



COVER STORY:
ANN AND DENNIS ABOUT A LIFETIME OF
SERVICE IN THEIR COMMUNITY

Issue 03 June/July 2014

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ALSO INSIDE:

NEWS &
UPCOMING EVENTS

SUMMER HAS
ARRIVED!

ASK THE VICAR:
DO I HAVE TO GO
TO CHURCH?

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Would you like to contribute to the magazine? You could either feature in one of the articles or help with writing, design, photography and proof reading. Please get in touch with Mirjam.

Please be aware, the deadline for contributions to the next issue of the magazine is Sun 13th July!

SPECIAL SERVICES IN JUNE/JULY

SUN 01/06 ASCENSION TIDE SERVICE	10.30	Join us as we celebrate Jesus' Ascension and the promise of the Holy Spirit. The service will be followed by a bring and share lunch.
SUN 08/06 PENTECOST SERVICE	9.30	On Pentecost Sunday, we celebrate the birthday of the church. Our service will have readings and prayers in different languages.
SUN 06/07 MISSION	10.30	"Love God Completely" is the start of our three part series exploring our Mission Statement.
SUN 13/07 MISSION	9.30	"Love Ourselves Correctly". Part two of our exploration of St Aidan's Mission Statement.
SUN 20/07 MISSION	9.30	"Love the neighbour compassionately". Series' Conclusion on Mission Statement.
SUN 27/07 CONFIRMATION	18.30	Join all the candidates from East Gravesend Group in a Confirmation Service at Holy Family.

EDITORIAL



CHURCH HIGHLIGHTS



30th March - Mothering Sunday

8th April - Aidan Ladies (& Men)
Pub Lunch

20th April - Easter Crafts
Workshop

20th April - Easter Egg Hunt

CONTRIBUTORS

We have been able to put together and distribute this magazine thanks to the help of the following people:

- Mr Ernie Lane
- Mrs Mavis Prater
- Mr Michael Welch
- Mrs Mirjam Ngoy
- Rev Lusa Nsenga-Ngoy



CROCHET AT THE PUB

A few hours ago, I managed to complete my first ever crochet blanket! I am hoping to use it for our baby due at the end of July.

Some of you have seen me plodding along with my crochet, as I took my work to the Aidan Ladies' Pub Lunch in April. I was amazed to see how much of a conversation starter crochet can be. Many of the ladies in church have done lots of crochet in the past and they were surprised to see how it has made a revival and is very popular among the younger generation.

The ladies and I had something in common, which gave us so much to talk about. We also discovered the differences, for instance, one lady commented on my use of bright colours. She shared how she only worked with white, pink and blue. But, our technique is the same!

In this issue of the magazine you can read about the importance of church and also how young people sometimes struggle to fit in. Crochet reminded me how sometimes we can be distracted by our differences, but let's not forget to keep our eyes open for everything we have in common!

Mirjam Ngoy - Editor

WE CAME, WE SAW, WE SERVED

DENNIS AND ANN ASHURST ABOUT A LIFETIME OF SERVICE IN THEIR COMMUNITY



Who doesn't know Dennis (69) and Ann (66) Ashurst! They have been coming to St Aidan's church for over 40 years! Recently, Dennis took on the role of Church Warden. Even though Dennis persists that he was talked into this role, it is not a surprise to see him and his wife serving their community. Their lives have been full of different volunteering jobs. This is a story about volunteering and giving to your community. Be inspired!

Dennis, you have recently become a warden at St Aidan's Church. Why is this something you wanted to take on?

Dennis: "Daphne [former church warden], in her power of persuasion, got me to do it. She talked me in to it. I decided to just give it a try and see how it goes. What I hope to get out of it? I would like to get a stronger faith myself by doing this. I don't know. It's a big question mark. But I am open. It is something new."

Ann: "I went back on the PCC as well. At the first meeting we were asked to take on other roles. I am now the nursery school and children's representative. You have to be careful as to how much you take on. I hope to get something out of it. I have done voluntary work for years. The good thing is that you meet new people and it gives you a purpose. I like to be busy!"

How long have you been coming to St Aidan's Church?

Ann: "I started coming here in 1970, when we moved to Gravesend. A lady over the road gave us the church service times. St Aidan's was our nearest church. Dennis was Roman Catholic and went to St John's RC Church, but this was often difficult without a car. Later, he joined me at St Aidan's."

How did you end up moving to Gravesend?

Ann: "Dennis and I met at Charing Cross Station, where we both worked. We got together at a railway dance. When we got married in 1969, we were looking for a house in the South East. We found a house at Riverview Park, they were still building there at that time. Our first daughter, Rosemary, was born and I gave up my nurse training. Dennis carried on working for the railway. After this we had three more children."

What has it been like living in Gravesend

Dennis: "It has been okay. Of course there have been

“WHAT I LIKE TO GET OUT OF IT? I WOULD LIKE TO GET A STRONGER FAITH...”

a lot of changes. But Kent is nice. The weather is nice! You don't have to go far to be in some lovely places and you have got London quite near as well, especially now with the high speed. Most of our family are around here, so that is what keeps us here."

Can you share a bit about how you have been involved in your local community?

Ann: "When our first child was born, I gave up nursing. I joined St John Ambulance as a volunteer in 1970 to continue being involved with care after giving up nursing. Dennis joined in the 1980s. We did first aid duties, taught Badgers and Cadets and visited schools to teach first aid. We also did ambulance duties."

"CHURCH IS IMPORTANT TO ME, BECAUSE YOU NEED TO HAVE HOPE - THE HOPE THAT LIFE IS PART OF SOMETHING BIGGER..."

Why is coming to church important to you?

Dennis: "You need to have some type of belief. I was brought up very strictly in the Catholic Church. I attended four services on a Sunday. Church is important to me, because you need to have hope – the hope that life is part of something bigger, that it leads on to something greater. Otherwise, what is the point of it all..."

Ann: "It is something I just always did. It was part of life when I was younger. We like to think there is something more than just this life. I have friends who don't believe. No one can prove anything one way or the other. I don't have blind faith anymore. I question things more now. Nobody has the answer. Our parents didn't question anything – they believed in what they were told to believe."



But yes, it does give comfort to have a faith. I don't think you have to go to church to be a Christian. If everyone followed the 10 commandments, the world would be so much better..."

Dennis: "We enjoy coming here. You get to know people. It becomes a way of life."

What do you think the church can mean for this community?

Ann: "You need to get the youngsters involved, but I don't think they want a structured church. For them it is old fashioned. Yet, a lot of young people are looking for something to believe in. It is amazing how many believe in angels, but they don't want to come to church to be told what to do."

"But you don't want too many changes, because you also want the oldies to keep going too. It must be hard for the ministers to keep both sides happy. Change is difficult. But we know changes have to be."

By Mirjam Ngoy

NEWS FROM THE PARISH

MOTHERING SUNDAY (30/03)

On Sunday 30th March, many of us came back to St Aidan's church to celebrate Mothering Sunday. Dozens of bunches of flowers, previously prepared and donated by a number of people, were distributed to mothers and those who played a mothering role in our lives.

Originally the day was the occasion for those who were in service or working away from home to be released in order to return to their "mother church". It also gave them the opportunity to go back home to their mothers. People would often pick wild flowers along the way to place in church or give to their mothers.

The Archdeacon of Rochester, the Venerable Simon Burton-Jones was our guest preacher for the occasion. He preached an inspiring sermon about Hannah and Mary, two women who, despite their social condition, became agents of change.

As we look through the stories of women from the Bible, we are often confronted by the many limitations they faced. We also see how often they have defied



the odds and brought change and freedom to so many others. Mothering Sunday reminds us that Hannah, Mary and other women through the Bible give us hope for millions of women around the world whose lives are often lived in dreadful conditions.

APCM (06/04)

On Sunday the 6th April, St Aidan's had its Annual Parochial Church Meeting.

The APCM is always a good opportunity to look back in gratitude for what has been accomplished in the previous 12 months. Equally, it allows us to look forward in hope for what God is about to do for all of us and with each of us.

This year, we tried something different. Instead of a separate afternoon meeting, we had our APCM as part of our worship; a reminder that this rather formal occasion is an integral part of what we are as a church. We finished the morning around a beautiful spread of delicious food.

The many reports were a good reminder of all that

goes on at St Aidan's. It brought to light the many unsung people actively involved in making St Aidan's the welcoming and vibrant place it is. They just get on with the task and do not expect any recognition for what they do.

Daphne Lane stepped down as Churchwarden after 10 Years of faithful and committed service. She is succeeded by Dennis Ashurst, who kindly offered to help steer St Aidan's through the next stage of her history. Daphne will continue to serve St Aidan's as a PCC member. In addition, she now leads our newly formed Pastoral Team.

We also welcomed Janet Morris, Gary Cordice, Ann Ashurst as new PCC members. This meant that we had to say goodbye to Philip Benning, Catherine Berry, Karen Goldberg, Nike Iluyemi and wish them well as they serve the church in different ways.



Logan Jude shows off his Egg Hunting skills

EASTER EGG HUNT (19/04)

On Easter Saturday 19th April, dozens of children with their parents descended on St Aidan's Church Hall for a morning of crafts and fun organised in partnership with Westcourt Residents Association.

Cross painting, cake decoration (often followed by immediate consumption), Easter baskets were among some of the crafts on offer.

It would be fair to say that the highlight of the day, for most, was probably the Easter egg hunt that took part in the community garden and around the Garden of Remembrance.

The morning was concluded in church with a short service and a retelling of the Easter Story with the help of some of the children in attendance.

Great fun was had by young and old alike and we look forward to the next craft morning in the Autumn to celebrate Harvest.

PCC AWAY DAY (03/05)

On Saturday 3rd May, St Aidan's Parochial Church Council went on its first away day in a long time.

What do PCC members do anyway when they come together? A formal answer would probably suggest that the PCC is responsible for the overall wellbeing, practical as well as spiritual, of their church, the church members, and the church buildings. The PCC also has a duty to promote the mission of the church within the wider community.

That is exactly what the PCC set to explore when it met in the beautiful setting of the Pilsdon Community in West Malling. The day was facilitated by Neville Emslie, Ministry Development Officer for Canterbury diocese.

Neville's expertise of the New Testament and his insights in ministry helped the PCC to reflect on what it means to be leaders in mission. The focus of the conversation was around some of the parables of the Kingdom of God in Matthew 13. The challenge: what does the Kingdom of God look like in our parish?

LUSA TO BE THE NEW MAYOR'S CHAPLAIN (13/05)

On Tuesday 13th May, our Vicar, the Rev. Lusa Nsenga Ngoy was made Chaplain to the new Mayor of Gravesham.

At the opening event of the Borough Council at the Civic Centre, Cllr John Caller, councillor for Westcourt, was inaugurated as the new Mayor of Gravesham. Cllr Caller had asked Lusa to be his Chaplain as he serves his one year term as Mayor.

Please join the Pilot in wishing both of them well as they carry out their duties during this mayoral term.

UPCOMING EVENTS

EVENTS AT ST AIDAN'S

JUNE

WED 04/06/2014, 10.15

COFFEE MORNING

Coffee Morning with cake stall and nearly new sale, Powerhouse Lounge

SAT 07/06/2014, 10.00

COFFEE MORNING WITH PLANT SALE

Coffee and Cake Morning with plant sale and bring & buy stall, 19 Hadley Close, Meopham, Proceeds to Christian Aid

WED 11/06/2014, 14.00

AIDAN LADIES

We are meeting in the Powerhouse. All ladies are welcome. Speak to Jenny Rawlinson (01474 352 253) for more details.

SAT 14/06/2014, 18.30

QUIZ EVENING

at St Mary's Wrotham Road

WED 18/06/2014

CRAFT CLUB

See pewsheet for details.

JULY

WED 02/07/2014, 10.15

COFFEE MORNING

Coffee Morning with cake stall and nearly new sale, Powerhouse Lounge

WED 09/07/2014, 13.45

AIDAN LADIES

Wendy Giles will be telling us about her "Turkish Odyssey" and this meeting will be open to all, gentlemen included. Please note, we are starting at 13.45!

SAT 12/07/2014, 19.30

RAINHAM LADIES CHOIR

Return visit by popular demand of the Rainham Ladies Choir with organist Janet Stone, tickets at the door £5.

WED 16/07/2014, 14.00

CRAFT CLUB

Meeting in the Powerhouse.

ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN

Every Wednesday during term-time:

After School Club: 15.30-17.00

Children's Gospel Choir - 17.00-17.30

COMING SOON

"Cameo" (Come And MEet Others) a new informal group meeting for a chat over a cup of tea and a piece of cake in the Powerhouse Lounge once a month - starting in the autumn. Keep an eye open for more detail.

SUMMER HAS ARRIVED

Caroline, Daniel, Michael and Laila were pleased to welcome a new addition to their family. Summer was born on the 19th May at Darent Valley Hospital.

She was delivered two weeks early. Both mother and baby are doing fine and the whole family is delighted with the arrival of the beautiful baby girl. Welcome into our church family Summer!



LIFE EVENTS

BAPTISMS, FUNERALS & WEDDINGS

Funerals:

24th March 2014: Joyce Edith Miller (87)
9th May 2014: Betty Joan Putman (83)

16th May 2014: Jon Paul Simmonds (38)
20th May 2014: Elsie Rosina Vines (82)

IN MEMORIAM

The late Phil Walker

Many connected with St Aidan's will remember Hazel Walker, who for many years was our enrolling member for the Mothers' Union. Three years ago she moved with her husband Phil to Herne Bay to be nearer their

family. Sadly, Phil passed away on Sunday 27th April. We offer our sincere condolences and assurances of prayer to Hazel, to Andrew, Stuart and their families. His funeral was held at Barham on 19th May.

The late Elsie Vines

Our dear Mum Elsie Vines very sadly passed away on 23rd April 2014. She was born on 6th September 1931. Her parents were Ada and Ernest Peskett and she had an older sister and brother. Elsie had happy memories of her childhood.

Elsie left school at 14 and went to work at Burroughs Wellcome in the laboratory. She met David when she was 16. David was in the scouts and Elsie helped with the cub pack along with her sister. They married in 1954 and had two children. Elsie loved family life and looking after the home. She enjoyed baking, knitting and sewing. David taught at Dartford Grammar School and Elsie became involved in school life and also the parents association. Later on she became chair of the Gravesend branch of the Arthritis Research Council.

They loved being Grandparents and were blessed with four, in whom they delighted.

They both had a strong faith and when they came to live in Gravesend in 1988 they started attending St Aidan's. Later, when David retired they became more involved in the life of St Aidan's and made many close friends. Sadly, David died in 2012. Elsie was devoted to him and missed him very much. Her friends at St Aidan's helped her very much during this time. Elsie sewed the tapestry cushion for the Bishop's chair in memory of David.

Elsie's funeral was on 20th May and the depth of feeling coming from her friends at St Aidan's was very



Elsie sewed the tapestry cushion for the Bishop's chair in memory of David.

moving and a comfort to us. We can't thank everyone enough for their support of Elsie. We are so thankful for the hard work everyone put in to make it a lovely service and for the lovely food which everyone enjoyed when we returned from the crematorium and also the beautiful flowers in church.

Elsie was a very caring person and was interested in people and their lives. She was a very good and much loved Mum and will be missed very much.

Ann, Paul and the family.

ASK THE VICAR

DO I HAVE TO GO TO CHURCH?

Email your question to info@staidangravesend.org



Dear Lusa,

I have been a Christian for most of my life. I used to attend church on a regular basis. However, in the past few years, church has lost its appeal to me. I still pray and read the Bible occasionally. My question is: can I still call myself a Christian if I don't go to church anymore? (Ian, 42)

Dear Ian,

Thank you for your willingness to share what must be a difficult question (it certainly is for me). You'd not be surprised to hear that you're not alone in asking it. In my experience, people stop attending church for all sorts of reasons ranging from change in circumstances (work, family, moving home, etc.) to breakdown in relationship (with fellow Christians), or crisis of faith.

The first thing to say is that there's not a simple yes or no answer to this question. The story of the thief on the cross illustrates the fact that one can be a follower of Christ and not engage with fellow Christians. He's a Christian because he trusts in Jesus. So, in a sense, you can say that being a churchgoer doesn't equate with being a Christian.

However, I'd suggest that although church attendance doesn't make you a Christian, being a Christian is an experience that fully makes sense when shared with others. In fact, when the New Testament talks about church, it seldom makes reference to a building. Instead, it defines church as the coming together of women and men wanting to learn from each other about what it means in practice to follow the teaching of Jesus.

The church was about a group of people welcoming each other into their homes, praying for their shared concerns, addressing each other's needs and reaching out to outsiders. It was, by no means, a perfect community, but one in which they were convinced that through their faith in Jesus, they were part of God's family. It was so effortlessly appealing that the group grew and grew, with people who had never met Jesus in person choosing to commit themselves to this way.

It's undeniable that for most of us, the experience of church often falls short of this. As a result, some have chosen to check out and go it solo.

Can anyone be a Christian on her/his own? Christianity, in the absolute sense, is not a private thing that has nothing to do with anyone else. That, I'm afraid, is a very modern view. Trying to be a Christian on your own would be like choosing to support a football team in isolation from other supporters.

It is also important that we realise that sometimes people are looking for more than bingo, a meal, or a dance. People are looking for God. The challenge therefore, is to set church as a space where God is made real, a place where all are willing to offer and embrace imperfections.

Ian, I don't think you have to be in church every Sunday to call yourself a Christian. However, I'd like to suggest that anyone who professes faith in Christ would want to share that with others (however imperfect that collection of people may be). Beside, if church is not merely a building, but a coming together of men and women, committed to make God real to all, my question to you would be: where in your faith journey do you find such a place - if it's not in church? What is it that you can bring to church to make it, a little bit more, the way you imagine church to be?

I pray that you can find a spiritual home in which all your needs are met. I hope that your faith can be enriched as you actively engage with other Christians. One thing however is true; the church is the poorer without your presence.

With best wishes, Lusa

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TOO DIFFICULT?

“The composer Igor Stravinsky once wrote a new piece that contained a difficult violin passage. After several weeks of rehearsal the solo violinist came to Stravinsky and said that he could not play it. He had given it his best effort but found the passage too difficult, even unplayable. Stravinsky replied, “I understand that. What I am after is the sound of someone trying to play it.” Perhaps something similar is what God had in mind with the church.”

Philip Yancey in ‘Church: Why Bother?’





OUR MISSION

To share God's love in the community.

OUR VISION

As a church we want to develop relationships that demonstrate the love of God.

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	18.30	Joint Service with Riverview Baptists at the Christopher Centre
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5th	9.30	Communion Service with Prayer for Healing & Sunday School