

# St John's Mission Newsletter

Reaching out at home and overseas

Mission Sunday 7th November 2021



Go and make disciples of all nations...teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you

Matthew 28:18-20



Sports Chaplaincy UK,

Matt Baker, National Director for England

twitter @gambettola68 and Sports Chaplaincy UK @sportchaplaincy

All change at Charlton once again! It didn't work out with the most recently appointed manager, Nigel Adkins, who was sacked in October. That was a shame as I got on well with him and he is a strong advocate of chaplaincy. As I write we have a caretaker manager, Johnnie Jackson, who has started very well. I've known Johnnie for years, again he supports the chaplaincy role so it would be great if he gets offered the role permanently. On the women's side of things chaplain Kathryn Sales continues to do a great job with the new full time team and is very involved. At academy level with the youth teams Gareth Morgan is still very much appreciated and is doing his role as a hybrid of in person and remote support.

- ◆ Please do continue to pray for favour on chaplaincy at Charlton and for wisdom and capacity for all of us as chaplains as we still face many issues raised by the pandemic

In October we held our annual Sports Chaplaincy UK conference, again online for the second year running. As always this was aimed at resourcing chaplains with some of the issues they were facing. Under the title "Fit to Serve" we looked at subjects such as Mental Resilience, Lamenting and Nurturing Hope all in the light of where society and sport is at in the current pandemic and coming through lockdowns

- ◆ Pray for all those chaplains who were at Conference and that they can put into practice some of the strategies suggested in both their chaplaincy and personal lives

Given how difficult it has been to meet with people in sport over the last year or so I am encouraged by the fact that we have still been able to make appointments. Recent appointments in football have been made at Leyton Orient, Coventry, Morecambe and West Bromwich. I am still looking to appoint at Blackheath Rugby Club and am having tentative discussions regarding chaplaincy in motor racing. We have also recently appointed someone to oversee chaplaincy in Disability and All-ability sport as this is an expanding area within sport in the UK

- ◆ Give thanks for the recent appointments & pray for success in the other areas mentioned
- ◆ Due to ongoing Covid restrictions not all chaplains are physically present again yet so please pray that individual clubs and sports would open up again to chaplaincy support as this is so needed by many individuals

Finally I am in the last 6 months of the contract we have with the football governing bodies – Premier League, Football League & Professional Footballers' Association. My role very much depends on this funding so please pray for the discussions over the next few months and for success in this so we can move the work forward.

## The Medhurst - Hebron School, Ooty, India

It's hard to believe that we are already approaching the end of our first year at Hebron School - a residential school in South India, serving Christian worker families across South East Asia and beyond. Beginning a new life / job / ministry during a pandemic has certainly had its many challenges, but we are thankful to God for calling us to this unique school and amazing part of the world, and feel very much a part of the school community now. This week is a very special one in the life of our school and education in India in general as *finally*, students across all year groups have been invited to return to school, the majority of whom have been studying online (or in the case of many millions across the country, not studying very much at all!) for more than 19 months.

As Covid cases continued to drop in July and August, the senior four year groups were permitted to return to school from the first week of September. At this point we began our new role of Dorm Parenting the Year 12 boys. We love it and feel absolutely called to the important job of being *loco parentis* to these young men, but wow - it's full on! Balancing our teaching load, our own three boys and our 17 teenage sons, for whom we are 'on call' round the clock, six days a week means that there is very little down time. In addition, Bene has begun another new role of overseeing the academics for Years 10 and 11, and Rachel is helping to bring back Drama to the school and is directing a play with a cast of around 30 students, and also a staff pantomime, both to be performed in the first week of December.

In India these days, overt Christian ministry is very closely monitored and becoming increasingly so. We regularly hear stories about the persecution of Christians in India are constantly praying for the persecuted church here and for those Christian organisations that have been forced to close under the current government regulations. We are therefore really grateful to be in a Christian school where we are able to worship freely with our colleagues and students and we have enjoyed the privilege of being able to share at youth meetings and during our weekly dorm devotions over this past term. Many of our students are hungry for God - for reassurance and security - after such a turbulent couple of years, and it's an honour to be able to support them on their faith journey.

### Please join us in praising God for:

- ◆ The past 7 weeks of Year 10-13 students, breathing life back in the school!
- ◆ The happy news that ALL year groups can return to school from this week.
- ◆ The opportunity to contribute to the education, pastoral care and faith journey of so many young people.
- ◆ Our own kids, Eden (8), Judah (6) and Shiloh (4) being increasingly happy and settled.
- ◆ India-UK travel being open meaning that we can come back to the UK for Christmas!

### Please join us in praying for:

- ◆ Balance and rest for us in the face of a very busy life and schedule here. For God's continued guidance and wisdom as we balance parenting our own children with dorm parenting, teaching and other responsibilities.
- ◆ The mental and physical health of our student body - there are many issues to navigate on the back of this tough couple of years.
- ◆ The persecuted church in India, especially for safety for the Christian worker families that Hebron serves

Thank you for praying with and for us. We're so thankful for our St John's family and remember you often in prayer too.

## Jessica O'Callaghan – UCCF Relay Worker at Southampton University

I am volunteering as a Relay Worker, continuing on with the work that I did as Personal Evangelism Co-ordinator at Southampton University Student Union. My role involves working alongside and supporting the CU, as well as meeting with individuals on a 1-2-1 basis. There is also regular training sessions to grow spiritually and develop my evangelism skills.

The start of the term with Freshers' week was jam-packed welcoming new and returning students into the university community, and loving them with the love Jesus loved us with first. Whilst safety was still at the forefront of the events, it was amazing to be able to spend time with students in-person. It was also so encouraging seeing how willing and servant-hearted returning students were; seeing students give up their time and intentionally get to know new students was such a joy! I'm inviting Freshers to my house for brunch to get to know them and help them settle into university life, with the hope of also encouraging other students to do the same with both Christian and non-Christian friends. So far this has been one of the highlights of my week!

I have had the opportunity to spend some time away with the rest of the Team. It was a really refreshing time to reset, pray, worship and learn together, encourage each other, share how we are doing and just enjoy spending time together. Sometimes Relay can feel a little isolating, so I've found it so valuable taking some time out and being with those in the same area of ministry.

Recently, I lead my first bible study at our impact group leaders training session on Luke 11: 37-44. We meet weekly to help prepare and support the students in leading their small groups. I have also started to meet with a few students on a 1-2-1 basis, weekly or fortnightly, to build deeper relationships, read some of the bible and pray together, and encourage them in their faith and general life whilst at uni.

### Please pray:

- ◆ Thank God that He is faithful and a solid foundation through every season of life.
- ◆ That I would prioritise my personal relationship with God, especially when term gets busy
- ◆ For building deep relationships with CU members.
- ◆ Preparation of 1-2-1 and Impact Group leaders training Bible studies.

## Rafael de Lima, Ministry Trainee - Christ Church Fulwood, Sheffield

During our first year of Bible training at Fulwood Church, we trainees studied Genesis, Matthew, Romans, 1/2 Samuel, Psalms, and 1/2 Timothy. We've been meeting on Sunday afternoons with other team leaders to study the gospel of John in preparation for our study sessions on Tuesday evenings, after "spud bar". And back in September I and another member of our congregation started leading a Wednesday Daytime Group at church for a few of our elderly members; we're currently studying the book of Numbers.

At the beginning of August, I served at the Oakes during their second summer camp, and we had a great time going through the gospel of John while helping the children to go through the questions "How do Christians know there's a God?", "How did Jesus prove he's God's Son?", and "How can people get to be with God?". If you'd like to try to spot me in their summer camps video, please have a go: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3W9AW9B7ar4>

I had a lovely time seeing a few of you from London in person back in July. Hopefully I'll have the opportunity to see more of you in person towards the end of this year.

Thank you as well for interceding for me since I started this journey. And I'd really appreciate your prayers for: more opportunities and proactiveness to share the gospel with non-Christians this year; more patience with my own limitations and gratitude for how God has made me; more wisdom, boldness, and creativity to apply what we've been learning so that it's not just accumulate head-knowledge; and a renewal of mind regarding who I think God is and what He can do.



### Neema Crafts, Iringa Tanzania, Update by Ben & Katy Ray

Our latest news is that we have Bibi (Barbara) safely with us in Iringa! She flew into Dar last weekend and we spent the kids' half-term break up there where we could do some extra work on the shop. We were very encouraged to see tourists starting to trickle back since travel restrictions have been eased (praise God!).

Please could we ask for the following prayer points:

- ◆ Praise God that travel restrictions have eased and we are starting to see tourists slowly coming back.
- ◆ Pray that there would be a better uptake of the vaccine by those who are most vulnerable amongst our artisans and across the country as a whole before the rainy season - there is often a spike of cases in Jan - March.
- ◆ Praise God for the wonderful collaboration between Neema Crafts and Sifa Collective, please pray we could continue to communicate well and remain unified.
- ◆ Please pray for two of our deaf tailors Jane and Evelyn, both have quite severe health issues, please join us in asking God for their complete healing.
- ◆ We are so encouraged that our cafe receptionist Chiku has committed her life to Christ after a long time deliberating (she is from a partially Muslim background), pray for Chloe Chettleburgh as she meets with her and Emmy (from weaving) to study the Bible together.
- ◆ Please pray for Katy and I during the very busy Christmas season. For safe travels to markets across the country, for strength and wisdom to manage all of the logistics and space for ourselves and family.
- ◆ Please pray for Diana Nzagi who is our new recruit to the role of Operations Manager at the Centre. This will hopefully free Katy (and Chloe) up from a big amount of work, but pray that training can go well.
- ◆ Please pray we can recruit a suitable General Manager (Ben's role) either local Tanzanian or a mission partner over the coming months.
- ◆ Please pray for enough light for our next steps as a family as we start to plan for a potential move to Arusha next year.

In other news, now that travel restrictions have eased, we are looking to head back to the UK for our furlough April - July next year. We really don't know yet where in the UK we might be based, so please do let us know if there might be a suitable place for us to rent (family of 5) in SE London! We're also hoping to send Zaki and Alessia to school for the Summer Term in the UK, so that is also a big consideration.



### Following Jesus where the need is greatest, Update by Ann Hill

Afghanistan Crisis Appeal: Tearfund has launched an urgent Appeal in response to the desperate suffering in Afghanistan. Tearfund has local partners who are able to provide emergency relief packages to those who have fled their homes, and trauma support for those affected by the horrific violence. The country is on the verge of economic collapse, and the worst drought in decades means supplies of food and water are limited. Half the population are on the brink of starvation and winter is approaching. A donation of £5000 was sent from St John's. There is huge suffering, and the future is uncertain.

**Harvest Appeal:** Families that rely on agriculture to provide an income are forced to go without when crops fail. The climate crisis has pushed many families to the brink of survival. Tearfund's harvest appeal is in response to the loss of incomes among those who were already struggling and whose fragile livelihoods are now worsened due to lockdowns, curfews, and illness.

Please pray for:

- ◆ the safety and wellbeing of people in Afghanistan, and protection for Tearfund's partners
- ◆ peace and an end to drought in Afghanistan and elsewhere
- ◆ wisdom for those taking decisions at the COP26 summit and courage to heed the call for action.

### Eden Team @ Beacon Church Blackpool – Matt & Hannah Lockwood

For those who don't know, Hannah and I lead the Eden Team at Beacon Church Blackpool. With our team we live in and reach out to our community of Revoe. Revoe is the second highest area of social deprivation in Britain (the following 8 are also in Blackpool).

We've been so amazed by what God has been and is doing here. We are now 13 weeks in and as of the 12th October have our own house! That is a massive answer to prayer. We spent 11 fantastic weeks living in the vicarage which has certainly cemented our relationship with Adrian (vicar), Fran (wife) and the kids but we are really pleased to now have our own space and start settling into our new home here in Revoe.

When we arrived, we were handed a 'Love your Neighbour' Grant that had been given to the church earlier in the year. This is a grant which allows mini grants to be spent on families in emergency need, providing an item such as a washing machine, fridge freezer, school uniform etc. Through referrals from local organisations we have been able to give just under £10,000 of goods and uniform to local families in need and build some fantastic relationships with our local community.

In September we launched a new congregation on a Sunday afternoon called 'Families at Four'. This is a lively, interactive service with craft, songs, a short talk and finishes with food! We had no idea how this was going to go and in all honesty we have been blown away. Each week the church building is bursting at the seams with families from Revoe, the majority having never attended church for a service before September. It has been such a blessing and is a genuine highlight of our week.

A huge part of our job is living in community with our neighbours. Through relationships built through Families at Four, our parent/toddler group and the grant scheme some authentic men's ministry has started. This so far has included a steak night and plans to build a set for the Families at Four Nativity Service. Alongside this, we have managed to build up a small community of people from Revoe who join us for Park Run each week. This is one of Hannah's favourite parts of the week and Matt says he doesn't enjoy it but he does really... It has been amazing to see relationships form in a context that we just turn up too rather than have to organise and it is a great start in encouraging healthy lifestyles.

#### Prayer Points:

- ◆ For strengthening relationships that we are building with families in our community
- ◆ For us as we work at creating barriers in our new home and protecting time together in our marriage
- ◆ For vision as we think through how the manage numbers at Families at Four as we are already very close to maximum capacity



### London City Mission, Alan Black Director of Studies,

#### LCM Children, Youth and Schools Team

Children at a primary school in south London had a choice of lunchtime clubs to attend. Alongside chess, arts and crafts and coding, the list also had another option: Bible Club. "We were always oversubscribed," says Laurah. "It's Muslims, as well as kids with no experience of church at all. And it's really clear that children didn't come just to pass the time, but to really engage with what we discussed."

LCM missionary Laurah Gordon who visited each Friday to lead the half-hour sessions, involving Bible teaching and related games and crafts. "It's not just Christian children who came along," says Laurah. "It's Muslims, as well as kids with no experience of church at all. And it's really clear that children didn't come just to pass the time, but to really engage with what we discussed." Please pray for our Children, Youth and School's teams as they engage with churches and schools across London and for churches to be alive to this opportunity. "A lot of people don't realise that teachers are looking for churches to engage with," said Laurah.

## LCM contd...

### LCM Prison Ministry Team

A prisoner released during the first lockdown has gone from strength to strength. He's now in full-time work, rents his own place and goes to church. He sees his kids all the time, and some day he wants to bring them to church. He's doing really well. But that said, we had to journey with him through many challenges for a long time. Many come to faith in prison, but sadly most do not that sort of support when they are released and are quickly fall back into their old way of life. There are several different ministries to prisoners in prison, but very few that will journey with those same people when they come out. That is the focus of our team; to enthuse and equip churches to love and disciple those coming out of prison as they struggle with the system, resist temptation, and seek to rebuild healthy relationships. Please pray for many churches who will love and disciple those who have trusted Christ in prison but have no connection with his family outside of prison.



### Greenwich Street Pastors - Update by Christine Legg

It has been five months since we resumed our 'soft' patrols since lockdown. We go out for a couple of hours from 7pm – 9pm, instead of 9pm – 1 am and perhaps our times will change. We have seen Woolwich getting busier over this period, new restaurants, pop-up vans and even an open-air cinema. There are still a few homeless that we meet and some people who want to talk. GSP patrol the streets of Woolwich on Friday Nights. We remain a force for good on the streets as we are there to Care, Listen and Help. We can help in situations where other organisations are seen as threatening. We are usually able to assist people in a number of practical ways, providing space blankets, water, snacks and in colder weather, gloves, socks and hats. Giving out information on how to access the Food bank and WSUP. For many, just stopping and having a conversation helps them feel less lonely and know that someone cares about them.

If you are interested in knowing more about being a Street Pastor, caring, listening and helping people, please speak to Christine Legg, Valerie Lester or Philip Landergan.

### Please pray for

- ◆ all of our Greenwich Street Pastors; for those who have been in self-isolation; for those still working (some of whom are key workers) and those working from home.
- ◆ Our numbers are low since Lockdown, please pray that people will express an interest in the work of GSP and join us for an evening as an observer, to find out what it is like.
- ◆ all the small business owners in Woolwich who have been forced to close – we pray that they will be able to rebuild their businesses in time and we pray for their families.
- ◆ the homeless we meet, that the Council will soon be able to help them with accommodation.
- ◆ those who are lonely, that through conversations they come to know God's love for them.
- ◆ those who have been made redundant.



### Greenwich Youth For Christ, Director Joe Crisp-Hihn

It has been really exciting to be back working in the new term. It feels, at least for now, that things are somewhat back to normal and we are trying to take full advantage of that. After an enforced time of pruning we are now seeing growth in three areas of the organisation. Our team has grown, with the introduction of 3 London City Mission pioneer students, each working a day a week with us. The number of projects we deliver has grown, with a new partnership with St James Kidbrooke, we have launched a Tuesday afterschool drop in and a well-attended Sunday afternoon youth group. Our schools work has grown, with a new lunch group and RE support in Mary Magdalene and continued mentoring in John Roan.

With all the growth, our core mission remains the same, to see young people's lives transformed by Jesus, we believe the local church is the most effective place to see this change, therefore we are continuing to work hard on our church partnerships, empowering and inspiring volunteers to deliver programs where young people can be nurtured, supported and disciplined.

- ◆ Pray for, Abi, Leonardo and Emmanuel our LCM Pioneers, that they would find their place within GYFC and inspire the young people they meet.
- ◆ Pray for our drop in groups, especially the new ones, that they would meet needs locally and strengthen relationships between the church and young people.
- ◆ Pray for young people's mental health, with a rising number highlighting difficulty to find the right support post the Covid-Pandemic.
- ◆ Pray that we would continue to discern and consider carefully where to spend our limited time and resources so we can be effective in the work we do.



### British Youth For Christ, Neil O'Boyle, National Director

There is so much that we could share both within our own lives and the work of Youth for Christ across Britain, but here are a few headlines. When it comes to the family we are all well. Neil was gifted a 3 month sabbatical this summer for 30 years of service with Youth for Christ, which involved studying leadership with the Maxwell foundation and project managing a fairly sizeable house renovation project (rising damp & mould, leak proofing the roof, 2 bathroom projects and reclaiming a 3<sup>rd</sup> of the garden). It sounds exciting but it wasn't overly relaxing, we were however so grateful for the time. Joy completed her counselling degree and has graduated, she is now counselling and continuing her studies towards an MA in spiritual formation. Jake (24) has secured his green card in the US and has a job at a trauma counselling centre, we haven't seen him since August 2019 but hope to see him and Grace, this Christmas. Lucy (22) is now in her second year studying theology at Regents College. Molly (18) is on the Youth for Christ gap year as part of the performing arts touring team, and Maisey (15) is in her final year for GCSE's.

Youth for Christ, like almost every area of society was significantly impacted by the pandemic, however we were able to increase our digital reach and we launched a new education website which supports thousands of RE teachers and over a million students. We have just launched our families Bible in partnership with the Bible Society, it is uniquely designed and has the whole family in mind (including teenagers). We are currently working on a brand-new evangelism resource which we hope will help churches right across the nation to share Jesus in a relevant way. Everything that we are currently focussing on is working towards our new strategy of helping the local church restore confidence in the Gospel. As society and culture is moving at such a rate, many Christians are uncertain as to how society views them and how they can communicate in a manner that will be received well. Our goal is to bring both encouragement to the Church that the Gospel is just as powerful, and lives are still being changed. We hope to provide the local church with not only the 'why' but also the 'how' to reach young people with God's transformative love.

We remain grateful to you for your support and encouragement. Please do be praying for Youth for Christ in this next season, that our reach and influence will increase. Please be praying for the family, for Joy in her studies and Neil in his leadership of Youth for Christ.