE GOT THINKING ABOUT GOD'S FAMILY AND THE WAY HE PROVIDES FOR CHRIST CHURCH



## JUNE WALKER

**W**hen I come into Christ Church on a Sunday morning and look around, I am thrilled when I see the mix of families, young and old, and I thank the Lord that I am part of a growing church in my old age. Looking back it seems to me that God worked in small things which then lead on to growth in response to prayer.

When I became a Christian and joined the church in the late 1940s Christ Church was very different. Some may find it incredible that God used the Book of Common Prayer, the Church Hymnal and the King James version of the Bible in those days, but He did. If you wanted to socialise with friends after the services you did it in the porch or spilling out on to the pavement. Later a few pews at the back of the church were removed (with faculty permission) to create a space around a small electric urn so we could have

coffee while we chatted. The Pathfinder movement was born at Emmanuel but was taken up at Christ Church in a small way about this time when Beryl Ba (nee Birchmore) was asked to set it up. Five people in their twenties went overseas as missionaries (including Beryl), each one with a different society. Their contemporaries who remained would pray for them after the evening service. God was expanding His church.

In no way could Christ Church be called a family church as it is today. There were one or two couples and a family service was run for a time but most young people who got married could not afford property in the area so they moved on. Things began to change when the church decided to sell the old Parish Hall in The Retreat and turn the church sideways to provide lounges, a kitchen, and offices, as it is today. Then it seemed that the property market changed; two or three young couples moved into flats in

the area and later into houses as their families grew. Three of them started Mums and Toddlers (small beginnings compared to now) and more families began to appear in church. We began to grow our children's groups such as Climbers, Adventurers, Explorers and Pathfinders. Tentatively a course was started for those enquiring about the Christian faith; now it is established practice in the Castle pub because there is no available room in the church on a Sunday morning.

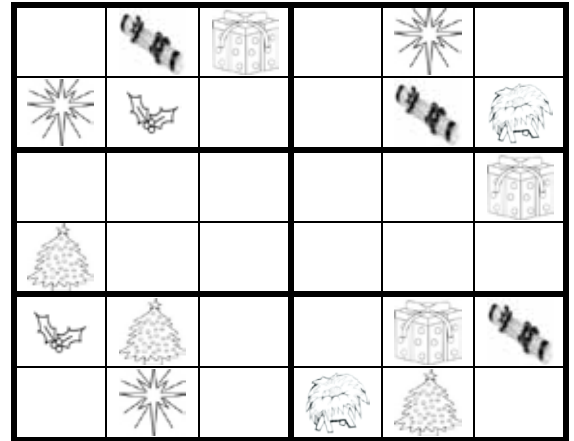
A lot of prayer, thought and struggles went into turning the church around. Could we afford it? Where would the money come from? Some were for, some against. God provided an answer to prayer and it has worked for His glory. We are now thinking, planning and praying about another extension to Christ Church because God is working and the congregation is growing. If we pray and trust Him, God will go on working. ■

# Funday school

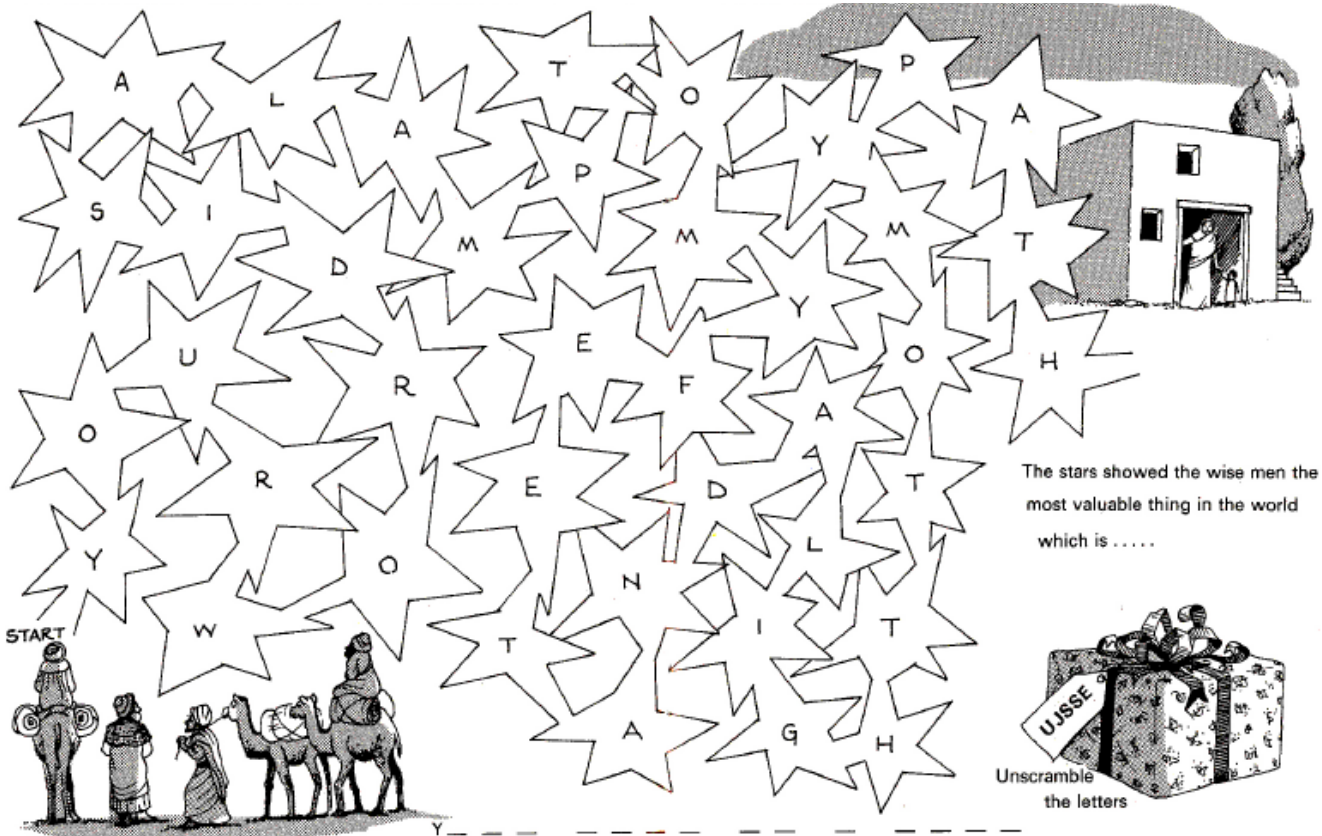
FUN ACTIVITIES FOR ALL AGES



## Christmas sudoku



The wise men were guided by a star. What message do you find when you follow the star trail?



(Psalm 119:105)

### ABOUT CROSS CONNECT

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