

**AUG - SEPT  
2023**

# Life.



## **Children's ministry?**

**Why does it matter?**

## **The Morris Family**

**Alan Cottenden  
Interviews**

## **A farewell**

**AJ & Amy are moving  
away**



**CHRIST CHURCH BEDFORD**

**Transformed by Love Seeking to Serve Experiencing Hope**

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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 Oct/Nov edition will be 19th September 2023. Please email: [Editor@CCBedford.org](mailto:Editor@CCBedford.org).



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online, just go to our website:  
[CCBedford.org/lifemagazine](http://CCBedford.org/lifemagazine)



# VICAR'S LETTER



*One of my favourite hymns is Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of Creation! A song full of rich imagery with a great melody. It also has one of my all-time favourite lines - "ponder anew what the Almighty can do." Every time I sing that line it gets me. It inspires me. It makes me want to sing a little bit louder!*

*As I write this, it is the first day of the summer holidays and it is raining. My son is at tennis camp and my daughter is playing with her toys. I have had my morning coffee and am contemplating the weeks ahead: what needs doing, what can be left, what can be delegated? Sometimes these things can be overwhelming. The stretch of the holidays and all it entails, the financial implications, concerns for wellbeing, and the like. And that doesn't even get us onto thoughts about the world, inequality, climate disasters, horrific safeguarding issues, and the like. It is easy to allow our thoughts to wander down rabbit holes of despair. And then I remember again the words of that hymn, ponder anew what the Almighty can do.*



This remembering reminds me of Moses and the children of Israel. The Lord Almighty keeps saying to them, remember. Remember the Lord your God, don't forget. I wonder what it looks like for us to remember God, to not forget what he has done, to praise him afresh for his goodness and his kindness. To ponder the great mystery that is Christ in us the hope of glory. To not forget the Lord our God.

As I have reflected upon this pondering, a new thought occurred to me - if we just stay there in the pondering, we can become selfish, lazy and unloving. A truly Christian pondering of the greatness of God leads to a healthy appreciation of the world around us. A truly Spirit inspired pondering of the loving kindness of God leads us to see the world through different eyes. Pondering about all that God has done for us leads us to action. If the love of God is truly in us, then we do something. So, let's ponder and do something!

Now your something and my something might not be the same. Figuring out what your something is, that's where wisdom is, and often we can get stuck there, and then don't do anything. So, I wonder, what passions has God placed upon you? What is it that energises you? What righteous anger is God stirring up in you? This might be where God is saying, hey that's where I want you to get involved and play your part. Because all of us have a part to play. So, let's ponder and do something!

Here are a few things which I have been thinking about recently which might inspire you:

Do you care about the environment?

<https://nenomacadamiastrust.org/>



Or what about food poverty?

<https://bedford.foodbank.org.uk/>



Or what about sharing the good news of Jesus?

<https://goodnewsuk.com/>



Or perhaps concerns for the persecuted Church?

<https://opendoorsuk.org/>



**Rev. David Thomas**

# CHILDREN'S



# CHURCH!



## **Why children's ministry?**

Why should we bother investing time, thought or energy into the children's ministry in churches? There are so many ways to answer to these questions that it's hard to know where to start. We could linger on the adverse statistics of church decline and simply conclude that children's work is a necessity that we can't avoid as we just need something to keep young people involved in church if the church of the future is going to have any children in it at all. Alas, this reasoning for children's ministry seems to be sorely lacking of the joy that children's ministry brings to both the church family (of all ages) and the impact that children's ministry can have on any individual's journey of faith. As we are thinking about where children's ministry stands in the grand scheme of Christ Church vision and plans for the future, I am seeking to encourage a fresh outlook for children's ministry from September from our families, volunteers, and those who support the children's ministry through prayer and encouragement.

## **Bible Passages**

The reason why we do children's ministry I believe lies in the passages of scripture that directly show God engaging with little children. Passages like Matthew 18:1-5 and 1 Samuel 3 tell us of a God who reaches out to even the tiniest among us. Jesus' words 'unless you change and become like little children' come as a stark reminder that we may too easily complicate things unnecessarily. This being considered, I wanted to encourage us to see children's ministry through the eyes of a child - with a pinch of spontaneity, playfulness and with emphasis on wonder. I am hoping to build a sense of excitement by making space for the curious and inquisitive nature that children bring so they begin to see God in their whole week as well as on Sundays. Ultimately, we want to cultivate the desire for children to pursue faith for themselves and to do this, we need to make space for children to experience the wonder of the Bible, and power of the good news for themselves. At the heart of this will be a sense of listening to what God has to say to all of us and through all of us. In children's sessions we will be making space for children to listen to God, listen to each other and for adults to respond and listen to children.

## Our Sunday Groups

We want to see a children's ministry that is holistic; a weaving together of teaching to build an understanding of the Bible, with the space to connect with God through prayer and worship and opportunity for community and friendship. We want to make children comfortable to respond to God in their groups, so as a practical response to these ideas we will be adapting our age groups so children are with others who are likely to see the world from a similar perspective. The groups have been renamed, to remind us of the focus of encouraging awe and wonder and imagine the impact that ministry can have over the long term span of a child's life. In order to connect children with the wider church family, we will be shortening our sessions, so children can spend more time in the 10:30 service which in turn should develop a deeper sense community.

Ruth Hulme





# CHILDREN'S



# CHURCH!



## **IMAGINE AGES 0-3**

A group for the littlest among us! We will be planting seeds of trust, hope and love as we make a space for babies and toddlers to use their senses exploring and discovering. We can imagine what their expression of worship may be at that age.

In Marvel we will be exploring God's story with the chance for children to ask their questions, puzzle about the characters in the stories and think about how and why Bible stories matter to us today.

## **MARVEL AGES 4-7**

## **WONDER AGES 8-11**

Wonder will be a group for children to do just that - wonder what the Bible is saying to us today. There will be chance for reflection, questions and creative responses all encouraging children to apply their faith to their lives outside of Sundays.





# *Chris and Natalie Morris interview*

**Written by Alan Cottenden**

*Meet the Morrises: Learning to follow Jesus as they raise four children, hold down demanding jobs, grow their own food and complete a PhD!*

## **Tell me about the family**

**Natalie:** We have four children. Callum is 19 and he works at Bookers, the wholesalers; Lily is 15 and is in Year 10 at St Thomas More School; then we have Mair who is four and Edith who is two. It must be quite rare to be organising your son's driving lessons at the same time as securing a nursery place for one of your daughters!

**Chris:** Mair will be starting at Castle Lower School in September, and Edith is the little girl you may have heard honing her drumming skills in church at the start of Sunday morning services or running around behind the communion table with me chasing after her!



**How did you come to faith in Jesus?**

**Natalie:** I grew up in an “unbelieving” household that was hostile to faith and generally suspicious and critical of institutions, including the church. But when I was about 17, I met some Christians who made me reconsider my assumptions about God. In talking with them I first experienced what I now recognise as God’s grace. They were consistently kind by choice, which I found powerful, if unnerving! I ended up working for a Christian organisation. I went on an Alpha course, which made good sense to me and I gave my life to God. Quite a turn around.

**Chris:** I was raised in a Catholic family and attended church every Sunday. To be honest, I saw my faith as something I did on a Sunday at Mass and that was about it. As I became a young adult, I increasingly classified myself as a “lapsed Catholic”. I had faith, I knew Jesus, but he wasn’t as central to my life as he should have been. When I met Natalie, I started to return to Catholic Mass as well as attending her church and – through endless discussion and honest conversation – I had to work through what I believed and I came to personal faith for the first time.

**How did you arrive at Christ Church?**

**Natalie:** When Chris and I decided to get married the leaders of the church I belonged to were not at all happy with me marrying a Catholic and they were unwilling to take part in the wedding.

**Chris:** Then somehow we met Richard Hibbert who offered to listen. He was lovely, helping us to talk through the issues, providing a marriage preparation course, helping us plan our wedding and – in the process – introducing us to the Christ Church family. Initially, we lived in Great Denham but now we’re in Goldington Road which – being much closer to the church building – helps with feeling more a part of the church community

**Tell me about your work**

**Chris:** I’m the Chief Education Officer at Bedford Borough Council, which means that I am responsible for Early Years, Schools and Further Education in Bedford as well as the Special Educational Needs agenda and school building programme. I’ve always worked in the public sector, from my summer job supporting with student loans through to my first job after Uni as an administrator. I love working in the public sector and am passionate about going to work every day, trying to make a positive difference. It’s even better that I get to do that in the town I grew up in and am raising my family in.

**Natalie:** For three-and-a-half days a week I’m Head of Professional Development across the Bedford College Group, which encompasses Bedford College, Shuttleworth College, the Bedford Sixth Form, Tresham College and the National College for Motorsport.



My role is to enable professional development across all our employees: teachers, administration staff, finance specialists, everyone. For the other day-and-a-half a week I'm co-chair of Bedfordshire Maternity Voices Partnership, which is an NHS working group of local maternity staff and parents who work together to improve the maternity services in the area. Our role is to be a "critical friend". For example, we aim to understand the experience of those receiving maternity services and provide feedback. I really enjoy it. I'm also studying for a PhD so - given I'm also Mum to four children - life is busy!

**That sounds like plenty! Tell me about the PhD.**



**Natalie:** It's on teacher professional development and I'm working (albeit it remotely) with Sunderland University. Over recent decades, teaching practice has been increasingly prescribed: for example, we have a national curriculum, and tight guidelines and criteria for success. My project is to investigate the benefits of giving teachers more autonomy, trusting them to make their own professional judgements rather than just following a tightly-defined path. I'm using an Action Research approach, which means I'm aiming to simultaneously investigate and solve the problem. And I'm nearly ready to submit my thesis.

**What's God been teaching you lately?**

**Natalie:** Gentleness and calmness. My life is very busy with lots of demands and it's easy to fall into just reacting to the latest thing that's happened, rather than taking a more measured approach. I'm challenged and encouraged by St Paul's words to the Philippian Christians: *"Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."* (Philippians 4: 5-7). I want to grow in that. For me, reading, thinking and talking things through are important ways of engaging with such truths and seeing how they might play out in my life. I relish opportunities to dig deep, space to explore, honest debate.

**Chris:** To be present with God more, to find time to be with him and let him in throughout the day. I've taken to using the Lectio 365 App which is a "free daily devotional resource that helps you pray the Bible every day", as the website says (<https://www.24-7prayer.com/resource/lectio-365/>). The great thing is that I can listen to the day's material while I'm walking to work, or when I'm in the car on the way to a meeting. I love the encouragement to live out biblical truths in how I am and what I do - at work, at home, wherever.

**What do you do for fun?**

**Natalie:** I love cooking and - though I've often grown tomatoes in the past - I've been growing food "seriously" for the first time this year. In fact, last night we ate our first totally home-grown meal. Of course, that's a bit easier to achieve on a vegan diet than one that includes meat, but it still feels like quite an achievement! The great plus of food-growing for me is that it's not too demanding on time: I can do a bit of weeding, watering and tying up in the odd few minutes here and there.

I enjoy birds, although - for the moment - I'm time-limited to those I can see in the garden. I also love learning, so dipping into a book to learn something new is a real joy.

**Chris:** I love all sport. I am a Manchester United fan and I only recently gave up my season ticket (I must have been bad luck as they've just had their best season for a while!). I love American Football, rugby, cricket, all sports! I try to keep up to date with it but - recently - I've not had time to sit and watch sport as much as I used to. But my favourite thing to do is to socialise, I love to have a drink and a chat with friends, host people for dinners and just generally enjoy the company of others.

**THANK YOU!  
ALAN COTTENDEN**



# CHURCH COACH HOLIDAY '23

Report by Rachel Bennett

A wonderful Christ Church holiday, this time we went to Great Yarmouth and stayed at The Carlton Hotel

It was a joy to have Gold Hill Travel as our coach company again and as ever our coach cruised along so smoothly on all the journeys we took throughout the week.

There were 44 of us on the holiday,

We had wonderful guided tours of Norwich Cathedral, Bury St Edmunds Cathedral and Southwold church. Of course we just had to take a fun trip on the Bure Valley steam train didn't we?!

**These holidays are such a blessing to all who come and can be summed up by comments made by some of the guests...**

**'We thoroughly enjoyed it'.**

**'I found everyone to be so kind and helpful'.**





We followed this by taking a two hour boat cruise (with running commentary) on the Belle of the Broads boat, brilliant!

Our day out in Southwold was rather wet at times but then there were plenty of lovely things to do to dodge the rain drops! eg, museums, fish and chips on the Victorian pier, tea in The Swan Hotel, stroll around the posh shops and for one guest, even a tour of Adnams Ale brewery and a bit of tasting!!

Our days always began, after breakfast, with a Thought for the Day and prayer, a great way to start each day. Each evening, at the close of the day, we shared Compline prayer together, such a blessing. We also had a fun quiz one evening then later in the week a sing along. It was very interesting on Wednesday evening to welcome Terry Baxter, our visiting speaker, who shared many things about his life especially about his time as Prison Chaplain in Norwich.



**'Great having a central location in Great Yarmouth for visiting places on Thursday'.**

**'Excellent value for money. Enjoyed the time of fellowship and fun as well as a chance to get to know other members of CCB better'.**

**'A fantastic week. Looking forward to next year!'**

# Creator, Creation and Creativity

Written by Elizabeth Mortimer

If the Godhead, the Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is complete in itself as a spiritual entity, why did God create the material universe? The following thoughts and quotations from the Bible attempt to answer this question.

**“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”  
Genesis 1:1**

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.” John 1:1-4

“In these last days he (that is God) has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe.” Hebrews 1:2

Not only was the Son, the Word, the agent of creation, but the third Person of the Trinity was involved as well. “Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.” Genesis 1:2

We read in Genesis chapter 1 of the creation of light in the darkness on the first day, the sky on the second day, dry land and plants on the third day, the Sun, Moon and stars on the fourth day, sea creatures and birds on the fifth day and, finally, land animals and human beings on the sixth day.

(See verses 3-26) God has created a mind-blowing diversity of scenery, animals and people.





As Christians, we believe that we were created in the image of God. *“So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.”* Genesis 1:27

It is obvious to me that God is a creative Being and that means that we are, too. Our individual creativity could take the form of art, music, cookery, gardening, flower arranging, woodwork, metalwork, needlework, writing or an aspect that I have not thought of.

My mind turns to the construction of the Tabernacle as an example of the creativity of people shown in the Old Testament. People were needed who were skilled wood and metal workers. I particularly like the reference to the embroidering of the curtains.

*“Make a tabernacle with ten curtains of finely twisted linen and blue, purple and scarlet yarn with cherubim woven into them by a skilled worker.”* Exodus 26:1. The whole thing must have been a resplendent structure.



Before my cousin, Margaret, who died in January, 2021, developed dementia, she was a talented artist. Up until nearly the end of her life, she enjoyed painting, although her pictures had become juvenile in style and repetitive in subject matter. Even then, she could produce a much better result than I ever could.

Although, according to the Bible, God completed the creation of the world in six days and rested on the seventh, He is busy preparing to create a new world for when Jesus returns and time is no more. *“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea.”* Revelation 21:1

**I believe it is up to each one of us to discover and use the particular type of creativity that God has bestowed on us and to use it to His glory, the benefit of other people and to enhance our own lives.**



# See you later, not goodbye

Written by  
**AJ & Amy Hutchinson-Wade**

It has been just over 6 years ago on the 2nd July 2017, when I was invited to attend an interview for the role of Youth Minister here at Christ Church Bedford. I was met at the train station by the lovely Judy Miller, who brought me to CCB.

After meeting many people and two days of some pretty intense interviews, I went home thinking I wouldn't get the job, only to be offered it a week later.

I accepted the job and moved down to Bedford, I had only been to Bedford twice before I moved, and I wasn't sure about the idea of living in a town, as I'm a city boy. But I have to say Bedford has grown on me.

Working at CCB has been an honour; it's been a rollercoaster. I have to be honest it has been really hard at points, filled with a mixture of emotions ranging from sadness to anger (mostly righteous anger), but through it all, it has meant so much to me that people here have continued to pray for me during those difficult times.

But that being said, being here has allowed me to experience and do things I would have never dreamed of.

I have seen young people grow up and become great young adults doing amazing things with their lives.

Making friends both here at CCB and across Bedford that will last over the years. Most importantly meeting my now wife here at CCB nearly 6 years ago, but I'll let her tell you all about that.

As my husband (I do love saying that) has mentioned, we met at Christ Church and I thank God that we did. It was my first day at Christ Church where I was encouraged to go a newcomers tea that I met AJ.

I came to Bedford for my teaching career 2017. Like AJ, I had lived in London before and been in Cambridge. I remember in 2019 really having a crisis of whether to continue living in England or go back to Northern Ireland.

Margaret Cottenden spoke wise words to me about how it can take time to settle and so I decided to stay. Boy am I glad I did!

I have loved being part of the family at Christ Church. It has provided me with so many opportunities to develop in my faith and to go from a shy (I know that's hard to believe) and reluctant volunteer to being involved in PCC, Standing Committee, Youth and writing for the church magazine, alongside leading evening services and even preaching for the first time!

But Christ Church has also given me a space to heal, to learn more about the amazing God we serve and what a daily walk with God looks like. I'll forever be grateful for that. AJ and myself are so excited about the journey Christ Church is on and we can't wait to hear and visit our church family. Please do keep in touch with us - we would love to hear from you all!







## BEDS & HERTS Historic Churches Trust

As well as our Mission Partners, Christ Church also supports a number of other local charities and organisations. One such is the Beds and Herts Historic Churches Trust, of which we are a corporate member. The Trust was established in 1991 to raise funds to restore and repair churches and chapels in Beds, Herts, and part of Barnet. It's income comes from subscriptions, donations, fundraising and the annual Bike 'n Hike on the second Saturday of September when hundreds of churches in both counties are open for visits by sponsored riders and walkers.

In 2022/23 22 churches in Bedfordshire Hertfordshire received grants of between £1,000 and £10,000 (totalling approx. £150,000) to help with a whole range of necessary repairs. The trust also receives funding from the Wixamtree Trust and handles applications from Bedfordshire churches on their behalf. Christ Church received two grants (totalling £20,000) from the Wixamtree Trust for the building of the new halls.

Bike 'n Hike is the biggest fundraising event each year. It has been held since 1992 and raised over £2.1 million. Last year the event was overshadowed by the death of the Queen a couple of days before, but over £91,000 was raised thanks to bikers, hikers, sponsors and helpers.



Photos from previous years including the Bishop of Bedford in 2021



We are looking for people to get involved this year: Saturday 10th September 9am and 5pm. Whilst the event is called Bike 'n Hike other modes of transport are acceptable: on foot, by bike, horse, camel, tricycle, space-hopper, buggy or pogo stick. You can travel by car or mobility scooter. Each participant or team chooses their own route, distance, pace and mode of transport sufficiently challenging to merit sponsorship but something you feel able to do. Sponsorship packs are available from the Christ Church Hub now. Why not come up with a plan and let us know what you are hoping to do and we will let the congregation know via our notices and encourage them to sponsor you and we will have sponsorship forms available. All money raised is divided equally between Christ Church and the Trust.



Please also keep an eye out for other ways you can support the trust, for example they give talks, run church tours where you meet at a railway station and then go on a tour with a guide, exploring some of the finest historic buildings in that area by coach, with good company and afternoon tea (next one is Saturday 23rd September). The Bishop of St Albans sometimes opens Abbey Gate House's garden in aid of the Trust, or you might wish to become a Friend of the Trust. There is more information about all of the above on their website <https://bedshertshct.org.uk/>

Pauline Grimley





## Sunday Services

9am & 10:30am Morning Worship

7pm Sundays@Seven

**Wednesday Service**

10am Holy Communion



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