

**JUNE - JULY  
2023**

# Life.

## **Afternoon Tea**

**You don't want to  
miss it!!!**

## **IMPACT**

**What's it like to be a  
volunteer?**

## **Men's Breakfast**

**Dates for the  
calendar**



**CHRIST CHURCH BEDFORD**

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

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Thank you to all who have contributed to this edition of Life. If you would like to contribute something to the next edition, the deadline for submissions for the August/September edition will be 21st July 2023.

Please email: [Editor@CCBedford.org](mailto:Editor@CCBedford.org)



You can read this edition online, just go to our website: [CCBedford.org/lifemagazine](http://CCBedford.org/lifemagazine)

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**\*\* Vacancy \*\***

**As of 1st June 2023 Christ Church - Life will be without an Editor! Think you might like to give it a go... please speak to the Vicar or visit the Church Office for more details of what's involved NOW!**

# VICAR'S LETTER



Every morning I get up and come downstairs and I go into the kitchen and I make myself a cup of coffee. (It is worth noting that it is no longer the first thing I do, more often than not sorting the kids out is the first thing!).

I have a very noisy coffee machine, and as I quietly wait, it chunters away, boiling water and spitting out my morning wake up juice. I usually end up looking out the window and I can see a bunch of small trees at the edge of the church garden. During the winter

months they looked forlorn. Sparse brown leaves, drooping down, looking very dead. And I wondered what on earth I was going to do. Dead trees are not a good look for anything, let alone a church.

A couple of months ago, as I stood in the kitchen, staring vacantly out the window, waiting patiently for my coffee, I realised something was different. The dead trees were not dead, some of them actually had green leaves instead of brown!

This Saturday morning as I make



my morning brew, those "dead" trees are now very much alive and covered in a multitude of green leaves. And so I am reminded that appearances can sometimes be deceiving, and that life appears to spring up in places where there appeared to be no life at all.

We're now moving from spring to summer. The days are longer, the sun is shining, there is green all around us. God has been faithful. I might not feel it, I might not even believe it, and yet there is a truth that remains, God is faithful.

As I stand here in my kitchen, I am once again amazed by nature, Psalm 19 says:

**"The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.**

**Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge.**

**There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard."**

(Psalm 19:1-3 NIV UK)

What is so amazing to me is how it lies dormant for so long, seemingly dead, and then suddenly bursts into life. God is at work in his creation, breathing new life. And creation declares the goodness of its creator.

I believe that we are at the start of a new season here at Christ Church, I believe a new spring is upon us. We are beginning to see green leaves

reappearing. We also find ourselves at a time in history where things seem to be changing at an unprecedented rate. And so as Christians we find ourselves in an interesting place, in some ways it feels very uncomfortable. Here we have an opportunity, an opportunity like the rest of nature to proclaim the glory of God. I wonder what it looks like for us to echo nature declaring God's goodness?

Perhaps the words of Micah might help us:

**"He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does**

**the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."** (Micah 6:8 NIV UK)

As we enjoy the summer; let us act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God. For in so doing I believe that we will join with creation in declaring the glory of God. A God who created all things, sustains all things, and became human like us. A God who has such great love for his creation that he says go and do likewise. As Jesus summed up the law and the prophets; love God, love your neighbour.

**Rev. David Thomas**

Summer



# MEN'S BREAKFAST



**What's the food?** - Numerous options available: most popular being egg and bacon bap plus tea/coffee. Also available: cereal; croissants; toast; jam and orange juice (please let John Betteley know if you would prefer vegetarian options).

**How to book?** - Email: [mens.breakfast@ccbedford.org](mailto:mens.breakfast@ccbedford.org) but it is OK to just turn up as you would be most welcome for this valuable time to build up friendships & develop networks.

**Venue** - Christ Church, Dudley Street. Breakfast from 9am, discussion from 10am

**Cost** - £3

## Dates:

**1st July - Joint Ladies Elevenses & Men's Breakfast at 10am.**

Andrew & Helen Russell share stories of music & walking with Jesus.

**22nd July - Men's Breakfast**

**26th August - Men's Breakfast**

**July Social - Curry Night. Date to be confirmed**



## Alan Cottenden Interviews: Clair Argent

Even if the name Clair Argent isn't familiar to you, you probably know who Clair is: with her brightly coloured hair, colourful clothes, wonderful smile, and big hugs she's hard to miss! Clair has quite a story to tell and I'm delighted that she has agreed to share it with us.

So, where did your love of bright colours come from, Clair?

I've struggled a lot with mental illness over the years and, when I was

particularly ill in my 20s, I dyed my hair black and wore black clothes. Nowadays, though, I love wearing bright clothes to express my personality, just occasionally reverting to my black-clothed Goth days.

**Tell me a bit more about your mental health?**

When I was young, I went to Bedford High School for Girls and I have wonderful memories of my time there: everyone was so kind and I'm still in touch with Mrs Neal, the school nurse. She lives in Somerset now. But, while I was there, I began to experience suicide intentions and I struggled. However, I won a place at Oxford University to study theology. I was based at Regent's Park College, where about half the students were undergraduates – like me – while the other half were trainees for the Baptist ministry. I'd taken Latin at A-level and I particularly remember the fun of beginning to learn Greek at Oxford. I still have a soft spot for Mark's gospel as that's what the tutors

used to introduce us to New Testament Greek. Anyway, I stayed for a year but I really couldn't manage – it wasn't the studying, but coping with the rest of life. I remember one particularly dispiriting occasion when I was wandering in a shopping centre, struggling with what was going on in my head, when a security man decided I must be up to no good and asked me to move on. I was granted a year out from my studies and – after a spell in hospital – I transferred to Bunyan Lodge, which was a home for people with mental health issues. That's where I met my husband, Mark. It was going to be a short stay but I ended up being there for four years and I was never able to return to Oxford.

### **How are things now?**

Much better. My formal diagnosis is schizophrenia with anxiety and depression but with the right medication, and the love of both my husband, Mark, and Father God, I'm doing well.

### **Tell me about your wider family.**

I'm the youngest of six: I have three

sisters and two brothers, all of them living within a train-ride of Bedford, which is great. I'm in frequent touch with my sisters, in particular. I also have four nephews, three nieces and three great nieces: quite a tribe! My parents have both passed away now but Mark's parents are lovely: they used to live in Silsoe and they're now in Petersfield in Hampshire. When I was little we lived in Chellington – a village near Carlton – where Dad worked on a farm. Then he became caretaker at John Howard School (and later Dame Alice) so we moved to Biddenham.

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

When I was 11 or 12, I remember telling Mum I wanted to go to church and that's when – along with Auntie Maud – Mum and I started attending St Mary's in Goldington. Eventually, I became an acolyte there, which meant that I helped the priest with things like preparing all the bits for communion. I was confirmed on 20th May 1988, aged 16. But, to be honest, it was after that I really

came to faith and my spiritual birthday is Good Friday 1991. That's when I grasped that Jesus died for me: it was a song called "Paid on the nail" that really spoke to me. I remained at St Mary's until I left Bedford to go to Oxford, although I still used to go during my vacations and if I was home for the weekend. Otherwise, the College Chapel was my church.



### How did you arrive at Christ Church?

When the vicar at St Mary's moved on it seemed like it was time for me to move on, too, and Mark and I went to St Paul's for a couple of years. Eventually, Mark decided that he wanted to join the Catholic Church while I was drawn more towards evangelical churchmanship. I found Christ Church and I particularly remember Sebastian Chance – who used to teach art at Bedford school – giving me a great welcome. Richard Hibbert was away for the first three weeks I was around but I also remember his warm welcome when eventually we met. In fact, I felt very welcomed at Christ Church altogether. I think that the



warmth of fellowship is still one of the best things about Christ Church: it's great to experience God's love through the friendliness of his people. And I love my Home Group which is led by Jon and Jane Day. I love it when we meet together. We also have a WhatsApp group, so it's easy to keep in touch with everyone.

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

The joy of praying for people. It's very empowering. It means that when I see needs I can do something to help. Mark and I love praying together. God's also been showing me that I can serve him by chatting and encouraging people: one of my sisters tells everyone that "Clair can talk with anyone". I think I have a ministry of hugs... which has got to be better than John Cleese's *ministry of silly walks!*

**Do you have any favourite bible verses?**

I love Romans 8:38&39: *"For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us*

*from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."* My old school nurse at the High School used to remind me of that often when things were very dark, and it reassured me. It still does. I also love Psalm 121; here's the first stanza: *I lift up my eyes to the mountains— where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth.*

**You're rather creative, aren't you?**

I love to paint and I love to write poetry. If I'm having a tough time Mark will often say to me, "Go and do some art". Cleaning things and talking with my sisters often helps, too. It's good to have found ways to help me manage when life is challenging. I started painting through an art therapy course that I did at the Day Resource Centre that used to be in Kimbolton Road. I found I was quite good at painting. I also enjoy collage. Maybe you can use some of my paintings to accompany this interview. Poetry is a great way of putting my feelings into words. Some of my poems have been published in anthologies as well as Christ Church's very own *Life Magazine*. One of my favourites... is called *O Sea*.

# O Sea

O sea how you mirror me  
Every breath and every nuance  
Reflects in your icy waves and  
Mighty rolling joy.

O sea how you mirror me  
All of my emotion in your spangled gown  
You wear your heart as I do  
We roll, we swell and we crash  
Our lives are power and  
Our love is eternal.

O sea how you mirror me.

A Poem by Clair Argent



# JULY 2023 VISIT

*Written by  
Gillian Lindley*

## How can you help?

### Please Donate!

- Reading Glasses
- Working mobile phones
- New Ladies Underwear
- Football tops
- Maths Instruments sets
- Partly used colouring books for Adults & Children
- Nail Polish and Jewellery we can give to the hardworking House Mothers.

**THANK YOU !!!**

Christ Church has been involved with the Home of Hope Children's Home in Malawi for over 10 years, with several youth visits. On 30th July 2023, 11 adults will set off with 22 suitcases to visit once again. Our main project is to facilitate the refurbishment of the Primary School classrooms and outdoor area. This was the first part of the school built over 20 years ago, so it needs some updating. We are often asked by people at Christ Church if we can take any gifts with us. Please feel free to donate anything from the list on the left. We have 2 fundraising events coming up a Children's Party on Monday 29th May 2023 and an Afternoon Tea on Saturday 10th June 2023. Please invite friends and neighbours. Volunteers to help or bake are always appreciated. Please contact Gillian Lindley or Ruth Janes.

# Afternoon Tea!



Saturday  
10th June

Christ Church  
Bedford

2 - 5 pm

Choose your  
time slot in  
advance

£10 per person

All proceeds support the  
Home of Hope Malawi



# impact



One of Christ Church's mission partners is Impact. Their registered name with the Charities Commission is actually Bedford Area Schools Christian Support Trust (BASCST). They have operated for 33 years and their official charitable objects are: *"The advancement of the Christian Religion among young people in the Bedford Area, particularly in schools, in conjunction with local churches and volunteers"*.

You may be aware that Impact employs three staff; Becky and Trish (who worship at Christ Church) and Hayley (who worships with the Salvation Army). They currently have links with 59 schools across Bedfordshire. What you might not know is that typically in any year they also work with about 50 volunteers; what do those volunteers do?

This article is primarily about my experience volunteering with Impact

for the Barn Nativity at Christmas, last December, and the more recent Easter Experience, in March. These and the Footsteps of Bunyan (being held in late May in Elstow) are special activities organized by Impact on top of their regular work with schools, and they need a lot of volunteers to run them. As I had retired in the summer I had no excuse not to answer their call, although I was a nervous thespian requesting parts with few lines, as I have difficulty remembering lengthy tracts.

For many years "The Barn" (attached to a house in Clapham) had hosted the Christmas and Easter events but, with the house in the process of being sold, St John's Church, Bedford became the new venue. Parts of the church are very old and the small vestry (our changing room/ stage entrance and occasionally tea room)

contained vestiges of the church's history; According to a very long list of incumbents, Stephen Barnfield was the first appointed "vicar" in 1315! We were sent scripts and maps and requests for DBSs and we met for two rehearsals, per event. The ladies of Impact put together scripts breaking down the Christmas and Easter stories into short acts... some held in the church and others outside – weather permitting, assigning parts and tasks per a detailed spreadsheet.

At Christmas I was King Herod and I had my own palace (gazebo) outside with a seat and a few servants keeping me plied with grapes and wine. At Easter I was a Roman soldier/palace guard, along with Michael Bishop. We were offered real metal swords but we instigated our own H&S risk assessment and decided to use wooden and cardboard spears instead.

The props and costumes were very good. At Christmas we had some very realistic sheep for the shepherds, and I and the three Kings looked particularly grand. Again, for the Easter Experience everyone looked the part with Caiaphas, Pilate and the Angel particularly resplendent in their robes.

At Christmas and Easter the cast put on three enactments a day across five days. Most of the time,





the children visiting us were of primary school age (mainly years 3 and 4 at Christmas and years 5 & 6 at Easter), and in groups of up to thirty. Nine schools came to each event, some arrived via coaches, and some walked.



The weather was kind to us at Christmas; it was cold but dry and four of the acts were staged outside with a miked up narrator guiding the children around the church and grounds and setting the scene. At Easter, unfortunately, the weather was wet and all the acts were staged inside the church with less movement of the children.



Each enactment took about 40 minutes, leaving 20 minutes for the cast to assemble on the main stage and take questions from the children. After the first day at Christmas, most of us went home, found our Bibles and then made sure we researched our characters thoroughly. There were a lot of questions and they could be quite left field. For example, Herod's servant was asked whether Herod was a good boss? I (as Herod) was asked what I had died from?

At the Easter experience I think everyone was quite amazed by the level of interest and enquiry nearly all the children showed. Many of the questions were deep and

searching; they had clearly reflected on what they had seen and were keen to understand why Jesus had died and, in particular, why Pilate had released Barabbas? They also wanted to ask Jesus whether crucifixion was painful?

As I mentioned earlier, these special Impact events can only take place with volunteers, most of who are retired. If ever you are asked and can spare the time, I'd strongly encourage you to participate. (N.B not everyone attended the 5 days.) This last December, 388 years 3&4 primary school children, 22 mixed age home schooled children and 16 children and parents from 3 toddler groups witnessed the story of Christ's birth and, in March, 354 children in years 5&6 saw a dramatic enactment of the Easter story.

One day, during the Easter Experience, the weather was so bad that a school planning to walk to St John's cancelled. Instead of performing to the children we performed to the camera. That evening a film version was edited so that it could be shown to the children of that school the next day, and subsequently other schools.

It was so worthwhile and fulfilling to participate and witness such important mission work which sees such a large number of young

minds engaged in learning about Jesus in such a memorable way.

It is also great fun; you meet a lot of new people. There were 31 and 41 volunteers at the Barn Nativity and Easter Experience, respectively, helping with acting, stewarding, serving refreshments and working on sound/lighting and filming. A lot of laughs were had, along with opportunities for solid reflection, particularly during the Easter experience.

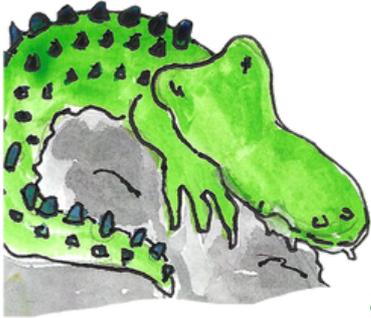
Volunteers came from about 11 churches; Anglican, Methodist, Baptist, Free and Salvation Army. It was an ecumenical effort with great conversation during the tea and lunch breaks. All sorts of Christians engaged in working together to help Impact bring the meaning of Christmas and Easter to life for the young generation, hopefully sowing seeds for further enquiry.

For more information about the work of Impact talk to Becky Guynn or Trish Horwood or look at their website [www.impactbedford.org.uk](http://www.impactbedford.org.uk). Here you can also contact them about volunteering opportunities.

*Written by:*  
**Steve Gardner**

# JUNGLE ADVENTURE HOLIDAY CLUB

Holiday Club for children aged 5-11  
10am-12:30 21st-25th August 2023



This Summer our children get the chance to go on a jungle adventure journey of nature based activities and hilarious fun as they hear about the life and stories of Jesus. We are going to be looking at Jesus who called disciples, told a story about the wise and foolish builders, calmed a storm and fed a huge crowd. We also hear about Jesus' friend Peter who 'mucked up big time' but shows that everyone who asks Jesus can be forgiven and have a friendship with him.

Throughout the week the children will be focusing on these themes:

- Discovering that I am special to Jesus and he calls me on to his team too.
- Discovering Jesus is the best guide ever, showing me the best way to live.
- Discovering Jesus has the power to care for me in all situations.
- Discovering Jesus loves to provide for my needs.
- Discovering Jesus is the best friend ever, and being God, he died to make that friendship possible

Each day the children will get to meet Dr Walter Falls, Sir Random Finds and The Jungle Tracker to explore clues. In small groups we'll unpack the Bible by making leaf compasses, footprints, instruments and fruit tasting! I am most excited for the Jungle Chants and hearing The Dung Beetles Band rock out! In amongst the storytelling and reflection times, there will be plenty of monkeying around with messy challenges.

Come for the whole week or book a day pass for each day you can join us in the jungle!

Please complete the online consent form on our website to book in or ask at the CCB office for a paper consent form.



# A DAY AT THE BEACH

Anyone for a great day out together to

## HUNSTANTON

Everyone! All ages!

# SAT

19TH AUGUST

2023



**Coach cost, £15 per seat  
(a suggested donation)**

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**Depart Bedford 8.00am, arrive Hunstanton 10.30am**

**Depart Hunstanton 5.00pm, arrive Bedford 7.30pm**

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**Fun for all... Swimming, Sandcastle Competition,  
Lavender Farm, Beach Crocker, Boat Trip, Fun Fair,  
delightful old town and Cafés and much more!**

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**Limited spaces, book through Rachel Bennett**



## Sunday Services

9am & 10:30am Morning Worship

7pm Sundays@Seven

**Wednesday Service**

10am Holy Communion



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