



What makes a gift great? That's probably a question on most of our minds as we approach Christmas. With presents to buy for friends and family, we want to make the most of our money. What makes a gift move from 'okay' to 'great' is if it is something I truly need.

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I am sure we have all received gifts that we don't need - Clothes that are not just too big but four sizes too big; the bicycle repair kit for someone who doesn't even own a bike. I was out shopping once and came across a place that was selling genuine chocolate teapots! In fact, quite a lot of the gifts in the shops today are things that we don't really need, wouldn't choose and won't really use.

The message of Christmas is that God has given us a

gift in the birth of Jesus of Nazareth. It might seem strange to hear, but the arrival of Jesus is a gift we all need. Yet for many of us the birth of Jesus is much like a chocolate teapot - fun while it lasts on Christmas Day, but useless and unnecessary beyond that point. Why would the message of a baby born in Bethlehem over 2,000 years ago contain anything I might possibly want or need?

I like to be surprised on Christmas Day and try to guess what people have given me. If I pick up the parcel under the tree and open it to find a life jacket, I will be sorely disappointed. I don't sail, surf or kayak. I live in London rather than by the beach. Why would I need a life jacket as a gift?

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But if I was out at sea and on the edge of drowning, a life jacket would be the best gift. What seemed to be a foolish and useless present would actually be

the greatest.

For all the festivities, Christmas can be a time when we feel most lost and alone. It can be a season when we are most aware of our deepest needs

- not presents under the tree, but the love, acceptance and forgiveness we all crave. Without them we feel lost at sea and adrift. Into this, God gives us a lifeline. In Jesus, God reaches out to us and offers us the answer to our deepest needs. The gift of Jesus is the greatest gift we could receive.

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Will you consider the gift that God has given? We'd love to welcome you to one of our Christmas Services which you can find detailed on the back page. I hope you can unwrap the greatest gift of all this Christmas.

Rev Dan Wells

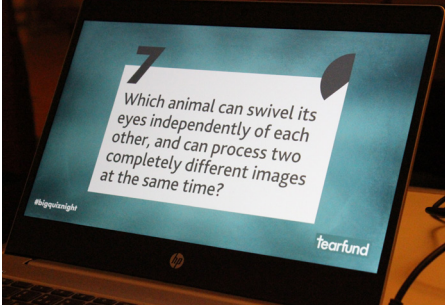
An Autumn to remember



Alison Bateman began her role as Head Teacher at Holy Trinity School this autumn, and we welcomed and prayed for her at a Sunday Morning Service early in September.



Saturday morning breakfasts saw the men gather to watch England play Argentina in the Rugby World Cup, and the women hear Louanne Enns speak about hospitality.



In November quizzers from our church and their friends enjoyed a competitive evening while raising over £300. This was part of Tearfund's Big Quiz fundraiser, with around 26,000 people in over 500 churches taking part across the country.



This year we again supported Operation Christmas Child, showing God's love in a tangible way to children in need around the world by packing shoeboxes with Christmas gifts.



Our monthly Film Forum began very successfully this term, with three well-attended films and some good discussions.



During October The Big Story saw Dan Wells lead four helpful and inspiring evenings as we looked together at how the Bible fits together from beginning to end.



Around 100 children and adults met to celebrate Jesus the light of the world at a Light Party jointly hosted by our church and Riverbank Trust on the last afternoon of October - a positive alternative to Halloween.



At our now traditional Autumn Launch in mid-September, we spent an evening sharing food and praying and worshipping together as we looked forward to the coming year.



We hosted the Vineyard Lunch on the last Sunday in October, a weekly opportunity for local churches to share food and hospitality with people who would otherwise eat alone.



Our All Age Services Team continues to put together some very creative Services that help children and adults to worship together regularly.



The 2019 Gift Day funding we provided to St Peter's Church, Wandegeya, Kampala, Uganda has helped them make exciting progress with their new toilet block.

A chance to discuss

This term has seen the introduction of Youth Alpha, a 9-week course that creates a space for our young people to have a conversation about Jesus and bring their friends along to find out about the Christian faith. Each week begins with a time of catching up around a make-your-own toastie station followed by a video and discussion. It's been wonderful to see the eager return each week of around 17 young people. The toasties have proved very popular and the surprising menu development of a toasted kit-kat chunkie wrap has been enjoyed

by many! The videos have been watched with attention and interest, often sparking conversation and always giving cause for thought.

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One of our leaders said:
It's been a privilege to give the young people a chance to discuss their faith, hopefully help and give them some food for thought to go out with!
As relationships have grown, the discussions have increased, and both leaders and attendees have had the opportunity to learn from each other on their journeys of faith.



One of our young people said:
I really love Youth Alpha because it helps you discover your faith and the concepts that you struggle with - and the food's really good too!

We are thrilled with the outcome so far from running this course and intend to keep building on what has begun with those who have come along. We will also offer the course again at some point in 2020 for other young people to participate.

Liz Morris

News of the Webbs

Having said goodbye to HTR in September 2018 and after a period of waiting (for God's plan to unfold!) it came as a complete surprise when Holy Trinity Church Brompton contacted me towards the end of the summer to ask whether I would be interested in joining their staff team.

For those who are unaware, my journey as a Christian began at HTB, over 30 years ago. I left 25 years ago, when I went to Oak Hill College to study theology as a mature student. At the time I never envisaged that I would return to HTB, 25 years later, as part of their clergy team. God really does have

His own sense of timing - and a sense of humour!

I've been employed by HTB as a 'curate' (one, among many others!) who are each



assigned to oversee and support one or more of their weekly Services, in one of their five churches in London.

I started work at HTB on 5 November, and the following day we moved to our new home in Twickenham. There are still a number of boxes to unpack and, with Christmas approaching, both work and life in general have become very busy. Naturally, we have all entered a period of transition, particularly Matthew and Joshua, who now have to get up half an hour earlier in order to get to school on time! Please pray for them (and for us!) and thank you for all your prayers over the past year. We remain very grateful!

Alwyn Webb

Governing at Christ's

On the day that I write this, I have represented our parish as a Foundation Governor at Christ's School for exactly six years.

I am one of those irritating people who loves to know stuff, which is usually only useful on pub (or indeed church) quiz teams. However, this also means that I am interested in how and why people learn stuff - what posh people call pedagogy! I have found that being a governor has been as interesting as I had hoped and perhaps more challenging.

Schools are close-knit communities.

Making changes always has to be done with great sensitivity, but the ever-changing environment and financial austerity imposed by successive governments has meant that constant evolution has been required. As the Chair of the Finance Committee, I have certainly had a number of new experiences - overall, these have proved to be good ones, from which the right decisions have emerged.

I have two years left of my second four-year term. We are encouraged not to exceed eight years - which I think is right. Succession planning is important for the

long-term success of the School, so we are beginning to think about how that should happen for my roles. I would be very happy to talk to anybody who might be interested - quiz team member or not!

Graham Bamping



Dates for your diary!

Please join us at events in the coming months

Wednesday Carol Service

Wednesday 11 December - 11.30

All Age Nativity Carol Service

Sunday 15 December - 10.00

Contemporary Carols

Sunday 15 December - 18.30

Carols by Candlelight

Sunday 22 December - 18.30

Christingle Service

Tuesday 24 December - 16.00

Midnight Communion Service

Tuesday 24 December - 23.15

Christmas Day All Age Service

Wednesday 25 December - 10.00

Vision Sunday

Sunday 12 January - 10.00

Giving Sunday

Sunday 19 January - 10.00

Alpha Supper

Thursday 23 January - 19.30

Followed by 9 Thursdays

Film Forum

Saturday 25 January - 19.30

Leaders' Morning

Saturday 29 February - 09.30

Film Forum

Saturday 29 February - 19.30

Men's Breakfast

Saturday 7 March - 09.00

Riverbank Sunday

Sunday 8 March - 10.00 & 18.30

Alpha Day

Saturday 21 March - 09.30



Film Forum

Saturday 28 March - 19.30

Welcome to HTR

Are you new to HTR? We'd love to link up with you. If you would like more information, please contact us. 020 8404 1112

www.htrichmond.org.uk

 HTR - Holy Trinity Richmond
 @church_htr

Community Sponsorship

This is the name of the Government run Home Office project to resettle refugees and their families. The Syrian crisis is and has been catastrophic. Over 500,000 Syrian people have died and over 11 million have fled their homes. Living conditions are poor and the future without hope for many.

In early 2018,

Riverbank Trust took on the challenge set before them biblically to feed the hungry, welcome the stranger and love the foreigner. By Easter 2019 Riverbank had been approved as the first Community Sponsor group by the local authority and had demonstrated that they had the finances, structure, volunteers, housing and support to make this project of rehoming a Syrian family a reality. Soon after, the contract was signed with the Home Office. There was then a flurry of excitement as we prepared to meet the family. In a short space of time additional funds were raised, a property was made new and school places were confirmed. In July 2019 the family arrived; Mum, Dad and three gorgeous girls were collected from Heathrow airport and transported back to their accommodation. With mixed feelings of excitement and trepidation, a new life began for this precious family.

Serving in this way has been humbling and a true privilege.

After a short settling in period over the summer, the two older girls started school and quickly made new friends. For the first time they experienced birthday parties, dressing up days, school dinners and homework! The youngest of the

girls went to nursery and loved it, began speaking a few English words and quickly showed us

her cheeky personality. Mum and Dad have done so well too. They both started college in September with the teacher noting that their English was already better than she thought it would be by this stage. Dad has begun getting some work experience - earning himself some pocket money. Both are keen learners.

Serving in this way has been humbling and a true privilege. As friendships grow over the next year, we look forward to seeing the family become truly independent. For now though, we will continue to accept their hospitality as we support them. The coffee is strong (but good!) and the home-made hummus is incredible!

If you would like to know more about the work of Riverbank Trust or make a financial donation, please contact us via our website - www.riverbanktrust.org.

Michelle Rutter

Verses to live by

He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand. He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God.

Psalms 40:2,3

These two verses speak to me simply and clearly about my salvation. Jesus rescued me from the squelchy mess of a

life without Him and literally lifted me onto the solid, safe ground of knowing Him as my friend and saviour. We've probably all experienced going for a walk, losing the path and ending up in boggy ground, and then the great relief of getting back onto a solid path - well that's what Jesus did when He saved me, and He's certainly put a new song of joy in my life.

Penny Cox

