

Work is still progressing to replace the existing 'Old' Church Hall at St John's. However, plans have had to be re-submitted to the Borough Council for approval. We are pleased to say no local objections had been raised to the development plans but Essex County Council Highways Authority had raised concerns about access on to the Ipswich Road for both pedestrians and vehicles! There was not time to resolve this issue fully before a planning decision needed to be made by Colchester Council and so we have taken the decision to withdraw our initial application only to re-submit it immediately!

This re-application will give time for us to address the Highways Authority concerns further but avoids a potentially long appeals process. If a way forward cannot be negotiated with the Highways Officers, a meeting of the Council's Planning Committee will be able to make a final decision in March. We are pleased to say, following meetings and correspondence we have had with our local Councillors, Paul Smith and Gerard Oxford, we do have their support to give planning permission to the project. If you would like to see more details about the re-development plans, please contact the Church Office in the first instance.

On a more positive note, we are looking forward to a Community Fun Day on 5th May to raise awareness of the project. But, just as importantly, it will also showcase the many activities and organisations that happen right on our doorstep that we may not even know about! Put the date in your diary, 10am to 3pm for a fun day with bouncy castles, a Hog Roast and lots of stalls and information about what happens in your community. We are hopefully arranging a variety of entertainment features for all the family: watch out for publicity nearer the time.

AN EASTER PRAYER

God of glory,
 by the raising of your Son
 you have broken the chains of
 death and hell:
 fill your Church with faith and
 hope;
 for a new day has dawned
 and the way to life stands open
 in our Saviour Jesus Christ.

I AM SMALL BUT HE IS GREAT

Hello, my name is Richard Williams. I am married to Linda, and have three children. We have now been at St John's for 24 years, and I became a Christian aged 24, and Linda at the age of 16.

I am chairman of St John's "Antioch" ministry, which is the "overseas missions" side of our church. Currently we have St John's members serving God in the following parts of the world: Thailand, Cambodia, East Africa, China, the Gulf, France, with myself on behalf of a Bible translation organisation based in Russia (see below).

This is my story: in 1986 a group of us started to pray monthly: firstly, that God would call one family from our church into full-time overseas missionary work (we never before had any in our history!). Following a period of persistent prayer, in 1991 God called not one, but two, families to serve overseas! That was the start of our church's overseas ("Antioch") ministry. Secondly, we were one of 2,000 groups asking God to bring about the ending of Communism. Again, once we started praying, things happened! We

soon witnessed the dramatic "domino effect" of Soviet Communism's demise, with the freeing up of Poland and other countries, including Russia.

It soon became clear that my "call" from God was to do what I could to serve in the building up of the Christian Church after Communism's downfall: thus, in 1988, I got involved with the training of pastors in Romania, and was a trustee of the Romanian Missionary Society for around 12 years; then, from 1993 to the present, I have served a "church planting" ministry in Southern Moldova. Currently, I am International Chair of the Institute for Bible Translation (IBT), having founded their UK charity in the year 2000. Basically there are 130 non-Russian languages in the former Soviet Union, spoken by one third of their population. In the 1970s there were hardly any Scripture portions, let alone Bibles. The translation work began in the West in 1973 and is now coordinated from Moscow, with current work in 56 of these languages. So far, IBT has completed the translation of 26 New Testaments, and three whole Bibles. So we are making quite good progress (for example, the Chechen



New Testament has recently been completed).

I am rather astounded that God is using me, an ordinary and rather shy person, in this kind of way. All I did was to say "yes" to God, initially in a very small way. I am a small person, but God is a big God. It is he who has "provided the increase" – and all the glory must go to Him. If God can use me, then he can use anybody! Please be encouraged: God may want to use you in surprising ways! God is not all "mystery": he wants to make Himself known: to you, and to me, and to have a beautiful relationship with us, both now and for ever. May God bless each one of you!

SUNDAY WORSHIP TIMES

- 8.00am Holy Communion:** 2nd and 4th Sundays
- 10.15am Morning Worship:** Every Sunday with 1st & 3rd inc. Holy Communion
- Children's groups:** STOMP, Get Real and Crèche
- 6.30pm Evening Worship:** 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th Sundays
- 7:00p.m. Café Church:** 1st Sunday

PRE-SCHOOL, CHILDREN & YOUTH

- Acorns Playgroup:** Each weekday except Thursday
- Little Oaks:** Parents and Toddlers, 0-4 years, Mondays 1.15pm (term time only)
- Saplings:** Mums and Babies, 0-2 years, Tuesdays 1.00pm (term time only)

- STOMP:** Children's groups (3-10 years)
- Get Real:** 11-14 year olds
- Youth Cell Groups:** 14+ and 16+

ADULT

- Alpha:** Newcomers and those exploring Christianity
- Adult cell groups:** Daytime and evening groups in local homes, to build friendship, faith and fun.
- Thursday Fellowship:** 10.00am Holy Communion and coffee (1st Thursday of the month)
- Church football team:** Saturdays
- Mothers Union:** 2.30pm, last Wednesday of the month
- St John's Evergreen Lunch Club:** 2nd Thursday of the month
- Ministry to the Elderly Visiting teams**
- Marriage and Parenting Courses**

CHURCH OFFICE

St John's Church Office, St John's Close, Colchester, CO4 0HP
 TEL: 01206 843232 • Email: stjohschurch.col@talk21.com • Or visit us online at: www.stjohschurchcolchester.org.uk
 Vicar: Revd. Bob Fuller • Curate: Revd. Dave Talks

Church Office open Monday - Thursday from 9.30 am - 4.30 pm,
 Friday from 9:30 am to 3:00 pm (Closed 1 - 2 pm each day)



CONNECT

TOUCHING THE ST JOHN'S COMMUNITY



in our villages, towns & cities

Several years ago, 'Soul in the City' saw 20,000 young Christians arrive in London for 10 days of events and projects to bring a new hope to deprived parts of the city. They co-ordinated with churches, police and local authorities to tidy, paint, repair and replace, with a joy that left many people amazed. The crime rate dropped, and many locals found a new hope and a future as these young people expressed their love of God in practical ways.

As time has passed, organisers have thought, 'why not do this across the

country, for an extended time?' So HOPE 2008 was born with the express purpose to 'do more, do it together, and do it in word and action.'

Many churches in Colchester of different styles and denominations are working together to do just that during 2008. St John's is one of them. Together we hope to do more in the community than we have done before. We hope to follow Jesus' example to share the Good News in both word and deed. We hope to get involved in the community in sustained ways to bring lasting changes for good.

On our own estate we are planning to have community days, open-air events, serving the community in various ways such as a 'mega-tidy', and work with the community to raise awareness of

what we can do for the environment. We are also looking ahead to the autumn and Christmas for more opportunities to express HOPE 2008.

Looking back to last Christmas we remembered how God became a human being in Jesus to make Himself known to the world. Looking forward to Easter we remember that in Jesus God completed that great sacrifice because of His love for us, to give us a hope and a future. Our desire, as His church - His body here now - is to continue to express that love as we do more, together, in word and action throughout the year.

Look out for the HOPE logo to mark future events and projects!

www.hope08.com
 Hope '08 Community Day - 5th May

ALPHA - 10 WEEK COURSE BEGINS WITH A WELCOME SUPPER ON THE 15TH APRIL 7:30PM

**FOR LARGE PRINT ARCHIVE COPIES GO TO:
 WWW.STJOHNSCHURCHCOLCHESTER.ORG.UK**

The Persecuted Church

The universal guarantee of the right to freedom of religion or, to give it its full title, the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, found in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948 is a direct result of the persecution of Jews during the Nazi era in Europe, 1933-45. However, official guarantees of religious tolerance in Europe have been known since the 14th century, although it often seems that they were more honoured in the breach than in the observance.

Some countries persecute all believers of whatever faith, Mao's China during the Cultural Revolution being an obvious example. Other countries persecute people of certain faiths, some target particular sects of a faith, and yet others permit an official faith group, but persecute people of the same faith group who do not belong to the officially sanctioned church - those who saw Paul Merton's journey through China for Channel 5 last year will remember him attending a meeting of both the officially accepted and the underground Christian church in China.

While one hears on the news stories of

people suffering political persecution, for example, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi in Burma, the persecuted church is not as prominent. That is not to say, though, that human rights activists do not campaign on behalf of those persecuted because of their faith. Amnesty International (UK) launched a campaign for Helen Berhane, a member of the Rhema Pentecostal Church, who was imprisoned in Eritrea in 2004 for releasing a CD of gospel music. In 2002, the Eritrean Government banned all Christian denominations except Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism and Evangelical Lutheranism, and ended all other religious practices apart from Sunni Islam. Helen Berhane was eventually released from detention in November 2006, fled to Sudan and was subsequently granted asylum in a European country in late 2007 - due to her ill-treatment during her detention, she can no longer walk unaided. Amnesty International campaigns on behalf of any prisoner of conscience around the world.

Christian Solidarity Worldwide campaigns on behalf of Christians suffering persecution worldwide. While I first heard of Helen Berhane through

Amnesty International, the information used here came from the website of CSW and through a Christian worker I know. Worldwide, the church suffers great persecution and CSW provides information and in-depth reports useful to anyone interested in this area. The words of Pastor Martin Niemoller bear repetition:

"In Germany they first came for the Communists, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Communist.

Then they came for the Jews, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Jew.

Then they came for the trade unionists, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a trade unionist.

Then they came for the Catholics, and I didn't speak up because I was a Protestant.

Then they came for me - and by that time, no one was left to speak up."

www.amnesty.org.uk/actions.asp
www.csw.org.uk/portal.htm

The Bereavement Service, on 30th March 3:30pm, is quiet, fairly traditional, yet relaxed and accessible. It lasts about an hour and gives those who have been bereaved in any way, no matter how long ago that loss may have been, an opportunity to come to church to remember their loss before God. There are optional opportunities within the service for lighting a candle, offering a silent prayer, and being anointed with oil for inner peace.

A FOND FAREWELL



Ray Gamble is coming to the end of his year as Mayor of Colchester and paused to reflect on his experiences.

Ray retired from the probation service last April before becoming Mayor. He has been a councillor for St John's for the past 18 years and spent a year as deputy mayor so was aware of the workload involved, but his mayoral year has not been one of restful retirement. "There are constant events, every day, often two or three a day, and family life has to fit in around a lot of these". Whilst still being active as a ward councillor Ray must be non-political in his mayoral duties, which includes being chair at full council

meetings. "My colleagues have been kind and the meetings have gone smoothly."

Two other skills honed this year are "eating for England, and flying by the seat of your pants! You never know what is going to be sprung on you, or when you have to do an impromptu speech".

"I have become patron for many organisations in Colchester including sporting and musical societies. The Mayor is even Chieftain of the Day for the South East Marching band competition held in the Castle Park".

"There are so many voluntary groups active in Colchester that make a real difference to society. I have been able to appreciate all this hard work, seeing behind the façade at what actually goes on."

One of the highlights was the Oyster Festival celebration. This was more than just a meal, but included dredging the first oysters off Brightlingsea. "Bob

Fuller, my chaplain from St John's, joined me in the small Mayoral boat to do this. He also enjoyed joining everyone for the Oyster Feast. I was honoured to be able to invite, as my personal guest, a young soldier from the Royal Anglican regiment, who had just returned from service. We were able to show in a small way our appreciation of Colchester for the sacrifice the Army continues to make for us."

Ray has met numerous visitors in the Mayor's parlour this year, including the Mayor of the oldest recorded town in Canada. They have all signed the visitors' book, but only the Queen and Prince Philip have a page to themselves in this book!

As the year ends, Ray wants to continue actively to support groups including the Town Watch Historical Society, the Rotary Club, Hospital League of Friends and Hospital drivers. He hopes to enjoy more time with his family and walking his dogs. Happy Retirement Ray!

STREET PASTORS

Colchester town centre on a Friday night is either the best or the worst place to be, depending on your idea of a good night out. But now over twenty Christian volunteers from eleven local churches (including seven from St. John's) are choosing to patrol the town centre as Street Pastors, working in teams of three from 11pm to 4am.

We are there to care for people, to be a listening ear and to offer help where we can to anyone in need. We believe that God loves everyone, whatever state they're in, and that His church has a responsibility to demonstrate this love in a practical and caring way.

Street Pastors was set up with the full support of the Police and Colchester Borough Council and since starting on December 14th we've been warmly welcomed by the public, door staff, pub and club managers and the people behind the CCTV system. We receive training for our role and wear distinctive blue jackets and caps so that people know who we are.

Typical situations where we've been able to help include caring for someone with a minor injury waiting for an ambulance to arrive, defusing a few aggressive arguments, helping a girl find her friends and looking after a woman walking alone who was very drunk and disorientated. We've also

had conversations with many, many people, most of whom approach us for a chat. Although the role of Street Pastors is to care, not preach, it's amazing how often people want to talk to us about God. Some want to be prayed for; one man became a Christian.

We are now recruiting team members for a second phase of Street Pastors and are looking forward to the time when we can have teams out on Saturday nights as well as Friday nights. More opportunities for local Christians to be the Good News on our streets and to show people that God still cares for them.

www.colchesterstreetpastors.org.uk

HOLY WEEK AND EASTER:

16th March
Palm Sunday Communion - 10:15am

20th March
Maudy Thursday Communion - 10:00am

21st March
Good Friday Service - 10:15am
Good Friday An hour at the Cross - 2:00pm

23rd March
Easter Day All Age Holy Communion - 10:15am
Easter Day United Service - 6:30pm

AT YOUR SERVICE

Caretaker: Eileen Ryall

Church Wardens:

Graham Goddard & John Saxon

Treasurer: George Pilgrim

Gift Aid Secretary: Martyn Pryke

Cell Group Pastors:

Celia Simcox, Bob Fuller, Tricia Adams, Richard Nield, Helen Morgan, Dawn Saxon, Dave Talks

Music Ministry: Jamie Nightingale

Prayer Chain: Jenny Woodhouse

Prayer Ministry:

Corinne and Neil Millard

Pastoral Visiting Team: Dave Talks

Elderly People's Ministry:

Mike & Jill Pinnock

Mothers' Union:

Audrey Jenner

STOMP (3-10 years):

Karen Taylor-Burge

Get Real (11-14 years):

Clare Wagland

14+ Cell: Richard Bloice

16+ Cell: Jow Warren

Children & Families Co-ordinator:

Clare Wagland

Church Office:

Julia Hassard & Dawn Saxon

Honorary Curate: Peter Adams

Curate: Dave Talks

Vicar: Bob Fuller