

St. John's, Lindow

IN TOUCH

God, the great Giver

*"For God so loved the world
that he gave his one and only Son"*

John 3:16

www.saint-johns.org.uk

At Christmas we share in the excitement of giving and receiving gifts as an expression of our love. The very first Christmas also involved a gift, given in love. In perhaps the best known words of the Bible, Jesus says '*God so loved the world that he **gave** his one and only Son*' (John 3:16).

Jesus' birth was the beginning of the greatest gift the world has ever seen. God's gift to us was not chosen from a department store or ordered online. To express his immense love for us God gave the most precious and valuable gift: He gave his Son. And this gift is a gift we all need, whether or not we know it.

Jesus continues: '*...he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*' According to Jesus, we have a serious problem. Not only do we sometimes manage to ruin Christmas by our selfishness but far more alarmingly we have ruined our relationship with God.

So the prospect of standing before God one day should terrify us. By rights, we should be thrown out of God's presence for ever (what Jesus calls 'perishing'). That's what we deserve but it's not what God wants – because he loves us. And so he sent his Son, born in manger that he might die on a cross. It is at the cross that we see the full extent of God's love, as Jesus was standing in for us. Though he was without sin, he died for all our mistakes in life, especially for our rebellion against God.

can receive the gift God gives – his Son Jesus, or reject him. But that is the most costly mistake we can ever make because it means rejecting God himself. By contrast welcoming Jesus this Christmas is to receive eternal life. That's not just a life that goes on for ever – it's living in a restored relationship with God, life as he meant it to be!



Wonderfully, God's gift of his Son, and the eternal life he brings, is only the beginning. God's continuing generosity to his people is the theme of the rest of this magazine. When a person welcomes Jesus they receive God's presence at work in their lives, the Holy Spirit, changing us from within, and giving gifts to help us serve Jesus more and more. On page 10 you'll find a review of '*Experiencing the Spirit*', a book to help us appreciate the gift of the Spirit, and the 'Theology Corner' is about the gifts he brings. On other pages you'll read how some are using those, and there's help for us to do the same.

Our Father God is wonderfully generous in his gifts to his children. May this Christmas be a season of great thankfulness!

Yours, Simon

Like any gift this Christmas, we

SKETCHY THEOLOGY

BY BEN HOLLINSHEAD



"I WISH THEY'D SPEND LESS TIME ASKING GOD FOR STUFF AND MORE TIME USING THE THINGS HE'S ALREADY GIVEN THEM!"

2018

Marc Hollinshead: So Rosalind, what brought you to Wilmslow and St John's?

Rosalind Scott: When I was younger, I lived in Warrington and only have very vague memories of Sunday school. I never really went to church due to moving every few years. I've now been in Wilmslow for a long time, having also been a child minder for 34 years. It's hard to remember what brought me to St John's but I remember living close by and going to the toddler group with my eldest son, Benjamin. We may have been invited by a couple, Andy and Sue Keithley, to do an Alpha course.

Where would you say you're at spiritually in life?

We only ever used to come to church when it suited us, but having become a Christian gradually, everything started to dawn on me; that need for forgiveness. My four grown up children live in different parts of the world so I do regret not bringing them to church as much as I'd like. My mother actually suggested church to me so parental guidance is very important.

Looking back we can easily think we've made mistakes, but it's also amazing what can bring us to faith. How involved are you in the church now?

I taught in Sunday clubs for 15 years, but I eventually had a break as numbers were dropping and I wasn't needed as much. I've now been doing Evergreens for about 8 years, which can be intense but I really enjoy it. In Sunday clubs I remember having to work very hard, but I learned a lot when I prepared the sessions. The giver can benefit just as much as the receiver!

I definitely agree! It's tough but rewarding. Any idea what you might do next?



I'm happy with doing the Evergreens for now, and as I'm often away at the weekend it can be hard to commit to more. However, the church is a team; if we all do our part to help then it works really well.

With that in mind we are thinking about our spiritual gifts. How do you think you have used gifts that God has given you?

There's always something for everyone to do at church and we all benefit in some way, like I've done in the Sunday clubs teaching and Evergreens. I think back to the many hours it took me to plan each session for Sunday. It was tough but I got a lot out of it!

I think the effort is always worth it, too, even when you don't realise it. Why do you think that is?

Well the thought of actually being saved is amazing. I'm always growing in understanding, and I'm currently following a "Bible in a year" app which has been really helpful. Looking back, I can see my mistakes but I know I'm forgiven. God's timing isn't my timing and I always try to remember that.

That's a great sentiment to end on as we wrap up. Thank you, Ros, for taking the time to share some of your story with us.

"GOD SO LOVED... THAT HE GAVE"

Keith and Catherine Ranger

Keith: Warm greetings to all in the St John's Church family, to which we were delighted to belong for ten very happy years, from our Retirement Complex in (usually!) sunny Scarborough, which Google tells me receives annually only a third of the rainfall that descends on the Parish of Lindow! So why not visit us here and build up your Vitamin D? This magazine's theme of God's gifts reminds me of the call to work and serve overseas to which I responded as a young undergraduate back in 1955 – "where is the next generation of Christian missionaries?"

Being called to cross-cultural Christian service can feel really scary, but it is my precious experience and humble testimony that God can give the ability to learn and use a difficult language, in my case Mandarin, and as a result be able to communicate the message of God's love in Christ clearly and effectively.

Over the decades I have been thrilled to see English, Scottish, Australian, Chinese, Indian, Iranian and Filipina people all become and remain rejoicing Christians.

To do the spelling a slight injustice, "responsibility" can be seen as "response" and "ability". When God calls, if we make a glad response He will always give the ability!

Catherine: The 1960's was an exciting time to be in London, to grow as a new Christian and to discover what God's will and future plans were for a young nurse, who had just become a follower of Jesus.

Not long after I had arrived at the London Hospital to begin my training, I came into contact with keen Christians who were eager to share their faith with me. I was taken to church and every week attended



the Nurses Christian Fellowship meetings at the hospital. I soon became a Christian and decided that I needed a plan for the rest of my life. Being an impatient person, I wanted to have it all mapped out. So I read "The Man Who Believed God", about the life of Hudson Taylor, the inspirational founder of The China Inland Mission, and was so deeply challenged that I felt God could use my skills as a nurse on the mission field working with the Chinese people. I was privileged to hear excellent missionary speakers and attend the CIM prayer meeting at Newington Green when I was off duty. God gave me a real hunger for reading missionary books, and learning all I could about CIM/OMF. I had more training to do, midwifery, Bible College, and a year in a church as a Parish Worker, but all the time had God's call in front of me.

During the time of waiting God taught me important lessons: one comes from the book of Ruth, Ch. 3 and V. 18. "Sit still my daughter and see how the matter will fall". My father was always quoting this verse as I was impatient to get going to Malaysia! Another was to action God's call, as it was easy to sit around and never get going. I believe that it is important to prepare yourself in every way possible. Another is to keep the goal ahead of you and not deviate from the path. As Isaiah 30 v21 says - "This is the way, walk in it". God was continuing to reassure me of the right way, and I needed to play my part and take action. When God calls how will you respond?

DISCOVERING OUR GIFTS

Gareth Crispin

DO ADULTS HAVE SOMETHING TO LEARN FROM YOUTH AND CHILDREN?

We lose lots of things when we grow into adulthood. The thing I miss most is being able to eat whatever I liked without consequence! Though I'm not so sad about having lost acne!

One of the other things we lose is the approach to life which I'll call: "giving things a go." It won't have escaped your notice that youth and children can pick new things up quickly (just think how rapidly and proficiently they can learn a musical instrument or a foreign language); the young brain learns fast.

But that's only half the story; we can't simply say "well of course they give things a go, they can learn so quickly compared to me." That might be true, but it's not simply a case of physiological or psychological development; it's also partly about social necessity. They don't have a choice! No baby looks at walking and decides to give it a miss. Young children don't normally look at words and decide that reading is not for them. High School students can't tell their teacher that they are afraid of looking stupid if they try to pronounce that long German word, or draw that scene, or act out that part of the play. In short, their lives are all about giving things a go, things which at the beginning they can't do, things which sometimes, it turns out, they actually have a gift for. Of course it's only in giving things a go that they discover their gifts.

Because of all this, good schools and families develop good cultures of failure. OK so, that's not normally how it's expressed, but a moment's reflection shows it's true and necessary. Every day in families, at schools, in Scout groups and sporting teams, youth and children are failing, for it is only in failing to do something that they learn over time how to do it right and improve.

As adults of course we've settled on our tools for navigating the world. We think "this is me, this is what I do, this is who I am, these are my skills." That's only natural and sensible, after all you've got to get on with earning a living at some point! However it is also unfortunately limiting. What if you have missed something which you could be good at, something even that God has gifted you in?

Oh yes....and what about failure? Well most of us are very happy that we can leave the days of try, try and try again well behind, but maybe that's not all for the good. Maybe in our church we need to develop more of a culture of failure. That doesn't mean wanting people to fail, but allowing them to fail. We can remind each other that failure is intrinsic to learning and part of the necessary step to success. Of course it is also a natural part of a community of grace. God doesn't love us because we get things right 100% of the time and his ways should be our ways, the way of grace.

I'm excited about all the undiscovered gifts there are in our church family; how about we remind each other of the grace-based community that we are and encourage each other to give things a go, give permission to fail and find what's out there? Maybe it's even worth asking the youth and children in our church how they approach learning and deal with exploring skills, after all, in this area, they are the experts!

**Overleaf you can explore a
flowchart which may help
you to think about what
your spiritual gift may be.**



Natural talents can be used in aid of spiritual gifts, e.g. musical ability.

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We have to work at **maturing our gifts**, and not waste them!

Gifts can be lost if not used. !!!

The **value of spiritual gifts** is to be tested by their **usefulness to the church** as a whole. Paul wrote that due to the interdependent nature of the church, there should be no spiritual pride associated with any of these gifts.

↳ **But...what are they?** ↘

According to 1 Corinthians 12:8-10, 28-29; Romans 12:3-8; Ephesians 4:11; and 1 Corinthians 7:7, **there are at least 21 spiritual gifts**, and these lists are not meant to be exhaustive!

Apostles; Prophets; Pastor-Teacher; Evangelist; Teaching; Wisdom; Knowledge; Faith; Miraculous Powers; Healing; Distinguishing between Spirits; Speaking in Tongues; Interpretation of Tongues; Helping; Service; Administration; Encouragement; Giving; Leadership; Mercy and Singleness.

Whilst all these gifts were available in New Testament times, some were foundational, for when the witness to Jesus was being first transmitted to the church (e.g. apostles, and the miracles that accompanied their witness - Ephesians 2:20, 2 Corinthians 12:12)

What are they anyway?

Spiritual gifts are a **God-given ability** given to individual Christians by the Holy Spirit, to build the church, by word and deed, to know, enjoy and proclaim Christ!

START HERE

How do I find my spiritual gift?

Perhaps more helpfully

1 Peter 4:11

Speaking

(Ephesians 4:11, Romans 12:6-8 and 1 Corinthians 12:8 - 11,28): Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, and Pastor - Teachers, Teaching, Encouragement, Words of Knowledge. These gifts help in planting and growing churches.

Serving

(Romans 12:7-8, 1 Corinthians 12:28): Service, Giving, Administration, Leadership, Faith, Helping and Mercy. These gifts help organize and administer the church, and serve others.

But wait!
I don't see my gift listed there!



So...how should I unwrap my gifts?

As we engage in Christian service in obedience, others may see a gift in us long before we ourselves are aware of it. Occasionally, others recognize that we don't possess a gift we think we have! Ask others - and pray about it!

Teaching can include an informal chat about Jesus and how to follow him.

Encouragement can include sharing some Bible truth in a letter or a text!

Helping can include hospitality, meeting practical needs, prison visiting, loneliness support, etc.

Giving can include giving our money to both gospel and mercy ministries, supporting the mission of the church.

And **Serving** is all-encompassing - any action that builds the church!

RECENT HIGHLIGHTS

News & updates from the
St John's church family!



11-18s weekend away



**Homegroups began
meeting weekly this term**



Remembrance Sunday



Bill Brown

Anne Kellet wearing her father's WWI flying medals

The cubs enjoying 'camp doughnuts' ahead of feeding the 5000



The Vaughan's homegroup weekend away



BOOK REVIEW

Experiencing the Spirit - Graham Benyon

Nicky Jones

Graham Benyon is a minister in Cambridge and lecturer at Oakhill Theological College, conference speaker and author of several books.

In *Experiencing the Spirit*, he gives us a clear and accurate summary of the New Testament passages which talk about the Holy Spirit. He tells us what experiencing the Holy Spirit looks like, starting with new life in the Spirit, who the Holy Spirit is, how He works in our lives to make our relationship with Jesus and God as Father real, how He gives us spiritual sight to understand the truth of the Gospel, to fight the battle against our sinful nature, to grow in holiness and to change our relationships with one another.

The book has a very helpful chapter on 'gifts of the Spirit', which clarifies some of the misunderstandings and controversies which have surrounded the gifts of speaking in tongues and healing. Graham makes it clear that

every Christian has a gift from the Holy Spirit and that no one gift should be seen as a special marker of spirituality, and there is a useful section on 'finding my gift'. He explains that all gifts are for the common good in building the church and spreading the Gospel, and he ends with an inspiring vision of future glory.



The book is very readable and full of helpful real life examples to illustrate his points. It is not an academic tome, but neither is it lightweight. I found it enjoyable, enlightening and reassuring. I think it would make a good Home Group study or be good for any Christian's personal reading. It would be especially helpful for Christian who may feel undermined by thoughts that others may have had a more spiritual experience than they have.

BOOK REVIEW

Christmas Jackpot - Adrian Reynolds



This book is very easy to read and can be read from cover to cover in about 20 minutes, which makes it great for over the Christmas period when everyone is busy. The message of the book is very clear: Jesus gave up all of his riches in heaven in order to come down and be with us. In a society where money controls most of what we do, whether we can go on that summer holiday or buy the latest iPhone, it's hard to imagine that the riches Jesus gave up to come down to earth were so much greater than our human riches, his are beyond our imagination. But the book is about 'how to get really rich this Christmas' and

that's the point this

book leaves you with. Jesus gave up all his riches in heaven and died here on earth so that we could share his riches, even though we have nothing to offer him. I think this book makes these points really clearly and in a way that is really understandable for anyone, including those who have never really thought about what it means to be a Christian. Offering someone this book to read is a great way of starting that conversation with them about the Christian faith and maybe they'll be intrigued enough to find out more by coming to one of the Christmas services this year. Even for people who are already strong Christians this book can be a great read as it really reminds us just how great this gift from God is, that we have got absolutely nothing to offer him in return but he still dies for us so we can have it anyway.

Alice Hutton

Gifts of the Spirit

This Christmas as you reflect on God the generous giver, why not also consider the gifts that come to his people from the Holy Spirit.

Why does the Holy Spirit give gifts?

Continually when the theme of spiritual gifts comes up in Scripture, we are reminded of their purpose; they are for building up the body of Christ – the church (1 Cor 14:3-12, 14:26, Ephesians 4:11-16, 1 Peter 4:10). That's why Paul could say that without love for others, our gifts are useless (1 Cor 13:1-3).

So how do we know if we're using our gifts correctly?

By asking ourselves, 'Is this building up those around me in the church?' and, 'Is now the right time, or is this the right location?'

For example, those musically gifted, could play 20-minute guitar solos in church or they could spend time teaching a young person to play guitar in church – which will build up those in church? If they choose to teach a young person then when and where should that happen, during a service or at home a couple of evenings a month?

Whatever the gift may be, Christians are called to be intentional about using them for the common good, and that means we always need to be considering those around us.

Gifts for everyone

Some Christians may doubt whether they have been given any gift at all. But the Bible says that to each a manifestation of the Spirit has been given for the common good (1 Cor 12:7). Every Christian has a gift from the Spirit, but these will not always be the same.

If you find yourself thinking that the Spirit hasn't given you any sort of gift, then why not speak to a Christian who knows you well. Very often it is the

people around us who are able to identify in us those gifts.

But not every gift for everyone

You will have a gift from the Spirit, however, you won't have every gift from the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is in full control how he distributes individual gifts (1 Cor 12:11).

Is it any wonder that the God who decided the human body needs approximately 78 different organs, also decided to give to his church a rich diversity of gifts? Paul says the church is like a body made up of many different parts – each part is placed just as God wants it to be, with different gifts to contribute to the life of the body (1 Cor 12:12-26).

This variety of gifts means when you look around at others in church, you're not meant to be thinking "she's a good teacher, why can't I do that?" For the same reason that a body isn't made up only of kidneys, the church isn't given only one type of gift!

The body can't work that way, and neither can the church. When the wonderful variety of gifts within a church are being exercised, the body is healthy and united.

The Bible doesn't give an exhaustive list of gifts, but it does give many examples that range from teaching to encouraging, hospitality to helping. If you'd like to read more about these gifts you can find more in 1 Corinthians 12-14, Romans 12:3-8, 1 Peter 4:7-11 and Ephesians 4:11-16.

Alec (pictured with his wife Leah and children) is a former ministry trainee and now serves as curate at St John's Hartford.



SPRING PROGRAMME

Sundays

10am

Lord's Supper on third Sunday

6.30pm

Lord's Supper on third Sunday

Homegroups

Jan 6	Philippians: Partners for Life Confidence in Christ Philippians 1:1-11	Philippians: Partners for Life Confidence in Christ Philippians 1:1-11
Jan 13	Honouring Christ Philippians 1:12-26	Honouring Christ Philippians 1:12-26
Jan 20	Standing for Christ Philippians 1:27-31	Standing for Christ Philippians 1:27-31
Jan 27	Learning from Christ Philippians 2:1-18	Learning from Christ Philippians 2:1-18
Feb 3	Confidence in Christ Philippians 2:19-30	Confidence in Christ Philippians 2:19-30
Feb 10	Knowing Christ (Parade Service) Philippians 3:1-11	Knowing Christ (Parade Service) Philippians 3:1-11
Feb 17	Pressing on Towards Christ Philippians 3:12 - 4:1	Pressing on Towards Christ Philippians 3:12 - 4:1
Feb 24	Using Our Gifts: 1 Romans 12:-18	Using Our Gifts: 1 Romans 12:-18
Mar 3	Using Our Gifts: 2 1 Corinthians 12:1-30	Using Our Gifts: 2 1 Corinthians 12:1-30
Mar 10	All age parade service	Heart surgery: Love Deuteronomy 6:4-19
Mar 17	Loving our Community: God's Call Luke 10:25-37	Loving our Community: God's Call Luke 10:25-37
Mar 24	Loving our Community: God's Priorities Matthew 18:21-35	Loving our Community: God's Priorities Matthew 18:21-35
Mar 31	Shadows of the Cross: Serpent Crusher Genesis 3:15	The Triumph of the Cross: Justified! Romans 3:21-31
Apr 7	Scapegoat Leviticus 16:1-34	Reconciled! 2 Corinthians 5:11 - 6:2
Apr 14	Life Saver Numbers 21:4-9	Cleansed! Hebrews 9:1-14
Apr 21	Easter All Age	Easter Praise

Meeting in various homes, on Wednesdays, Thursdays & Fridays, afternoons and evenings, to study God's work and encourage one another.

Philippians: Partners for Life

During the first half of term our homegroups are linked to our Sunday series.

Meeting weekly, the groups begin on 10th Jan and finish on 14th Feb. Dates given are Thursdays but some groups meet at other times (full details on weekly noticesheet).

After half term we will be hosting a choice of training courses, 8pm, Wednesday & Thursday evenings (1st March – 4 April) to include:

Parenting

Dig Deeper

Questioning Evangelism

Additionally, a women's bible study meets at 9.45am on Wednesdays, and a men's bible study meets at 6.30am on Fridays.

Monthly Prayer Breakfasts

Jan 5, Feb 2, March 2, April 6 on Saturday mornings 8.30-9.45am, Church rooms.

Special Events

Jan 12	Who Let the Dads Out? Church Rooms, 10am - 11.30am
Jan 19	Men's Breakfast Alderley Edge Golf Club, 8.15am
Jan 25-26	NWP Annual Conference St Andrew's Leyland
Jan 27	Evergreens Lunch Church Rooms, 12.15pm
Feb 3	Bring & Share Lunch 'The World of Mission'

Feb 9	Who Let The Dads Out? Church Rooms, 10am - 11.30am
Mar 3	Evergreens Lunch Church Rooms, 12.15pm
Mar 9	Who Let The Dads Out? Church Rooms, 10am - 11.30am
Mar 16	Youth & Childrens Leaders Training Day, Knutsford