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St John's Church

Elmswell

Parish Review 2015

Our goal is to
Know Christ and make Him Known

As a church family, we aim to:

- Demonstrate God's love to the world
- Declare the good news of Jesus Christ
- Depend on God as part of his family

1. Worship

We are very privileged at St John's to have a congregation made up of all ages and our worship reflects this. On the first Sunday in the month we have a thriving 9:30am All Age service, which is averaging over 50 people and is attracting some new families. We have many involved in leading the music at this service and the cajón drum is a most welcome recent addition. Also on the first Sunday is the traditional BCP service, much valued by those who enjoy the traditional language and format.

On other Sundays, we aim to have a balance between the organ and band and I am very grateful to the Blays who head up the contemporary music on the second and fourth Sundays in the month. It is very encouraging to see Annabel Standen gain in confidence with her involvement on the third Sunday (as well as the other musicians too, of course). Great thanks also go to Jean Turner for her excellent organ playing and leading of our wonderful choir.

It is also encouraging to see some newer people getting involved in sidespeople duties, cleaning, serving refreshments and reading and praying.

Central to our time together is receiving from God as we sit under the authority of his Word. 2015 saw us spend time in the first 6 chapters of Mark's Gospel, the letter of 1 Peter, parables of Jesus, the book of Proverbs and Jesus' teaching about his return at the end of the age. God's word feeds us spiritually and it is important to spend time hearing from him – "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16).

In 2015 we improved our audio-visual facilities. No more do we have to work round a projector on a trolley in the middle of the dais. Instead the new projector, along with the TV screens, enables all to see song words, video clips and sermon presentations clearly.



We enjoyed a number of special services in 2015 – starting with a new evening service to mark Epiphany (thank you, Miriam) through Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday and Good Friday, to Time to Remember and Christmas (to name a few). People continue to be blessed by our services of Healing and Wholeness and it was wonderful to welcome Battsford Praise Band for an excellent time of praise and worship in September.

Many thanks to all who make St John's such a welcoming and godly place of worship. It is my hope and prayer that we will feel the touch of God's Holy Spirit as we come to meet together to offer him our praise, our thanksgiving and, indeed, our very selves.

Peter Goodridge

2. Youth & Children's Work

Children and youth work at St. John's takes place largely on Sunday mornings in term times during regular 10.30am services. A crèche is provided for the very young each week with toys and an adult supervisor. Explorers (4-9 years old) and Pathfinders (10 to 13 years old) meet in their own rooms. CYFA (14 to 18's) is a growing group with 8 or 9 regular attenders, which meets on Sunday evenings. It was great to see our young people have such an active part in the Good Friday service.

In addition to these regular times of teaching, SlamJam youth choir practice once a month on Saturday afternoons and have performed many times in 2015 - Mothering Sunday, the Fun Day in June, Harvest, Remembrance Sunday, the November concert and the Christmas Eve 3.30pm crib service. Many young people are involved in the 9.30am music group too.

The Explorers group, which has up to 7 members and 8 adult leaders (who operate on a termly rota), have looked at several books of the bible during the year including Samuel, Kings, Psalms, all the gospels and Acts. Sessions always include a fun opening introduction to the topic, a bible story and a way to encourage the children to use what they have learned in the days and weeks ahead, for example how God uses unexpected opportunities in our lives to tell people we know about Him.



In December, all the children and youth joined together in a session to enjoy a nativity play written for us by Pam Millyard, we learned how Jesus has paid the price for all of us - a great time was had by all involved.

We have also welcomed over 20 Beavers in February, where they learnt about baptism, the Lord's Supper and a Bible story, as well as enjoying some craft and refreshments. The primary school came in for their Harvest service and Little Elms for their Christmas Nativity. We are also privileged to go into the school for assemblies and as part of the Open the Book team.

Thanks to all who work so hard at St John's with young people, both in the church and in the community.

Caroline Long

3. Prayer Life

Our prayers for St John's are the power house; the engine of our parish. Thus, it is a vital part of our ministry here.

The fortnightly prayer meetings take place on Saturdays at 9am in the side chapel (or church room on cold days). Here we can bring the concerns of the parish, or ourselves, to the Lord. There have been some wonderful answers to our prayers. Do come and join us if you can.

The prayer chain is there for us all. Run and organised by Lisa, it is a great blessing to know there will be 34 or more people interceding on our behalf soon after Lisa receives the requests, by phone or email.

After the morning service, on the third Sunday in the month, there is someone in the side chapel to listen and pray with anyone who would like the ministry. Indeed, after any service we can always seek out someone for prayer.

The chapel is there for our use. It is a comfortable and special place. It also includes a "prayer tree", where we can leave a request for prayer.

Pam Millyard

4. Home Groups

Some 27 adults meet regularly at three locations in Elmswell – the Tuesday evening and Wednesday afternoon groups meet fortnightly while the Wednesday evening group meets every week.

Bible study (Mark, Ruth, 1 Corinthians and an Overview of the Bible) prayer, laughter, questions and learning together, sharing joys and worries and social events e.g. Passover Meal go to make up the varied programme of each group.

As one of the group leaders, I can honestly say that I look forward to each meeting and always come away enriched by members' faith and blessed by their contributions.

So why not join us? We would love to see you.

Richard Webb

Mums the Word

Mums the Word continues to meet weekly during term time on a Thursday morning at the Rectory. It is a lovely group of Mums - not just from St John's, but from other churches as well - who meet to study God's Word together, pray and encourage each other.

Recently we have gone through the Christianity Explored course, "Life on the Frontline" (sharing our faith with others) and Biblical Womanhood. We are extremely grateful to the ladies who help in the crèche each week, without whom the group could not exist.

Lisa Goodridge

Coffee Break

Coffee Break meets during term time at the Rectory between 10.00am and 11.15am on Monday mornings. As well as having a chat together over coffee or tea (and, of course, other nice treats), we have a 5 to 10 minute Biblical Thought for the Day, which has sparked some very interesting conversations.

Coffee Break is an ideal place to get to know others in the Church and is a welcoming place to bring a friend. People can come regularly or occasionally, as they wish.

Lisa Goodridge

5. Ladies Lunch

The St John's Ladies Lunch, which was started in January 1998, has had another very successful year welcoming ladies from the church and beyond once a month to the Wesley Hall. Homemade soup, roll and cheese, followed by fruit, cake and coffee or tea are served. Each month there is a short talk covering numerous subjects of interest and insight into the speaker's life and faith. On average 35 ladies attend and at Christmas men friends and relations are invited to join the party.

In the summer a "hats party" is organised when all ladies wear hats of various styles and a buffet meal is served. This was initially a garden party in the rectory garden but moved to the Wesley Hall because of unreliable weather.

Every year a different charity is supported by collecting loose coins and most recently the money has been sent to the Suffolk Accident Rescue Service. Donations of teddy bears collected during the year are given to the St John's Christmas Fair for the teddy bear tombola.

All ladies are welcome to join us and a list is left in the church for folk to add their names. It is helpful to know how many will be present.

We thank God for another year of friendship and fellowship and the committee members are grateful to all who assist in any way. We trust this will continue even though the future of the Wesley Hall is unknown.

Margaret Hitchins

6. Men's Breakfast

During the year, four men's breakfasts took place with an average of between 16 and 20 men sitting down to a breakfast, which is best not seen by a dietician.

This meal is normally followed by a speaker, who gives a presentation on a Christian related topic for about 20 minutes. Questions and answers usually produce an interesting discussion.

A donation is then made to the speaker's charity, before the usual chores have to be undertaken.

Tony Chaplin

7. Summer Fun Day



With no Summer Fair being organised, June 2015 instead saw a Summer Fun Day. This was held in and around our magnificent church building.

We enjoyed entertainment from Slam Jam and Alastair Blay – both performing excellently as usual. There were opportunities to try out football skills, have your face painted, splat the Rector with a wet sponge or be a guitar hero on the Playstation. Food was aplenty in the café or outside at the barbecue and various jewellery items, jams, pies, cakes and plants were on sale. Many thanks to everybody who made this such an enjoyable afternoon.

Peter Goodridge

8. Christmas Fair

A big thank you to our wonderful team, who again helped to provide a really enjoyable afternoon.

The café was really busy and a queue formed to buy raffle tickets for the Grand Draw, with prizes donated mainly by the church family. We had the usual range of stalls and things to take part in - Messy Church, Bible quiz, competitions, teddy tombola, the wonderful cake stall, books and an amazing range of bags to buy. We tried some new stalls and some were more successful than others, but as always there was the chance to win a Christmas cake or a gingerbread house.

The choir provided Christmas Carols and Father Christmas made an appearance, much to the delight of the younger visitors.

We raised over £2000, but as always it would be lovely to improve things. So, once more, if you have any ideas or would be willing to help in any way, however small, we would be very grateful. The Ladies Lunch has already started collecting teddies for the teddy tombola!

Our aim is part mission and part fund-raising, but most of all that everyone has a really good time. Thank you.

Linda Barber

9. Summer Barbecue



The Church Barbecue was held at the Rectory on a beautiful summer afternoon in July. It was lovely to have so many people of every age gathered together to feast on sausages, burgers, salads and ice cream and to enjoy games or simply chat and get to know each other better.

Peter Goodridge

10. Autumn Concert

The Autumn Concert held at St John's on 21st November 2015 was a great success, raising £400+ for the fabric of the Church. It was arranged and organised by Alastair and Angela Blay, who created the programme and played solo piano, cor anglais and trombone, as well as accompanying others. Jean Turner organised and rehearsed four choir items – the concert ended with their blessing of "As you go on your way," which was the perfect way to finish! Several of Angela's pupils from Elm Tree Music played solos, a memorable moment being 7-year old Tom on recorder – you could have heard a pin drop! Sue Wright led Slam Jam choir in two songs, very well received, including The Wind In My Sails, Sue's own composition using Pam Millyard's poem. Other Church members to perform included Brenda, Barbara and Linda in two memorable songs from the Old Time Music Hall, Grace

and Caroline Long performing a Disney piano duet, Katrina Bull and Annabel Standen playing solos and Peter, Philip, Mark and Jane singing English Country Garden. Many thanks to those who helped with refreshments & washing up...the Shloer, hot chocolate and cake went down a treat! All in all, it was a wonderful, entertaining, varied and happy evening! Thank you to all involved.

Angela Blay

11. Marriage By Design

Last May we again ran the Marriage By Design day. This is an excellent course developed by Care for the Family. We run the day each year to help couples getting married in the parish or local area prepare for their married life together.

Marriage by Design enables couples to take some time out to talk with each other about their relationship. They have the opportunity to share with their fiancé their hopes, dreams and fears for the future and to think through various skills which can help their marriage be as strong and robust as it can be.

At the same time, we aim to give couples a day as enjoyable as the best date they could go on. Last year the Church Room was decorated beautifully with heart-shaped balloons and a delicious lunch prepared.

Marriage is so important and it is a privilege to help couples invest in their relationship together.

Peter Goodridge

12. The Friends of St John's Church

'The Friends' was started in 1995 when St John's church was in need of urgent roof repairs. Since then we have raised well in excess of £55,000 by holding Coffee Mornings, Art , Flower and Craft Festivals, Concerts. Suppers, Beetle Drives etc. We also have items for sale such as Tea Towels, Mugs, Cookery Books and Book Marks.

Membership is open to anyone who is interested in maintaining our lovely, historic church. The subscription rate is £5 per annum (minimum) and as we are a registered charity we are happy to supply a Gift Aid form.

Proceeds from our events go into the Church Fabric Fund and can be used for repairs, maintenance, insurance, etc.

If you would like to join 'The Friends' please ask Jean Folkard (tel: 242099) for a membership form.

Jean Folkard

Lent Lunches

This was a new venture for us where we had a Bible study, with questions and discussion. This was followed by a lunch of soup, bread and tea or coffee. We started with about 8 people, but this number increased to around 14 by the end of Lent. Donations were collected each week and the money went to the food bank in Stowmarket.

Barbara Yeates

13. Christians Together in Elmswell (formerly Elmswell Fellowship of Churches)

a. General Information

For over 40 years the Churches in Elmswell have met to worship together at Christmas, Easter, Pentecost and for the last 12 years or so have run a Children's Holiday Club in the Summer.

Our aim is to encourage Christian people who live in Elmswell to share fellowship, but invariably since the Methodist Church closed for worship our attendance numbers have fallen with just the Anglican, Baptist and the few remaining Methodist residents who attend the services.

We would love to welcome people of any denomination or none to our united services which are advertised in the Elmswell Newsletter.

For more information contact Jean Folkard, Secretary (tel: 242099), Christians Together in Elmswell.

Jean Folkard

b. Open the Book

We now have a team of 11 of us from St John's and the Baptist Church, who visit Elmswell School three or four times per term on a Wednesday morning. We act out stories from both the Old and the New Testament during School Assembly.

As the children enter and leave the hall, we aim to find a suitable song to go with our story, preferably with actions so that they can be part of our offering: these songs are usually very lively and we all really enjoy taking part.

Since Christmas, we have told the stories of "The Epiphany," "The Ten Lepers" but only one came back to thank Jesus, "The Widow's Mite," finishing the term with "The Story of Easter."

We are assembling a good set of our own costumes and have access to extra props as and when they are needed. Sometimes these props keep everyone guessing as to what the stories are about.

Brenda Begg

c. **Holiday Club**

Circus Fantastica was the name of the 2015 Holiday Club, which was held at the Blackbourne in mid-August. About 60 primary school children and 25 young helpers aged between 11 and 18 (known as the “Fit Crew”) attended. It was another fun week full of games, magic tricks, puppets, craft, songs, entertainment and Bible teaching. The Fit Crew excelled themselves as they got stuck into helping out with the games, craft and leading a dance routine. Once again the football, relay racing, the parachute and dance class were all very popular. This year there was also the opportunity to try out some circus skills.



Up front leading was exciting and engaging - thanks to our good friends, Ian and Elaine Coules, who again travelled down from Liverpool. The couple mix limitless energy with an enthusiasm for God. This year Ian and Elaine spoke about how amazing Jesus is – he is an amazing friend, an amazing helper with amazing strength, an amazing healer with amazing love and an amazing provider.

Parents and friends joined us for a taster of “Circus Fantastica” and a hot dog supper with an abundance of cake on the Thursday evening.



Special thanks to Ian and Elaine Coules, the Fit Crew and to all the adults, who worked so hard all week to make it such a “fantastica” event! It is one of the year’s highlights and a great privilege to see all the children having such a super time.

Peter Goodridge

14. International and Home Mission Committee

We give thanks that the years of patient translation work undertaken by Tim Curtis in the Paraguayan Chaco have resulted in the printing of the entire Bible in the Exnet language. While individual members will continue to support Tim's work, as he considers his future, it seems a suitable point at which to find a fresh mission link for the whole church. The committee is aware of the importance of encouraging our children and young people to become interested and supportive of mission work both at home and abroad, as well as maintaining prayerful and practical support for mission by the whole Church family.

After much discussion, considering several options, the Committee felt that Peter should explore the possibilities of forming links with work in Kagera, through our Diocesan Link Advisor and the committee hopes before long to have specific suggestions for the church family to consider.

Catherine Joughin

15. CMS (formerly SAMS)

It is true that God has a perfect plan for our lives if only we would follow his instructions, attending to his Word and spending time in prayer. Gaining encouragement by praising and sharing things together.

When we think about the endeavour to bring the Word of God to the Énxet people delivered in their own language written down, we marvel at the translation teams perseverance over many years. We can be sure that trusting God to give them understanding together with steadfast prayer and practical giving from supporters from many places has seen this work reach a happy conclusion. Currently 4000 bibles are eagerly awaited from Sao Paulo, Brazil allowing the launch of the Énxet Bible deeper into the communities that so need to hear. With continuing prayers for this work and encouragement to those who are practising their reading skills, it is a very exciting time. The latest CMS link letter from Tim Curtis in the Paraguayan Chaco paints the scene very well and there is clearly great excitement about the arrival of the bibles and also the latest oral recordings, painstakingly practised by 30 now competent readers who encompass many age groups.

We all need inspiration and trust, when things are slow to come to fruition, but surely there is a lesson for us all in this fine example of how to trust and obey God's leadership. It is the race for the best way to live that is offered to us, and at whatever pace it is worth running.

Celia Richards

16. CPAS

The Church Pastoral Aid Society was founded in 1836 and for many years we at St John's have been privileged to help support their work of spreading the Gospel through local churches, youth camps, house parties and publication of resources for church evangelism and teaching in the Church of England.

Our support for the Society by prayer and giving has continued during the past year. On 14th June 2015, Rev John Fisher came to speak at St John's for our CPAS Sunday, which produced a collection for CPAS of £230.56. Also the CPAS collection boxes totalled £221.00. A further donation of £175.00 from the General Purposes Fund was made later in the year. If anyone wishes to have a box to support the work of CPAS please speak to Margaret Hitchins.

Margaret Hitchins

17. Foodbank



St John's continues to support the Stowmarket Foodbank and they are very grateful to receive our help. The Foodbank exists to provide individuals and families in the local area, who are in crisis, with emergency food parcels. They work with local organisations to identify individuals and families in need, which also helps reduce fraud.

We have a box at the back of church for donations of food items. There is normally a list of most required items next to it. The Foodbank are also happy to receive donations of money for specific emergency purchases.

We were delighted that the Friends' Lent Lunches also raised money to help this worthy cause.

Lisa Goodridge