



Hello dear friends!

Judith “treated” me to a Treetop Challenge at Bedgebury recently with my 2 sons, my grandson and a friend of his.

I read the on-line description: -

“Ready to chase that feel good feeling in the fresh air? Come and join us at our Bedgebury site. Once firmly roped into the circuit, you’ll soon be tackling the cargo nets and flying down the Tarzan Swing with gusto. Crush your goals, push your group onwards and be ready for the perfect photo opportunity when you reach the tricky Tunnel Crossing. One thing is for sure – you won’t easily forget this incredible high ropes experience!”

My nervousness at the prospect was slightly assuaged by the declaration that “Whilst there is inevitably a small risk of injury when undertaking such activities, all participants receive a safety briefing from a trained instructor at the start and any risk of injury has been minimised to the best of our ability.”

So, with some trepidation and trying not to show my nerves particularly in front of my grandson I attended the briefing and got kitted out with the harness wrapped securely around me in preparation for the “assault” through the trees with the mixture of zip wires, swaying steps and ropes etc.

My 2 sons kept close to me – one in front and the other behind me – just in case I needed any help! My, wasn’t I glad to have that help!

My grandson and his friend were soon out of sight – progress for me was slow and cautious – I knew, of course, that the safety equipment would stop me from falling to the ground but there were some crucial moments when my strength almost gave out trying to haul myself up from the various ropes etc to the platforms high amongst the tree tops with the strong hand and arm of my eldest son in front of me and my other son making sure I was always clipped on – I tried to enjoy the view but was mightily glad when we got to the end of the course!

Essential for me was trust in the safety equipment and the encouragement and help of my sons which reminded me of the Scriptures: -

Proverbs 3:5 and 6 - Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.

Psalms 121 v 3 - He will not let your foot slip - he who watches over you will not slumber;

1 Thessalonians 5 v 11 – Encourage one another and build each other up.

In these days of uncertainty, we need to exercise that trust in the One who never fails us and the encouragement of His presence and one another.

Be safe and trust in the Lord

Terence

Dear Terence and all our Friends at SFC!

This is a long-overdue note to say a true thank you to you and the family of Staplehurst Free Church for your quiet and ongoing loving support of us here in White River. I wish we had grand reports of wonderful outpourings of God's Holy Spirit in great demonstrations of salvation but it is definitely feeling like the Doldrums over these recent months. It's been a challenge to keep focussed and yet at the same time to rest in God's overruling Sovereignty in these times.

Sometimes we can feel rather alone on the high seas of God's calling, especially when everyone is taken up with their own survival and area of living; churches are on hold; the post office is hibernating (and we hear possibly in semi permanent shutdown), and of course the pandemic rules of living are similar in so many countries. Where rules are relaxed it seems numbers start to rise again? Well, the odd thing here is that the rules have never been strictly adhered to, so any relaxing of rules makes very little difference :)

I am focussing on rewriting lessons / courses and that is very time consuming as you can imagine, especially when interruptions come like traffic on a motorway. We are believing The God who sent us here will open doors of His making in His time!!

Thank you for your continuing financial support - it is very valued.

Thank you for your praying - when alone it is a support to our hearts.

Thank you for being there - it is a reminder that we are part of something bigger than what we see.

Thank you for your trust in us - we feel and believe we are on a mission for Jesus

Thank you for hearing the voice of the Spirit - we trust Him to lead you in prayer.

Thank you for your friendship - we are truly grateful (Hallelujah!)

Well, that says it all really, so with our love and until another time, stay blessed and in HIS Peace, and may you soon be able to meet together and lift your voices in happy harmony to Bless the name of HIM who is above all others!!

Peter and Kay



Re-Starting Services in the Church Building

I wrote to all members and friends towards the end of July setting out our plans for the re-opening of the church building for services beginning with the prayer meetings on Wednesday mornings. Those who have come to the prayer meetings during August will have enjoyed meeting in the church garden save when the weather hasn't been so favourable, when we met at the garden end of the hall, socially distant and wearing masks.

We will continue with this, meeting in the garden as long as the weather remains fine as there is no requirement to wear masks outdoors – re-locating into the main hall when it is no longer practical to meet outside.

I was struck by a quote I read in our quiet time in the morning the other day in Scripture Union notes –

“Without God, we cannot; without us, God will not”. God is the God of the miraculous, but He usually works in partnership with us to make the miraculous possible. (Daily Bread SU : Monday 31 August).

We have not been able to meet in the church but the church has been open via zoom and u-tube etc and many more people have been involved in the streamed services on Sunday mornings. God has certainly been working miraculously, working in partnership with us – for which we give God all the glory!

You will not have failed to see the huge banner on the front of our building announcing to the world that we are back in the building for church services from 6 September!

This starts this coming Sunday with an open air communion service in the car park at 10:30 a.m.

We would love it if as many as possible could come but please if possible leave your cars at home but I do appreciate that some have to use cars in which case please park responsibly in the road, remembering not to block people's drives.

There is no need for you to wear masks or face coverings, though if you feel more comfortable wearing one, that is up to you. If you need to use the toilet facilities in the church, the disabled toilet only will be available and on entering the building for this purpose, masks or coverings will need to be worn.

We will observe social distancing rules in the car park in the same way as in church, seats will be placed in the car park at appropriate positions so that families, couples and those in “bubbles” can be together – some may prefer to stand. Bob as the “welcomer” will direct you accordingly. In this way we do not think we need to limit the numbers attending.

The service should last no longer than 30 minutes and will include items from our worship group either pre-recorded or live and whilst we are not allowed to sing, they can and of course we can hum along!! There will be prayers and bible readings.

For those who would like to take communion, there will be the appropriately cut pieces of bread and gluten free wafers and small communion cups with juice on a table just outside the main front doors and you will have the opportunity to come forward to receive communion – please respect social distancing.

I look forward to seeing you but if you have any queries, please ask either Bob or me.

With effect from the following Sunday, the morning worship services will be held in the main hall which according to our risk assessment can accommodate up to 35 people and it would be useful for us to know how many are planning to come – so please drop Maggie or me a note accordingly.

For those who do not feel comfortable attending, the services will continue to be live streamed via u-tube from the church, so look out for the link which will be sent out prior to the service.

Kate Minett is prepared to run Sunday School activities if there is a demand for this and is contacting parents and helpers accordingly.

If you would like to see the risk assessment for these services – please let me know and I will make sure you get a copy.

Speakers at these services during the rest of September are as follows:-

13 September – Clive

20 September – Andrew Royal of the URC

27 September – A report by video will be shared being an update on the work of the Falconer Trust in Zambia which we as a church support. This service will also be our harvest thanksgiving and further information will be shared about that nearer the time.

At present, there are no plans to hold evening services but this will be kept under review and there may be special evening services to be arranged – Watch this space!

News of other activities will be shared as and when there is further news. Please in particular see the note from Corinne regarding the exciting proposal to run a new “Bumps to Babies Group”!

We want to make sure that coming to church is both enjoyable and safe so please bear with us as we make adjustments to our plans accordingly.

God be with you all.

Terence on behalf of the Interim Leadership Team

1 September 2020.

Some thoughts from my garden.

Recently I set about weeding in the vegetable patch in my garden. It was at least 10 days after I returned from a fortnights holiday and, to be honest, I had not touched it for at least a week or more before I went away. You can imagine what it looked like, weeds everywhere amongst the runner beans, potatoes and onions. Some of the weeds looked quite pretty, with light blue or yellow flowers; after all, a weed is just a plant in the wrong place.

As I worked, it was easy to pull up all the large weeds, but this just made the smaller weeds underneath all the more obvious, and if I left those they would simply grow into large weeds. Back to square 1. It was then that God reminded me that sin is like a weed, spreading everywhere if not dealt with, and the smaller, more subtle sins will grow if not dealt with at source.

My mind was led to the parable of the sower. Some seed fell amongst thorns and the corn was choked as it grew, just like my vegetables in the weeds. Other seed fell on good ground and gave an abundant harvest. Stretching the parable slightly, God then said to me that He could change the first example into the second: unlike the farmer in the parable, He is able to weed out everything that spoils our witness if we let Him.

How has your spiritual life been during lockdown? Do you have weeds that need to be dealt with, activities not necessarily bad of themselves, but not what God wants from you? Are you doing something for God that He wants someone else to do, but they cannot because you are doing it? As we go forward together, may we be weed free through Him.

Peter



Pastoral Care update — Care Homes

Three weeks ago Terence and I were invited back to Sobell to resume our weekly services. Due to Covid Regulations we met in the garden but it was great fun and everyone was delighted to see each other. Further visits are weather dependent and we are just taking it a week at a time.

Sobell also asked to receive the Church's link for the online Summer Specials and the carers have undertaken to show them to the residents as and when they are on duty.

Our own Martha Isted has been my link with Staplehurst Manor as she is the Activities Officer. Again, she has used the Church's link to share services with the residents when she has been on duty. From time to time she has also asked me to video short messages and a couple of songs to show to the residents, which I have been more than happy to do.

This gave me the idea to record similar messages for Ruby in Abbotsleigh.

Esme, the Activities Officer, has been very helpful offering to show Ruby videos on her own phone. She also receives the Church's online link for services and shows them to Ruby when she can.

Iden Manor have been offered the link for online services but so far I haven't hear back from them.

All in all, I think you will agree that this is encouraging news. Please keep the Care Homes in your prayers.

Ruby Lacey and Kathy Street

If you have a moment, why not send a note to Ruby. I'm sure she would be delighted to hear from you. Also it would brighten Kathy Street's day to receive a phone call or a card as she is finding life a little limiting at the moment with a broken wrist.

"Therefore encourage one another and build one another up just as in fact you are doing." (1 Thess 5:11)

Lots of love Kate x

Thank you

We would like to say a huge thank you to Linda for her sterling work keeping our church toilets sparkling clean and absolutely immaculate over the last couple of years. However Linda feels that now is the right time to step down from this role, so we are seeking a replacement volunteer. Currently only the disabled toilet is being used so is the only one which would need to be cleaned regularly, however as and when we are able to resume more activities the role will eventually include cleaning the other five every week too. If you would like to learn more or are able to help with this behind the scenes but important function please speak to Maggie. Thank you



Community Centre for Debt Advice – Staplehurst

As many of you will be aware, the local debt advice centre is based in the Free Church, although we have worked remotely throughout lockdown. It has been a very quiet period with creditors not bothering to chase debts. However, we have had some very positive results for one client – I will call him David.

David first came to us 2 years ago, brought by a support worker from KERS (Kent Enablement and Recovery Service) – a KCC service giving short term, targeted support to mental health patients. David was in a very bad way mentally and his financial situation was serious. He had almost £30,000 of debt. His ongoing health problems meant that he would probably never work again, so we needed to find a solution to ease his anxiety. Given the total debt, David was not eligible for a Debt Relief Order – an insolvency solution that results in the whole debt being frozen immediately and written off a year after the application. Anxiety over the public nature of bankruptcy meant that he rejected that solution, so we negotiated a payment plan that set him paying just £1 per month to each creditor. At that rate it would take him 150 years to pay off the debt! With medical evidence to back up our request, this plan was accepted. Over the last year or so we have asked David's creditors to write off his debt but they have not agreed. However, the lockdown situation seemed to change things. Over the last couple of months 3 creditors have written off debts to a total of about £17,000 meaning that David is now eligible for a DRO. We are aiming to complete the application process within the next month or so and he will be debt free by Christmas.

It is such a privilege to be a "Jesus person" and stand in the gap for someone - taking their burden, fighting their cause and seeing them set free. Proverbs 31 v 8 says: "Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy".

If you would like to know more about the Debt Advice Centre, please speak to Sue Twort or Corinne.



Community
Centre for
Debt Advice
Staplehurst

Roger's Railway Sing-a-long

Roger has made a video with his train set as a child friendly sing-a-long. If you would like to join in the fun with a gospel message, follow the link below!

<https://youtu.be/JrEZr-MrmTE>





Free Bees bumps to babes group



In March this year we had to close the Free Bees toddler group following the COVID19 guidance. At the time I followed other groups, discussing the future and not anticipating re-opening until January. This seemed very extreme but is sadly now becoming a reality.

Although current government guidelines would allow for the re-opening of toddler groups, the restrictions are such that it would make it very difficult, stressful and quite likely not very enjoyable. As a consequence we have no plans to open in September.

In recent months I have become aware of the plight of new parents – couples who have had babies born during lockdown. They have had very little face to face interaction with health professionals, friends or family, leaving them isolated, fearful and not even able to have the pleasure of showing off their new baby. These families, with young babies, are easier to support as social distancing rules can be followed. We have taken the decision, with the support of the leadership, to open a temporary 'bumps to babes' group. The group will welcome pregnant mums and new parents with their non-moving babies. It will run on a Thursday morning in place of the usual Free Bees group. At such time as restrictions allow for the more normal functioning of toddler groups we will assess how to proceed. The new group may continue to run, man-power willing or may be absorbed into Free Bees.

We are so lucky at SFC to have a fantastic 'café space' and are able to make use of it for the new group. We will run the group as a 'support café' which will help with social distancing and will enable us to provide drinks, snacks and cakes. In this environment attendees won't have to wear masks as we will come under the government guidelines for hospitality spaces rather than places of worship.

We would really appreciate your support in prayer for this new group, as we attempt to facilitate new parents forming friendships and support groups, whilst showing them the unconditional love of Jesus. Please get in touch if you would like to help out.

Corinne

Welcomers Rota for September

6th — Bob

13th — Graham and Brenda

20th — David and Nic

27th — Clive and Kate

Friends of Kent Churches Sponsored Ride and Stride

This year's Sponsored Ride and Stride for Churches will take place on Saturday 12th September. Due to Covid-19 restrictions Staplehurst Free Church will not be open this year but we would still welcome cyclists and walkers to participate and support us.

If you would like a sponsorship form or further details please contact Roy Barclay on 01580-890247 or email roybarclay@freenetname.co.uk.

Visiting cyclists/walkers should note that no refreshments will be available, nor will there be any toilet facilities at the Free Church.



Staplehurst Free Church Interim Leadership Team

Terence Hawgood
Bob and Mary Howse
Clive Jones
Kate Henry

Treasurer: Roger Bashford

Staplehurst Free Church

Church Administrator - Maggie Martin

Email: churchadmin@staplehurstfreechurch.org.uk **Office Tel No.:** 01580 893993
www.staplehurstfreechurch.org.uk

Services in September

Sunday 6th	10.30am	Communion in the Car Park
Sunday 13th	10.30am	Worship, Word and Holy Communion <i>Speaker: Clive Jones</i>
Sunday 20th	10.30am	Worship, Word and Holy Communion <i>Speaker: Andrew Royal from the United Reformed Church</i>
Sunday 27th	10.30am	Worship, Word and All-Age Holy Communion <i>Recorded message from Neil Starling, the Falconer Trust</i>

Enabling everyone to know Jesus
and grow in a personal relationship with Him

**STAPLEHURST
FREE CHURCH**