
THE PARISH CHURCH OF ST JOHN THE EVANGELIST

News from Whittle & Clayton Brook

PARISH GAZETTE

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FREE copy
Donations welcome
**DECEMBER
2025**

Speak out, Reach out, Gather in for Christ



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Dear Friends

In a moving passage towards his first letter to the Thessalonians, Paul writes this:

Now we ask you, brothers and sisters, to acknowledge those who work hard among you, who care for you in the Lord and who admonish you. Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13)

It is striking that Paul, who was so adamant that we work to please the Lord, not people, who said that whatever you do, do it with all your heart as for the Lord, who never sought praise from people, should, nevertheless, say that there is a right place for honouring people, for recognising and giving due respect to those who work hard among us.

With that in mind, I want to honour and thank Cath for producing the parish gazette for so many years—nearly 30! She has quietly and faithfully continued in this ministry, without fuss or fanfare. This is now the last edition. So, thank you, Cath.

At the same time there are many, many in both Clayton Brook and St John's who have served in various capacities for years and years, often without a break, and never seeking praise or attention—children's leaders, musicians, preachers and leaders, welcomers, cleaners, churchwardens, and others whom I will have missed. Thank you to you all; we acknowledge and honour you.

Why don't we make it our aim to be better at saying 'thank you' to one another? I have often said that being thankful to God is a great means of growth in faith and prayer. Let's join thanking one another to that. Who has served you, or a member of your family recently? May we say, 'Thank you'? On which note, finally, may I thank you for being the church-family you are. It is a privilege and a joy to be part of you. However, and in spite of all that I have just said, in the end may it still be a case of 'to God be the glory.'

Your brother in Christ
Philip



It's a record!

A special thank you to everyone who donated a shoebox for 2025 Operation Christmas Child. We donated a total of **128 shoeboxes** from St Johns and Clayton Brook churches.

This year Clayton Brook was a drop off centre for any shoeboxes donated within the area, and some of us volunteered to be on duty at Clayton Brook during drop-off week to receive them and then pack them up for collection to go to the processing centre in Burnley.



ALEX and KATE in ASIA

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

We pray that this email finds you safe in his loving hands today.

I (Kate) went on a short term mission trip to the Philippines to an orphanage for children who experienced human trafficking and abuse. There were 12 children aged 1-11, and many staff members who helped took care of them. We were able to do bible camp ('Epic Explorer' which is developed by Christianity Explored ministry) and lots of games and crafts. It was lovely to be able to engage the kids in many creative ways, but we also saw and heard heartbreaking effects of sin and God's enduring grace in the midst of everything. Here is just one story I wanted to share... a story about a child there and what the missionary there said.

A was 18 months old when she was rescued from sex trafficking. Her own biological father kept her in a cage and sold her for sex. When she was rescued, she was incapable of showing any emotions, could not distinguish people from objects, and was completely closed off into her own world. Yet, God has so graciously intervened, and she was able to go through many trauma intervention sessions. She is now 9 years old full of energy and love (she made me a key ring and a bracelet whilst I was there with many smiles and hugs) Nonetheless, she still battles the effect of trauma - she is still not able to read simple words and struggles to control her emotions with frequent outbursts of anger. She is now going through an adoption process with the missionary who started the mission.

The lady K who started the mission said this.

"People often confuse context and content of God's work. **Context** in our case, is very devastating and challenging. Children we rescue come from the darkest places where they were exposed to evil we cannot even imagine. However, the **content** of God's work here is exactly what Ephesians 2:4-5 describes. "But, because of his great love for us, God who is rich in mercy, made us alive in Christ...."

K is now approaching the final stages of adoption with A and another boy B, and we are praying for God's sovereign hand

If for some reason, if you would like to hear more about this mission and would like to support them, do let me know and I would happily give you more info or connect you to them.

May his life-giving grace guide us even today :)

Love in Christ,

Alex, Kate, Euan, Hana, Rowan and Yuha

.....

Family Life and Church Life

There was a week-long Korean Thanksgiving holiday earlier this month. Alex and Kate's dad took the kids away for three nights to a nearby city. Although it rained a lot and they could not do everything they planned to do, they still had fun.

Kate went to and returned safely from the Philippines for a short-term mission trip to an orphanage for children who suffered human trafficking and neglect. Children's story started from dire and desperate places, but Kate was encouraged and challenged to see what God was doing in their lives. They were slowly being restored from their traumas through God's sovereign love and grace.

Church life as always include encouragements and challenges! We are thankful to God for new members joining the church – a married couple and two ladies. We also praise God that another baby was born to a church family, and we were gladly able to help take care of the baby's older brother for few hours for three days. At the same time, we did face new challenging pastoral care situations (a case of serious marital conflict and depression, and a case of suicidal ideation). Our church service hall also had a small fire, so this coming Sunday (Nov 2nd), we need to move to a temporary venue. We hope that we will be able to return to the original service hall the following week!

Yuha and her adoption

Korean government has been transitioning to a new fostering and adoption system since July. Previously, various NGOs undertook fostering and adoption process. However, the government is now trying to take responsibility over fostering and adoption which can be a positive progress. However, since the system is new and still not fully established, there have been significant delays in adoption cases. Yuha, sadly, is one of those cases. She is now 9 months, and her chance of getting adopted will drop after she turns 1. We were told that she won't get adopted this year, but we hope and pray that she will get adopted next year.

Studies

Alex's MDiv is nearly at a close with his final papers and exams due at the end of November/early December. It will be quite a crunch, but he's thankful that it will be done before the busiest part of Christmas. He is getting helpful feedback in his sermon classes, including using a 'sermon feedback form' to get feedback from leaders within the church. He hopes he can continue this semi-regularly even after finishing to ensure he is always growing in his preaching.

Kate is still working through 'Complex problems in Counseling' course this term, and the most recent topics included self-harm/suicidal ideation, trauma, and sexual sins. The topics are heavy, but Kate has already encountered two ladies with self-harm/suicidal ideation this month through church (In one case, we had to call the police) and is seeing how God is challenging her to be better equipped to serve his people. Kate has also been feeling convicted of her need to enjoy God's goodness when there are many pastoral cases that seem overwhelming to her.

Prayer Points

Please give thanks for God's grace over the mission trip to the Philippines.

Please pray that our church will grow passionate for mission

Please give thanks for Yuha, and please pray for her adoption.

Please pray that we will be able to enjoy God's goodness and grace in the midst of pastoral challenges.

Please remember the LOVE FUND

The Love Fund consists of donations of money from members of both our churches. This can be used for anyone in our church or parish who is in need of help. If you are in financial need for whatever purpose:

shopping, bills, essentials etc then get in touch with Philip and he will be happy to help you. tel: 01257 515141

email: info@stjohnsandclaytonbrook.uk

Something to make you Smile (hopefully) and perhaps think?

CHRISTMAS

"Want to keep Christ in Christmas? Feed the hungry, clothe the naked, forgive the guilty, welcome the unwanted, care for the ill, love your enemies, and do unto others as you would have done unto you."

Steve Maraboli

"My idea of Christmas, whether old-fashioned or modern, is very simple: loving others. Come to think of it, why do we have to wait for Christmas to do that?"

Bob Hope

"The reality of loving God is loving him like he's a Superhero who actually saved you from stuff rather than a Santa Claus who merely gave you stuff you don't want."

Criss Jami

At Christmas we receive presents that we don't really need and God offers us a gift we cannot do without.

Five Christmas Quiz Questions (answers at bottom of page)

- What colour are mistletoe berries?
- Which Angel visited Mary to tell her she was going to have a baby?
- December 26th marks which saints day?
- When Santa got stuck in the chimney, what did he have in his sack?
- What is traditionally hidden in a Christmas Pudding?

Five Familiar Carols (answers at bottom of page)

- Heavenly cherubs announcing in song.
- In a distant bovine café.
- O miniature Nazarene village.
- Universal elation.
- Celestial Messengers from splendid empires

Christmas Hits (answers at bottom of page)

- Red suited visitor to a place close by.
- Gui et Vin

Three stages of a man's life.

- He believes in Santa Claus.
- He doesn't believe in Santa Claus
- He is Santa Claus



•It was Christmas and the judge was in a merry mood as he asked the defendant "What are you charged with?"

"Doing my Christmas shopping early" replied the defendant. "That's no offense" said the judge "How early were you doing the shopping?"

"Before the store opened" answered the defendant.

•One night Fiona and her friends went carol singing. They knocked on the door of a house and began to sing. A man with a violin came to the door and within a minute tears were steaming down his face! Fiona and her friends went on singing for half an hour, every carol they knew and some they didn't.

At last they stopped. "I understand" Fiona said softly "You are remembering your happy childhood Christmas days, enjoying listening to carols"

"No" the man sniffed "I'm a musician"

•Christmas is a time when we want our past forgotten and our present remembered.

Some people think that Christmas time is gifts, grub and booze; But the best bit is that Jesus came – God's Son in human shoes.

Christmas is most truly Christmas when we celebrate it by giving the light of love to those who most need it.

•The hinge of history is to be found on the door of a Bethlehem stable. **J. John**

ANSWERS:

- 1. White. 2. Gabriel. 3. Stephen. 4. Soot. 5. Silver coin(sixpence)
- 1. Hark the Herald Angels Sing 2. Away in a Manger 3. O Little Town of Bethlehem 4. Joy to the World 5. Angels from the Realm of Glory.
- 2. Santa Claus is coming to Town. 2. Mistletoe and Wine.

From David Barlow With thanks to J. John and Mark Stibbe Monarch Press

With thanks to David for all his gazette articles over many years



Please continue to pray for the re-ordering of St John's church.

Almighty God, we thank you for this church building, a place where your people have gathered for worship, fellowship and service.



We ask for your blessing on the restoration which will take place here.

May your Holy Spirit work through this project to create a space that is holy, welcoming and a beacon of your love to all who enter.

May the lives of people who live in our community be transformed through God's work within the walls of our renewed church.



May our congregation work together in faith to love and support the vision for the renewal of our church building



Warm Welcome at Clayton Brook Church

Refreshments, Light Lunch and Dessert

Every Monday 11 - 1pm
(sadly we're not open on Bank Holidays)

Donations welcome
Everyone is welcome, children and babies too.
Contact Gill Wright
or just turn up



Proverbs 22:9 The generous will themselves be blessed, for they share their food with the poor.

Living Waters food bank is low on everything at the moment. There is a food collection box in Clayton Brook church and in St John's. If you are in Chorley you can drop off donations at Living Waters church in Bolton Street, Tues and Fridays 10-12noon.

Or give a money donation on their website: www.facebook.com/LWStorehouse, And most supermarkets have food bank trolleys.

Words the Lord Jesus Himself said:

"It is more blessed to give than to receive" Acts 20v35

The Suffering Church

As we celebrate Christmas, we are able to celebrate our Lord's birth, its helpful to reflect on what Jesus' birth means to those who follow Him in more challenging circumstances, which for many are getting harder year by year.

Hope (Romans 5: 1 – 5 and 12:12)

The word "hope" in the Bible has a meaning it does not have in any other context. The Old Testament was built on hope, a hope partially fulfilled in the redeeming death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ; but still there remains an ultimate fulfilment, to which the New Testament looks forward.

Hope, seen in many beautiful passages in the Bible, is when we will experience the fulfilment of all God's promises of salvation, totally free at last from the grip of sin, selfishness and guilt. Hope is also used to mean a feeling of confident assurance and sure expectation of the things that God has promised will be ours one day.

In Romans chapter 5 Paul explains how, as Christians, we can rejoice in our hope of sharing in the glory of God, for we are justified by faith and have peace with God through Jesus, our Lord and Saviour. In chapter 12 Paul reminds persecuted Christians in Rome to rejoice in their Christian hope.

As Edwin Mote wrote "My hope is built on nothing less, than Jesus' blood and righteousness".

Patience (Romans 12:12)

Suffering for Christ was normal for early Christians, to whom Paul was writing and suffering is sadly normal for many Christians around the world today. Even where persecution does not occur disciples of Christ are often seen as misfits in a mainstream society, suffering from indifference and apathy. Jesus warned us that the world will hate us because we do not belong to it but belong to Him. (John 15:18/19). If we do not sometimes feel at least a little out of place in the world, are we really following Jesus?

Writing to believers where suffering is the norm, Paul tells us to be patient. This is a very positive and active kind of patience not simply a passive endurance, a patience that perseveres in bearing the load, which refuses to weaken, complain or be discouraged. And we can only do that with the help of the Holy Spirit on a daily basis.

Written by a Christian martyr in Assam India, after watching his wife and children killed the words of that famous hymn exemplify this. After his death many of the village including his killers turned to Christ.

I have decided to follow Jesus, I have decided to follow Jesus, I have decided to follow Jesus, no turning back, no turning back.

Prayer (Romans 12:12)

Prayer is our lifeline, the lifeblood of the church. It is one of the main channels through which God pours out His promised strength and grace into our lives. Without prayer our limited supplies of resources will soon be exhausted. Yet through prayer we can endure our challenges with patience and amaze unbelievers by rejoicing in hope even while we are suffering.

Many of us struggle to pray (at least I do) as we should. We know that talking to our heavenly Father is vital but it still too easily drops down our list of priorities. And when we find the time we cannot still the racing thoughts enough to listen to Him. That's why praying with other believers is so important. Who would have thought that so many of us now use technology to help us pray together, God having established Zoom well before we needed it! In God's wonderful economy when two or three weak Christians gather together to pray, each somehow find strength and encouragement from the others, leaving us strengthened and ready to go forward for and with Jesus.

Joyful hope lifts us over present affliction and patient endurance is maintained by steadfastness in prayer, mutual and individual. (R.Lenski. 1945)

Diligence (Romans 12:11)

Paul urges us to be diligent in serving the Lord never putting off to tomorrow what can and should be done today, adding that we should be seething and boiling, a more accurate translation of the Greek for v 11! The verse ends with a command to continue serving the Lord. The translation could have been "slaving" for the Lord. At the beginning of the letter to the Romans Paul calls himself a slave to Christ, serving Him as Master. As Christians we are all called as slaves of Christ our beloved Master. What a privilege to serve Him with fervour and diligence.

Eternal God, grant us so to know that we truly love You, and so to love You that we may fully serve You, whom to serve is perfect freedom (Augustine of Hippo).

Generosity (Romans 12:13).

In verse 13 Paul looks at the practical needs of God's suffering people. When he wrote this letter it is believed he was on his way to Jerusalem carrying a financial gift from the church in Macedonia and Achaia to the poor in Jerusalem. Paul wrote often about a fellowship in Christ (koinonia) which to Paul included giving practical help to other believers in need. Do we believe things are just the same today when we see the plight of millions of Christians around the world?

Teach us good lord to serve You as you deserve, to give and not to count the cost, to fight and not to heed the wounds, to toil and not to seek for rest, to labour and not to ask for any reward, save that of knowing that we do your will. (Richard Gillard).

Hospitality (Romans 12:13).

From giving financial help Paul now moves to giving hospitality, a specific hospitality known to the Christians in Rome and regularly practised. It was the hospitality given to fellow, for by doing so some people have shown hospitality to believers, whether travelling preachers, messengers or those fleeing persecution, some of whom were destitute. As pilgrims in a hostile world, Christians had of necessity to care for each other and provide for each others needs. And yet Christians are sharing from the little they have with other Christians in greater need and sometimes with those who are not Christian, in places like Syria.

Pagan society marvelled at the way those early Christians treated fellow Christians like blood relations even if they had never met them before. This is still seen in some parts of the world where material wealth is considerably less than here.

Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing so some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it (Hebrews 13:2) or even to Jesus Himself (Matthew 26: 37 – 40).

Empathy (Romans 12:15)

Paul tells us to rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep. Christians should not be people who shrink from the pain or empathy with those who are suffering. Peter calls us to be tender-hearted to each other (1 Peter 3:8) and we know that Jesus wept with Lazarus' bereaved sisters (John 11:35).

Rejoicing with those who rejoice can sometimes be an even bigger challenge. One keep from envying their success requires a noble soul so as not to be envious. Chrysostom one of the early Church Fathers who died in 407 AD wrote that to rejoice with other people in their success requires a noble soul so as not to be envious. Rejoicing with those who rejoice is also applicable in times of trouble because rejoicing in our suffering builds God's character within us.

I will weep when you are weeping, when you laugh I'll laugh with you and I will share your joy.

Love (Romans 12: 16 – 21)

Paul calls on believers to live in harmony with each other based on the premise of wanting the best for other people. It is a mindset that is blind to class, caste, status, race, wealth or rank, a mindset so focused on the wellbeing of others that there is no place for conceit or personal ambition. Paul even urges us to live as peaceably with everyone, even our enemies and persecutors. So we shouldn't retaliate when we are hurt, or as Paul expresses it, we must not give back evil for evil. This was Jesus' revolutionary teaching who tells us to love our enemies pray for them.

Our lives should be admirable in the eyes of unbelievers, even if they think we are crazy! If, by God's grace, we can subdue the basic human instinct for taking revenge, we are a powerful witness for the Gospel. So what might be the result of showing love for an enemy. Our love could change our enemy. Love hopes all things, so no enemy is beyond hope. God was wonderfully patient as He brought each one of us to repentance and faith.

Finally, Paul holds out to us a glorious prospect. If we can continue rejoicing, loving, forgiving, and hoping, then evil has not conquered us, no matter how great our suffering. Something millions of Christians do every day. And, if we respond by good, we can conquer evil itself.

Spirit filled souls are ablaze for God. They love with a love that glows. They serve with a faith that kindles. They serve with a devotion that consumes. They hate sin with a fierceness that burns. They rejoice with a joy that radiates. Love is perfected in the Fire of God. Nothing can separate us from the love of God. (Samuel Chadwick).

A Living Hope

"Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, And your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in Glory" Colossians 3: 1 - 4.

As it is likely that this will be the last gazette, at least for some time, and if you are interested in supporting organisations dedicated to helping suffering Christians please check out www.barnabasfund.org www.tearfund.org and www.opendoorsuk.org. In particular look out for Open Doors "World Watch List" booklet published every January and Barnabas' information of countries where living for Jesus is extremely difficult – "Praying For The Persecuted Church" just recently published. These articles may have finished but the needs of millions of Christians around the world remain very real, can we help?

Thank You Cath

Since the very beginning the church has depended upon the faithful witness and service of ordinary people (mainly women) to sustain it and pass it on to the next generation. Not on Bishops, priests, vicars, readers, theologians, scholars or preachers. Its those people who week in week out serve their local church who provide its foundation and ensure its survival (with of course the help of the Holy Spirit. In our own Church of England parishes vicars and priests come and go, whilst many of those faithful people stay and serve. They may want inspiration and leadership from those called to lead but ultimately it is their own faith and service which sustains them.

There are many in all churches, often serving in ways rarely noticed or fully appreciated, but invaluable to their church and valued and appreciated by Our Lord. One of these women is Cath who I have known for more years than I care to remember, faithfully serving St Johns parish through at least three incumbencies (Don, Alan and Philip) in many ways. I just wanted to thank her for those areas I have valued. For many years Cath was the PCC secretary, always efficient, always helpful and always reliable. Without her in that role the PCC would not have functioned as well as it did.

Cath has also been the editor of the Gazette for a number of years, in which time she has improved the content and never failed to turnout a readable and interesting magazine, covering a wide range of topics every year, not least keeping us in touch with those ministries the church supports, for example Alf and Hilary and latterly Alex, Kate, Euan, Hana, Rowan and Yuha. However perhaps Cath's most important service has been her faithfulness in prayer, not just the monthly prayer letter but her own personal prayer ministry in church, offering the opportunity for her to pray for and with anyone.

And of course until his death in 2021 Cath was a massive support to Roland in his ministry and an encouragement to all the Lay ministers in the church.

So in thanking Cath, this is also a thank you to all those who serve our church faithfully and often without being noticed, without you we simply would not survive.

THANK YOU CATH for everything you have done and still do.

- David Barlow

EMERGENCY PRAYER CHAIN

The prayer chain has now moved to WhatsApp. It is always available for anyone who would like urgent, emergency prayer for themselves or their family or friends.

If you know someone who is a member of the prayer chain,
please ask them to put in your prayer request.

Or telephone Gill Wright or Cath Orr

Our prayer chain takes many calls. Do not be anxious, concerned or troubled.....

'The Lord is near to all who call on Him' (Psalm 145v18)'

Cast all your anxiety onto Him, because He cares for you' (1Peter 5v7)



**Beehive Mother and Toddler group meet
on Monday mornings at 10.45 to 12.15
in Whittle le Woods Village Hall
Play, chat, stories, singing
There's room for everyone
See Christine Whiteside**

This is my last Parish Gazette

I have been producing the gazette since 1997. Kath Atherfold was the previous editor, and Hazel Smalley, who many of you will remember, was the editor before her. Thank you to everyone who has sent in articles and comments over the years.

God Bless you all - love from Cath x

With 2026 New Year resolutions in mind, here is John Wesley's rule of conduct:

Do all the good you can
By all the means you can
In all the ways you can
In all the places you can
At all the times you can
To all the people you can
As long as ever you can



with the family of God