

**FEB - MAR
2023**

Life.

Bye Bedford

Alan Cottenden
interviews Revd.
John Bell

Organ Recital

A not to be missed
event!

Go 4 Gold

Dates for your
diaries!



**CHRIST
CHURCH
BEDFORD**

Living to love God and You

CONTENTS

Thank you to all who have contributed to this edition of Life. If you would like to contribute something to the next edition, the deadline for submissions for the April/May edition will be 17th March 2023. Please email: Editor@CCBedford.org



You can read this edition online, just go to our website: CCBedford.org/lifemagazine

- 3
A Word from Our Vicar
Dust & Glory

- 5
"Come Together"

- 8
Organ Recital
Justin Waters visits

- 9
Boxing Day Fun

- 13
Go 4 Gold
Dates for your diaries

- 14
**Bye Bedford,
Hello Hartlepool!**

VICAR'S LETTER



Lent, that's another one of those tricky ones isn't it. I remember many moons ago I gave up chocolate for Lent. As most of you are aware, I have a sweet tooth, and love nothing more than gorging myself on chocolate (Cadbury's Dairy Milk, Galaxy, Toblerone – other chocolates are available, but I err on the side of quantity of the aforementioned over quality!). So, one year in my late twenties I think, I decided to give up chocolate for Lent. It seemed like a thing to do. I did

pretty well, lost some weight, but about halfway through I slipped up. It was someone's birthday in the office, and they had brought food in, lots of stuff, and there was chocolate cake. And I, without thinking picked up a slice, and was very happily sat at my desk, probably working on a spreadsheet or some such data thingy, eating chocolate cake. Until a co-worker asked me what I was doing. Eventually I realised, oh no, Lent, chocolate, nooooo!

As I have got a bit older, and a little bit wiser I have realised two things, firstly that giving up chocolate for Lent is similar to giving up chocolate as a new year's resolution. It's not likely to stick because my willpower has limitations. Secondly that the key thing about Lent is that it is preparation for Easter. Now this can include many things; self-examination, penitence, self-denial, study, generosity and giving. At its core though, is the preparation for the death and resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. If the focus on Lent is just to abstain from chocolate, then we might gain a benefit of losing some weight, but likely I'll just get a bit frustrated and annoyed by the whole thing. If the focus of giving something up is replacing it with prayer and drawing closer to God, then I might have some sort of chance of actually getting through Lent both quitting the chocolate and growing deeper in faith. Also, it should be noted that a Lenten fast does not include Sundays, so we can enjoy chocolate on Sundays, hallelujah!

This Lent we are going to be looking at the Church of England's material titled "Dust and Glory: A Lent journey of faith, failure and forgiveness." An opportunity for us to invite God into the mess of everyday life, considering the idea of failure from different angles and explore something of the difference God's redeeming work in Jesus makes to the struggles and shortcomings of human life.

Revd. David Thomas



"Come Together"

Written By Sue Templeman

On Saturday 14th January the **Ladies Elevenses** and **Men's Breakfast** gathered for our first joint "Come Together" event when around 100 guests came to enjoy great fellowship and a choice of Bacon Butties, pastries, cakes, fruit, yoghurts, fruit juices and hot drinks. There was a wonderful, happy atmosphere in the halls with all the chatting while appreciating the refreshments our loyal team of helpers prepared and served.

We were greatly blessed by our two guest speakers, Tim and Julie Robb, who were at Christ Church between 2003-2007 but are now serving our Lord at St. Mary's Church, Eaton Socon. Their message was very engaging, with good humour, but also to encourage us all to be disciples of Christ wherever we are: shopping, at the school gate, the gym, walking the dog (an activity for a healthy body and the opportunity for conversations with others!) and anywhere you are because God is there with you. and can use introverts and extroverts as he knows our personalities and the skills we have. A short video was also included to further their messages.

They had chosen scripture, which was printed out for all to read and take home:-

“So here’s what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life – your sleeping, eating, going-to-work and walking-around life – and place it before God as an offering.”
(Romans 12:1 MSG)

As part of her talk, Julie read ***“Resumes of Apostles”*** which is on the **Bible.org** website and was very encouraging and amusing as it shows God uses the most unlikely people to share His message of Good News and the blessings we have through putting our trust in Christ’s ability and not our own!

After the Robbs had spoken and been thanked there was an opportunity to continue conversations and buy preserves, cards and quilted messages from Ruth Janes who uses her talents to make items to raise money for the **Malawi Home of Hope**... They are to be recommended!

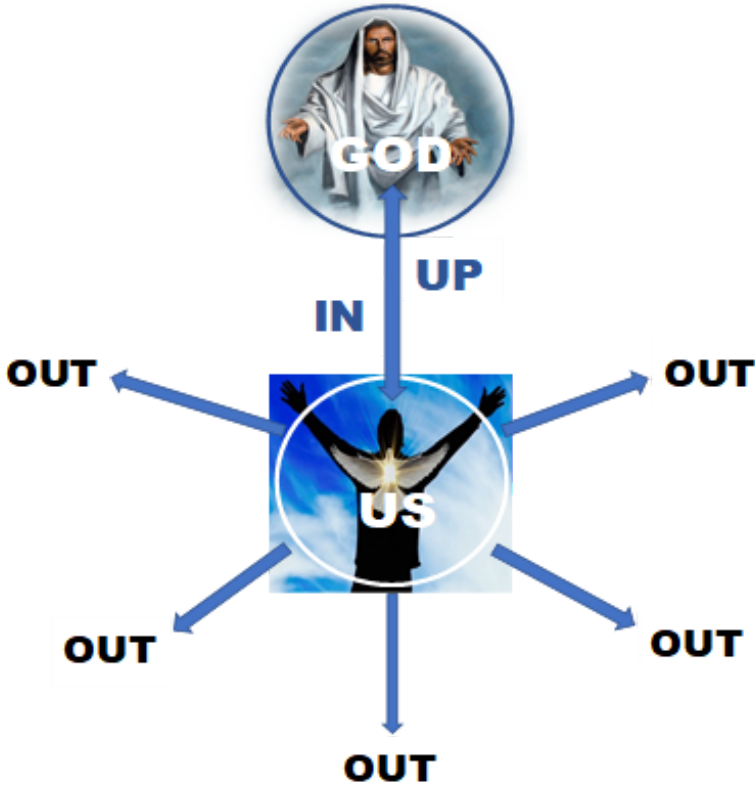


There was also a Flipchart for guests to write their thoughts about the event:

- Lovely to see Tim and Julie ‘Go be disciples’!
- Great bacon!
- Excellent! Well done, everyone.
- Lovely to have a mixed breakfast.
- Thank you, thank you, thank you so much! Such inspiring talks, God is speaking. Wonderful food and fellowship. You are all amazing. ❤️
- Liked the God Vibes!
- Wonderful, thank you, great food and message.
- Lovely to have an event to come to as a couple, during the daytime.
- I think we can say it was a success!!
- Good food for fuel and body.
- We should do it again?!
- Wonderful talks, inspiring, encouraging and words to hold and use every day. Thank you so much!
- A definite success, thank you!



One person even drew a diagram reproduced here with a personal interpretation, which is, hopefully the meaning they wanted to convey:



We look up to God who lives in us by his Holy Spirit. He helps us in our everyday lives when we seek his guidance. We go out as his disciples in the knowledge that he is there with us in all situations and can use the skills and talents we have to encourage, bless and also share the Good News of God's love and salvation through Jesus.

Many thanks to those who helped in any way with this event and to all our guests for attending and making it a success!





Organ Recital

Organist : Justin Waters

**Saturday 4th
February at 3.30pm**

**Followed by Tea & Cake
Retiring Collection**



Christ Church

140 Dudley Street Bedford MK40 3SX

For more than 200 years, Pilgrims' Friend Society has been helping older people to live fulfilled lives in their later years through residential care and independent living. Find out more by visiting www.pilgrimsfriend.org.uk

Bedford & Ouse Valley Auxiliary

Pilgrims' Friend Society 175 Tower Bridge Road London SE1 2AL

**PILGRIMS'
FRIEND
SOCIETY**

Boxing Day Fun!

WRITTEN BY RACHEL BENNETT

What a way to share Boxing Day 2022 with lovely people, friends, old and new!

During the day 20 of us shared much fun, fellowship and food together. Some of us were able to stay for the 6 hours while others joined us for a few hours. Here's what the guests thought of our special day...



Dec '22



"It was the most beautiful and relaxing day I've had in a long time. The atmosphere was Christmassy and I met a lot of nice people. Well organised!"

"Absolutely Fab! Wouldn't have missed it for anything. Sincere thanks to all who contributed."

"Everyone was so helpful, even helping to clear the lunch table, thank you!!!!"

"A truly wonderful occasion this Boxing Day with great friendship and fellowship."

"It was so nice and relaxing and we had a brilliant quiz led by John Hartup, yer!!!!"



GAMES & FILMS



"Lovely Boxing Day celebrations with friends, laughter and jokes! Thank you!"

"Wonderfully relaxed day with fellowship, films, games, chatting, eating, drinking and many cups of tea!!!!"

"What a delightful, happy time we've shared together this afternoon! Good company, good variety of things to do and the venue was comfortable, warm and the lighting just right! Thank you for all the time and consideration in organising today's event - I appreciate it very much!"

"The yummy Cream Tea with Bubbles was such a delight at the end of our great day together."

"It is wonderful not to have to spend Boxing Day alone. It has been a time of great fun and fellowship. Thank you Lord for a special time."

"Fantastic day. Excellent company. Fun things to do. Festive food. Please come next year for a fun, fun time together, don't miss out so put the date in your diary, you can't miss the 26th as it comes right after Christmas Day!!!"



Go 4 Gold

February - April 2023

14.00-15.15

Visiting Speakers

Friday 17th February

Judy and Sidney Miller share news about Good News for Everyone

Friday 21st April

Beetle Drive!

We will welcome and enjoy our speakers, have games fun, plus enjoy a cuppa and cakes!



SOCIALS... on all other Fridays

Do come and join us if you can.

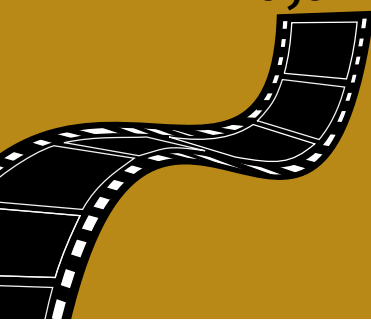
Cuppa and cake with chat is included and all for £1!

We will meet in Christ Church 14.00 - 15.15ish, entrance through The Hub

FILM CLUB

Fridays: 3rd February, 17th March

Do join us and enjoy a film plus refreshments of Popcorn, drinks and Ice Cream and all for a £1!!!



 **CHRIST
CHURCH
BEDFORD**

BYE BEDFORD, HELLO HARTLEPOOL

ALAN COTTENDEN
INTERVIEWS:

REVEREND
JOHN BELL!



It's now two months since John Bell – our former curate – left Bedford for Hartlepool, along with wife, Rebecca and children, Sophie and Daniel. John is now a vicar leading 5 congregations in 4 churches across 3 parishes, including 2 church schools. Sounds quite a challenge! Anyway, our editor asked me to find out how they were getting on and this is what John told me.

So, John, help me understand your set up: 5 congregations, 4 churches, 3 parishes: how does that work?

So, the churches are: All Saints (which is in the Stranton area of Hartlepool), St Luke's, St Colomba's and St Aidan's. But All Saints has a second congregation which meets in nearby St Matthew's Community Centre. The 5 congregations total about 150

people.

How do you get your head around all that?

With some difficulty! I'm gradually finding my feet. It's quite challenging getting to know everyone and working out who belongs where. I keep having to reassure myself that it's early days yet: we've only been here 2 months. But all the churches have been very supportive and welcoming which has been a real blessing. People are keen to get stuck in and help and I haven't suffered from the problem you sometimes hear about after an interregnum where - when the new vicar arrives - everyone assumes they can step back now and let the vicar do everything! Each of the five congregations has its own distinct culture and ways of doing things but they are also good at working together. We'll



David Jonathan Thomas is at All Saints Stranton Church.
30 m · Hartlepool · 🧑🏻‍🤝‍🧑🏻

What a joy to see my man [Revd John Bell](#) get installed at his new church up north. What a blessing you will be!



soon be advertising for a second vicar who will take over primary leadership of two of the four churches, although I'll joint lead with them overall. We also have two retired clergy who are a great help and Clive - a non-stipendiary priest who is employed as a community and families worker.



How are Rebecca and the kids?

Rebecca has a new job which she's started since Christmas. As for her previous job in Stevenage, she's providing pastoral support for primary school children. Her focus is on those who need extra help for whatever reason – perhaps because of behavioural problems, or special educational needs, or a particularly challenging period at home. She's at a school in Redcar four days a week, spending the other day in a school closer to home. The school system in Hartlepool is different from that in Bedford and so Daniel has moved from a Middle School in Bedford to a Primary School in Hartlepool. That's

involved quite a shift in culture and his new school doesn't have some of the facilities (like science laboratories) that he was used to accessing in Bedford. Sadly (for him and her) his class teacher was off school nursing a broken arm at the start of term and is now on jury service! So that hasn't helped with settling in, added to which he's missing his Bedford friends. So, it's a challenging time for him. Sophie is settling into secondary school and is starting to get to know people. The behaviour policy of her new school is rather stricter than that of her old, which is taking some adjustment. Another difference is that her new

school is much less multi-ethnic than her old. About 20% of the pupils in her old school were from minority ethnic groups compared with about 3% in the new. It's been good to see Sophie getting involved by singing in the worship group at church, like she did at Christ Church.



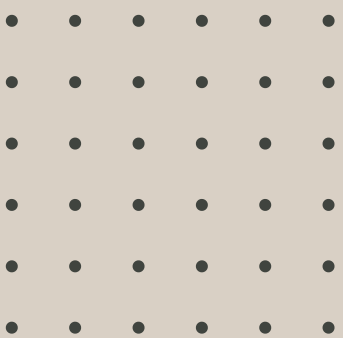
How does Hartlepool compare with Bedford and your various churches with Christ Church?

With a population of about 90,000, Hartlepool is a bit smaller than Bedford with its 110,000 or so but one of the main things you notice is that it is generally more needy. It's still really recovering from

the loss of the shipbuilding industry and the steel works: it has a lot of the marks of an industrial town but most of the big industry has gone and so there's quite an emphasis on redevelopment and regeneration. The level of social need in the area is high: for example, an enormous number of people rely on



services like Foodbank. None of this is strange to me as I grew up in the North East but the culture shift for Rebecca and the kids is no doubt greater. Our four churches are quite heavily involved in outreach programmes to help tackle the needs and we host 6 projects within the Communities of Hope initiative run by the Diocese. They involve things like drop-in cafes and support groups that aim to help people develop key life skills, find



employment, manage their debts and so on. One of the imminent challenges is that the national funding provided to get these projects started will begin tapering off soon and there's work to be done in making them sustainable long-term.

When we lived in Bedford, we lived just across the road from Christ Church (the only church building), which made it very easy to drop in, bump into people, chat, see what was happening, get involved and so on. The Christ Church Hub is a great asset. By contrast, in Hartlepool the five buildings where we meet are scattered across the town and mostly a car drive apart. That makes it much harder to build and maintain a sense of community and I have to be much more purposeful in planning to see people because I'm less likely to just bump into them. The scattered sites pose a challenge if you're responsible for leading several Sunday services across multiple locations! It's also difficult to chat with folk over coffee after one service if you have to be straight on to the next somewhere else. More trivially, we miss our walks by the river in Bedford, but we have the North Sea beach instead!

Something else that's both a blessing and a challenge is the diversity of churchmanship across the congregations. St Aidan's is Anglo Catholic (I'm gradually getting used to being called Father John!) while St Luke's is "middle of the road" and All Saints, evangelical. So, while I'm driving from one church to another I may also be re-

programming my brain ready to tackle a different style of liturgy! I enjoy the breadth and diversity but the mental gymnastics can be challenging.

Another interesting difference from Bedford is that, in the North East, it's much more common for people to look to the church for baptisms, weddings and funerals even if they aren't normally part of a church community. That gives lots of opportunities for getting alongside people and sharing the love of God with them, which I love.

Looking back, what do you think you learned in Bedford?

One important lesson was not to bite off more than I could chew and to be aware of my limitations of time and energy... also, being able to say "no" when necessary. Helping to lead Christ Church through the vacancy was also really helpful, a sort of "dress rehearsal" for thinking through similar issues at the beginning of my ministry in Hartlepool. I'm also aware that I grew in confidence during my time at Christ Church and a greater confidence helped me to recognise that the Hartlepool job might be for me when it came up.

We'd only been in Bedford for 8 months when Covid struck which made for an "unusual" curacy in which the planned progression of activities and experiences was somewhat hampered. It also meant

that by the time we felt we'd really got to know people it was time to leave! We're missing those friendships now but doubtless we'll build afresh here in time.

How are you viewing the future?

We're really excited to discover what God has for our churches. What's important? What really matters? What do I need to change in my way of doing things? What does God have for me to bring? What does God have for us here as a family? Why has he brought us here? We need to catch together God's vision for us. It really is early days yet and it's important for me to get to know everyone and understand how things tick, resisting the temptation to prematurely drop into "fix it" mode. I also need to get my head round how to work with 3 PCCs, 3 standing committees, 3 sets of wardens and so on! The Area Dean has been really helpful. I haven't yet contacted the clergy in neighbouring parishes and that would be good to do.

How can we pray for you all?

Please pray that, as a family, we find our place in the town, make friends and connections in the churches and beyond, including in the schools where Rebecca works and Sophie and Daniel study. Pray also for us to discover - with the churches - God's vision for us, and for me in particular to quickly get to know the people and churches in my care.



Sunday Services

9am & 10:30am Morning Worship

7pm Sundays@Seven

Wednesday Service

10am Holy Communion



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