

## SPECIAL MESSAGE FOR EVERYONE...

We need your **up to date information** – and ideally a photo of you – because **every weekday morning we pray for the people of St Mark's**, which means that every **six weeks** you are prayed for... In the narthex are the cards we use – please check that your details are correct. If they are put them in the box, if they aren't please update us, and if there is no card for you – sorry! **We'd love to be praying for you**, so please create one!

Every Sunday in June we will also be taking snaps of people – these will only be used for this purpose – it is so useful to put faces to names. If you would allow us to take a quick snap of your beautiful faces that would be **so helpful in praying and just knowing who everyone is**. Many

## SPREE

12 children and 7 adults from St Mark's will be going to Spree, a camping weekend for children and young people aged 8-15, where the Christian faith is explained in a clear and relevant way.

Please pray that all would stay safe and dry, have an exciting and fun time, and grow in relationship with each other and with Jesus.



***Please pray together for...***

Pray for these lovely people being confirmed on June 19<sup>th</sup>:



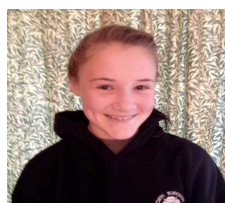
Rob Swales



Peggy Redfern



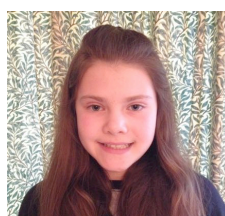
Kay Fieldhouse



Grace Glover



Katie Thornton



Millie Greenwood

### **Mission Partner Prayer Focus:**

This month we are praying for **Paul and Ruth Turner in Peru**. **Pray for the team going out to Peru next month to join them from St Mark's – that God would do amazing things through and with them.**



**St Mark's**

**Inspiring each other to love and follow Jesus Christ... everywhere in everything**

## INDIVIDUAL STUDY NOTES

**Week Beginning:**

### SHARING OUR STORY

*'But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect' (1Peter 3:15)*

With a visiting speaker at two of our morning services, and a break in our journey through The Gospel of Luke this week, I thought it would be a good opportunity for us to do something a little bit different in regards to the weekly notes. Connoisseurs of highbrow entertainment will not have passed up the opportunity to watch 'David Beckham Into The Unknown' this week, documenting the recently retired footballer's adventure to Brazil, travelling deep into the Amazon Rainforest to visit the Yanonami tribe. There was a fantastic moment in which Beckham attempts to explain his job as a professional footballer to a tribal leader. The tribal leader looks thoroughly perplexed as the translator passes on Beckham's descriptions: "My job for many years was to play soccer – soccer is a football, and there are 11 players on each team, and there are two goals, and you have to kick the ball in the other team's goal... it's a lot about teamwork". Beckham is asked by a companion, "have you ever had to explain football to anybody?" to which he replies with a broad smile, "No, never, apart from my wife"

It got me thinking about how we explain our stories and how we speak of our lives of faith. How might we describe our experiences as Christians, the difference Christ makes in our lives? How might we tell the story of the gospel to those who have little or no knowledge of it? How can we lose the jargon and shake off our assumptions about what other people will know?

So, this week in our groups and individually, I want to set the challenge of thinking about how we might tell our story. I'm going to set out some possibilities as to how you might like to approach this, and offer some of my own attempts and thoughts (you might think of other creative ideas too). I hope you enjoy the challenge!  
Love, Andy

## Ideas and questions

- Is there a passage of scripture that has been pivotal in your journey of faith, or a verse that you have come back to again and again? How and why is it important? What does it say about your story?
- Is there a passage of scripture that describes your present experiences or circumstances, be it joy, sorrow, thanksgiving or lament?
- What image or picture would you use to represent something of the hope of the gospel, or your life of faith?
- Have a go at writing a short 'Why I believe' account (this needn't exclude questions or doubts that you have)
- In no more than 140 characters (i.e. a Tweet) have a go at describing either:
  - a) Something of the message of the gospel
  - b) Your experience of faith

## Examples

### **PSALM 139**

Having already had three children, Brian and Jude decided that enough was enough, their hands were full and they had plenty to contend with! And so an appointment was made for Brian to have a certain procedure, and the operation was booked. It came to the day of the appointment, and Brian and Jude got in the car, ready for their journey up the A19. As they set off, two significant things happened. Firstly, Jude began to cry. And cry. And cry. Secondly, a snowstorm that had set in got heavier and heavier the further north they headed. About half way into the journey Brian pulled the car over. They agreed to turn the car round and return home. They decided to cancel the operation.

Brian maintains that he was simply being a loving and caring husband, moved by the tears of his wife and aware of her emotional wellbeing. He insists that the decision to turn the car round was absolutely not influenced by, a) concern that the car would be stranded in the snow, or b) the dawning reality of a certain imminent painful procedure.

Either way, some nine months (...or so) later, a baby boy was born into the family, the fourth child, and undeniably finest of the brood – me!

When I reflect on this story I recall those words of Ps. 139:13-16 and give thanks:

*For you created my inmost being;*

*you knit me together in my mother's womb.*

*I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;*

*your works are wonderful,*

*I know that full well.*

*My frame was not hidden from you*

*when I was made in the secret place,  
when I was woven together in the depths of the earth.  
Your eyes saw my unformed body;  
all the days ordained for me were written in your book  
before one of them came to be.*

### **Psalm 139:13-16**

### **STOLE**

Recently a dear family friend sent a cheque towards the acquisition of a new stole (the long scarf that vicars wear) as a belated ordination present. I was very grateful for this, because the stole that I had commissioned for my ordination, while very beautiful, isn't especially appropriate for all occasions. The flames of Pentecost found on it can look more like a threat of imminent judgment in certain settings! I therefore wanted to commission something that would speak of the hope that we have in Jesus. My idea was for the new stole to have a plain cross with life (budding branches, foliage, blossom, flowers) bursting from and around it. From something so ugly and cruel, our hope, the renewal of creation, springs forth.

### **WHY I BELIEVE**

*A few years ago I was asked to write a short paragraph, or 'statement of faith', relating to why I am a Christian (as opposed to stating what I believe). It was during something of 'dry season' of my life of faith, one of those times when God doesn't seem close, when it's difficult to pray. While I may wish to adapt some of it now, I leave it unedited to reflect that particular time:*

I believe because of what I have seen, heard and experienced. I do not know if I was born with a *God consciousness* but I have prayed for as long as I can remember, and believe I am not speaking into the dark. There have been moments of encounter with God that have been intensely powerful and euphoric, others in which I have barely recognized God's presence. I experience moments of clarity, life in clear and vivid colours, other times I only "see in a mirror, dimly", sometimes the mirror is mantled and obscure - I cannot see it at all. Yet there remains in me an immanent sense that God's love is beckoning me, that Jesus is "standing at the door, knocking". I believe that as we draw near to the Father, by the Son, through the Holy Spirit, we become more truly ourselves – "God's Spirit touches our spirits and confirms who we really are". Though there are parts that baffle me, or simply go over my head, as I read scripture the story of creation, fall and redemption makes sense. It fits with what I observe in the world. The blend of sheer beauty and tragic brokenness that surrounds us speaks of what is, has been, and will be. I believe because I have seen people and situations restored and renewed by the love and grace of God. I can see in other people, as well as in myself, God's power to transform and revive. My own brokenness is transformed by God's grace. I have seen, heard and experienced this grace and it is the foundation of my universe.