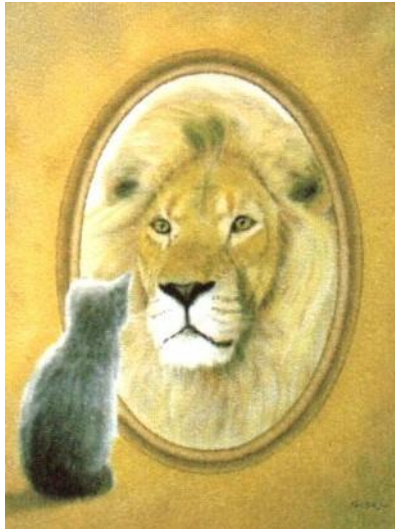


150+ Stories for 150+ Years

*Faith stories of God's goodness
from one small church,*



Church of Christ, Commercial Road Tunbridge Wells

Introduction

It is with great joy I welcome you to this booklet comprising 150+ stories from various people and activities over the past 152 years. Most of the stories are from people still alive and we appreciate each person who took the time to reflect and write their thoughts and memories of the impact of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and the influence this Church family has had in their lives.

However, some stories have been written posthumously so we could ensure voices of faithful saints from years gone by were heard as well. It is both humbling and exciting to think of the number of people this congregation has influenced over the years with regards to the Gospel of Jesus. Faithful members who have served in a variety of ways, who have shared their faith with others, who have sacrificed time and effort and energy, to ensure the Kingdom ministry of this congregation has continued to survive and thrive.

Did those founding members of this congregation, Henry Collyer and others, have any idea that 150 years later, what they began would be celebrated and would be continuing? I'm sure they believed the Word of God would never return empty, and where the gospel of Christ is preached and lived there will always be life! Over 150 years, we do things differently, we look nothing like our founding fathers did, but we are still passionate about knowing Jesus and making Him known; we do this by being encouraged and challenged and equipped to Grow Up in our relationship with Jesus our King; to Grow In in our relationship with one another as we Build a Healthy Church community, and as we Grow Out, blessing our wider local community with the good news of Jesus.

Our prayer is that this congregation will continue to make a positive and powerful Kingdom impact in Tunbridge Wells and further for the next 150 years or more, or until our Lord returns, as we see lives transformed by the love, grace and power of our Risen Saviour.

Enjoy reading the stories, anecdotes and thoughts of just some of the thousands of people who have been part of this congregation over the years.

Cliff Allen, Minister

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Annie Adams

On the 8th May 2017 I was baptised at the Church of Christ, after a long lifetime of discovering who God was. It was the best day of my life, being surrounded by my friends and church family who have supported me throughout my journey and getting to celebrate me running into the arms of the Father, never to look back; my past forgiven and my future exciting!

Church of Christ has been an absolute joy for me, my main memory of course being 'Crème Fresh' - the youth group that helped completely form my faith; it was a place of fun and banter and so much laughing until I cried, but also a safe place where I could ask questions and dig deeper into the Christian faith without anyone forcing their own opinions on me.

To this day, Crème Fresh was the most accepting and open group I have ever been a part of, nearly every week we would have a new member, even if just for 1 week, and we never questioned it. People were allowed to come and go as they pleased, which made us even more eager to stay.

It really represented the Christian message to me, and just through running like it did, completely open with no 'categories' you needed to fit into, I learnt about Jesus' acceptance without the message even needing to be verbally shared.

I saw the acceptance of Jesus in every person who walked through that door on Sunday night and to this day I will carry that message with me.

Barbara Adsett (Simpson)

As a child I joined Church of Christ and stayed in touch with Hazel Turner, Lynda Steers and Cynthia Murrells up to Hazel & Cynthia's deaths.

I came to the Church as a 6-year-old attending the August Holiday Club (which I adored that time and in the many years after). As the prize-giving was on the Sunday, myself and my other family members began attending the Sunday School and F.O.Y (Fellowship of Youth).

I was 11 years old and attending a Scripture Union club at school. I asked my teacher about where the 10 Commandments were. My faith was simple (still is in many ways). I just knew I wanted to follow God. Different groups of evangelists came to the Church over the years and I was baptised on May 11th (a Friday evening) 1972 when I was 18 years old.

My twin brother Derek has been a full-time evangelist and a pastor amongst other things.

Mr Heasman always remembered the time that he was painting the church and I just kept racing in and out of the building for mischief (sorry about that).

I felt so loved and accepted as I grew up in the Church and went on to lead Sunday School and a youth/kids club for many years out of my gratitude for all that I'd learned from Church of Christ. Thank you.



Cliff Allen

How did a small-town boy, growing up on a farm outside Streator, Illinois come to serve as the Minister of this congregation for the past 31 years?

Reluctant Participant – After gaining a Business degree from college, I found myself working in my father's garbage business. It was during this time that a couple from my home Church invited me to join them on the mission field in Vienna, Austria working for an organisation (Taking Christ to the Millions) smuggling Bibles behind the Iron Curtain. After spending a year living and working abroad, I came home with a desire to do more with my life than work in a landfill, so off to Bible College I went. While at Lincoln Christian College in Lincoln, IL, I was invited to lead a team to the UK to help with some children's camps over the summer, something I had no desire to do at the time. Because I had experience of living and travelling abroad, I was strongly encouraged, by members of the faculty, to lead a team of four to the UK in August of 1985. After much resistance, I became a reluctant participant in this venture, little knowing how it would completely change my life.

Compelling Conversations – Upon arriving in the UK, we were welcomed by our hosts from the Church of Christ in Tunbridge Wells, Gail Burns and Rita Ide. We also met Winifred Haffenden, Hazel Turner, and Colin & Judy Owen. It was in these first few days that one of these people asked each of us in the team if we had any thoughts of coming to the UK in the future to work and minister. Since I was a reluctant participant, I didn't think anything more of this invitation. Our first week of camp was at Overstone in Northampton, and it was here that the 2nd conversation took place with Dan Yarnell. About half-way through the week-long camp, Dan asked me personally if I had any thoughts, or would be willing to return to the UK to minister. Again, I was convinced this was NOT the direction God was leading me. Imagine

my surprise and bemusement, when at the next week's camp at Peckwood, outside of Redditch, Pete Bowen asked me if I had any thoughts about returning to the UK to minister. Three weeks, three similar questions, but three people in unrelated circumstances. God was beginning to get my attention. It was on our last week of camp, at Kilravock Castle outside Inverness, God, fully grabbed my attention in the form of Lynn Summers, who ultimately became my future wife. Over the week, we were interested enough in each other to continue to communicate after I returned to the US.

Amazing Co-incidences – So, because of several compelling conversations, in 4 weeks I went from a reluctant participant with no desire in considering a future in the UK, to returning to the US with every intention of returning to the UK as soon as I could. It would take me too long to explain all that took place in the next 12 months – a return to the UK to study at Springdale College, permission from Lincoln Christian College to finish my degree in the UK, raising support so we had a financial base, being invited by the Clapham Church of Christ to join them as their youth minister, and convincing Lynn to marry me. On October 4, 1986 we were married and for 3 years I served as the youth minister at the church in Clapham.

In 1989, the last of our amazing co-incidences took place, (at least in this part of our story) when the Church of Christ in Tunbridge Wells extended an invitation to us to come and minister among them which, of course, was the first place I had been challenged to consider returning to minister. It's been such a joy and privilege to serve this congregation and this town seeking to make the name of Jesus known.



Dan Allen

It takes a moment to take yourself out of your own situation and realise the work God has done in you. For me it is so easy to get caught up in the busyness of life but writing a testimony like this is so good for the soul as it reminds me of the incredible work God has done. From when I was born, Church of Christ has been my church. It's where I had birthday parties, attended

weddings and have been involved in so many other joyous occasions. I don't really remember a time when I didn't believe in God, but what I do remember is we would love to play wink murder in Sunday school!

I think I was about 11 when I went to New Wine and committed myself to God. I remember being a little scared, so I was pretty happy when I saw two of my mates stand up with me. We were given a pack and that was that, I was officially a believer. Then in October I was baptised with some of the other youth. These are some of the biggest events in your faith journey.

However, they didn't really feel too big, and I think that was because nothing had changed. I would be a presentable polite boy on a Sunday but go to school and engage in unwholesome chat and behaviour. I was living a double lifestyle. I was never scared to say I was a Christian, but I didn't show the love of Jesus through my words or actions.

This happened until year 13 where we had a small group after school. This is where my faith became more than a Sunday practice as we would try and be practical about sharing our faith. This meant I had to practice what I shared.

After school I took the new wine discipleship year with St Philips Church and it was cool to see a different type of church. I never realised that church was done differently because all I knew was Church of Christ. There were some things I liked and some things I disliked (the liturgy) but overall it was a really formative year for me. It made me realise my identity as a child of God and set a foundation which can't and won't be broken.

Then I went off to university. My first year wasn't the best but I think it was needed. It was my first glimpse of independence BUT it was in lockdown. It would mainly consist of us making a drinking game out of any tv programme or activity. I think being a pastor's son has many benefits such as the love and care I receive from not just my parents but the church community.

It has given me so many great opportunities and it has taught me how to live out my faith. I am forever thankful for that. However, there are a few negative things, one being I have lived a sheltered lifestyle. Again,

this is a testament to how much they love me, but I haven't experienced or witnessed many hardships, so when I went off to Uni it allowed me to experience life for myself. Although I do not encourage drinking, I believe I needed that time to realise what I was missing, which was God.

I had pretty much neglected God that first year plus one of my best friends committed suicide, which resulted in me turning my back on God. I knew I would come back but last summer I wasn't up for any type of discussion with him. That was my biggest mistake, because when I came back in September it felt like my faith and relationship with God had been stunted. I was leading a small group but felt like a fraud as the people in my small group probably had better faiths than me.

However, the work God has done in me this year has been a miracle. It won't seem like much, but I spend time with God every day, which never happened before. I truly understand the grace of God (or at least more than I did) and it is honestly incredible. I can mess up and sin and yet his arms are wide open for me to run into. I've seen people come to faith and I'm not scared about having a faith conversation. None of this is down to me but it is all down to my Heavenly Father who I am eternally grateful for. I am also eternally thankful for Church of Christ. There are so many reasons but here are 3:

You've prayed for me. It's not like you've prayed for me a little bit but you've truly invested your prayers into me. Without those I wouldn't be the person I am today. It is such a selfless act and it shows the true nature of Jesus.

You've shown me how to be a part of a community. For some people who go to church, they come, listen and go which is fine but they don't get to be a part of something. Having a community which serves one another is the best type of community.

Whether that is helping with youth, Sunday school, tea, coffee, welcoming, worship, leading, data projector, you are serving one another and that is how Jesus taught us to lead. By being SERVANT HEARTED. Also this community loves and cares for one another, it is not like we just serve and then go home but we want to know how everyone is doing. Without that we wouldn't be a community we would

be a workplace.

You've allowed me to experience God. Sounds pretty obvious as we are a church, but experiencing God can be tough. However, you've allowed me to go to Soul Survivor and HIT Camp. You've allowed me to be involved with other churches and grow with youth from around the town. You've allowed me to speak to you about God. You've allowed me to pray and worship.

These have all been ways I've experienced God and YOU have been a part of that. Lot of Love Church of Christ x



Emma Allen

I grew up attending St. John's church in Tunbridge Wells and became a Christian when I was a teenager at the youth group. I started coming to Church of Christ when I met Phil. I found the congregation to be friendly and welcoming and made up of very genuine people. Particularly fond memories

for me include quizzes at the church, bbqs at Jean's and helping with HIT Camp this year. I've really enjoyed getting to know people at the church better since we moved back to Tunbridge Wells in 2020 and feel grateful to be part of such a caring church family

Lynn Allen

Faces

☹️As a young child I looked in the faces of people on the streets, and saw the sadness of a broken world, and instinctively knew, as a five-year-old, that we all needed God, so I used to talk to him often.



Places

↓But my youth took me on a different path to drunken, ego-filled, pleasure and people-pleasing places, looking for love in unfulfilling and

insecure ways, that brought pain and brokenness and often wondering if there was more to life?

Cases

♥At University I studied different religions, but there was no one who came close to Jesus. I was impressed by cases of radical Christians reaching out and loving their enemies, taking risks and challenging me to the core.

Traces

✝Ultimately only Christ had died for me, and defeated death, to remove all traces of sin and shame in my life. When I decided to really follow Him and be baptised, I knew the joy of his presence.

Oasis

☝Since then, through all the many ups and downs of life, and through Church life, he has brought me to healing and abundant spaces, sharing life with others so completely different and diverse, (particularly now building community with women on the fringes of society.) He has brought purpose, guidance and inspiration.

Graces

☝All these graces have been part of an amazing adventure. I have ended up working for a charity in Kenya looking after destitute and orphan children. (some of those kind of faces I was praying for as a child) Jesus really has been the way the truth and the life for me, doing more with my life than I could have ever dreamed of.

Phil Allen,



I was brought up in Tunbridge Wells and in the Church. (At time of writing I was working in central London for a consultancy and living in Greenwich. Now living & working from home in High Brooms). I was inspired at Soul Survivor with thousands of others.

I've had good life and try not to take anything for granted – a loving family, good education

and have a job I enjoy. Throughout whenever I have had to make important decisions or have been unsure of the direction I should take, I feel like the guiding presence of God has been with me and helped me make decisions that have turned out to be right for me. Going to Leicester University where I met my wife was one such example and I am forever grateful that God brought us together.

Due to my father being the minister I was literally born and raised at the Church of Christ and was probably being passed round older ladies as a baby!

I have been the beneficiary of many of the church's activities and have also been able to serve by helping at many as well. These include: Holiday Bible Club, HIT Camp, Sunday School, Sunday Worship, Picnic In the Park, Summer Softball games, Men's Retreat, various fundraisers and I'm sure many others over the years!

Changes in the church - We got rid of the pews and replaced them with much more comfortable chairs, replaced the overhead projector with a laptop and screen, replaced a brown carpet with a more appealing turquoise colour, painted the walls a few times and installed hot water in the baptistery.

Apart from the cosmetic side of things, the church has become less formal and probably more welcoming over the years as people in the UK have changed the way they view Christianity itself. The Church has worked hard to develop a relaxed and comfortable environment where anyone and everyone is welcome, which is great. The constants have been the children and families always present and the fantastic honest teaching that the Church provides.

I remember playing Manuel as a child in a Fawlty Towers sketch at an entertainment evening, not sure if it was funny or distressing at the time but certainly got a lot of laughs! To be honest there have been many great moments.

I would pick out the HIT Camp weekends as just some great times with lots of children all having fun and learning something of God's love. The events and collaborations with other churches have had a great impact in bringing Christians from the town together.

Alpha Courses

Introductory Courses to Christianity have been held for many years both at the Church and also in partnership with other churches across the town. They generally involved a meal, a talk on some aspect basic to the Christian faith, followed by discussion groups and a weekend away. A number of our congregation came to faith through them (including one lady who calls herself an Alphaholic!).

*"Thank you for a wonderful evening at Alpha. As ever a delight to see you as you have played a huge part in the transformation of our lives" J & S
"I feel blessed that our town and its church leadership have given my family the opportunity to know about the gospel in such an easy going way." J*



"I loved listening to your message. It provided a great opportunity for our group to understand the core idea around the word of God, the work of Jesus and the Holy Spirit. The group discussions which followed were charged with new energy and everyone in the group was keen to engage. It was really informative and great fun – perfect!" S Mc

Anon

Although there may have been some Jewish roots, my immediate family were not religious. My Dad was atheist, abusive and racist, with a similar worldview to Hitler! Even before I was born there were occultic influences in our household. My parents had had a bad experience with a Ouija board and left it in the loft, but we knew it was there.

I went to a COE school and was helped into an awareness of God by occasional visits from the vicar. I also had a best friend whose mother was very Christian and all part of God's guiding influences.

However, the Ouija board sparked our curiosity as children. It seemed like a game, but then things dropped from the ceiling, figures visited at night and there were strange noises and fear of the dark which added to the oppressive abuse at home. I went to a Spiritualist Church as a teenager - oblivious to the danger, had readings done at a psychic fair and was given tarot cards. (My relatives are still involved with Spiritualism and some dark stuff).

I moved out at a young age due to family breakdown and neglect. After some time of living rough, I moved in with some work colleagues and was impacted by one who became a Christian and had her life transformed. I and other housemates loosely went along to her church and saw testimonies of those 'on fire for God'.

Sadly, one day I was attacked on a train by someone known to me. The resulting police investigation was very intrusive and led me to give up work at a time of saying goodbye to a boyfriend and seeing my Dad for the last time. These combined losses and anger brought me to a place of mental breakdown. I was overdosing, along with other punishing behaviours. But at my lowest points I would hear a loud voice (of God) telling me to stop and saving me from slipping away.

My next move was to near Camden Road in Tunbridge Wells. where I felt compelled to reach out to a local church. And so it was that I met Cliff and came along to the Church of Christ. Immediately I felt it was the right place to be and a real home with relatable human beings, understandable services and no judgement. I was then baptised. Feelings of shame for being ill, self-harming and self-condemnation - as a bad, weak person (stigmas received from my family's outlook on life) continued and caused me to have another year long breakdown and spell in Maidstone hospital. At this time Lynn & Cliff visited and Gail & Rita sent me a letter which had a profoundly positive effect. I lived in sheltered housing for a while, which was mostly good, although not without vulnerabilities.

I went on to meet my husband. This was a hard relationship, but I am grateful that it created my son. My husband had a psychopathic personality disorder and was bipolar. He was possessive and difficult to

live with. We both attended Alpha and I do think he had a belief and some changed behaviours before he died of probable suicide.

Not used to being alone, I had another relationship with a man who was also an alcoholic, and who lost a long battle with cancer. My son has had his own demons to fight but has done really well. Some bad supernatural influences have continued to battle against us, but I have kept praying and we would not have got through but for God answering those prayers and giving us a way of escape.

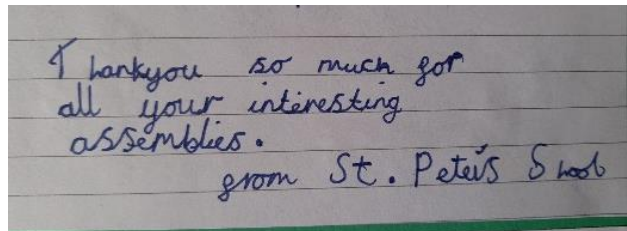
I continue to meet with people from the church, despite some social anxiety. Our chats help balance the negative thoughts and challenge the lies and my feelings of uselessness. Even in hospital recently after an operation and being almost bedbound, I was able to help another patient – which I felt was a message from God to me – helping me to hang on every day. I hope one day I will be fully healed of past trauma.



Doris Ashby moved to Tunbridge Wells after her husband died and she lived at St Stephens Court. She also worked part-time in the Post Office on the corner of Camden Road and Kirkdale Road. Doris played the piano from time to time. She was small in stature but well-read and articulate. She was involved in weekly Bible Studies and helped to cook at various children's camps. Doris had a wonderful sense of humour and a deep and abiding faith.

Assemblies & Basketball

Over the years Church of Christ has had input into three of our local primary schools; St James, St Barnabas and St Peter's, and also Beechwood and Bennett



Memorial schools among others.

We have been involved in both praying for and supporting Teachers, Pupils and Parents in their finding and sharing of faith in creative and accessible ways.

Cliff has also been able to use his love of sport to coach Basketball at St James. This has been another great way to connect with community, win (or lose!) trophies and be of service.



“My two have had so much fun learning basketball...We have all really appreciated it.” SB

Becci (& Luke) Bacon



I have known God for most of my life but didn't fully understand the personal relationship He wanted with me until many years later. Even though Church of Christ was not my 'home' church, I was blessed to be able to visit a few times a year when we lived in Tunbridge Wells.

During a time of life that was extremely difficult, the people at Church of Christ were amazing at showing Jesus' love through the welcome we always received, the genuine care and the fact people always remembered my name and what news I had last shared with them.

To be honest I think people were just being themselves and trying to live life the way Jesus commands, to love each other, I was no special guest but I was always so blessed by them. Church of Christ to me is a beautiful example of the diversity and community of God's kingdom and has been, and continues to be, a blessing to me and our family.

Luke led worship at Church of Christ for several years and is now an Anglican Minister.



Sarah Bailey

Thank you so much for all the prayers and love. The church has been so amazing and become my family.

Sarah began & worked at 'Daily Bread' Café in Rusthall, until she moved away.

Balls/Birthdays & Socials (celebration messages from 2020 below)



2020 was to be the year we celebrated God's goodness and faithfulness being the Church's 150th Anniversary – he had other plans! but before the covid lockdown happened we were very blessed to enjoy our Leap Year Ball at Beechwood School, which was also a great outreach and fundraising event.

Anniversaries have also long been celebrated at the church, along with Birthday milestones and quirky 'Entertainment Evenings!' The hall is also hired out on a regular basis to community groups for social and educational purposes, such as a local choir and drug re-hab group.



Baptisms – It has been our joy to witness the declarations of faith and baptisms by immersion over the last 30 years of the following:

Caroline Rumley	1990	Vicky Daw	2005
Jackie Heap	1990	David Owen	2006
Julie Rolling	1990	Jane Clarke	2007
Nina Jagelman	1991	Martin Ebbs	2007
Pat Stone	1991	Paul Berry	2007
Joan Brown	1992	Henry Gathercole	2009
Sandy Evans	1992	Julie Molyneux	2009
Tina Gilsenan	1992	Kieran Reid	2009
Becky Lewis	1993	Luisa Saiz-Collada	2010
Christine Henfrey	1993	Steve Reid	2010
Jayne Tucker	1993	Gemma Kinne	2011
Susan Tucker	1993	Ann Mason	2012
Hannah Brown	1994	Cecile Kent	2013
Linda Hunt-Green	1994	Connor Reid	2013
Dianna Spencer	1995	Dan Allen	2013
Kathy Anderson	1995?	Rachel Payne	2013
Stephanie Hudson-Barnes	1995	Sam Jemmett	2013
Tim Henfrey	1995?	Abi Sheehy	2016
Richard Thomas	1996?	Annie Adams	2016
Andy Thomas	1998	Lily Baish	2016
Louise Fielden	1998	Melinda Millen	2016
Matthew Oliver	1998	Nassia Vogelzang	2017
Bill Burchell	1999?	Noah Smith	2017
Geoff Eadon	1999	Renna Vogelzang	2017
Graham Watson	1999	Russ Davies	2017
Karen Payne	1999	Helen Kevan	2018
Naomi Allen	1999	Kalypso Moriati	2018
Nicky Watson	1999	Kelsie Weaver	2018
Calon Flack	2000	Amy Baker	2019
Caroline Bartlett	2000	Claire Brown	2019
Jean Barling	2000	Jackie Lilley	2019
Ricky Brown	2000	Jo Janetta	2019
Jan Ruzika	2001	Lauren Danguiin-Wilson	2019
Sara Johal	2001	Leslie Monrose-Webb	2019
Tony Foster	2001	Stephen Campbell	2019
Lizzie Owen	2003?	John Simpson	2020

Always wonderful and powerful times of joy and transformation as these 'new' births mark the start of new adventures with the Lord.



While we celebrate that many of these, and other church members are going on with the Lord, whether in Tunbridge Wells or other far-flung regions, (such as the Irvines in Australia, the Fieldens in Wales and the Gilsenans in Birmingham), we also pray and long for the prodigals to return.



Barbeques

Yearly BBQs have been held every summer and have been great feasts and times of friendship and fellowship. Held in Jean's garden, Beechwood or in our local park, sometimes including popular softball games.

We have also partnered with St James church to facilitate a Christian presence at Festivals and Events in the park. On occasion we have had a Fun Day with bouncy castle, softball matches or parachute games with our Muslim community.



Jean Barling

A notable part of my story begins in about the 16th Century. My maternal Grandmother (according to her daughter, my Mother), was of Huguenot descent whose family came from the Netherlands. She never forgot her heritage and would always go to the Church of England Good

Friday service all on her own. It was she who gave me my first prayer and hymn book when I was six years old and I still have it (eighty years later).

The reason the Huguenots (a strong, yet minor Protestant Christian denomination in Europe) had to migrate was because they were demonised as heretics by the Pope. The Jesuit sector of the Roman Catholic church set out to destroy all heretics – Jews, Islamists, Protestants, who did not come under the authority of the Pope. Shira Sorka-Ram from Israel has recently done a history of the Bible and identifies this slaughter of these heretics: Jews, Islamists and “other minor sects”. Chuck Missler from the U.S. is more specific, and in his history of Christianity he records the murder of 70,000 Huguenots in 1572 - hence the migration.

I now fast-forward to my early teens when I was taken along to the Girl Crusaders on Sunday afternoons where I was encouraged to “give my heart to Jesus” / “ask Jesus into my life”. So I did this in order to conform, but I am sure God answered.

I left school and went to work in London, which opened up a new world of culture. My new career was one in the field of architects and fine furniture, both antique and modern; till one day God said “MOVE”. ‘Er, umm, yes, Lord, where to, please?’ No answer. Thankfully the demand was repeated till I had to resort to the counsel of my retired missionary mentor friend as I was floundering. She directed me to go to Bible College and learn from God there. I did, and on leaving was just as much in the dark; I was then offered a small room in a lady’s hostel as I had no home, no money and no future. So being nearby I walked to Hyde Park and, under the trees, howled my heart out in desperation. It was as though God was saying “you work it out!”

Gradually, I did, and God opened doors one by one. After a cookery course I worked at Lambeth Palace for five years, then, in 1980, came home at my Mother's request to help care for my ageing father. Shortly after the move home I was invited to visit my father's elder brother and his wife in Australia, and the doctor said 'go quickly'. I had a wonderful few month's holiday with them, and then a close friend with whom I had been at Bible College said 'On your way home, visit me in Manilla in the Philippines where I am working in the admin side of Overseas Missionary Fellowship'.

So I did, and discovered the existence of a brand new mission home; a shell of a building much in need of furnishing. Sue said 'I am too busy to do it and I don't know how to anyway - YOU DO IT'. So, I did, and found it hugely fulfilling. Looking back, I think God was saying "See: this is my gifting to you...use it." For ME.

It has been amazing how God has provided, above all my expectations, and enabled me to achieve what I have, all since that day walking in Hyde Park seemingly with no hope, when He was just saying 'TRUST ME'. So as the hymn writer has it: 'THIS IS MY STORY, THIS IS MY SONG, PRAISING MY SAVIOUR ALL THE DAY LONG'

Paul Berry

I was a deep sea diver for many years. When my Mother died she asked (family friend) Jean to keep an eye on me. I started helping Jean out a lot with her computers and she began cooking me meals.



Over time, she also started cooking meals for the Alpha courses, so she said to me 'If you want to get fed, come to Alpha!' I did reluctantly and was warmly welcomed.

I really met with God at the Holy Spirit weekend and decided to give my life to Christ. When I told Jean, I apparently had the biggest smile on my face.

I have had some battles to fight in prayer, but I remain passionate about God's word and spirit and his power to heal.

Bible Studies and Fellowship Groups



Deeper exploration of the Scriptures and the outworking of the Christian life has been core to the community at Commercial Road. A number of different studies and courses have really been appreciated by those attending either in homes, online or at the church building. Some of these have been Freedom in Christ, Jesus the Gamechanger, the Wellbeing Course, and the Shape course. In the early

days of the ministry some of these discussions were pretty challenging. Thankfully Cliff has a 'thick skin!' There were also those who's sole purpose was to prove the Church wrong! By God's grace, the chief culprits are still with us!

Jason Bradshaw

I became a Christian in 2005 after being invited to St Lukes Church Maidstone by a old school friend. I have had a interesting journey in my faith. In 2010 I signed up to South West Youth Ministries. I was sent to a small village in Devon where I trained as a Youth and Children's worker with the Church of England.



On my return to Kent I worked with young people with disabilities. In 2015 I got into a relationship that was not healthy, and I walked away from my Faith! However, life events led me back and in 2016 I found faith again. I was enrolled as a Salvation Army soldier at Maidstone Corps. I thought I would be in Maidstone serving with the Army forever. Oh no God had other plans and myself and my partner Shelley were led to Tunbridge Wells. After a bit of church searching, I found Church of Christ. I found my spiritual home and a lovely church family.

However, that was not the end in 2021 God led us to the outskirts of a small village called Leigh near Tonbridge. Initially I was a bit confused why God had put us in the middle of nowhere with alpacas and sheep for neighbours.

God led me to St Mary's Church Leigh. To cut a long story short, God found me work to do there, and I now am in charge of running the Parent and Toddler Group! Occasionally once every so often I come back to visit Church of Christ as it has a wonderful place in my heart and means the world to me

The Bright Hour

The Ladies' 'Bright Hour' was established between the wars, somewhere around 1930. There were several 'Bright Hours' in the town's churches and ladies would frequent several in a kind of rota fashion, but by the 1990s all the other meetings had closed, leaving Commercial Road as the last. Hymns, scriptures, prayer and a speaker preceded tea and biscuits, and sometimes the reading of a serial story such as Anne of Green Gables.

My overriding memory of these meetings was the cheer and laughter. If you ever got Mrs Gilliland and Mrs Skinner laughing, you could just about forget the rest of the meeting because their laughter was infectious. I once asked the ladies "How old are you on the inside?" They answered 43-45 – this was from women who were all born at the beginning of the 20th century!

We had annual outings in the Summer and we went to Bognor Regis, Broadstairs, and the favourite, Eastbourne. We also went to see gardens in the Spring and Autumn. Some of those attending not mentioned elsewhere were: Ivy Bennett, Ivy Cavey, Rosina Gilliland, Lillian Skinner, Mrs Streeton, Ivy Richards & Doris Gould. *(pic from 1985)*





Hannah Brown

Is the current longest member of Church of Christ. She began attending the Sunday School at a young age, came to faith early and has since used her many communication gifts to serve the church in worship, preaching and teaching, writing and prophecy. She writes:

In the middle of the desert, the teeming desert of modern life, a church volunteered to be an Oasis, and God accepted the offer. The Oasis was a place of respite from the world, calm, quiet, a place to rest. This Oasis would change people.

The thing is that the Oasis isn't meant for every visitor to stay, or it would cease to be an Oasis! In agreeing to be an Oasis, we gave up the chance to be a "megachurch".

Instead, we refill, revive, and repair battered souls. Some stay and help to man the Oasis helping. Others move on, ready for the next part of the journey. The Oasis isn't big, but it is vital.



Ricky Brown

Oblivious – as a child, I was oblivious to religion – it had nothing to do with my life. My dad always told me to do what I want, and I did! I had a sense of right and wrong – (Star Trek!) but focused more on what was right for me.

Sampling – Then at secondary school, I met a girl who was quite good fun to hang around with, but who wouldn't stop going on about why she was being baptized. She kept talking about her faith and I found it quite interesting that religion mattered to her. I am now married to that girl, by the way. I was 12 when Hannah was first talking about being

baptized. I was 16 before she finally persuaded me to come to church – to a barn dance of all things. I remember being surprised by the community – by how many older people there were, but also that they were basically alright. I started coming along to lots of church things.

Commitment – After a little while, Linda got me further involved by inviting Hannah and me to lead worship with her. I really enjoyed singing. I attended various courses and understood the gospel message, but something was holding me back. I remember I had a conversation with Cliff in which he pointed out that I was basically a Christian – I believed everything and was living the life – but I hadn't made a commitment. When I was 18, I finally did. I prayed the prayer and was baptized in the autumn of 2000.

Wilderness – a few years later, things weren't going so well in my life. My marriage was great, but things at work weren't, I was very unhappy, and I was struggling with understanding my role in life and in the church. I wasn't happy with some things and I didn't know how to communicate what I was feeling, or what to do about it. Ultimately, I lost faith in people... so I stepped back from church for a while and I got a very different new job. I ended up being away for about 15 years! I didn't step away from God, but I wasn't sure how I felt about God. Now, I see that time as my time in the wilderness, learning, adapting, being shaped.

Return – Last year, Hannah and I were invited to take part in the Wellbeing course. When Hannah mentioned it, saying that she had already said that we were too busy(!), I found myself saying that I thought we should do it. I got to know people from church and had to re-evaluate my ideas about my faith. I was able to observe as an adult. I realised that the church wasn't the same as it had been, and neither

was I. I came along to a couple of services to talk about the Wellbeing course. It was meant to be two services... but here I am still!

Listening – I'm enjoying being back as part of the community and I hope that God has work for me to do. I'm listening to what he has to say and am continuing to learn and grow in my faith.



Gail Burns

Served as a Missionary from USA to the Church from 1982-1995. She was terrific with children and young people and dedicated to activities for both the young and the elderly.

Often seen at Youth Camps and Church of Christ National Events, she brought her imaginative and pastoral flair to church life, helping to start up a parent and toddler group and many an 'after school and holiday club'. She is now part of a Church of Christ in Kirkby in Furness.

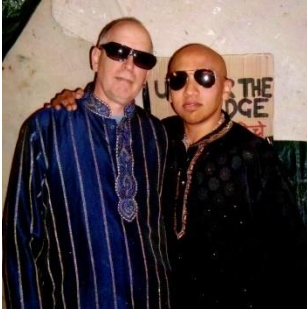
Gail did a lot with families in the community. We remember her dressing up as a fairy one Christmas, and she and Rita probably made many of the Christmas costumes that live on today! She has kindly supplied **all the stories in dark blue in this booklet.**

Campaigning

Issues of Justice and Social Concern have had a long history in the Churches of Christ. One of our favourite stories was when some of our Sunday school children drew food for the world pictures on paper plates. Soon after a



few of them ended up getting to go 10 Downing St, meeting the then Prime Minister - David Cameron and comedian David Walliams. It was all part of a TEAR Fund global campaign and the government shortly after significantly increased their Aid budget to reduce World Hunger. Amen!



It has been great to partner with Empathy Action in the town to help deliver some 'Poverty Trap' and 'Desperate Journey' simulations, which really help you appreciate what life is really like for many in extreme poverty. *(Cliff acting as a slum landlord).*

It has also been a blessing to campaign together with others for 'freedom of the prisoners and release for the oppressed. The persecuted church, poverty, homelessness and care for the planet are also close to our hearts.



Ykle (& Pavla) Caraces

I am from Venezuela and my wife from Czech Republic, we have 3 children. For many years I had been living without Christ in my heart. After the Alpha Course, the Church of Christ has been our main church, and as a member I attest to zeal for work in the community and supporting other local churches, as well as support in our spiritual and personal lives.





Stephen Campbell

1957 to 2007 Lost, 2008 found

My background is that I pretty much grew up in a family of women, my father passed away when I was about 10 months old, so I never knew him (something that has saddened me in later years). Mum never re-married, so I was raised by her, my gran, my sister and a succession of various aunts and family friends. There was no male influence in my life at all.

My family were all Anglican churchgoers, (apart from my Uncle Ian who was a minister in the Scottish Church in Roslin, Scotland, (birthplace of Dolly the Sheep!) Whether they were Christians or not I don't know. We lived in Wadhurst and attended St Peter and St Pauls Church where I was christened and later became a chorister. I attended Wadhurst Primary School and later Wadhurst Secondary School (now Uplands), where I won 2 swimming trophies!! Mind you the swimming and the Grace of God saved my life when I nearly drowned off the coast of Mollendo, Peru, when I was 14, but that's another story. I should have known he was always with me.

We moved to Tunbridge Wells in 1970. I remember on the occasion of my confirmation at Christ Church, Tunbridge Wells in 1972, I was so sure that something dramatic was going to happen to me and waited in anticipation, like in Acts 2: 2-4 for some sort of burning bush moment but you know what? Nothing obvious happened, and none of my subsequent experiences while attending church and nominally being a Christian, amounted to anything at that time.

Inevitably I grew to be a teenager and then withdrew from any church/Christian activities. Eventually I left home on 18th July 1976 and went off to live in London, where I trained as a nurse at The Nightingale School, St Thomas Hospital. I left nursing in 1978 and worked for a few years in an administrative capacity for The General Nursing Council in London until the early 80's when I returned home to Tunbridge Wells.

The path The Lord sets out for us is not always easy to see, for some it may be easier. Like a rail track disappearing into the horizon, some may not see it at all. Either way, God gave us free will to either stick to his path or choose our own. In my experience when you deviate from his path and try to do things in your own perceived, pathetic strength, you have got trouble with a Capital T, which was where I was rapidly heading. It wasn't all bad. I was married before and have a wonderful massively talented biological son Joshua, and 2 stepchildren, Molly and Stephen, but as this is looking more like my memoirs, I'm going to fast forward to 2007 when I met Andi.

We were blessed with Gabriel, or 'Tag' which is actually an acronym of The Angel Gabriel as his name was abbreviated to when Andi and I were texting, and it just stuck, some people thing Tag is his actual name! Andi and Lauren attended The United Reformed Church in Rusthall. I didn't attend church at all then, but I thought I'd start going along to see what it was all about.

One Sunday, there was a sermon by the then Minister, Bob Street, which really resonated with me. After the service I went to talk to Bob and he prayed with me, and at that moment I was compelled by The Spirit to ask for forgiveness and give my life to Christ and declare Jesus as my Lord and Saviour. As I did, I felt an enormous, crushing weight lifted off me.....

I would not be here now, if it had not been for Andi and me meeting. Over time, we grew in faith as a family, and eventually our path led us here to Church of Christ.

As soon as we arrived, we felt.....hey, we're home! We were quickly adopted into this amazing church family, after a while our Minister Cliff Allen was kind enough to give me a shot at leading worship in song, which I am so blessed to be able to do. You guys have seen our family through some tough times, the passing of my mother in July 2018, the relocation of my job to Tonbridge, an unexpected house move, various job challenges for Andi, Gabriel starting secondary school and Lauren leaving home and nearly getting stranded in France, and the impact of the Coronavirus in the year of our Lord 2020.

I don't know what we would have done without you! Praise the Lord we didn't have to face that on our own.

So, what have I learned? Lots really. I know The Spirit wants me to lead worship in this place, so that's what I do, and I hope that some of Jesus light shines through me on my frontline. Some days it's brighter than others, some days it feels like it doesn't shine at all but I know Jesus is with me every step of the way. I am weak in my own strength, which is why I needed to be baptised last year and to make that very public declaration in the name of The Father, The Son and the Holy Spirit.

As a footnote I would encourage anyone reading this book, if you're not sure, or if you are moved by something you hear or see at one of our services, don't say to yourself "Naaa, I'll have a think about it". Come and talk to us. That's what I did, and my life has changed dramatically since then. I now have faith and purpose, no fear of death, and stand strong in the Love and Resurrection Power of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

To finish off I'd like to leave you with these words from one of my favourite old hymns "What a friend we have in Jesus". Come and meet him at Church of Christ. Amen

Gabriel Campbell

I have been going to church ever since I was born but it never really meant much to me and at school, R.E. never really said anything because it wasn't engaging, but when I started doing the projector at Church of Christ, I really started looking at the songs and thinking about the words and the song 'More Than Conquerors' had some effect and the words meant something to me.



So when my sister and dad got baptised I really started thinking, God the father is the way, he leads us through the storms, he gives us hope and gives us faith but most of all he is The Father He is Son and He is The Holy Spirit And he believes in me and I believe in him.



Tom Cater

Today's word is "abandon". My biological father abandoned my mom and me before I was born. I know the story of why he left and the expletives he leveled at me during his departure. I realize now that his leaving was a good thing, and I'm proud of my mom's courage to raise me alone; but early on I wrestled with this question..."What's wrong with me?" It's a question that many other abandoned people ask.

After many years of wrestling with that question (and all other questions associated with it), I felt like it was finally beating me...pinning me down...immobilizing me. During a particularly difficult time in college, I was reading Psalm 8 and these verses changed me, "When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You set in place, what is mankind that You are mindful of them, human beings that You care for them?" (vv.3-4). Then God immediately reminded me of something Jesus said, "I am with you always..." (Matthew 28:20).

It was in that moment that I realized this truth: my 'father' may have abandoned me, but God had not. Every time I think about that moment, I'm reminded of what Jesus gave up proving that God was "mindful" of us and that He "cares" for us. Paul puts it this way, "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9). He told the Philippians that Jesus "made Himself nothing" (2:7).

Do you realize what that means? Jesus abandoned His glory for us...to live among us, to die and be raised for us...all for us. Therefore, give up that which keeps you from being fully devoted to God. Live with abandon for the One who abandoned everything for you. I am a friend of Cliff's who visited the Church in Tunbridge Wells in 1985.



Smellen Chiyangwa

I came to Church of Christ from an after Alpha course which was run in town by most of the churches in Tunbridge wells.

When I joined the church it was a small congregation and I was reticent, as I had always been in larger congregations but what I found was a church that in numbers appeared small, but in deeds and action was one of the most active churches I had been in. It was undertaking several community projects, engaging with the local schools and engaging with the other churches in the town.

Once I joined, I never looked back. I felt I had found my place and my home somewhere where I felt accepted and truly felt the love of Christ.

I found a family that I had been missing where growth was encouraged and I could engage with other churches because it felt safe in my home church.

I went through a lot of challenging times in my personal life while I was there, and during this time the church supported me in ways that I feel I can never say thank you enough.

A lot of individuals in the church truly showed me love in action, the love of Christ not just in words.

Although I now live in a different part of the country, I will always consider Church of Christ my home church. While at Church of Christ I learnt and observed people working out their faith in love and grace.

Church of Christ will always be home, I truly felt I had found my home.

Christmases

...at Church of Christ have often unleashed a wealth of creativity in décor, costumes, in special presentations (including the memorable

“Wise Guys & Starry Skies” and “the Best Present of All” with orange clad Donut Man) and Carol Services with dripping wax!



And singing outside Sainsbury's or in town. There was often a beautiful solo, a meaningful message, a photo opportunity, and the enjoyment of mince pies and mulled wine or big Christmas Meals, Parties and Quizzes.

Church Anniversaries

For many years around October the Church has held special celebrations around each yearly anniversary – an opportunity to give thanks for another year. Special speakers, guests and food would be features. All the long tables, and teapots would come out and a full hall from far & wide would enjoy the gatherings. Lynn & Cliff also celebrated 25 years at the church in 2014, another of endless opportunities to come “taste and see that God is good.”



Church of Christ Network & Ilford

The Fellowship of the Churches of Christ in the UK has been an ongoing encouragement for our local branch for many years.

Much has been through our National Co-ordinator Dan Yarnell. Originally from the US, Dan came to Christ from a background of abuse and rebellion, but at a young age felt the call of God on his life and has travelled widely on kingdom business. He and wife Amy have seen



some amazing miracles and now lead a house church, restoring some of the disenchanted.

The fellowship is also seeking to replant a church in Ilford (Essex) among others, and Cliff helps to mentor the new leaders.

(Henry) & Harriett Collyer
(slightly imagined in parts)

My name is Harriett Collyer, and together with the help of God and my husband Henry we began the Church of Christ here in Tunbridge Wells.



I was born in 1847, and Henry in 1846, and we were both baptised into Christ at the Knaphill Church in Surrey. In 1865 I married at the age of 18 in Guildford. At this time, Henry was a labourer, and his father Isaac was a carpenter.
(Henry mid back row)

I give the Lord thanks that only one out of my 11 children died early, as I lived in a time when roughly only half of all babies survived until their 1st Birthday, due to bad sanitation and hygiene. The sewers weren't built around

here until 1870. Although we had so many children in those days, they were often to be seen but not heard. Family life was demanding, but everyone played their part.

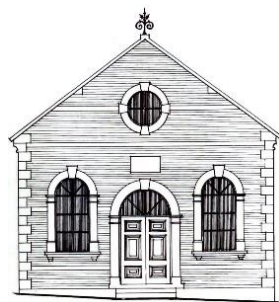
HENRY Collyer and Harriet Collyer had the following children:

- i. CHARLOTTE M COLLYER was born in 1867 in Woking, Surrey,
- ii. GEORGE COLLYER was born in 1868 in Woking, Surrey, England.
- iii. ISAAC COLLYER was born in 1869 in Woking Surrey England.
- iv. FLORENCE COLLYER was born in 1870 in Tunbridge Wells, Sussex
- v. ELLEN L. COLLYER was born in 1877 in Tunbridge Wells, Kent,
- vi. KATE COLLYER was born in 1879 in Tunbridge Wells, Kent,
- vii. ARCHIBALD DAVID COLLYER was born Jun 1880 in Tunbridge Wells, Kent, England. He died in Sep 1881.
- viii. EDITH W COLLYER was born in 1882 in Tunbridge Wells, Kent,
- ix. HAROLD COLLYER was born in 1885 in Tunbridge Wells, Kent,
- x. LANCELOT COLLYER was born in 1887 in Tunbridge Wells, Kent,
- xi. SIDNEY COLLYER was born about 1889 in Tunbridge Wells, Kent,

In 1870, when our 4th child was born, we moved to 8 Birling Cottages, off the Frant Road in Tunbridge Wells. Henry had been preaching on the Common for a while. We were passionate about wanting to be Christians only, while not the only Christians. We dreamed of a Church united in essentials, tolerant in non-essentials and loving in all things, that the world might readily believe and hasten the return of Christ.

It wasn't easy, we had to be prepared for the hecklers and the disrupters and sometimes Henry had things thrown at him, but soon, he could draw a good crowd, and we first began gathering as a church in our home.

We then moved meetings to the Belgrave Commercial school in Goods Station Road, and in 1877 purchased land in Commercial Road, which was then one of the main commercial streets, to build the present Christians Meeting House. Henry did most of the preaching, two sermons a day and usually 40 minutes in length.





Camden Road was once the vibrant heart of the town. The locals were the people who built the town, the servants and gardeners and the 120 independent traders who made the town work.

We formally opened the Chapel on 14 October 1877 and ‘a goodly number’ attended. The importance of the ‘Church dwelling together in Love and Unity’ was preached. In the afternoon a discourse on the Mission of the Holy Spirit by J Pitman (resident evangelist) was listened to attentively. The next day a social meeting and tea were held at 5 o’clock where 150 sat down. We enjoyed the ‘cup that cheers not inebriates’. Two were baptised that evening and more Salvation discourses took place during the week. Membership grew to as many as 200 regular attenders.



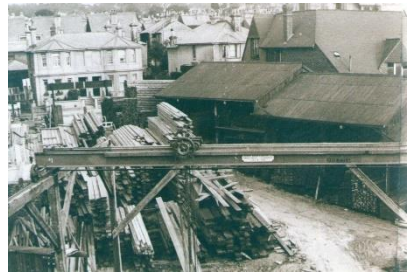
The chapel was erected by the united efforts of its members and became the property of the Church of Christ. Joseph Robertson was a builder before becoming known as a butcher. He and his brother helped build the chapel. They lived next door to us from 1881. By this time Henry was a coal and corn merchant and had a shop at 139 Camden Road.

We also lived at 157 and 73 Camden Road early in the 1900s. During this time the courts ordered that Henry pay £8 (almost £1,000 today) compensation to a customer who mistakenly climbed an 11 ft ladder and had a bag of chaff knock him to the ground. Times weren't easy.



Locally there was the 'Temperance Tavern' or Café in Goods Stations Road, and several nearby pubs where trouble was often brewing when the Salvationists were planning to march and the Skeleton Army had other ideas –

Then in July 1888, there was the terrible case of the Baltic Saw Mills murder where Bensley Cyrus Lawrence, the foreman, was called out of his house one night and shot at close range. At first, who did it was a mystery. Then two youths confessed the crime to Salvation Army Captain Walter Cotterall, who had them arrested. One, Will, had worked for Lawrence and held a grievance over petty matters.



Throughout their trial they showed no remorse or awareness of the seriousness of this and many other crimes they had committed. They were hanged in January 1889, being described as 'evil cretins'. A very sad case.



Which brings me to another notable character; James Berry from Yorkshire. He was Public Executioner until the 1890s. Berry carried out 131 hangings in his seven years in office, including those of 5 women. James Berry also hanged William Bury, a man suspected by some of being Jack the Ripper. Some years into the job Berry wasn't very happy. He believed that at least 6 of the criminals he had executed weren't actually guilty of the crimes they were accused of.

He resigned his post aged 40 and was the first executioner literate enough to write about his work in 'My experiences as an Executioner.' But he was haunted by nightmares. Believing evil had been transferred to him from these criminals, he turned to alcohol and had a nervous breakdown, determining to commit suicide.

However, a young Christian saw him that night, and brought him to a mission where Smith Wigglesworth told of his conversion to Christianity in 1894. He said "For two and a half hours he was literally sweating under conviction and you could see the vapour rising up from him, after which, he was graciously saved. Berry became an Evangelist Preacher touring around and giving talks against the death penalty.



On 30 March 1894 the Chapel in Commercial Road held the Church of Christ conference, hosting churches from 10 other locations. It was a wonderful time of fellowship with brethren from near and far.

They recorded a membership of

1,089, with 119 being added in that year. Henry Collyer was one of 3 elders and several preachers. The church grew rapidly and had an average attendance of about 150 until World War 1. Open Air meetings on the common continued, as did debates in the



Assembly Hall. Darwin's theories were often discussed. 2 other daughter churches were planted. Outings to the coast and Conferences were all part of church life.

In the town, a residence nearby in Grosvenor Road was given as a home for Belgian refugees.

The Women's Suffragette movement was gathering steam.



One ardent feminist was well-known locally for riding around energetically on her bicycle, wearing breeches and showing too much ankle for the neighbours' liking. The suffragettes' disruptive actions, from upsetting the political process to burning

down the cricket pavilion, split the community. But as the war loomed, women were called upon to put the needs of the country first and as eager young boys joined up, everyone's lives changed.

Tunbridge Wells became an important disembarkation centre.

Detachments of troops were on the Common, and more men encouraged to take the King's shilling. The influx of men caused



problems. The National Council of Women organised patrols to protect the virtue of local girls. And while some women lost jobs, others found positions vacated by the newly-enlisted men.

(Photos from local history sources online)



Alarmed by the unsanitary condition of the men, calls were made on the women of the town to help. Laundries, canteens and safe places for the girls were provided. As women took control of the town's affairs some men found the

changes challenging. Women of different classes working together also found the new order testing.

Families were pressured to have their boys enlist. Some in our congregation were Conscientious Objectors and suffered for it. The soldiers, of course, kept the truth of war to themselves in their correspondence, but then the reality of war struck home, with the delivery of dozens of letters to grieving families. We all cried openly in Church. Life of a kind continued for local lads at the Somme, where questions were being asked about the validity of war.

Back home, through the winter months that followed and with news of more losses, the women's camaraderie sustained our spirits. A big lesson was being learned about the value of tenacity, of coming through together, and of not squandering the price paid for freedom.

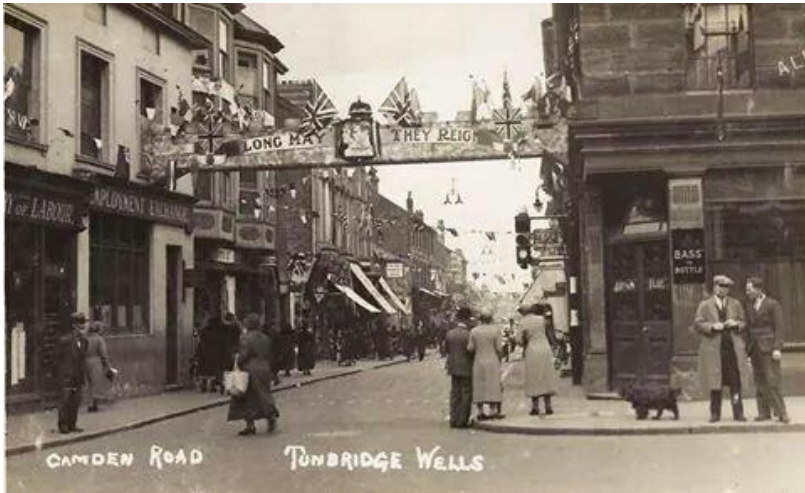
In 1923, our son Lance, also a local preacher and singer with the tuning fork, migrated to Australia with his family and for decades gave leadership in the **Boronia, Victoria, church**



My Henry died on 12 March 1936. He was buried by Thomas Hagger of the Gardiner, Vic Church, where Thomas married one of Lance's children, Max, in 1938. Henry had been a well-known tradesman in the town and a member of the Tunbridge Wells Council. He had addressed

large gatherings on the Common on Sunday afternoons and was remembered for the able manner in which he discussed his themes.

Since his retirement we lived at 24 Charles Street in Southborough, and after a funeral service at the church he was buried at Southborough Cemetery. Only six of our children were at the funeral. 3 being active in Australia with the Churches of Christ and two dead.



Camden Road was to see many changes through the years.

Sadly, the war years saw a decline in membership at the Church, although regular missions continued, and ultimately it was the faithful determination of a small group of members with the help of others from US and Australia, that allowed the church to continue and begin to flourish again.



I see much renovation work has been done both physically and spiritually over recent decades, which has allowed the church to be better used and known.

Although much has changed from those early years, I am glad that the church remains true to it's basic vision 'to know Christ and make Him known.'



Community & Fair Trade



Our area around Camden Road is culturally mixed and a sometimes transient community. For many years we have been prayer walking, litter picking/graffiti cleaning, posting invitations and joining in local events.

One of these has been the Annual Lantern Parade which often needs Stewards to assist and Burgers to be cooked. Prayer has brought breakthroughs for the gospel and also allowed us to be further known.

We have also had interactions with the Town Council, Police and local traders whilst seeking the benefit of residents and working together well. We are proud that our town is a Fair Trade Town, aiming to ensure farmers across the World get a fair price for their goods. One time the schools had a Fairtrade T Shirt designing competition and Lynn produced the T Shirts for a fashion show.



Cyril Constable

was one of the best readers of Scripture. It was said that if you closed your eyes, it was as if you were listening to the Apostle Paul himself reading his letters out. What a wonderful gift to share with the Body of Christ. He was married to Rosemary – June Heathcote’s sister.

Robert & Cherry Cook (visitors from Norfolk)

It was a blessing to praise God at Church of Christ last weekend. When away from home, it is not always easy to find a place to worship which is teaching the truth and full of the Holy Spirit. It is good that God’s word is being proclaimed in Tunbridge Wells and we pray that the Alpha Course may be successful. Your church is doing a wonderful work with the children in your area. Thank you for making us feel so welcomed. It gave us both such a boost. We do hope we will meet again some day.

Janet Cooper

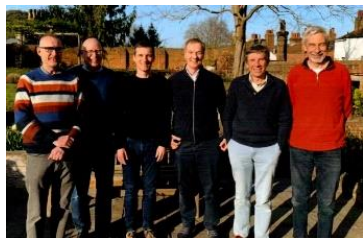
Janet was a TW girl and was a part of the Commercial Road church for most of her life. In later years she moved over to East Grinstead, where Lynn & Cliff would visit on occasion. At one time she was travelling over to church by the bus each month. She and Myrtle Sandall were great friends and Janet stayed with Myrtle whenever she came to stay in Tunbridge Wells and to visit the Church.



Alice Corke

A quiet but cheerful and kind woman. Alice was a faithful member of the church over many years. She was the mother of Tony Corke who had married Cynthia Robinson. His friend Tim Widdermouth also married Jeanette in the church in 1960. Mrs Corke attended the Ladies' Bright Hour and was always present at church until her health prevented her from doing so.

Churches Together for Tunbridge Wells - CTTW



Church of Christ has been instrumental in bringing Church Leaders together for the purposes of Prayer, Support and Mission. Cliff has been both President and Secretary for long periods and,

praise God, many initiatives have been born and sustained through our collective Christian Unity. Monthly Ministers' lunches continue, alongside a Living with Leadership Prayer Group, and Missions Agency



Networking...and, as we write, new plans for a Town Chaplaincy and After-School Pastors are afoot. Out of these gatherings has come a joint church discipleship journey otherwise known as the Community of Practice, and "Huddles!"



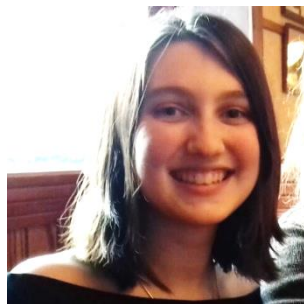


Simone Curry

To all at Church of Christ, I've been so blessed by your encouragement and loving welcome over the past few years that I have been leading worship here. You have a way of making everyone feel part of your family. Be encouraged.

Lauren Danguien-Wilson

I've always been brought up in the faith, as my Mum took me to church as often as possible. We used to go to the United Reformed Church in Rusthall, but I found that place to be draining of faith sadly as I was the only person there my age. So, I was grateful when we decided to move churches and found Church of Christ, where I was encouraged to grow in my faith.



In 2019, I was diagnosed with a mild form of PTSD following having witnessed two road accidents. I was having nightmares every night and felt anxious about crossing roads. My doctor offered me medication or therapy, but I declined both as neither felt right. The only thing that kept me going through this time was Church of Christ. Every Sunday, I felt calm and as though the PTSD had been lifted from me. After the baptisms of Jo, Jakki and Leslie, I knew I too had to be baptised to be healed from the PTSD.

And so I was baptised on the 4th of August 2019 with my Dad, Stephen. Since then, I've only had occasional nightmares and anxiety attacks, but I have felt true healing from the Lord since my baptism. I know I'm not completely healed, and I believe the Lord has not completely healed me to teach me how to be strong and to keep my faith during the darkest of times. Also following my baptism, I came out of an unhealthy

relationship. I am grateful to the Lord for giving me the courage to do so.

In December 2019, I started a relationship with a friend and colleague of mine called Sonny. We decided that for his birthday we would go on holiday, and after weeks of consideration we decided to go to Nice from the 14th to the 21st of March. Unfortunately, weeks before us going COVID-19 spread across the world.

We still decided to go as we had paid for our holiday and France was not yet on lockdown. France went onto lockdown the day we got there. We spent the first day exploring Nice, which was a really lovely place. On the second day, the hotel had put up a sign saying that they were closing and needed all guests out on the 17th of March (Sonny's birthday) by midday.

So we decided we needed to get out of France as soon as possible before they shut the borders. We went to Nice airport and spoke to easyJet, who we had flown with. They did not have any flights until 9pm on the 17th. As such, we decided to go to Calais and catch the ferry. We made the necessary arrangements and boarded a coach at 6pm, which took 14 and a half hours to get to Paris. Before I went to sleep, I prayed for safe passage for us. We slept on the bus but not very well as we were cold, hungry and uncomfortable.

When we got to Paris, we went to the train station, as the next step of our journey was to go by train to Lille then onto Calais. The train to Lille was cancelled, so we decided to get an Uber to Calais. Sadly, the Uber driver got the wrong end of the stick and took us to Lille instead of Calais.

We decided to check the trains anyway but the train from Lille to Calais had also been cancelled. So we took another Uber to Calais. We got to the port 10 minutes before the ferry due to leave before the one we had booked was due to be boarded by foot passengers.

Once on the ferry, I knew the Lord had delivered us from a bad situation. After about 30 hours of travelling, we finally made it home. We then started a week of isolation to make sure we were clear of the

virus, which we were. My faith has grown even more since going through that experience.

For the future, I pray to continue growing in my faith and service to the Lord Jesus and that I continue to receive His grace, love and mercy.

Jonathan Daniell

Through all the ups and downs of cancer treatment, it has been good to know that God has had my back and like in the poem 'Footprints in the sand' there are times when he carries us. I am grateful for everyone's prayers, and that I am "all clear".



Vicky Daniell



I grew up in the Quaker faith and when I met my husband, he was also a Christian but as the years went by, we were not regular churchgoers. We moved to Tunbridge Wells and I struggled with finding a church that felt right to me.

I had a friend who attended the Church of Christ and as soon as I set foot in the church, I knew it was where I was meant to be.

My life has changed incredibly since I set foot in that church,

I was the Co-Ordinator for Tunbridge Wells Street Pastors for almost 7 years and now work for Women's World Day of Prayer (I only knew about the job roles through someone at the church). I have made many friends and some of them play such an important part in my life today. I feel I have grown so much in my Christian faith and it is getting stronger every day - every day I feel closer to God.



Chris Dare

I really hated school! I was bullied both verbally and physically. Having slightly darker skin, I was never accepted, so never fitted in. I still remember vividly the day I left secondary school aged 16 – the relief of leaving it all behind was immense. I was going to make sure I never set foot in a

school ever again. God had other plans!

Following a degree in Art, I took a year out to travel around the UK with a Youth for Christ band. We would spend a week in schools taking lessons and assemblies. At the end of the week, we would hold a concert. Between songs, band members would give their testimonies. After the concert, we spent time chatting with young people, often listening to their struggles.

During that year, I felt that God was calling me to work with young people full time. I spent a year training in Youth Work, followed by jobs in different churches as their Youth Pastor.

Here is the irony of my story: I now spend each day of my working life in a school!

Due to the bullying I experienced in my youth, I had become introverted and lacking in confidence. With God's help, and the affirmation of family and friends I was able to grow in confidence. This has brought me to a place of work I could never have imagined. At the end of the summer about 6 years ago, having been a temp at Barnardo's School for a year, I was looking for full time work and given my CV to the Deputy Head in July.

One morning, washing up after breakfast, I was looking out of the kitchen window. It was a beautiful sunny day at the end of August. I let out a heartfelt prayer 'Father, please help me find work. I would love to work at the school I've been in for the past year.' At this point, something amazing happened.

The leaves of the trees ahead blew in the wind. A sense of indescribable peace washed over me. It was then that I heard a clear voice speaking to me 'Rest in ME. I am going to provide a job. Wait to hear... it will happen!'

It was about 2pm that afternoon when the phone rang. It was the Deputy Head of the school I had worked in for the past year. He explained that term was due to begin in a week and they were short of staff. He went on to ask if I would be interested in working there for a couple of weeks initially...I was there until Christmas, becoming full-time following an interview. I have worked at that school for 11 years now.

Following a more recent interview, I will be starting a new job in a different school from September 22. All of this came about with God's clear intervention over 3 years. There were obstacles along the way, which were broken down in order for it to happen! I love being part of staff teams who work together to help educate and change the lives of vulnerable young people in Special Schools.

Being a part of Church of Christ means so much to me. As a smaller church, the sense of community provides openness and opportunity to share thoughts and feelings. Talking to individuals and receiving prayer support builds me up, giving me confidence to carry out my job. Without God in my life and the support of family and friends, there is simply no way I would be where I am today.

Thankyou Church of Christ.



Clare Dare

What a blessing to be part of a church family who are supportive, encouraging and praying faithfully. I have known the power of prayer in my work situations, and love being part of our Church children's team and camp.

Russ Davies

I have had an ongoing battle with my accommodation, but whether I've known you well or not at Church of Christ, you have all been a support to me.



Vicky Daw

was very active in the church for many years, using her wonderful communication and creative energy in youth work and particularly All Age Services.

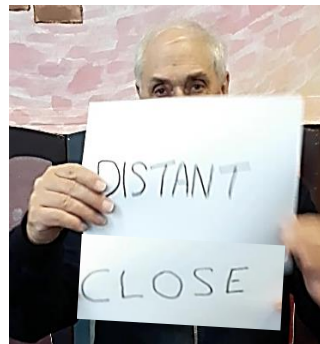


She also was a big Christian presence at St Barnabas school for many years. Her four boys were all involved also in church life, especially in the youth, clubs and camps.

Geoff Eadson



Martin Ebbs



Easters/Pentecost

As the Church's most important festival, Easters (together with Pentecosts) at Church of Christ have always been special for the wonderful messages of hope, life and peace proclaimed.



Whether early morning in the park, out on the Streets, after delicious breakfasts or before the annual Easter Egg Hunt, they have been great times of testimony and

community. One dog-walker in the Park sent us a video saying our singing was memorable!



Dennis Evans

OK here goes...

I accepted Jesus into my life in 1985. After arguing, a lot, with people in and around the church at the time, I attended a worship service in Coventry. I attended for mainly two reasons, girls and free food and drink. I spent most of the service outside the building mocking those inside.

From memory I think I got cold but decided the best thing to do was to go inside and warm up. At that point the preacher was talking about doubting Thomas. I was struck deeply by the message, it seemed to hit me deep. I really don't remember hearing a call to go forward and accept Jesus, but suddenly I was at the front of the congregation. I was

taken to one side and prayed over. The next thing I remember is a burning sensation going through my body. In an instant I went from not believing to a very real sense of God. That revelation has been so profound that even in my darkest days I know that I am not alone. God is with me.

Following my conversion, I began to get involved with Church of Christ camps. There, over two Summers I met Gail Burns and Lynn and Cliff Allen. This began my long association with the Commercial Road congregation. The church has been a powerful influence in my life. It has been my home church and my spiritual oasis.

I have been blessed with friendship over the many years. I cannot say enough about how Lynn and Cliff have enriched my life, encouraged me and spoken honest truth in my life. Without their commitment and friendship, I'm not sure I would have stayed on the path of life. Though I have taken many detours their friendship and love has been unconditional.

Some of my funniest memories are with them Naomi, Phil and Dan. although Dan was quite tiny when I left, and is now at University!

I remember serving at the bible club and seeing a young Hannah growing up. The papier mache head that took weeks to dry out!

I have been honoured to watch young people grow both near and from afar. Those that I continue to see through the miracle of Facebook. Naomi, Phil, Hannah, Lizzie, Dave, Caroline, Nina and Tim to mention a few.

I have visited with my youngest son Ethan and he speak fondly of the Sunday school. The continued outreach to the youth and those on the edges continues to amaze me

I have made friendships with people who, even though I don't see them very often, make me feel welcome and remind of their influence. I think of people past and present: Linda, Janet, Barbara, Gail and Rita, Hugh, the Owen family, Cynthia and her wonderful piano playing, Myrtle, Stephanie and Richard, Ann, Tony. I really could go on.

I am grateful for my time with you and I and grateful for the opportunity to continue to have contact. May God grant you peace and strength.



Sandy Evans

Came to faith through the Church as a young single mother. She met and married Dennis and lived in Tunbridge Wells with son Michael for several years, before moving to Raunds. Sadly, she had a series of medical conditions that kept her in and out of hospital, but she always remained very positive and used every opportunity to share faith with fellow patients. There were times when she was really on fire for God and blessed us all with her genuine trust in the Lord. After fighting off so many challenging illnesses, she died of covid, but still speaking love to the end in 2021.

Exhilarate & other Clubs

So many games – (Duck duck goose, Sleeping Lions, Maltesa Blowing,



Cats & Rats, ‘Snowball’ Fights, Pinada, Spinning for Chocolate buttons, Hide and Seek), and stories, crafts and activities. Action songs, flag waving, cooking. Surprise boxes, stickers, competitions, video clips, visual aids, dramas. at where? CATS club, Genesis, TDSS,

WoW, JC United and more. Numerous children, and many a family impacted through Christian creations taken home and the friendships formed.

“I love the way you teach me new things about God” Love H

“Thank you for, in your own time, doing Exhilarate. We all love you” DC

“We appreciate your loving care, we really enjoy it. You are the best teacher. Your club is fantastic” RV



“Thank you for all you do to make WoW Wednesday a wonderful experience for the girls. It means a lot that they are in a safe and trusted place learning about God and having a great time.” LF



Flack Family

Barbara came first and loved to help with the clubs. She became a chief babysitter for Daniel and took over the Church’s kitchen! Nicky and Graham, Calon & Koby, Carrie-Ann, Karen (& Barrie) have all shared our faith journey at varying points.

George Fletcher

George and his wife lived over in Herne Bay, Kent. He was a life-long Church of Christ member. He and his wife were from London, and when George retired he was part of the Herne Bay Baptist Church, but once a month, he would faithfully journey to Tunbridge Wells where he would be involved in either preaching, or leading the service, or giving some of the most entertaining children’s talks. he came to Commercial Road, generally, and to all special occasions and outings.

He was a very intelligent man, an articulate, enthusiastic preacher, and deeply committed to Jesus Christ. He held his belief with great integrity and stuck to what he believed. If he disagreed with what you believed, he was willing to live and let live, but you just knew he knew he was right! He had a really silly and subtle sense of humour. He was game for a laugh and would jump into just about any game going.

He would also bring some wonderful talks to the monthly Sunday evening service at St James’s Court on Wood Street. He served on the Fellowship of Churches of Christ Social Action Committee and was also

one of the Overseers of the Church for several years. He was full of enthusiasm, faith and action.

Dana Fowler



Daisy Fowler



Matt (& Lois) Fryett

My wife Lois and I have known Cliff and Lynn approximately 12 years from when we moved to Kent. We have two teenage girls – Eloise, 17, Caitlin, 15 and a 12-year-old son Noah. Noah was just 3 weeks old when we first visited the Church.

I was brought up in a Christian home, but in my teenage years and early twenties I turned away from God. However, I saw God moving in my older sister's life and she persuaded me to attend an Alpha course.

During the course I met others who had relationships with God and I decided to give my life to Christ in 1997.

My relationship with God is my foundation for life. He has forgiven my sins and thankfully continues to do so. God has given me peace, strength, courage, direction and hope.

He has designed us to be connected to Him and be a conduit for Him to work in the lives of those around us. I love to be a part of His work, to be among people of God and to see other people come to faith too.

God has given me the privilege to lead people in sung worship, which

has been a ministry that continually really excites me.

We first attended Church of Christ in 2007 when we moved to Kent. Our first impressions were of being very welcomed and that the services were all-involving and engaging as people within the congregation are encouraged to pray out loud, interact with the sermon / service activities and good-humoured banter with Cliff is welcomed!

The congregation has always been a mix of ages, backgrounds and nationalities, but one that gels together, and people are comfortable to be themselves.

Church of Christ is an outward-looking church, ready to engage with whatever God is doing and whatever way they can serve the community.

Cliff has a pastor-heart to let everyone know that they are valued and have a part to play in the life of the church. Cliff is not afraid to trust people, and he encourages people to serve and grow in their gifts to serve God.

Although we attend St Matt's Church, where my wife Lois is the Children & Families Minister, I still occasionally visit Church of Christ when I can to lead sung worship, which is always a blessing to me.

Cliff and the church have been so encouraging to help me grow in confidence in leading worship. Cliff has also encouraged me to preach on occasion too.

Cake and sharing food is another lovely characteristic of Church of Christ!

Our children have also enjoyed the 'Heroes In Training' kids camp that happens every summer.

Funerals

We have celebrated the cherished lives of many members and friends over the years, as they were laid to rest. Often at the Church or Crematorium, seeking to bring comfort and hope to those grieving.

"Thank you does not seem enough to say what you have done for me and the children in the last few months. You did N so proud at the service and gave me strength to cope with it all." C

"A quick note on behalf of myself and all our friends to say how much we appreciated the good celebration service. You cannot under-estimate how important this was to everybody." M

"I thought the funeral service was beautiful and your words have brought us great comfort. Thank you for your kindness and support" D

"That was some amazing funeral service honouring June and telling the story of Jesus in her life. C



Henry Gathercole

The Church of Christ - the people, experiences, and opportunities to encounter God - has been a significant foundation of my journey to faith since I first attended in 2002.

In the early days the church provided me an opportunity to feel a sense of independence and freedom as I sought to explore, question, and understand my faith. Since then, it has provided me many opportunities to continue that exploration through formative experiences at Soul Survivor, friendships formed, and continuing to learn more of Jesus.

Whilst I've moved through different phases of life from the adolescent years, leaving home to study at university, two different stints living abroad, and starting my adult working life - the church has been a constant feature of my life. Whenever I return, I feel a sense of "coming home" and immense peace to be among friends in a place that has been such a positive influence on my life.

I am certain that the Church of Christ has in many ways shaped my understanding of and approach to faith. It's enabled me to grapple with really what it means to have a faith and live that out in a very real sense.

And I know that this will continue to sustain and challenge me in the years ahead.



Josephine Gbadamosi

Josephine is a friend from Clapham church of Christ, who has visited TW on occasion. She sent her children to Sunday school in London and became a Christian after Cliff wrote the verse John 3:16 on the top of a Newsletter one time. Her faith in the Lord inspires us. She shares about a time God answered a very

urgent prayer.

When my daughter went for her first baby scan, we discovered the baby was in a bad way. There was no diaphragm so the stomach was being pushed up into the baby's chest. There was a tumour on the right lung. The kidneys had been affected and there was a blockage in the respiratory tube. The heart was being pushed and under great pressure. As we went to see the Specialist, I silently begged God not to let the baby die. I knew the doctors are good, but God has the last say.

As a Christian I knew that I had been given authority over death and I was not going to allow Satan to steal this life. I rang every Christian I knew and alerted several prayer chains. When we returned to the hospital the next day and the professor re-examined my daughter, everything was back in place. There was a diaphragm. The kidneys were fine and no blockage. Only thing was the tumour, now being called a cyst. We were so ecstatic.

However, 2 weeks later the cyst had grown and was covering the whole of the right lung. We were told we should prepare ourselves as the baby was going to die. There was no hope apart from a very risky procedure called shunting. Again, I pleaded with God. After a very tense 15 minutes there were sighs of relief and that operation had been successful. Uncontrollable joy just poured out non-stop from me. I was in awe of what the Lord had done for us. The lesson I learnt from this is that nothing is achieved without prayer. No weapon formed against us will prosper.

Praise God, I have a healthy grandson and daughter.

Gillette Sisters

Dorothy and Edna were twins and wonderful singers in the church. They had a rather domineering Father who apparently insisted that they wore hats at home to be respectful!



Ashley Ginsburg

Good Neighbour Network/Neighbours

Linda and Dawn particularly have been part of this compassionate ministry for those recovering from illness or just needing some regular company. They have been able to use their gifts of humour and listening to bless others.

Lockdown gave an opportunity for community to flourish in Beulah Road among others, as Cliff organized street parties, open air services, and music from local talent, all at a distance! (inc VE day celebrations – very nostalgic!)

'Thank you so much for all you do to keep our spirits up and our sense of community going. We owe you a great deal.' A

'Good Neighbours are beyond price.' S & T,

'You make a difference to this road, and thereby do a lot to advertise true Christianity.' H & P



Jon Green

Life has turned out way messier than I'd ever have imagined. But God is still good. For example: I suffered a brain haemorrhage in my early 30's (which I totally don't recommend); much later, the wife of my dreams left me and married her co-worker (which also isn't great). A couple of under-

statements...

I can't really make good sense of it all. But I know that Jesus broke into my life at 15½ years old, and I've never been the same since. I still see evidence that God is alongside me and I'm deeply grateful.

The supportive impact of the Church of Christ in recent years has also been more beneficial than anyone might imagine. The church has given me reminders of God's grace and has helped me through some very difficult times. I would not have liked to face some of this stuff alone. I thank God I didn't have to, courtesy of my church 'family'. I am always touched that many people here feel able to be so transparent, honest and real on Sundays... I have always said the B/S factor at our church is very low ...I think it's one of the most authentic signs of our shared experience of Jesus.

I would invite anyone into our church community. They may not find all the "beautiful people" (I speak for myself!) but you can find Christ ... embodied in real people facing the ups and downs of life...a remarkable sign of the presence of the Holy Spirit among us.

Winifred Haffendon (& parents)

Winifred lived in the family home, Garden Cottage, at the top of Stone Street. Her parents had the house built and the garden was used to help stock their florist shop, which used to be on Monson Road (where TN1 is now). The garden was extensive, but after retirement Mr Haffenden sold part of the garden—there are two



bungalows to the right of Garden Cottage. **Ernest & Ethel Haffenden** (Winifred's parents) were stalwart members of the congregation with Ernest Haffenden serving as Sunday School Superintendent. Winifred was one of three sisters (Olive and Margaret being the other two). She trained as a nursery nurse and lived away from home in her career as a nanny. Winifred eventually moved back to Garden Cottage to look after her parents.

Winifred was a life-long member of the Commercial Road church. . .as were her parents. A very intelligent, pragmatic, kind, generous, quiet, strong woman who served the church faithfully; she was, along with friend, Hazel Turner, instrumental in keeping the doors of the church open during the years leading up to and following the URC vote. She was the church treasurer and church plan compiler for decades. She taught in Sunday School and was youth group sponsor. She was a woman who knew her God and always endeavoured to try to serve Him with grace and commitment. Winifred wasn't big on joining clubs and such; however, she was an accomplished needlewoman, knitter, gardener, and cook/baker. Garden Cottage was always open to church members and friends to drop in, have a garden party, Bible study or craft session.

It was at such a bible study at Winifred's that Lynn went into labour with Philip – somewhat distracting for all present! There was another occasion when Cliff and Lynn (pregnant with Philip) had a shattered windscreen on a borrowed car, then managed to lock the keys in the boot! They eventually ended up in some dreadful garage in the midst of nowhere and Winifred and Hazel kindly came to the rescue with key replacement in the dead of night.

Winifred's sense of humour was dry and sharp. She loved to read all manner of books and enjoyed concerts. She was a good friend, a solid person with whom you always knew where you stood. If you had a problem with her, you just went to talk to her about it. She didn't hold grudges.

In pursuing new knitting/crochet/tatting/embroidery ideas, Winifred trawled craft shops and liked looking for something new to try. In fact, she was asked to leave a craft shop in Australia (while she and Hazel

were visiting Trevor and Beth Streeton in Perth) as she was going up and down the aisles making notes but not buying anything!

Winifred and Hazel travelled far and wide during their holidays together and it never failed that they would have 'interesting' times. The best, was the time they went to Greece and arriving quite late in the evening, went out to buy bottled water to make tea as it wasn't considered safe to drink the water. They came back from a small shop with a couple of bottles of water and made their tea. Having made the tea, which smelled a bit peculiar and tasted not very good at all, they realised that what they had thought was water was actually gin: 'Eau de Vie!'

Winifred died of an aneurism whilst visiting her sister Margaret McDonald in Grantham, April 1996.

Ian Hagley



Steph Harding

Church of Christ - you are a church of warmth and love, whenever I visit I see the love and fellowship you all share. Cliff & Lynn thank you for your kindness and care and the wonderful way you Shepherd this flock. What a blessing and a great example of Christ's love you are!

Mr & Mrs Hart

were a faithful couple. Mr Hart was a train driver who drove the Edinburgh to Euston express. He was a lovely man but had a short fuse and often clashed with Fred Heasman, one of the church leaders at the time. Mrs Hart was a lovely, gentle lady.

Harvest

A time for somehow locating hay bales and corn sheafs on which to place our offerings. Also, a great time for thanksgiving and generosity, providing goods for the food bank, soup for the Soup Bowl and parcels for any in need.

Also, a time for explaining to children that food does not just come from the supermarket, 'but is fed and watered by God's own hand'.



Leo Harvey

My name is Leo and I have been a member of church of Christ for the last few years. I came to faith at the age of 30 after being a Union Rep for my union The Civil and Public Servants Association, later known as the PCS or The Public and Communication Services Union.

I was on the extreme left of my union. I was a Marxist and I was very active in the union and used to say that Karl Marx was right when he said "religion is the opium of the masses."

When I turned 30 following a divorce and some ill health my GP decided it would be a good idea for me to go to Burrswood for some hydrotherapy. It was there through the Pool Manager, that I eventually came to faith.

My faith journey has not been straight forward and it has had its ups and downs, but over the last few years I have found Jesus to be more real than ever. Church of Christ has been like a family to me and very supportive in my time of illness.

I feel privileged that I am able to help in the work of the Church in making Jesus known in Tunbridge wells.



Nick & Jackie Heap

were residents in Commercial Road, before the Reids moved into their house. Jackie was one of the first people we baptized in the early 90s, but despite occasionally attending, Nick seemed very resistant to the gospel but was prayed for a lot! Twenty years later we received an email from them saying:

Our lives have changed a great deal over the last few years. We have been regular church goers and I (Nick) have been on the Christianity Explored course and Discovering Christianity course. I then went on to fully commit my life to Christ which has brought a big change in my life for the better. My health has deteriorated a lot, but now, with Christ at my side it is a lot easier to cope with.

Fred & Eva Heasman

(Uncle Fred) was a longstanding Church member and was active as one of the Church leaders. While it was said he was a force to be reckoned with, it was also acknowledged he had a good heart and truly loved the Lord and wanted what was best for the Church.

His passion and sometimes his short temper, caused him to come into conflict with others, but matters were quickly resolved. His first wife tragically died while doing a slide show at a Christmas play. Later in life,

Fred married Eva Burnell. Fred was involved in helping to run the Flower shop on Monson Road that had once belonged to Mr & Mrs Haffenden.

Eva was born in Treharris, Mid Glamorgan on 25th November 1905 to Mr and Mrs Robert John Burnell. She had an older sister, Elizabeth Mary and a younger brother, Bob. She was a farm worker first in Wales and then in Devon where she worked for a good family and was baptised into Christ. When she moved back to Treharris, she became a founder member of the Church of Christ in the town.

Her involvement with the church was such that she decided to attend the World Convention of Churches of Christ in Toronto, Canada in Summer 1955. On the ship, Empress of Australia, she met fellow conventioneer, Fred Heasman of Tunbridge Wells (a serving elder).

They were married on the 11th of December that year in Treharris, and then Eva moved to Dynevor Road, TW. Fred was a widower with two grown children: Bessie and Robert. Their marriage lasted until Fred's death in 1980.

To know and to understand Eva meant acknowledging and accepting that she was fiercely independent, generous, stubborn, open-handed and a profuse knitter...she had the wool to prove it!

When her house was cleared after she moved into Birkin Lodge, Hawkenbury, a myriad letters of thanks were found, and a commendation from the Deep Sea fishermen's Mission for the socks, scarves, socks, hats, and mittens she had knitted for them.

Eva was a member of the Commercial Road church until she had to spend an extended time nursing her sister, Mary, her niece, Ann, and Ann's husband, Gwyn, who were all terminally ill more or less one after the other. Eva died at Birkin Lodge on 17 December 1996, age 91.

June Heathcote

June was a cousin of Myrtle Sandall and the daughter of Leo Heasman (Another of the Heasman family). Her family lived near Pluckley, so they attended the Church on a monthly basis.

June returned for special events and has been a great encouragement and generous support to the Church over many years, always eager to know how the congregation was doing, even though, due to health, she is now no longer able to attend.

Jenny (& Jon) Heylin-Smith



When we moved to Tunbridge Wells my husband Jon started to attend the Baptist church, and through a welcome dinner there, we got to know Cliff and Lynn, who spoke about Church of Christ and it being so close to our new home.

I've never considered myself to be religious, but to support my husband and as an opportunity to learn, we started to occasionally attend Church of Christ, particularly if there was a special event, or speaker coming in. I really like the relaxed feel and cafe style running of it.

We once went to hear a local woman speak about her journey from addiction in her 20s to faith and her current work with domestic violence victims. She spoke in such an open, frank and funny way that she really appealed to me.

During her talk she asked people to come up and take a stone from a bowl which could be used to remind people to pray. She suggested perhaps keeping it in a pocket. I took one and kept it by the side of my bed.

At that point we'd been trying for 2 years for a family, with no success. So, I started to use this stone as a reminder to pray for me to trust in God's plan for me and our potential family. After 3 months I was pregnant and we now have a lovely family with two children.

I'm still not sure if I have faith (work in progress), but I've kept that stone and will never forget the place and people that led me to it.

Heroes in Training (HIT) Camp

Ahh the annual trek to Carrotty Wood where so many memories have been made – the mud, the trust falls, the campfires, the swimming, the forest skills, the car wash, the roast dinners, the ambitious crafts, the dramas, the prayer groups, the water fights, the teamwork, the washing up, the midnight walks, the capture the flag,



toads/squirrels/rabbits in tents etc etc



The excitement of the first night, the exhaustion of the second! Bleary eyed staff, adventure, opportunities, times for reflection, fun, friendship

and faith discovery.

Little Kids Camp -

In June I went to little kids camp with the church of Christ, to Carrotty Wood near Torrbridge. We had a good time because we slept in tents, had lots of fun, despite the rain. But most importantly we learnt about God. Our theme was getting "connected to God". We did this by singing songs, reading and listening to the bible, having prayer times and most importantly the communion service, but instead of wine we had COKE! We were asked to stand up if we wanted to make a commitment to God. And I did! Now I feel good, and although I get teased sometimes, nothing's young to stand in my way of getting to know Jesus better!

BY LUKE
HARPER

I had a great time and I had a fun time and I loved it. I want to go again. thank you for inviting us.

from ellott and thee dacksons.

Holiday Bible Clubs

These were a big feature of each year with intriguing themes, décor, crazy hair and costumes. For raising so much money at the end of a week for charity, someone would often get slimed, pied or their beard cut off!

Wonderful times of energetic worship, creative visuals (remember the whale!) enthusiastic role play and captivating video clips.



“A huge Thank you for running the Space Academy this week. The boys have had a ball and enjoyed every minute of it.” G & V H.

“What a privilege it is for us to teach small children that they can have a relationship with Jesus. The young people who helped were amazing and really had an impact on those watching them”. HG

Hospitality

From our first invitation to a schizophrenic homeless young man sleeping on a local bench, who we later discovered was related to one of our church members, it has been a privilege (if a little risky at times!) to host many guests over the years, too many to mention, but including overseas students, guest speakers, visitors from overseas/mission teams, lodgers, homeless friends and refugees.



Jean, Kalypso and the Ingles particularly have opened their homes and hearts. Much rich sharing has taken place over meal tables.

Having installed a shower, during lockdown we were even able to use the church as an emergency temporary home when needed!



“Words could not say how much I appreciate everything you did for me during my darkest hour. You have changed my life and shown me real love.” S

“You welcomed me into your home when I was losing all hope and gave me exactly what I needed, your love, support, patience and time.” C

We are so grateful to God for spaces to entertain and the provision of food to share.

Steph Hudson-Barnes



Linda Hunt-Green



I first knew about this Church of Christ in roughly 1990 when my daughter, Hannah, and I lived nearby. Hannah was about 7 when I asked my elderly neighbour if she knew of a good Sunday School locally, as I wanted to find one that Hannah could attend.

I had dabbled with Christianity over the years, but my chequered past always made it inconvenient to make a commitment to change my life radically as was definitely needed! I believed, however, that Hannah should have the facts at her disposal so she could make an informed decision when she was older. My neighbour's grandchildren had gone to that Sunday School, and she said it was lovely.

I took Hannah there one Sunday, and we were both welcomed warmly. Gail, a deaconess in the church at that time, took her by the hand and taught her the foundations on which my daughter was able to build a solid, enduring belief in the saving grace of our Father.

It could only have been God who prompted me to offer to play the piano (an old, upright, manual one) if ever their regular pianist couldn't be there. I thought, 'What on earth are you saying that for?', but someone - probably Cliff - made a swift note of it ...

So, I sometimes played the songs for the weekly services, which I enjoyed, as I love to accompany singers. The lovely lady who usually played, called Cynthia, was always the first to acknowledge that she really couldn't play well. Sometimes she played the introduction to a hymn, only to find everyone looking blankly at one another, wondering which song we were supposed to chime in with!

Gradually Cynthia, who became a very dear friend, gave up playing with some relief, as the congregation had moved onto somewhat more complicated songs. And I, of course, couldn't avoid listening to the whole service each time. Cliff and Lynn encouraged (nagged?) me to attend weekly Bible Study meetings, in which I learned probably more than I originally wanted to, about the truths contained between the

covers of the Bible until, one night as I lay awake about 2 years later, I wondered what was stopping me from making a full commitment to Christ. I couldn't think of any sensible reason!

So, during the prayers the next Sunday, without warning anyone what I was going to do, I said a prayer and told the Lord that I was committing my life to him. When the prayers finished, I was startled by enthusiastic applause and cheers, and many hugs. It seems lots of people had been praying for this for a very long time, which surprised me greatly. At that time, I was a novice where the power of prayer was concerned!

And so I started to learn. A couple of months later, on Pentecost Sunday 1994, I was baptised here by Cliff, amidst great rejoicing. My dear old, cynical mum was there, although Alzheimer's was starting to get hold of her mind. Cliff came over to talk to her, and she supportively told him, 'Well, Linda had tried everything else, so I suppose she thought she might as well try this now.' Thanks, Mum !...

That commitment was the best decision of my life, without a doubt! Hannah was baptised a few months later, aged 13. She has a staunch faith and got a degree in Theology at London Bible College. Since then, God has guided me to two new homes, both of which were desperately needed at the time.

The most recent one, in 2020, is perfect for me after my leg was amputated, as it has wheelchair access and a wet room. God has made me strong enough to overcome potentially deadly illnesses more than once, and has always given me the confidence to adapt to whatever challenging circumstances I've found myself in. And there certainly have been a few over the decades!

Cliff and Lynn have always been there for me, and I owe them a huge debt of gratitude. They truly deserve great rewards in Heaven for accepting and loving this loose cannon!

It might sound strange to say I don't resent the amputation at all, but it's true. People can see that I'm an amputee, and because I am by nature an outgoing and optimistic person, I am often asked me how I can remain happy when I have so many permanent health issues. What

a chance to witness! I can dive straight in and start by saying truthfully, 'That's easy - it's my God and my sense of humour!'

Thank you, Lord, for bringing me to this warm, loving family here, and for the support I've received from these dear friends. He knew just where I needed to be and guided me here. Of course, He did! Praise Him!

Rita Ide



Originally from the US, Rita served the Church with Gail Burns, initially with the Nordheims, then on their own for a while until the Allens came.

Rita was quiet, but resourceful, wonderfully gifted in practical skills and common sense. She helped renovate and modernize the church in the 1980s including building the ramp outside the church and all the kitchen

cupboards, alongside many other church endeavours, especially children's church and activities for the elderly.

Jack & Dawn Ingle

My wife and I emigrated from South Africa four years ago. Because of our unhappiness with the apartheid policies of the Government, we had actually previously sold up and left South Africa with our five children in 1983.



We bought a house in Bedford and tried to integrate into the community. Unfortunately, at that time, all white South Africans were seen as the polecats of the world and we were unable to make friends in or out of the local church community. In fact, there was a BBC programme called Spitting Image which had a theme song with the words "...I've never met a nice South African".

We returned to South Africa about 18 months later. The political landscape in both Britain and South Africa has changed a lot since then, but new immigrants still face a lot of challenges when they arrive in a country without their support structure of friends and family.

We were, shall we say, regular church attenders back in South Africa, but for a variety of reasons were not involved in face-to-face ministry.

The Church of Christ in Commercial Road was more or less the first church which we visited after moving to Pembury. From the moment that we walked through the door, we experienced love and acceptance and it has been a pleasure to reciprocate and be involved in the life of the church.

We are both growing in our faith and our confidence that Jesus is the Answer to the problems of the world today. It remains a puzzle that this truth is seemingly not more widely known and we look forward to being involved in spreading this Good News in Tunbridge Wells!

Dawn – The minute we walked into church that first Sunday after we arrived here, I felt at home and very privileged.



Hugh & Barbara Jagelman (re-visiting in 2010)

We had a lovely time at your party. It was also great for us to catch up with old friends and we particularly liked the singing.

It also brought back a lot of memories being in the church, all the services, all the children's events, the baptisms and the pantomimes and fun evenings.

May the Lord continue to bless you and anyone who contributes to the daily life of the church and all the outreach.



Jo Jannetta

Growing up, I used to go to church every Sunday in Otford. My Mother was a Methodist and my Father Roman Catholic and I was christened COE. My parents had very different ways of connecting with the Lord, but the same God, and I was happy to

be brought up that way.

When I got married, my husband was not keen on Church and was mentally abusive. I was able to take our children for a while and they were in a choir, but even when I was not able to go, I always wanted to, and was glad when I could return. Although people have asked me why I did not leave my husband, I did not want to go back on the marriage vows I had made.

My husband died 10 years ago, and when I moved to St Stephens Court I started looking around for a church. It was then that I met June and she encouraged me to come to Church of Christ, which I liked straight away.

God has made an incredible difference in my life, with the help of some really good church friends who have been a sounding block for me and helped my understanding. I feel he has helped me to fight my demons, find healing and real freedom.

Janina (from Germany)

It was a fantastic year here in Tunbridge Wells! I really found a home here. The church was like a family and I'm so thankful to God to have had the opportunity to be part of it. It was great to lead the kids and youth groups. I really loved it. We had such good conversations, but also so much fun together on game nights, HIT camp, Soul Survivor... and with the kids in



the Exhilarate Club. It was great to have the opportunity to help in the soup kitchen. It was really a blessing for me. I will miss you all. Thank you.

Helen Kevan



I was brought up in a Christian family and went to Sunday School when I was a child. I was confined to a wheelchair when I was 13 and when I was 15, I went to a Joni Erickson seminar. While I was there, I was overwhelmed with God's love and even though I wasn't healed physically, I knew God's love was real and I made up my mind afterwards to follow Jesus and make Him my Saviour and my Lord.

Throughout life, all sorts of things have happened – good and bad, but I have known God's strength and His love all along the way and seen so many answers to prayer.

I met Mark and got married to him – an answer to prayer that I was able to be married in white and to have the Brownie group that I help lead attend the wedding.

Mark and I attended Christ Church in Southborough and loved going there, but it got harder and harder to get to their services due to our need for Care workers.

However, we found Church of Christ and absolutely love coming here because the people are so friendly and we find it a place we can be real and honest and open. So another answer to prayer for us.

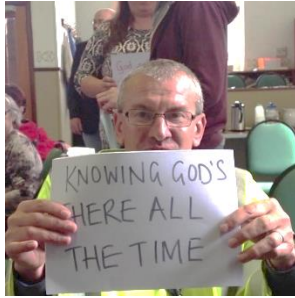
I was feeling sad and frustrated about not being able to do things and then God answered our prayers for an assist dog and Orla came along and now Austin is now part of our family.

I have known God's encouragement and love throughout my life, especially in difficult times and with God's help, I've not let being in a wheelchair limit my activities or things I am involved with.

About 4 years ago, I had a stomach operation, which was another answer to prayer and I have been able to lose weight.

I love Jesus and want to be baptised to obey Him and to follow Him even more in my life, knowing He will lead and guide Mark and I into the next chapter of our lives.

Mark Kevan



Gemma Kinne



(One Sunday we had 5 generations of Gemma's family in Church)



Lana from Ukraine

At the beginning of this year, I had a question for God. "When is war going to start" – nobody knew. We prayed at the New Year, and God said the coming year will be a year of pain, we trusted him, but we still did not know "Will there be war?"

After New Year I had a dream and woke up sweating. In my dream I was by the window looking at fireworks. My mother said to me get all your documents, do not take the lift down from your apartment, use the stairs and go to the Cemetery and cover yourselves. I did what she said. My Mother died years before and I did not understand the dream.

I took it to my Pastor, and he interpreted it. The fireworks were explosives and the beginning of war. The documents and passports were to preserve our identity, the stairs were to indicate that all my achievements up until that point would become lower. The Cemetery signified new life. The covering the protection of God and my mother a guardian angel.

I told my son and he said “Leave now” but I was not able to leave because I had adopted children and there were safeguarding controls on leaving the country, but I believed once the war started, they wouldn’t matter and when the time came, it was so.

At new year, I had the aspiration to travel round Europe. When I wrote this down it was impossible as I had no money to travel and had only ever left the Ukraine once. God brings our dreams to life and I never imagined how he would do this!

When we saw the first rocket, we left our home on 24th February. I had not driven a car for 10 years, but we were in that car for 6 days. Everyone was fleeing and there were many traffic jams. We could not leave the car. When the call of nature came, my children had to stand in front, so we did not lose our place in the queue.

When we got to Poland, God had put everything in place for 1 month for us in a new apartment. We needed to leave like millions of other Ukrainians. I was so nervous that I lost my peace. I didn’t want to go elsewhere but my daughter insisted. “Where to go?” I saw an island on the map that looked safer – I didn’t know where it was. I prayed to God and said, “Show me a sign, and please make it happen without me lifting a finger.” He reminded me that I had brought with me two

cushions I liked with pictures of London on them! Again, I handed it all over to God.

When we went to get a haircut, and met another Ukrainian woman who said, "I am going to England." She told us about the need for a visa, and she offered her help. She also found a woman in Tunbridge Wells who put everything in place for us.

People were saying "It is impossible, it is too hard." But God controls everything, and I had put my trust in Him. It is only thanks to Him that we are here. But "why England?" I am still waiting for that answer to come! I had no English language and I cried to God that I didn't know how to survive here. God told me to put some effort into learning, so I try to understand.

My testimony is that – we need to trust God with the difficult parts of our lives. There is a big difference when we are distant with God and when we are close.

Even when things are scary, don't think, don't look at them, just trust. I lost everything from my home, but I live for today and God promises to protect. If you have lost relationship with the Lord, it is very important that you restore that relationship and enjoy it.

Ernest & Ivy Lawrence

Helped to run the Flower Shop (with Fred Heasman) in Monson Road. They were also involved in running the youth group at Church and were faithful members of the church for many, many years.

Percy & Annie Lawrence

Annie Vineall Lawrence was Ann Waddell Vineall's sister-in-law. Annie was brought up in the Church of Christ. Annie had a wonderful, raucous laugh, was a bustling woman and had a sweet nature. She and Percy had one daughter, Mary.

Percy was a deacon at the Commercial Road church for many years— Ann said he was diligent and faithful. The Lawrence family was one of the Church of Christ families in the area, along with the Heasman and Haffenden families.

Percy was a conscientious objector during WW2 so was sent to work on a "ditching farm". He served on the land farm all through the war. Annie's death was a severe blow to him as was his development of diabetes both of which meant a huge changes of life for him.

Percy was living in his and Annie's home up on Bayhall Road when we first moved to TW. But when diabetes began to severely affect his legs, he stayed with Ann for about a year. Percy died in November 1991 at the age of 83.



Lewis children - Although mostly not church members, every Lewis child attended the Sunday School at Commercial Road.

The last five were active in youth clubs, went to summer camps organised by the

Fellowship of Churches of Christ, attended and later helped in Holiday Bible Clubs, Little Kids Camp and Children's Hour.

As far as I know, the Lewis children all live in TW or nearby.

(Mr &) Mrs. Joan Lewis (now Mrs. Peter Sumner) raised her children at 18, Rankine Road.

They were - Joanna, Keith, Yvonne, Cecilia, Rosita, Wendy, Gary, Becky and Denise (*the last two are in the above picture on far right and left*).

The Lewis children, every last one of them, were polite, kind, thoughtful, happy/cheerful children.

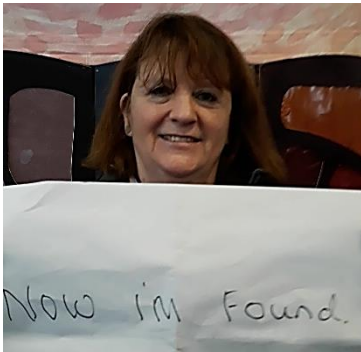
Jakki Lilley

I know for sure that if it wasn't for Jesus, I wouldn't be here now, as I was going down a very dark path, and I was nearly at the end of it. Jesus saved me.



Emily Martin

As we were doing 'the Noise' mission last month, I was really touched by what you were doing as a church to bless your community throughout the year. As I thought about it, I felt that it touched God's heart too. I felt challenged to bring your church a gift to say for want of a better expression – thank you! Thank you on behalf of God's heart and on behalf of the community for what you are doing.



Ann Mason

I was born with a mother who had a lot of affairs, finally leaving when I was 9 years old. Being told it was my fault, I felt guilty, abandoned and unloved. I became like a mother in my childhood to 2 siblings. Being told I was not good enough and useless, I became bitter and angry and felt unworthy.

I married a man whose mother had died when he was 13. I became a mother again. He was also like my mother as he had affairs and I was told I wasn't good enough and I would be better off dead.

As a result, I took an overdose. When I came round, my husband told me I was worth more dead than alive. I found the strength to end my 18-year marriage. I felt unwanted.

Three months later I began dating another man who was like my father. He was abusive, manipulating and a heavy drinker. I also became a heavy drinker and drink became my confidence, my courage, my best friend.

Then a customer invited me to attend an Alpha Course. The people weren't abusive. I could see genuine love and care and honesty.

I had my feet washed at a week of prayer meeting and I said how I wanted my partner to stop his treatment of me. The lady washing my feet pointed out the abusive, controlling behaviour so I found the courage to end the 18-year relationship.

I decided to get baptised as I could see Jesus Christ was my Lord and Saviour, my Rock and my Father who truly loved me. My chains are gone, I've been set free. Amen.

Jean Meadows

I first touched base with Church of Christ in October 1988. I was new to Tunbridge Wells, had a toddler and just found out I was pregnant again. I knew no-one here. Walking into town one day I noticed a sign for a mother and toddler group so investigated.



I walked in to see two women sat at a table and no other mums or babies. On hearing their American accent I thought I'd stumbled into a Mormon cult! Their welcome was amazing, one played with my toddler while the other listened to my woes of loneliness and fear of being pregnant again (I'd been extremely ill with sepsis after my first and almost died).

There then grew the most amazing times, making lifelong friends, day trips out to Badsell Park Farm and most notably Treasure Island in Eastbourne. CATS club followed Mother and Toddlers and became a huge part of our lives along with Holiday Bible Club.

Although I became a committed member at St James church, I can honestly say the relationships I made in this wonderful Church kept me sane through the bad times and celebrated the good times with me. I cannot thank you enough.

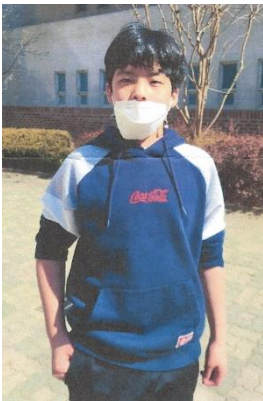
Men's
Breakfasts/Curries/Retreats

Food, glorious food - a big feature of getting Men together to share fun and faith, BBQs, Cooked breakfasts, bacon sarnies, getting lost on Ashdown Forest! Film discussions, work parties etc



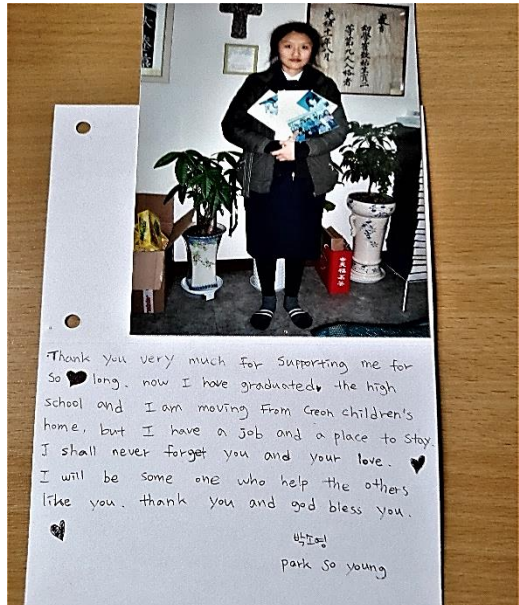
Missionaries/The Noise

We have been privileged to support a number of different missions, local, national and international over the years, including most recently Brian & Comfort Jennings in Ghana. and Dr Chae in South Korea, where we have sponsored several orphans, including Hwee Lee Sung currently supported



and among those formerly So Young (below)

*God bless all of you in the Commercial Road Church for your faithful support down the years! We greatly appreciate all you have done!
Brian & Comfort.*



Thank you very much for supporting me for so long. now I have graduated the high school and I am moving from Greh children's home, but I have a job and a place to stay. I shall never forget you and your love. I will be some one who help the others like you. thank you and god bless you.

박지영
Park So young



We have also encouraged our Young People to take part in days of practical missional outreach by blessing the community with Love in Action, through a yearly initiative called the Noise.



Julie Molyneux

Church of Christ has been my spiritual home for about 20 years now. My children, Dan and Rachel, have grown up here and we have all formed lasting friendships within the church family. Whilst I had always had a faith, I had not, as an adult, regularly attended church until I came here.

I was not in a happy place when I first arrived at the church and found great comfort in the kindness and friendship I found there. However, a major turning point for me early in my attendance was when one of the church leadership was preaching one morning and said "it's not enough to come to church on Sunday and feed off the faith of other people; you need to have a faith of your own".

This had a transforming effect on me and I began to take my faith more seriously and it was the beginning of my understanding of what being a Christian really means. My faith and understanding have grown over the years with the guidance of Cliff and Lynn and other church members. I love the honesty in our church - we're a 'warts and all' congregation; none of us are perfect but more importantly, none of us pretend to be. There have been so many happy times spent with my church family over the years that it would take too long to list them but mine and Rachel's baptisms do stand out. I thank the Lord that he guided me here.



Leslie Monroe-Webb

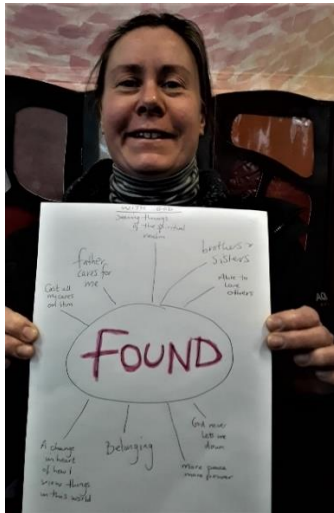
As a way of life, my faith and belief in our God has always been part of me, although sometimes hard to completely understand or commit to.

It gives me strength to know that there is a mission given to every one of us and it is for us to climb those mountains and grow the fire in our souls and come to the light.

The Church of Christ has helped me to feel comfortable to be part of Church. As a family church you have been ever so supportive throughout the event of my time living in this area.

I will miss you very much as I move back to France and hope that we will all keep in touch throughout the years via the online study.

Heather Moore



Kalypso Moraiti



I was born in South Africa but brought up in a strict Greek Orthodox home. My earliest memories of church included lengthy services all in Ancient Greek and thus incomprehensible to me. The wrath of God, which my parents constantly reminded me about, always scared me. However, my views about God changed once I immigrated to England and found the modest Church of Christ on Commercial Road. Slowly I learned that God was not a frightening figure but

rather a Father and friend.

Initially I was shocked by the love and warmth of Christ which seemed to inundate our congregation. My Church family's amazing testimonies ignited in me a desire to learn more about the Lord.

I was baptised in June 2018, and I am continuing on my journey to build a strong, personal relationship with Christ and serving others has brought me even closer to Him.

Cynthia Murrells was an Ilford, Essex girl. William Robinson was her father, an elder and leader in the Church of Christ in Ilford. Cynthia met Tony Corke many times as youth groups from the area Churches of Christ (there were quite a few pre and post WW2) met for gatherings. Cynthia and Tony married and moved to a house in Upper Grosvenor Road in Tunbridge Wells. She and Tony ran youth clubs for the church. Both were teachers—she primary/junior, he secondary school. They were very involved in the life of the Commercial Road church.



Believing she had a strong marriage, Cynthia was devastated when it broke up, but kept going. The church leadership of the time were not helpful and she stopped attending church for many years and didn't

return until the early 80's, where she took turns in playing the piano for morning worship and did some Sunday school and youth work. She, by that time, had remarried (Bill Murrells) and moved to Thomas Street. She lived there until following a whole lot of hospital visits (she had a lot of medical issues), she died at the Kent and Sussex Hospital in 2006.

Cynthia was a good friend. She was clever, funny, kind, compassionate, generous and resilient. She never was shy or embarrassed by her faith in God. She was quite confident and matter of fact about God in her life.

Muslims & Refugees

From the moment the Roebuck Pub on Camden Road was converted to a Mosque, we knew God wanted us to reach out. After much prayer the door seemed for several years permanently closed. Our first encounter was when stories of Isis began to hit the headlines and the Mosque opened their building for an introduction day. A delightful doctor serving tea afterwards confessed “We were so scared of you, and Lynn had to admit “We were also scared of you!” When asked about Jesus, one surprising answer that stuck with her was “I think sometimes I am more Christian than many of you actual Christians.”



Since forging friendships, and building bridges, God has given us many opportunities to journey together: play games and football, have many ladies' coffee mornings, unite for a 'Love Your Neighbour' Event at the Town Hall, and even study the Bible and Koran together.

We also feel honoured that various Refugees have landed on our doorstep, and we have been able to extend friendship and a practical welcome. In particular to a family of six Syrians, escaping war in Syria. And more recently a number of Ukrainians who



have been learning English in the Church, with some attending on Sundays.

“Thank you for organising with Imam Yasser the magnificent gathering at the TW Town Hall. As refugees from Sevenoaks, all power to your elbows for the work you are doing in building inter-faith relations and out into the wider community. Entirely splendid.” DW



(Ravi) & Radhika Namburi

I grew up in India, where my Mother was Christian and my Father Hindu. I knew the power of Christian prayer, when at a young age my Father had some difficulties in his work, which led to us moving around a lot, and him even contemplating suicide. After calling out to Jesus, the Government suddenly lifted a suspension on him working and things were ok again.

I have many testimonies of God answering my prayers. When we came to England, we went to some larger churches, but were glad to find a home at Church of Christ, and for the love and support.



Frank Nemek

I was born in Prague 4 Oct 1960. My Mother was a Christian and I remember going to Church with my Grandmother when I was young. My Mother was a Teacher and came from a wealthy family. My Father worked at the University. They divorced when I was seven. I loved sports. We spent some summers in Romania, and I visited Russia with school. We lived under Communist rule since 1948, so I stopped going to church because of this threat, but Christianity was always in my heart.

At 18, I started to drink, beer was very cheap. I had to go into the Army aged 23-25 and again drinking was very common. Vodka became the new beer. I was addicted but ‘everyone was doing it.’ At University I

lived a very free and drunk life, and just before a sports trip to possibly escape to West Germany, I got arrested and thrown out of University. After prison and a week in a 'mad house', my Mother's lawyer got me released.

I met a woman who had 2 children. She became my wife and we had a daughter, but divorced in 1990.

I was drinking more and in and out of psychiatric units. There were times that I would stop for a while and enjoy different employments. I was happy when I was working. I had the opportunity to come to England and lived in High Brooms. My daughter also came here. After some problems at work, I went to Gibraltar. The Authorities moved me on to Spain, where I was homeless. One man brought me to a Christian Rehab Programme, and for 1 year I was reading the Bible daily and learning Spanish but began drinking again and got an infection in my leg that led to very serious blood poisoning. At that point, I decided to stop drinking, and it was like a miracle – I did. I returned to England.

I met Jack from Church in one of the town's car parks handing out food, He invited me to the church, where I was able to have a shower and clean up a bit. Later, I was able to move from Rusthall, closer to the church and I like this place – it is like a family. I hope my daughter will one day come.



Michelle Newton/Simpson

I grew up in a Christian household and went to 'Loaves and Fishes Club' which was a church group on a Thursday evening. I was confirmed at 12 but didn't really understand the significance. I drifted from church when I went to University and returned to it through my jobs in boarding schools helping plan and

lead services with the pupils.

I had a very tough time starting a new job away from my home and was incredibly upset when my marriage broke down. I became depressed

and found life challenging. My new dream house that I bought near to my job was a great boost and I was able to attend the local church and complete the Alpha Course as it was running on my evening off. It felt good to be part of 'the family' again and everyone was incredibly supportive when I had problems at work. Moving to Tunbridge Wells and selling my dream home was a real test. However, through all of these ups and downs I have rebuilt my life walking alongside amazing people of faith from different church communities.

With the Lord's help, strength and my rededication immersion I have deepened and strengthened my faith. I am still challenged at work and with the local and world situation, but I get to teach children about God and how wonderful Jesus is and to share the amazing things he has done in my life and in the lives of those around me. I will be forever grateful for all I have been given and for the deep acceptance that I can be happy even in the difficult times as I know there will be more to come. I honestly don't know how people without faith 'do life', but I do know the family I have at Church of Christ and Christ Church make mine so much easier. Thank you everyone for making me feel so welcome and to a God who will never give up on me.

Curt and Linda Nordhielm were a part of the ministry team that moved to Tunbridge Wells from St. Ann's Church of Christ, Nottingham in 1982 to work with the Commercial Road Church of Christ.



Curt and Linda studied and graduated from Lincoln Christian College in Lincoln, Illinois and moved to England in 1978. Their first daughter, Donnetta, was born in Nottingham in 1980. Ingrid was born in Tunbridge Wells in 1984.

They worked in the church until 1987 when they moved back to the States to take on a position at Lincoln Christian College. They went on to serve at Boise Bible College, Idaho and then at a church in Michigan.

Curt and Linda did so many different things within the church: preaching, reading, building work, painting, youth work, calling, evangelising, baptising, teaching, Bible studies, and being friends. Curt and I got involved in the Ministerial Alliance, as it was then, and with the Tell the Wells mission in conjunction with Billy Graham's crusade in 1985/6?

They both loved God and strove to continue to grow in Him and help others to do the same. Curt said that sometimes he really had to remember that he was, at heart, an American, and so had to keep reminding himself that those around him weren't!



Philomena Oguntoye



Michael Oguntoye



Janet (& Gary) Oliver

I am not great with stories, but I can't let this opportunity to thank the church pass me by

Firstly, thank you so much for the wonderful Sunday School teachings that all four of my children enjoyed very much back in the early 90's (where does time go?)

My husband and I were flying around at a million miles an hour back then, but when it came to the last Sunday of the month, we always tried our hardest to make "Family Service". We thoroughly enjoyed it and the

Church was always so welcoming and never did we feel pressured to be back again the following week.

To Cliff I want to say thank you so much from the bottom of my heart for the service you delivered at my Mother's funeral.

It still amazes me how you could make it feel like you knew her so well. You brought me so much comfort that day. Thank you.

Finally, to your amazing family and the most generous offer you made us when we couldn't hold off moving away to our new lives in Somerset anymore, you gave our son a place to stay whilst he completed his exams, something you didn't need to trouble yourselves with. Gary and I are so grateful that you were there for us. Thank you.

Matthew Oliver

Wow Sunday School with Gail and Rita what memories, Gail used to pick me and my three sisters up from our house and I remember thinking Mum & Dad have only arranged this so they can finally have a couple of hours quiet to themselves.



But truly I enjoyed my time with Gail and the way she delivered the stories and teachings to me and all the other children was great and it certainly got into me and kept me thinking past my early Sunday mornings.

My fondest memory that actually still gives me a beaming smile as I write this, was a school summer holiday when I think I was around 11 or 12 and the Church was running a sort of summer camp but it involved sprucing up the Church. I should say that at this time in my life I had discovered NBA basketball and was addicted. I lived and breathed it. Anyway, I was upstairs in my old Sunday school room painting with Cliff and I started talking ball and then it happened "You should come along to the club I run" Oh my goodness I think I might have dropped my

brush. Church ministers don't play sports I thought to myself, he just leaves here and sits at home reading the Bible doesn't he?

Anyway, every Wednesday after school I walked to meet him along with a couple of friends and we practised, and I loved every minute of it.

One particular practice I asked Cliff for a quiet word and I think it went something like "what you spoke about last Sunday, I want to do that. I am ready".

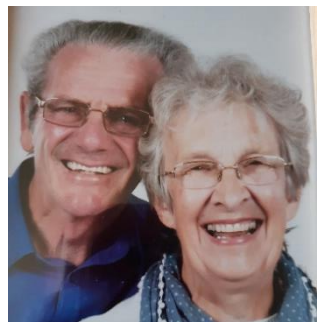
I was baptized by Cliff a few weeks later and I really felt like I accepted Christ into my life. Later into my young adult life and after moving away, I admit I have drifted away from faith, but I still believe that my time with this Church helped shape me into the man that I am today and if I could do it all again I would not change a thing.

Thank you Cliff and thank you Church of Christ

Bessie Owen was Colin Owen's Mum and had a beautiful voice. She often spoke at other Ladies meetings in the town and would sing at them. She was instrumental in getting Colin to Church, where he came to faith. Bessie attended the church after her marriage because she moved to the area from Pembury then. She too was a stalwart member and led the 'Women's Bright Hour' every week for years, (decades) She did other things like polished the silver!

Colin & Judy Owen

Colin was baptized as a teenager and a member of the church for most of his adult life. He served the church by preaching, leading services, serving as an overseer, helping with youth clubs and camps, provided wisdom and leadership for the congregation over many years, led many years of outreach and service at St James's Court - a once a month worship time at a local residential care home. Loved and served Jesus in practical ways and applied Bible teaching to everyday life and experience.



Judy was also baptised in the church and married Colin in 1960. She served as Sunday school teacher, youth group leader, a variety of camps and women's events. Also with Colin, provided safe and steady leadership of the church for many years. With Colin, she helped to organise and facilitate the St James's Court worship times.



Janet Owen

I first attended Church of Christ when I was just 4 years old which was way back in 1965. I went to Sunday School which was then held in the afternoon, 3.00 pm and we were collected from home. I think it was an opportunity for my parents to have an hour of peace, so they put me in my best dress

and sent me off to Sunday School.

I have very happy memories of my time there and as I grew older, I joined youth group and made some amazing friends, some of whom I am still in contact with today. My earliest memory was learning the books of the Bible, our teacher, Miss Turner had made the books of the Bible from the little individual boxes of Kellogg's variety cereals. I can remember being more intrigued by how she had eaten so many boxes of cereal!

Youth group and Sunday school were fun, parties at Christmas which always included "spin the breadboard", one of the most competitive games I have ever played. Playing skittles with empty bubble bath bottles, again I was amazed at how a leader could have used so much bubble bath to get all the bottles! Camps at Bexhill, visits to the farm at Pluckley, journeys to the Church at Ilford for competitions, and I clearly remember winning a play competition with our Noah's Ark play, when we received a shield that was engraved.

I remember the time my brother, John, threw a cushion and instead of catching it the other person ducked, the cushion flew over their heads and flew straight at the piano taking down two vases of carefully arranged flowers. This resulted in us having to apologise to an elderly lady at the church who had donated the vases and this was I think my

first occasion of receiving kindness that I couldn't really understand. We expected a telling off, but instead I remember her saying, were you having fun.. well yes!, and she said I am sure it wasn't done on purpose, but look where you are throwing things in future. God Bless Mrs Sandall, a truly amazing Christian role model.

As a child I remember ladies in funny hats, one shaped like a tomato ketchup pot, and we sang some very unusual songs. One went: Little brown houses now what do you hold, treasures of crimson and scarlet and gold, kings queens and princesses crocuses small, God is the maker and giver of all. Those around that long ago will remember...

As I grew up surrounded by a group of firm friends, I began to realise that there was a purpose to Church and that God was actually real. I heard amazing stories. I cannot remember when I started attending church services, but following a National Youth Camp, I gave my life to Jesus and was baptised at the Church on 7th September 1980, aged 19.

This marked the beginning of my Christian journey but I actually believe the journey began way back in 1965 when I walked into Sunday School and experienced love and unconditional friendship that I knew was different.

I will close with one of my favourite Bible verses, it is an unusual one but speaks volumes to me:

Your path led though the sea, your way through the mighty waters, though your footprints were not seen. Psalm 77 vs 19.



Suzanne Owen

I grew up from a tiny tot to mid adulthood in the Church of Christ, being enrolled in the 'cradle roll' as a very young child. It seems an old fashioned word these days, but I believe it marked entry into Sunday school. My reflection focuses on Sunday school because it was a very significant part of the formation of faith and spiritual life for me that came later as I grew up.

My earliest memories of Sunday school are the tiny wooden chairs that the youngest children sat on. These were later painted a variety of bright colours, but in my Sunday school days were all a uniform brown! There was also a larger version of these brown chairs for children aged about 7-9, and then the older children sat on the benches. The Sunday school Superintendent, Winifred Haffenden, led the Sunday school, which was at 3pm on Sunday afternoon. So, it was always a quick turn around after church in the morning to get back to Sunday school, (and I also remember an evening service, so the day was spent going to and from church three times a Sunday!).

Sunday school opened with some singing and prayers before the children went separate ways into their classes, and then would re-join just before the end for a final song. There is one song that sticks in my mind from the early days, as there were images on a board, stuck on as a kind of memory jogger for the youngest who couldn't read. It meant everyone could sing. As far as I recall the words were (and you can imagine the pictures):

Birds and Bees, Flowers and trees
Sun and moon that glow, Rain and snow, and winds that blow
Are God's gift to me.

Night and day, Friends to play
All my family, Loving care and clothes to wear
Are God's gifts to me.

I don't know who wrote it, but it has stuck in my head all these years!
The words might be simple, but they reflect an attitude of thanksgiving that I have tried to maintain.

Early Sunday school days were accompanied by illustrations that always included fuzzy felt pictures. It is hard to imagine nowadays, but essentially these were a board covered in brushed cotton, and pictures with a kind of Velcro type backing that entailed them to stick, or not! There was quite a lot of amusement when the teacher's attention was spent trying to get the pictures to stick! The classes always included a craft or colouring too.

I am thankful to Cynthia Murrells, a great teacher, who taught me my way around the Bible by competitions to find the reference. She would give the Bible reference and the first to find it read the verse. The minor prophets were always a challenge, but I owe a lot to her. I am sorry to say I took the competition very seriously and always wanted to be the first to find the verse, but I didn't always get there quickest!

Other memories of Sunday school are the nativity plays and my 'great sadness' that I was usually the narrator and never played Mary. This was put right in my 20s, when I was invited to be Mary at a nativity coordinated by Gail and Rita, when I was wheeled on standing on a skateboard, I can't quite remember why now! Attendance at Sunday school was rewarded every 36 weeks with a book - always a reward to look forward to. Sunday school later became a place of debate, hearts and minds stretched by the challenges presented, and finally full circle when I became a teacher myself.

As I reflect, this was hugely important part of my growth, not only into faith, but into social interaction and into teaching. I remain very appreciative of what I learned. I haven't even mentioned the Sunday school outings, for many a highlight of the year. There are many occasions when I realise that my Bible knowledge and spiritual understandings are rooted in those early years at Sunday school. I appreciate it much more now than I did then!!

Picnics in the Park

What fabulous events these were for many years, as the town's churches worked together to gift to the town free burgers & sausages, face-painting, bouncy



castles, prayer tents, music bands, clowns, puppets, dance, competitions, whack the rat! hook the duck, etc etc.

Wonderful to see the Calvary Grounds full of crowds hearing about and experiencing the goodness of God.

Pastoral Support

Although we have been nowhere near perfect by any means in this area, we are grateful for so many kind words from individuals who have appreciated some of the care the church has been able to provide, especially at times of need.

We also know that much goes on behind the scenes, that may only be known by God.

“Thank you for your help, prayers and finally lifting the burden I had carried for 27 years. I couldn’t have done it without you. I know I tried often enough. I shall always be most grateful to you” V

“Your love and prayers bring comfort still” J

“Your prayers really meant something to me at a time I really felt that I couldn’t go on. You helped me overcome grief.” N

Rachel Payne

I grew up at the Church of Christ and I would say it is the most formative thing in my life.

This Church is so special to me and so many others. It gave me unconditional love, demonstrating to me how I should love others. I was baptised here at the age of 14 and it was a beautiful day surrounded by my church family that I love so dearly.



I am so thankful for the amazing memories I hold from summer HIT camps, Picnics in the Park, Christmas plays, and down to earth Sunday services.

A memory I won’t forget is the church allowing a friend Sam and me to perform comedy jokes at the Christmas get together when I was about 8 years old. It definitely wasn’t funny, but they all supported us and at

least pretended we were. I wouldn't have done that anywhere else, but I felt so at home and had confidence there.

This Church has made me the person I am today and blessed my family so much. I proudly brought my friends along to services, and all of them have said how special it is, and how welcomed and loved they felt.

I can't thank Church of Christ, and Cliff and Lynn enough for all they have done for me. It will always hold a massive place in my heart and I wouldn't have wanted to grow up anywhere else!

Miss Dorothy Pearce was best known for her piano playing. She was extremely short, not much taller than 4 feet. She played the piano only at the evening Gospel meetings, because no musical instrument was allowed to be played during the morning worship service at that time. She was related to Richard and Shirley Pearce who visited from Australia.

Neville Pink

Bro Pink, was at one time part of the Clapham Church of Christ, (where there was also a Bro Brown and Bro White!) He later became more of a freelance preacher, but remained a friend and visitor of the Tunbridge Wells church.



He had a quiet, gentle and constant faith.

Prayer Times – Town wide

Corporate times of prayer to ask God for his seed of truth to be sown in the hearts and minds of every man, woman and child in this area have also been an essential part of the church's mission. Foot/Handwashing, Prayer Marches, Prayer Walking and Half Nights of Prayer. Prayer for Black Lives Matter in Calvary Grounds, Monthly prayers for the persecuted church etc

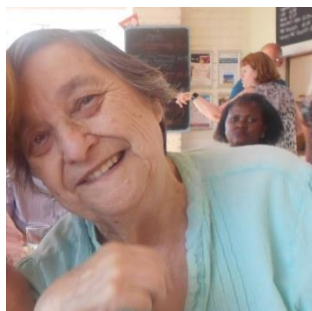


“Your passion for Jesus, your love for the people of this town and your energy in communicating and encouraging is fantastic. Somehow the Week of Prayer brings together so much of what you are working for...another very special week.” G & M

June Rabbett

June began attending the church around 2006, when the local church she had been attending, closed.

June loved to worship God in song and in prayer and in the years she worshipped with us, until her death, she grew in confidence in who she was in Christ.



She served Christ and the Church through her intercessory prayer, through leading Bible studies, and by quietly encouraging many of the younger women in the Church family.

June was a living example of how God never finishes with us, taking her through some very troubled times, to the point where she absolutely radiated the love of Jesus in her daily life.

Her funeral was a great celebration of her life and of her faith.

Connor Reid

I only truly came to know God in my teens. I had been a member of the church attending kids clubs and holiday camps and activities my whole life. However it wasn't until early on in my teenage years that I began to think about the actual spiritual side of things. A key turning point in my life was getting baptised at the church alongside two of my best childhood friends whom I also knew mainly through church.



The impact the church has had on my life is monumental, it has helped shape me into the person I am today and even if I cannot attend services, my faith is something I keep a grasp of and hold on tight to. The church has always been there for me when I needed it the most throughout the hardest times in my life and I will always be thankful for that.

My most memorable moment to do with the church is when we were attending Soul Survivor and I'd had a bad injury at the start of the year playing rugby.

Soul Survivor was around a month after my operation and I still didn't have full use of my knee, I remember people around me praying for healing and to speed up recovery. After they did this I remember being able to kneel down for the first time since this injury occurred without any pain.

The Roberts Family (Groombridge)

We attended the Church of Christ Commercial Road Tunbridge Wells on a pretty regular basis as children, more or less every Sunday. There was a regular church service, during which the children present moved into the smaller room at the back where Sunday school took place. This was run by Miss Winifred Haffenden, assisted by Miss Hazel Turner. There was a piano in the room, which we think our family donated at some point, and I used to play this to accompany the hymns we sang.

The two above-mentioned Sunday school teachers did a great many other things for the young people attending the church. They lived at the top of Stone Street {off Camden Road} and in good weather they invited the children into their home and garden for various activities.

They also arranged outings to the seaside in the summer, and I can remember going to St Mary's Bay on more than one occasion. Also, during good weather recreational activities were undertaken in the school holidays at the Hilbert Recreation Ground, which was within walking distance of the church.

As regards the main church itself, I remember another family who worked extremely hard on behalf of the congregation. Mr Colin Owen took many services, and his wife Judy and their children were always busy arranging things and participating in all the events.

A little later I think there was a meeting group for slightly older children, and this was run by Mr Martin Steers and his wife Linda. Mrs Cynthia Corke also gave a great deal of her time, as she regularly played the piano for the Sunday service together with being a main player in all the other youth activities. I can remember going to her house in Upper Grosvenor Road to enjoy games etc in her garden.

We most definitely benefited from the steadfast care and guidance received from all those involved in the church, and I believe it gave us a good grounding in building strong relationships for our future lives. It is wonderful to note that this valuable work has been in evidence for so many years, and hopefully will continue for many more years to come.

Lizzie Russell

"My main connection to Church of Christ was through being involved in leading the youth group 'Creme Fresh'. It was such an honour to be involved in leading the youth ministry at Church of Christ. The people in the church have always showed me encouragement and shown me how to live in the joy of the Lord



no matter what adversities you face. I've met some amazing people at this church who I hope will continue to be close friends of mine."



Jan Ruzicka

I believe that Our Lord has started to outline my life before I was even born – I have always been a plan! I was christened as a baby at church – in my case at Roman Catholic Church – in a country ruled by the Communist party, where Christianity was oppressed. Neither of my parents were (or, actually, are) Christians and it was my late grandmother who pushed it through against all odds (I do not know how she did that, but I am sure God indicated) and it was an important start to my Christian faith.

Although I was not an actively practising Christian, my gran has always read Bible stories to me and sometimes, when I used to spend weekends at my grandparent's house, she even sneaked me to church. She told me words of the common prayers and explained how the prayers work. Meanwhile, the Communist party lost power and free and fair elections were re-introduced. I did not care that much neither for Christianity, nor for democracy as I was a teenager...after passing my A levels, I decided to come to the UK – I remember my gran making a cross on my forehead, mouth and chin (which she did every time I was going away) and reminded me not to forget about the power of prayer.

After a while in the UK, I happened to arrive in Tunbridge Wells to be an au-pair for a young girl, working for her mum and they used to come to our Church. At first, I did not pay much attention to it but after a while, I came to one of the meetings in the park and was invited by Cliff to come along to church on Sunday, which I, after some time, hesitantly but willingly, did. And it was the right thing! For a while, I used to be a 'backbencher', but my faith started to shape up. I remember when Cliff asked me to read a couple of bible verses in my mother tongue along with Bill Burchell (a former late member of our Church), who read it in English. The meaning was the same. Jesus and his teaching is the same regardless of languages.

By then, I was a regular in attendance and went along to Spring Harvest (a Christian festival)...a year later, I volunteered as a team leader of one of the little kids groups. After some time, on a lovely summer day, I was baptised by Cliff at our Church (a couple of days before Dan Allen was born, I think 😊).

At our Church, I have actively started to walk with our Lord. Within our Church, we have always shared good and better, bad and worse... we pray together and see miracles happen, prayers fulfilled, lessons learned and destinies shaped.

Our Church has always been my Church and always will be the one I will come back to. God gave me this Church and I am so grateful for it!

Maria Luisa Saiz

I am a person who feels lucky and happy because I have had the opportunity to know Jesus in my life and my life changed. I changed from a life without faith to a life full of Hope.



I could see that Jesus is alive.

He is in our hearts. And I am very grateful to my brothers and sisters in faith of the church of Christ: Lynn, Cliff, Betsy Naomi, Dana, Barry, Hannah, Linda and many more for helping me in the way to Christ.

I was a person without any faith. I lost my faith when I was a teenager. I met Betsy after 2006 and she encouraged me to go to the church and try to know Jesus.

Betsy was full of faith and her life was focussed on God. One day I went to the church with her to attend one session of the Alpha Course. I was shocked! The experience was amazing there and I started going to Alpha Course and Bible studies. I realised that I wasn't alone in the world.

I had a lot of anger inside me and I could understand the importance of forgiveness, hope, love and sense in my life that Jesus was giving to me through my Christian family and his teaching. I could feel and believe that Jesus was alive with the followers of the church of Christ brothers and sisters in faith: A new relationship with God started and Jesus was light, truth and hope in my life. I felt very happy and my life changed.

God affected my life because he has meant GRATITUDE, HOPE, TRUST, LOVE, FORGIVENESS.

He has chosen me to live my life because he loves me. He has given to me the possibility to start a new day, every day when I open my eyes and I breathe. I am free to decide and all the doors are opened in my life thanks to him.

I can appreciate nature, I can have the possibility of having a family and friends. I am healthy. If I make mistakes, he forgives me because He is love and I can have another opportunity because of his mercy. If I fall, He stands me up. His grace is amazing. He is with me and I feel secure.

I can't remember the date but It was one day that I went to attend a session of the Alpha Course, I had dinner and I was listening about Jesus. People were serving us with big smiles and all the words that I heard including the testimonies there, impressed me. I felt that I needed and wanted to be part of this.

I served doing the washing-up, helping to cook, welcomed the new people. I went to the weekend of the Holy Spirit, and events related to the church. Knowing Jesus helped me to know myself and change, to know the greatness of God and have hope and gratitude because he is the way.

My baptism was the day of Resurrection in 2010. It meant that I accepted God in my life and I was aware of whom I have become and where I was going to at the end. The journey is long and difficult but thanks to God, Jesus is alive in our hearts and we can have hope, love and truth.



Myrtle Sandall was the daughter of Ernest Heasman (there were several Heasmans associated with the Church over the years.) Her parents were members, there and she was taken there (as were brothers Keith and Peter) from infancy. Myrtle was a delightful lady who played the piano and had a beautiful voice.

Sadly, her failing eyesight and arthritis prevented her from playing the piano in her later years, but her voice was still lovely. She was articulate, intelligent and a get-it-done kind of woman.

As a teenager, she once got into trouble with others from the youth group for riding their bicycles on a Sunday and pulling their skirts up, which revealed their ankles, to do so. A severe reprimand was her reward. She married John Sandall in the early 1950s They never had any children and so found working with the youth of the church to be a blessing.

John and Myrtle lived at 10, St. Luke's Road, just a couple of houses up from Elsie. Myrtle's staunch friendship with Elsie held firm as Elsie began to slip into dementia not long after her brother had died.

Even though Elsie would turn up at the door at odd hours, Myrtle would let her come in and have a cuppa to settle her. before she would walk Elsie back to her house and see her safely in. She visited Elsie as often as she could when Elsie had to go to an awful nursing home.

She had a gentle and sweet nature, a deep faith and was a devoted member of the Church, attending the Ladies' Bright Hour in her later years and never missing a Sunday morning worship service.

Mr Scott used to live at the top of Beulah Road and attended the Church each Sunday regardless of the weather, always sitting near the front. Also, regardless of the weather, he wore the same overcoat to church in all seasons. Tragically, he was hit by a car and killed while crossing Beulah Road.



Katy Seedhouse (Gathercole)

I really enjoyed the service I sang at, at your church. I thought the atmosphere was great and found the sermon really helpful and easy to listen to. Throughout the service there was a phrase going through my head and I wanted to encourage you with it.

It was 'This is the church of Jesus Christ.' I felt like the service on Sunday was perhaps how Jesus would want it to be. For example, someone crying, and someone else in the middle of a song offering to pray with them. Even though there were not loads of people there, I felt like the fellowship among people was Christ-like and good. Thank you for blessing me with that service.



Marianne Shaw

To all our lovely friends at The Church of Christ,

I wanted to take the time to write to you all to thank you for the love, support and friendship you have shown Lilah, Heidi and me since we first came to the church just

over a year ago.

As I'm sure most of you know by now, church wasn't a place I was familiar with outside of school carol concerts, weddings, christenings and funerals and when Lilah said she wanted to start attending because she believed in God, I was nervous about coming along. I thought you would all be able to see I wasn't a Christian and so I tried really hard to blend in.

With my limited knowledge of 'what being a Christian is' I pulled together a really formal outfit from the recesses of my wardrobe so that I was in Sunday Best camouflage. Except Sunday Bests aren't so much a thing anymore and rather than blend in I stuck out a bit. So the next

time the girls and I came along, I smiled and nodded a lot but spoke sparingly in my best voice so as not to 'give myself away' because to me, Christians would be able to see through the way I spoke and identify me as an imposter. It didn't work. You talked to me anyway and after a while, I stopped trying so hard to remember the 'right way' to talk with you, and with God. As a result, I've had some wonderful conversations, with you and with Him.

Thank you seems like such a small word for the blessing you have all been in our lives, not only when I was ill but now that, we as a family, are back to full strength. In the past I have given thanks for what I considered to be the practical help you gave but each time, until now, I have forgotten to give Thank you all for carrying us, for praying with us, for praying for us and bringing your spirituality, faith and love into our lives. I remember, not long after I found out I was sick, telling Cliff I was worried about praying too much in case they ran out- I had confused prayers with wishes! Now reassured we are not collectively worshipping a genie; I understand prayers are even better with even greater results.

There aren't enough superlatives to describe you all, God included. Jack, please forgive me as I know you're not a fan of the overuse of 'awesome' but on this occasion, I think it sums up our church family and your achievements perfectly. Lots of love and prayers,

Natasha Shaw/Walkes



I have been a member of Church of Christ for over thirty years. I have seen the Tunbridge Wells church grow and evolve into an integral part of the community. During that time it became a beacon and anchor during some very trying times in my life.

I was always taught that no matter what happens God will always be there to welcome, love, support and comfort me and that's exactly what has happened.

Once I got out of my own way of thinking I had all the answers. Once I stopped long enough to hear his words, I found a peace that I really didn't realise was even possible. I've always heard people talk about "The peace that passes all understanding" and I thought to myself that I would really like some of that but surely, it's not possible and if it passes all understanding, how would I even understand it.

I spent decades going to church, reading my Bible and being a 'Good Christian' and when I was going through trials, I could always count on my Tunbridge Wells Church of Christ family to be there to support me, but it wasn't until I listened properly to what I was taught in church that I began to feel "The peace that passes all understanding" and yes I do 100% finally understand it.

Abi Sheehy

I am so proud to call myself a member of God's family and I have absolutely loved every second of being at Church of Christ, Crème fresh and Exhilarate.



I am so unbelievably honoured to be part of such an amazing and welcoming group of people who are constantly giving and supporting...You have inspired me to keep on giving and teaching others.

Derek Simpson

The Church of Christ meeting in Commercial Road occupies a very significant place in my story of coming to faith in Christ as a young boy. We were a large family of seven children and it would be fair to say that there were a lot of difficulties in the home and kindest to leave it at that. We moved into a council house in Beech Street when I (and my twin sister, Barbara) were eight years old and attended St Barnabas Primary School in Quarry Road. I think that four of us came regularly to the Church of Christ.

I first came to the 'Holiday Club' which was run for one or two weeks in the summer holidays. These were excellently organised events attracting large numbers of children with games at the Recreation Ground in the morning and meetings with games and Bible Teaching in the afternoons and evenings. I am sure that many people were involved, but it was Tony and Cynthia Corke who stand out. Cynthia became a good friend who took a great interest in us for many years.

It is a great credit to the Church at that time which, though it was small in number, put a great deal of effort into children's ministry. I was in the Sunday School for many years, and that was where the strong foundation of the gospel and biblical truth was laid, on which my life with Jesus Christ has been built. I especially remember having Colin Owen as my teacher in my teens.

Our family was nominally Christian; my father used to say that, "A little bit of religion is good for an Englishman – as long as he doesn't take it too seriously!"

In practice that meant belonging to the Church of England, but not attending, and having a Bible in the house but never opening it! In reality, there was very little that was Christian about our home and, when Barbara and I did 'take it seriously', we encountered opposition at home.

I was greatly blessed to have around me many believers as a young man. I was associated – at different times and sometimes concurrently – with three churches. St. James' (Anglican), Calvary Chapel (FIEC) and the Church of Christ. Though very different in some ways, they were all evangelical churches and the gospel I heard in them was consistent. Also, at St. James' C of E School, many of the teachers were believers.

From the start, a great emphasis was put on personal Bible-reading and prayer. We were expected (and helped) to know our way around the Bible and to put its teachings into practice. One day, when ten years old, I was sitting in bed reading the Bible, with the help of Scripture Union notes. It was in the summer holidays between Primary and Secondary School.

On that evening, God stepped right out of the Bible and I knew that Jesus Christ was real and present and speaking to me. The gospel I had been taught came alive and I as I responded humbly to the call of God, I put all my trust in Christ and committed my life to serving him.

The reality of that experience has lived with me. From that moment, I set out – in the Apostle Paul’s words – to “...follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.”

I was greatly helped in this by Mr and Mrs Heasman. I think that they saw how serious I was about following Christ and I remember a number of times in their home where we sat over an open Bible. They gave me the heaviest book I had ever owned, entitled, Paul, the Dauntless; a detailed biography of the life of the Apostle.

I read every word several times over and was gripped. As I read it, we talked about it. None of us were aware then, that most of my life would be spent as a travelling evangelist and Bible teacher.

As a young teenager, I regularly attended the evening services and lapped up the preaching. The Wednesday evening youth group was run by Martin and Linda Steers and was probably the event in my week that I looked forward to most eagerly.

I was there on the Sunday evening that Martin preached his first sermon. He began by saying that people often turned round to look at the clock, but he would save us the trouble. He put a (mechanical) alarm clock on the table in front of him. This back-fired when – at 7.15 – it went off very loudly and disconcerted the preacher totally!

Martin and Linda were also behind the only beauty contest I ever entered! It was decided that the girls would all take part in one. Martin had the idea that the boys should join in. Two of us – Paul Roberts and I – were talked into it by our sisters who provided our outfits. I think a girl actually won, but I did get a prize for coming first in our ‘category’. I am hoping that Martin lost the photos long ago and that they are not going to appear on a board somewhere at the celebrations!

I was not at the Church of Christ for many years. In my middle teens, I sensed God calling me back to the involvement in the Covenantors at St.

James', which proved significant in my spiritual development in many ways. Mr and Mrs Heaseman were greatly concerned about this and I remember a long conversation at their home including a Bible study on Baptism. When I was later baptised, I made sure that they knew about it!

We kept in touch and the Heasemans were also helpful to me when I was considering my first call into Christian ministry. They were keen supporters of the Royal National Mission to Deep Sea Fisherman and encouraged me when I said that I believed God was calling me into it.

A few years later, at only 18, I became the youngest port missionary in the history of that organisation; sharing the gospel with fishermen and their families for seven years until God called me into tent evangelism. But that's another story...!

The person who stands out most from those times is Cynthia. She was the one we went to when there was trouble at home. And for many years, I called in occasionally on rare return visits to the town.

I was always glad to know that the Church was doing well and even got to preach there a couple of times in the 1980s and 1990s.

I am grateful to God for all the Church did for me.

Happy Birthday!

John Simpson



My Mum sent us (11 children) to Sunday School to learn about Jesus, but when I got older, I forgot about Him. Joining Beechwood School helped me to re-connect with Jesus and coming to the Church of Christ,

I met people who encouraged me to open my heart and want to know more. Over the past 2 years Jesus has transformed me into a calmer, happier and more helpful person. I am now ready to commit my life to Christ.

Soup Bowl/Winter Shelter



Church of Christ was home to a soup kitchen 2 days a week for several years before the Mosaic Christian Centre was completed. Cliff supervised a team of Volunteers and introduced them to the concept of praying before serving the guests. (This probably helped when he was threatened with a knife one time!)

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serving the guests. (This probably helped when he was threatened with a knife one time!)

We installed a shower in the Church so we could offer a place to clean up alongside several other useful services. One or two enjoyed it so

much it was hard to get them out of the building!



Despite the food fights and interesting characters, some have ventured further in, to a service and then found their home in the Lord and his community.

Churches Together also had a Winter Shelter yearly until Covid, where over 20 churches would either open one night a week or send volunteers to man these lifelines for those sleeping rough in freezing temperatures. Ann M helped a lot by using her van to transport beds etc



Spring Harvest/Soul Survivor/New Wine

Christian Festival Trips have often been a source of life and growth for church members and faith beginnings for young people. As a small congregation, experiencing the much larger gatherings,

extended times of worship, bible teaching and ministry, alongside relaxing times of fellowship has been enriching and times of really meeting with God and renewal.

We remember the sparse cooking, the hurricane weathers, the late-night raves, and the joy of changed lives. Cliff & Lynn remember being woken at the dead of night in their tent by a young man wanting relationship advice!

Lynda Steers

Looking back on memories, When I was at the youth club with Tony and Cynthia as club leaders, we all met up one special Saturday to watch the football World Cup. We sat on chairs or on the floor wherever there was a space, we sat, cheered, held are breath until the end. Hurray we won, loud cheering clapping and a lot of excitement. Then refreshments followed.

Martyn and I met at the club in the late 1960s. We were married on the 24 October 1970 (50 years ago) 1 week after the church celebrated 100 anniversary (19 October).

Our children (Heidi & Ashley) went to the Sunday school. One of the Christmas nativities, I remember was when Rita and Gail took photos down the Hilbert and Grosvenor Park by the pond where the caves are. My daughter was Mary. The photos were shown on the screen at church with the children also acting out the nativity.

Pat Stone had been married but had divorced. but she always referred to herself as Miss Stone. Baptised at the Church, Pat was crippled with perpetual leg/foot problems (and various other health problems, including breast cancer), but she still got about with her little dog (which frequented Bright Hour to everyone's delight).

She had a simple but genuine faith that was revealed in her love for those in need and animals. She also had a cheeky budgie that knew some very unsavoury words which Pat swore she hadn't taught him! Pat lived up on Lady's Gift Road in Southborough.



Alan Stovall was an orphan and was raised in a Dr Barnardo's home. He came to the Church via Mrs Fountain, with whom he lodged. He affectionately called her 'Ma'. Alan was an accomplished carpenter and he loved to sing. He was often called upon to carry out repairs at the Church building. He also gave lifts to several of the older ladies so they could get to Church on a Sunday

morning and to various meetings through the week. Alan would often share his singing gift with the residents at St James' Court where a monthly service was held through the 1980s and 90s.

Alan was an evacuee from London during the Blitz. He and his brother came down to Tunbridge Wells and lodged with a member of the church.

Alan was a builder by trade. He was a meticulous man and didn't like to do anything in a rush as he wanted everything done just right. Granted, that meant he ran into problems with employers who wanted him to get on and get the job done. When the church was doing its major refurbishment work in the early 1980's, Alan got stuck in and worked alongside Curt Norheim and Rita Ide doing everything from digging and hauling to joinery work to painting. A rota was set up to have tea cooked for him after every day that he worked at the building.

He was a tall, bearded man; very quiet; very sincere. A man of quiet but strong faith. An inoffensive man, if stubborn when it came to principles of work and faith. At a Court case for a car accident, he stuck to his belief that he was innocent, and sure enough it was proved.

Street Pastors

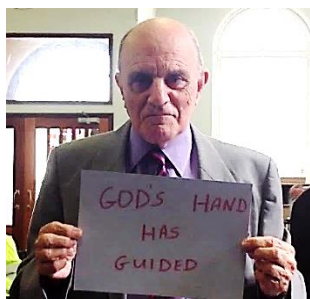
When the first teams went out on the streets, they were mocked, but soon after they became respected not only by the many night-time revellers but also by the Town Council and Police, as they helped to break up fights, keep the town quieter and save the NHS loads of money.



Supported always by the Prayer Pastors, many a dangerous situation is diffused by the grace of



God. Vulnerable young people kept safe, flip flops and lollies handed out and prayer and testimony shared. Jean, Paul, June, Johnny Vicky & Cliff have been particularly involved.



Trevor Streeton

I was born in Tunbridge Wells and my first recollections with the church are from 1944/45 as a Sunday School student. Graduating into upper school, I recall we had a Bible Class for boys on Sunday afternoons and on one occasion I was sent home for misbehaviour! The church followed me up and did not let me go!! I attended the Sunday evening Gospel Service regularly, as well as being part of the Fellowship of Youth.

In 1954 Colin Owen, Tony Corke and I attended the Whitsun Youth Convention in the Midlands. Travelling home in the train we discussed what we had experienced and all decided to make our commitment. We were baptised a couple of weeks later. I remain in contact with my two friends to this day. Both over the years have

caught up with me in Perth. The decision that I made at that time has been the cornerstone of my life.

Serving in the church after completing my National Service, I met my Australian pen friend Beth in 1962, who came to England on a working holiday. We were married in Commercial Road the following year and emigrated in 1964. Did I in those formative years ever expect that I would make my home on the other side of the world? Probably not. But God is faithful and I have been richly blessed over many years, turning eighty four in 2020, in the will of the Lord.

A number of return trips to the old country have been made and it has been pleasing to see that the church is alive and well today, whilst acknowledging the many saints who have now gone on to their eternal reward.

In recent months health issues have overtaken me. I will likely be having knee replacement surgery at some point. Whether long distance travel will be an option, only time will tell. In addition, my regular bed in the town will elude me as my sister Gillian has moved away. I will leave matters in the hands of the Lord. Blessings be yours.

Sunday School

Taking place in the upper room, has seen a number of changed formats and activities over the years, but always sought to share the word of God in creative, fun and relevant ways. We give thanks for all our dedicated teachers and helpers and continue to pray for a new generation of those on fire for the Lord.



“Dear all the members of church of Christ, we would like to thank you all for helping us learn more about Jesus... We also thank you for Linda who plays the music for us all while we sing the loving songs. We praise the Lord. Jesus is ALIVE” – T, H, AM & L

Tear Fund Café/Coffee Mornings/Jumble Sales

Back in 1990 the Church became a café to raise funds for Overseas Aid.

Since then, there were many coffee mornings and the occasional jumble sale when there was a Market in the Camden Road car park, and the church was open for a cuppa and listening ear.

More recently we have hosted some Community coffee mornings with Muslim ladies and refugees.



Eddie Terry was a guest preacher at the Church on a number of occasions. He was originally from the Church of Christ in Fulham but spent much of his adult life as a missionary in Malawi. He is remembered for being a good preacher who had a twinkle in his eye.

Thanksgiving/Baby Blessings/Parenting



Praying for childless couples, our delight has been so see some beautiful new lives born. We have had thanksgiving and baby blessing times and for many years we had a Parent and Toddler group meeting weekly in the Church.

During that time we were happy to hear from some Indian ladies we had befriended when they moved to US, asking if we knew a Church like ours to attend.

One time, during a heatwave we filled up the baptistry and used it as a paddling pool!

Lynn has also been involved with Fegans Charity delivering Parenting Courses which she also found useful herself!



Miss Towner – Before the Piano, because musical instruments were not allowed at the Sunday morning Worship time, it was Miss Towner's responsibility to operate the Tuning Fork so the congregation could all begin to sing in the same key. Her father, Mr Towner, was one of the better dressed members of the congregation, always arriving in a bowler hat, waistcoat and suit jacket along with a polished pocket watch.



Vivien, Susan & Jayne Tucker began attending the Church in the early 1990s, when they became curious about what Cliff Allen, their neighbour, was about!

Vivien was the Mum and Susan and Jayne were twins and as a family they had a host of dogs that took up much

of their time and devotion.

However, they attended the church regularly and Susan and Jayne, particularly, stepped out of their comfort zones to help with children's clubs, eventually leading them. They had a simple, yet sincere faith. Sadly, both Vivien and Susan died of cancer and Jayne currently lives in Ramsgate.

Betty Turner

Betty was the third of four children in the Turner family. She spent most of her working life as a live-in nanny. Betty's fiancé had been killed during WW2 and, she said, she was never interested in 'replacing' him. Her last employer before she retired was with Desmond Wilcox's family. She was with them for well over 15 years. Mr. Wilcox came to her funeral and read 1 Corinthians 13. She kept in touch with all her charges over the years.

Betty came to the Commercial Road church where her sister, Hazel, was a member. Betty was baptised at the church and was as involved within the life of the church as her health allowed. Betty had a variety of health issues and spent most of her retirement years having mobility problems and stints in hospital.

She could be a rather demanding person, but she was also generous. She liked to talk Dick Francis books and horse racing. She introduced me to Dick Francis (Thank you, Betty!), and loaned me the books that she had until I could purchase my own copies. She was a good conversationalist and could chat on quite a variety of subjects.

She and sister, Peggy, shared flats in Rusthall after Peggy retired. (Peggy had worked for several years in a shoe factory in Southampton but spent most of her life as a companion to an English ex-pat in Cannes in the south of France.)

Our abiding laugh was that no matter where we went—around the countryside or further abroad in the country—she would invariably say, "I met someone from here" and I would usually say, "I've been there". Peggy's employer had an open house policy and the names that Peggy could cite as regular visitors were truly wowing!

Peggy was baptised at Burrswood in Groombridge—the vicar had the candidates all go into the swimming pool together, and clinging to the side of the pool, each lady was pushed under the water by the vicar as he knelt at the poolside.

You've never seen so many people witnessing a baptism trying to not laugh in a very serious service!



Hazel Turner

Hazel was a nurse who moved to Tunbridge Wells to work at the Kent and Sussex Hospital after her training in London and a stint in Australia. She was from the Southampton area. She began attending Commercial Road and was baptised there. She had her flat but spent a lot of time helping Winifred with

Winifred's parents.

Winifred eventually asked if Hazel would mind moving into the spare room at Garden Cottage as Winifred needed more and more help with her aged parents. So, as a temporary measure, Hazel moved in to help care for Mr and Mrs Haffenden. Both of Winifred's parents eventually had to go into nursing, but Winifred asked Hazel if she just didn't want to stay on. So, Hazel moved fully into Garden Cottage and was there until after Winifred's death in 1996.

Hazel then moved to a bungalow on Broadmead living there and developing the garden until the Parkinson's that she had developed caused her to move into the Tunbridge Wells Care Centre on Upper Grosvenor Road.

Hazel was a bustling, fierce, dedicated woman with a big heart and not a vindictive bone in her body. She often didn't read people well and in her enthusiasm/fergency could rub people up the wrong way. She was, however, an exemplary nurse and ran her wards with efficiency and utmost consideration for the patients under her care.

Her faith in God was solid and she 'attacked' her faith walk in the same fashion as she did being a nurse. She taught in Sunday School, was involved in youth work, Bible studies, district gatherings, cleaned the church after the elderly gentleman who used to do it could no longer so. She used to plan and execute Christmas, Easter, Church Anniversary plays/programmes and church outings.

She was forever misplacing her spectacles. One time she rang me up to say that she had just picked up her new glasses (having lost the previous pair) only to find the missing pair in her dressing gown pocket as she went to put the dressing gown into the wash. She could laugh at herself.

Karen Vidler

Karen Brockhurst was Cynthia's next-door neighbour. Karen grew up knowing Bill and Cynthia. Karen began attending church with Cynthia and was baptised at the Commercial Road church by Curt Northeim.

Karen had learning difficulties, but was an avid reader, especially of histories. And what she read she retained. She was a fount of information. . .and you didn't want to be on another quiz team when it came to history questions. She worked full-time. She met Cliff Vidler (porter at the Kent and Sussex) through her brother;

Cliff and Karen married in 1987, officiated by Neville Pink of Clapham and Balham. Karen and Cliff's wedding is the stuff of legend. Surely there could not be another wedding as full as mishap as theirs. Karen's wedding dress (her mother's from the 1950's) was ruined at the dry cleaners and had to be remade. The woman in charge of making the bridesmaids dress decided she didn't want to, so along with Karen's wedding dress reconstruction, I made the bridesmaids' dresses. Neville Pink was late for the wedding, making it necessary for the Registrar to delegate the service to one of the church officers.

Neville arrived bang on time for the service (he had got off the train from London at Tonbridge rather than TW, had to find a taxi and then got caught in traffic), only to be held up by the photographer who wanted to take before photos as Karen had been driving around the area in the wedding car for over 10 minutes determined not to arrive at the church until Neville got there.

There were three false starts to the service as the Bride didn't come down the aisle the first three times the music started (photographer, again) and at the end of the service, as Cliff and Karen came out of the back school room having signed the register, Cliff tucked Karen's hand in his arm and strode off down the aisle and out the church. Whereupon

Neville quite coolly said, "Ladies and Gentlemen, there went Mr. and Mrs. Cliff Vidler!" Karen and Cliff have two daughters and lived in Southborough. Karen died in 2018.



Ann Vineall

There are people that you know who will always impact your life. For such a quiet and unassuming woman, Ann's impact was substantial. A small, gracious woman of deep faith and a quiet sense of humour.

I learned so much from her and gained so much insight into people 'of age', as Ann would put it. Perhaps one of the greatest things I learned about older people (this was before I was one of them!), was that no matter how old a person is, they remain the person they always were.

Ann was born and brought up in a house at 54, Tunnel Road. She was Ann Waddell. I know that by the time Ann was 16 her father had died and it was just her and her mother at home. Ann's brother had driven a delivery truck from the butchers he worked for up from Tunbridge Wells to London and never came back. After a lot of searching and enquiring, the Salvation Army said that they think what he did was to sign up to the Army (this was during WW1) using a false name, and was killed in action, never to be identified. Ann said her mother never recovered from that.

When Mrs Waddell developed cancer, she didn't fight it and being a frail woman succumbed fairly quickly. Ann, at the age of 16, having no other family evidently, was taken in by Mrs. Waddell's great friend, Mrs. Vineall on Woodland Road in High Brooms. Both families were members of the Church of Christ, Commercial Road.

Ann and Annie Vineall were great friends already. She and Annie shared a bedroom in the Woodlands Road house. Eventually Ann married Bill Vineall and Annie Vineall married Percy Lawrence. Ann and Bill never had any children but Annie and Percy had Mary and Ann found great delight in being Mary's aunt. (I used to take Ann down to Mary's in St.

Leonard's-on-Sea for each holiday season—Easter, Summer, Christmas, birthdays. Ann would stay with her for weeks at a time.)

Bill was quite poorly and Ann stayed home to look after him. One of the part-time jobs she had most of her life was that of house cleaner. She had quite a long list of people she cleaned for, and was able, with a pared-down list, to carry on cleaning while Bill initially took ill, but eventually had to pack it in all together when he needed full-time care. Bill died around 1983.

Ann continued to live on her own for a while, but took in her brother-in-law, Percy, when he began to have difficulties with diabetes and could no longer take care of himself. She cared for him for a couple of years until he had to go into a nursing home in Rusthall due to his developing dementia.

Ann read a lot and we shared/swapped romantic novels back and forth. She would read just about anything, though. When her eyes began to fail, she just got larger print books and supplemented them with a magnifying glass. A very lovely woman.

Nassia Vogelzang



My first encounters with religion happened by the way of my grandmother. Every morning I watched as she read her Bible and prayed. Whilst I too prayed occasionally, I always viewed God as distant. I often wondered if He even listened.

When I joined Church of Christ. I was surprised to hear them preach about God's love for me and genuine interest in my life.

Over time I became more aware of his presence and provision and I began developing a personal relationship with Him. I was baptised in August 2017 and since then I have been learning more about God through His word. Now I look back and wonder how I lived so much of my life without acknowledging my Creator!

As a teenager I find it reassuring to know that no matter what comes in this life Christ will always go before me and stand beside me.



Renna Vogelzang

Before coming to Church of Christ, my church life was somewhat different. I lived in South Africa where I attended a Greek Orthodox church with my family around once a year and could barely understand the ancient Greek that was spoken throughout the service.

On moving to England in 2016, my whole life changed initially, it seemed, for the worst. Being from a different country, continent and even hemisphere made me feel judged and separate to everyone around me and I had lost my sense of belonging.

Our friends who we were staying with invited us to come to their church and never have I been more grateful. I was welcomed into Church of Christ with open arms and smiling faces - I immediately felt at home. We had left all of our family in South Africa, but were adopted into this new church family from the minute we walked in.

The amount of love and support God has shown me led to my decision to be baptised in August 2017 and continues to motivate me in whatever situations I face. God was there when I needed him the most. Knowing he is always with me and that he cares for me has helped me develop a more positive take on life.

Michael Wadsworth

My parents were always in Church Leadership, so church was a big part of our lives growing up. In my teenage years however, I found school rather isolating for a while, and was angry with God over my inner turmoil.



I went through an Emo phase, where I'm now aware that people gave me quite a wide berth!

Soul Survivor gave various opportunities to encounter God, and as part of a charismatic fellowship, I had times of Holy Spirit filling. Eventually I had two very good Youth Leaders that helped me towards my Baptism on my 18th Birthday, which was a significant moment for me.

Also significant after a gap year was an inspirational Bible Lecturer who enabled me to question the Bible and delve much deeper. God has brought me through some relational challenges, but still today one of my enduring passions is to teach small groups how to study God's Word.

As husband to Naomi, when visiting, I am naturally drafted into any job that needs doing at Church of Christ! Always a pleasure!



Naomi Wadsworth (Allen)

Church of Christ has always been a part of my life. Some of my earliest memories are of mums and tots (I can still remember some of the toys!) performing in nativity plays and church entertainment evenings.

Growing up in the church I was a part of the many children's groups - Children's Hour, CATS (Crafts and Things) club, TDSS (To do some stuff), HIT camp as well as Sunday school. I can remember learning Bible verses in Sunday school and having them on a little index card to take home each week.

In CATS club we would play mad games but I also remember chanting the books of the Bible as we learnt them together.

Church of Christ is where the foundation of my own personal faith was laid. It was the investment from members of the church who volunteered in different capacities that helped me to understand for myself who Jesus is.

Whilst I "officially" made a commitment to God at Spring Harvest in 1999, it was the months following in baptism prep with Cynthia Murrell that grounded what I actually believed.

During my teenage years I was able to grow in faith by serving on different teams, volunteering with town-wide initiatives like the Noise and having opportunities to dance and speak at the front of church.

I've always enjoyed the family nature of Church of Christ. I have felt nurtured by so many spiritual mothers and fathers who have sown into me in various ways.

One of my favourite memories is being in a prayer triplet with Steph and Suzanne when I was still a teenager. In many ways looking back it was a sacrifice for them to include me and allow me to be a full part of the group. Yet it was a really powerful time of being valued and a genuine part of the church community.

Now years later, I am still a part of a church community hoping to invest into young people in the same ways I experienced.

Funny moments for me have included: many an entertainment evening...particularly the one where the guys sang "I'm a lumberjack", also the one where Hannah and Ricky did a Pavarotti/Celine Dion duet. I have also loved the Sunday afternoon softball games - excellent church community.

Ramone Walkes



I don't have much of a story however I can say that since the very first time I came to the church it has made me feel nothing but welcome.

Also, despite me not attending service for a while, it still till this day inspires me to be a better person and the memories carry me through very difficult times.

Kelsie Weaver

Dear Cliff, Lynn and all the Church of Christ family – Thanking you immensely for going above and beyond to baptize me. It was honestly the best day of my new life with Christ. Even though it was for a short while before moving to Canada, I'll always remember how truly loved you all made me feel. Your church gave me a newfound sense of belonging. From across the pond, I appreciate and value the virtual bible chats. "Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns and songs from the spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts." Col 3:16



Weddings/Marriage

Another joy and privilege has been to have weddings at the church and take part in a number of celebrations and all the preparations attached including marriage courses.



Some remembered have been Dennis & Sandy, Wendy & Julian, Hannah & Ricky, Roy & Teresa, Steph & Andy, Ann & Tony, Dana & Steve, Phil & Emma, John & Michelle.



Perhaps the most unusual wedding we were asked to do was for Anju's niece in Paris, which had to be translated and involved eating Mauritian-style and lots of riding around the city at break neck speed to try and catch the train back!

We have also been invited to some Syrian weddings recently.

“Thank you for making our day so special. We really appreciate everything you have said and done for us today. Most of all we really appreciate your walk with God and your friendship. Without you we may not have reached the blessings of marriage.” W & J

“Thank you so much for allowing us to celebrate our special day at Church of Christ and for being so supportive. It is wonderful to be part of such a small family church where we can serve others.” J & M

Lynn & Cliff have also taken part in several ‘Marriage Encounter’ seminars at secondary schools, where students get to explore marriage by interviewing couples! Slightly nerve-racking! but often great and deep times of addressing hopes and fears.



Rosie Wilson

I am a Mum of four grown up children all of whom were home-schooled. I became a Christian in 1988 after a couple of wayward years living in tents and vans and squats. I was brought up going to church on Sundays but it never really meant anything to me and so when trouble came in my life in the form of my parents' divorce, I turned to drink and

drugs to fill the void but thankfully God did not give up on me.

A couple of years of living like this, someone gave me a bible which I shoved in a drawer to start off with but got out when I was in on my own one night. I started to read from the beginning, Genesis, and it was a lot of long words and stuff I did not understand but when I accompanied a friend to a local bible study the guy was speaking about the exact bit I had been struggling with.

From the first verse to the last.

That really spoke to me that there was a God and he was interested in me. I became a Christian and got baptised in the local pool. I have never regretted that decision. Whatever life has thrown at me, whatever bad choices I have made, I know that God is for me always and will never leave me or forsake me.

My husband, 4 children and I moved to Burrswood around 2003 and after looking around for a bit we settled on Church of Christ because of the friendly, caring atmosphere.

My first impressions were of slightly eccentric, real people. They were friendly and children were made welcome. I helped to set up and run the WOW Wednesday club with Lynn. I remember my first craft session was very glittery and took forever!

I recall food playing a very important role in most gatherings. Lots of fun sunny BBQs and picnics. I remember Barbara falling in the baptismal pool one Sunday morning. Sarah remembers Barbara playing a trick on her and pretending to cut her long plait off!
Keep up the good work!

Women's Gatherings/Crafts/Retreats



'Quiet' days at Burrswood, Creative craft sessions, coffees and meals together (not to mention Eurovision!)

Time out for the girls, has been great fellowship, learning and fun – like the egg balancing self-esteem idea from Steph, and those manic ceramics!

Dr Chester Woodhall.

Age 76. Married to Angela.

Graduate of London School of Economics.

Place of birth. Birmingham England.

We love the Church of Christ because the soul saving message of Jesus as Saviour and Lord is clearly preached.



“ Go ye into the whole world ...” To share the Good News of Jesus in various countries of the world has been our driving force and we have seen many lives changed by our Lord Jesus Christ.

We are from the British Churches of Christ and, like the preacher brother Collyer who began the Church of Christ in Tunbridge Wells with

his open air preaching one hundred and fifty years ago, we are from Birmingham. In fact, I have done a lot of open-air preaching in years gone by. We are in our fiftieth year as church of Christ missionaries mainly in Central and Southern Africa. We appreciate the encouragement we have received over the years from the Church of Christ at Tunbridge Wells.

We have seen thousands come to Christ and go through the waters of baptism. Baptism is a great time of commitment and rejoicing. Areas of Christian service in which we are or have been involved are: Christian radio and television in several languages, youth ministry, Bible College teaching, prison ministry, leadership development, preaching and teaching.

Worship

We have been so blessed over the years to have those with musical and vocal giftings leading our worship times and helping us to come into the presence of God, as we lift our hearts and voices to Him.



We praise God for Linda, Hannah, Ricky, Stephen, Chris, Simone, Luke, Matt, Aiden, Phil, Jon, Jess Daubeny and many others who have given their time to practise and learn new material, but most of all to help us to truly worship genuinely and humbly before the King of Kings.

Equally we are thankful to have had the Inspiration and meditations of so many of the congregation and other visitors, leading our services, giving testimony, preaching, eaching and sharing communion in so many creative and powerful ways that have constantly fed, challenged and nourished us.

Lockdown in 2020 was a challenge having to adapt to masks, sanitiser and worship online. (pre-recorded or live from 57 HS!) Zoom meetings including “the Twelve Days of Christmas” choir! We also had church in a field, park, and school grounds when able.



Post lockdown we have been reaching out to families again with a “Back to church Sunday” and “Breakfast Church”

“I wanted to let you know that I very much appreciated this morning and meeting your friendly congregation. You are valued genuine friends who offer an otherwise lacking togetherness in the community, which shone through in their actions. Never stop being what or who you are. You sent a warm glow through a cynical old atheist... My regards, respect and love to all your Ukrainian guests and families. KP

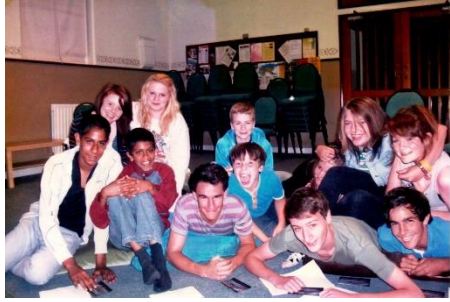


Youth at Church

Hide & Seek in the dark. Food – Pizza (don’t ask Linda to put them in the oven!) Film nights, Outings – London Dungeon! Icecream & Icebreakers.

Encouragement and Equipping. Youth Services with loud music! Group Sweatshirts! Fancy dress parties!

Before Crème Fresh, it was the unfortunately named - STD! (Stuff to do) which then



became TDSS (To do some stuff!) During lockdown, Nassia enabled wonderful catch ups and phone bible studies.

Joint Youth ventures in the town have seen large crowds at ID. Youth for Christ also have a drop in centre and run Unite Live.



Other Youth Leaders are present in a lot of the area's schools, taking assemblies and mentoring. Cliff has helped teach at a joint Kairos Gap Year programme in the town.

For many years Naomi Allen worked with a Youth organisation called XLP



In inner city London on estates and within gang culture. Mentoring young people to fulfil their God-given potential. At one point they were visited by Royals – William & Kate. Naomi continues working with youth groups at Open Doors.

Again, our enormous thanks to all who have shared honestly and at times vulnerably. Every word or picture is deeply appreciated.

As we acknowledge the contribution and company of many others remembered, among them (*in no particular order*):

Catherine Rush, Bill Burchell & Sophie, Glyn Owen, Browns, Dianna & Josh, Archie, Geraldine A, Hailey & Faith, Dan P, Reids, Asa, Richard W, Aiden T, Andy, Baz & Fiona, Tony & Jackie, Popes, Debbie, Jake & Evie, Kiara, Skyla & Andres, Zachary & Bette, Emily D, Kiera, Sally, Kinne-Trusler/Mills', Keith A, Chocourys, Frankie, Charlie & Joey, Patrick B, Mark C, Karen & Lindsey, Rollings, Daphne & Roxanne, Nina & Mark, Penhallows, Jenny B, Dee & Heather, Carrolls, Pomfrets, Walters, Joe Daubenys, Chris & Kate, Rick & Lin, Wilsons, Jacob & Aaron, Carolyn M, Mike L, Olly O, Jaden & Caleb, Mitchells, Augustina, Joyce, Karen & Ellen, Julie & James S, Walkes', Smiths especially Caitlin, Barrettos, Jay, Baischs, Somerton, Paul & Helen T, Daubenys, Sandy C, Tylers, Zandi, Phil H, Ramphuls, Fletcher, Jade & Summer, Martha, Ivan, Caroline D, Zhivka & Vasil, Baker's, Connie, Mark D, Tony, Gillian P, Sandra, Bernard & Jermaine, Tim L, Lane's, Shona & Isabelle, King-Lewis', Ann-Marie & family, Judy A, Rodney & Beryl, Ann A, Vlad, Ian S, Sah's, Derek, Yay & Aliah, Paul C, Derek, Alan, Ray S, Peet, Marina, Demir & Olivia, Valentina & Sviet, Rachel Renfrew, Maslins, Yvonne V, Alex & Claire S, Monroses, Harman, Martin Robinson and a myriad of other very welcome visitors.

we hope this booklet will be an Open book – continually filled with more and more faith stories. So, what's yours? Has it connected with ours? If not, we'd love to meet you and hear it.

“The Church is not a museum displaying perfect people. It is a hospital in the traditional sense of the word. Often the place of hospitality and restoration. It is a place where the wounded, hurt, broken, and injured find healing. It is a community of sinners.” Nicky Gumbel ...who because of Jesus – God calls Saints.

Every blessing, Lynn Allen

