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The Online Link St. John's Hillingdon



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St. John's Church,
Royal Lane, Uxbridge UB8 3QP
www.stjohnshillingdon.org.uk

Your Sunday Service Link (10.30 am):

Click on the Loving, Growing sharing Image
above from Sunday 10am or on

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89481452808>

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Email stjohnshillingdon@gmail.com

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I haven't done a jigsaw in many, many years, unless you count the simple ones done at our Let's Go Parent 'n' Toddler group! Anne started a 1000-piece puzzle not long after 'lockdown' and I was keen not to help out or get involved. In the end I did spend some time on some of the sections just intending to do a bit each day using a 'little and often' strategy to help it onto completion. Each time I thought I was only spending a few minutes doing the puzzle but it was always much longer than I thought. It was a tough one and Anne finished it off recently, after finding the inevitable lost

piece that went astray under a chair.

The puzzle had plenty of sky, water and trees. This meant that during the time I was doing the puzzle I could see puzzle shapes in the real trees and scenery when I was out and about! I must admit I did approach the puzzle as something that just needed to get done as quickly as possible. What a waste of time I thought! However, what in the end happened was that my attitude changed and I became far more patient with the puzzle and the idea of doing it.

Another surprising effect on me following the completion of the massive puzzle (it seemed massive to me) is that I have been looking at things, especially nature, in far more detail. The words and encouragements of Chris Rodrigues in her Eco news about nature have also encouraged me in this. Reading Eco news and being 'forced' to look at the intricate details in the jigsaw puzzle pieces have made me more observant and caused me to look deeper in much more detail at the natural things around.

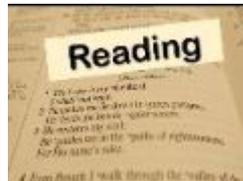
Looking more closely and intently helps us to slow down and in turn this helps us to be more peaceful. Having peace and being still helps us to commune and remain with God, enabling us to hear his direction and his 'voice'

"What is this life if, full of care,
we have no time to stand and stare?" from *'Leisure'* by William Davies

"Be still and know that I am God" *Psalm 46*

It is part of being truly human that we should create for ourselves oases of stillness in which we can be spiritually refreshed.

Keep praying,
Alan



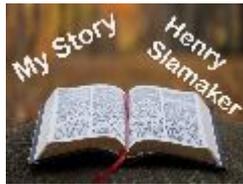
Acts 17:16-34

16 While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols. 17 So he reasoned in the synagogue with both Jews and God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the marketplace day by day with those who happened to be there. 18 A group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began to debate with him. Some of them asked, "What is this babbling trying to say?" Others remarked, "He seems to be advocating foreign gods." They said this because Paul was preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection.

19 Then they took him and brought him to a meeting of the Areopagus, where they said to him, "May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? 20 You are bringing some strange ideas to our ears, and we would like to know what they mean." 21 (All the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas.) 22 Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: "People of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious.

23 For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: to an unknown god. So you are ignorant of the very thing you worship—and this is what I am going to proclaim to you. 24 "The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. 25 And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else.

26 From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. 27 God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us. 28 'For in him we live and move and have our being.' As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring.' 29 "Therefore since we are God's offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone—an image made by human design and skill. 30 In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. 31 For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead." 32 When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some of them sneered, but others said, "We want to hear you again on this subject." 33 At that, Paul left the Council. 34 Some of the people became followers of Paul and believed. Among them was Dionysius, a member of the Areopagus, also a woman named Damaris, and a number of others.



My Story; Unmasked - By Henry Slamaker

Part 2 of 4

We all enjoy a good holiday don't we? A nice break away from it all, whatever your personal 'it all' is! A change is as good as a rest, or so people say. Some breaks I have felt like I've needed in life haven't been limited to the geographical kind. At the Bible camp I enjoyed as a teen, there was an evening meeting every night, one of which was the sermon of the true vine story. The preacher that evening really impacted me with that story which wasn't new to me at all. I went to a Bible school so had learnt that story over and over, but there was something about how he applied it to life that struck me. I was 14 years old and by this stage in life I had put up so many masks and walls to hide behind. To protect myself - even from me! These pretences enabled me to be who I was expected to be and who I wanted to be instead of who I am.

After the meeting had ended I retreated to the shared tent before the other girls. Alone I could relax a bit and lower some of those masks. Take a break and stop trying so hard to be everything I am not to 'fit in' which was so exhausting to maintain. The problem with that was, when I stopped pretending to be somebody else, all I was left with was me. I was taught from the Bible and concluded that some things, like being attracted to the same sex, were Evil and an abomination against God, to the point where God hated them so much that He destroyed everyone. Not just the few offenders within that nation but everyone in the nation. I knew that beneath my walls and masks I was one such offender and I hated myself. I was still crying my eyes out when the girls came back and found me. No one had ever seen me cry before so they were worried. They took me to one of the leaders and it was there, in his and his wife's caravan that I prayed to accept Jesus. I was told that once saved my name was written in God's book and can never be rubbed out. I did wonder if he would have told me that had he known the beneath the masks me, but I accepted it. Great I thought. Maybe now God has instantly cured me of same sex attraction, after all He destroys everyone for it so why wouldn't that part of me be made gone if God makes me acceptable to Himself? The girls from my tent were waiting for me in the now dark and freezing cold field in just their pj's. Alas, I realised that I was still me.

The natural response to my confusion over God and sexuality was to throw myself into private study of systematic theology of the Bible. For those unfamiliar with that, it is the study of what the whole Bible says that God says about subjects or topics. I found myself researching answers to questions I didn't even have. All I gained from those answers were more questions without answers. As a student of a Brethren Bible School, I graduated through the year stages until I left at 18/19 years old. They don't give you paperwork, qualifications or anything like that. It is not that kind of school. However, if you go to other Brethren assembly's you can always ask for a letter or reference from the elders to verify your attendance and education with them. It is a bit of a shame

that I didn't pursue qualifications as I had always wanted to be a vicar since as far back as I could remember. Well, what I thought a vicar was anyway and I had a limited experience of the Vicar of the church down the road from where I lived. I actually thought that all they did was stand up front, preach, pray and give bread and wine. Clearly a Vicar has so much more to do than that.

Anyway, I thought I was 'all that' with a fountain of Bible knowledge, but deep down I knew I wasn't. Sure I could recite stuff from the Bible. I knew a lot of stories and could apply the Bible to topics that affected people in biblical times. I could find answers for many questions people had if they still lived in the times recorded in the Bible. But people don't live way back then. I couldn't apply it to now; to people's lives in today's world, and I still couldn't do the one thing I wanted above all else. I couldn't answer my own questions I had started out with. Plus I had gained plenty more to add to those already churning over in my head like a broken record. I couldn't apply any of it to me or my life as I didn't fit the 'stereo typical Christian'. All that happened when I read or studied the Bible was condemnation instead of salvation. So I tried harder to be that 'good little Christian' with the lifestyle people claimed is the evidence of being a believer and follower of Jesus. In fact I did so to the point it was dangerous to my personal safety. I made silly and reckless decisions.

Have you ever felt like running away? I did that as a small child once. I walked around the block a few times angry about something I can't remember now. I soon got hungry and reluctantly went home. I think everybody runs. Sometimes we run towards things while other times we run away. I have a tendency to do the latter a lot more than the former. I have run away from people, things and all kinds of situations and hurts. The problem with that is, the thing that hurts me the most is me, and I take me with me everywhere I go. You can't get away from yourself.

At 19 years, the moment I left education, I ran off to Inverness with the first man that showed an interest, my son's father. Such a damaging thing to do and I don't recommend it for anyone. All I wanted was to be acceptable and to be accepted. I had this need to prove myself to be certain things and live set ways. All of which contradicted who I am. I was accepted by others while knowing it was with all the pretences and masks in place, so I never really felt accepted. Being acceptable is not the same as being accepted. I knew I was attracted to women not men, but I wanted to be this 'normal' I had been lead to believe exists. Spoiler alert, there is no standard normal. I wanted to be pleasing to God and somehow I thought that putting on more pretence and more masks would achieve it. Let's be honest here, they weren't just masks that hide, they were masks that meant I was lying and deceiving everyone, and a man who had real feelings, hopes of marriage and to have a happy family life with children etc. It was like all those sins were somehow better and more acceptable than the sin of who I am. As if those are forgivable and able to be covered by Grace, while who I am is unforgivable and can't be covered.

So let me address the Elephant in the room, the whole sexuality and gender identity stuff. I knew I was attracted to females about age 6 or 7 years. I had older sisters who used to look through my Mums shopping catalogue. I did it too. We would circle the things we liked and ticked the things we would want the most for birthdays or Christmas to give my parents plenty of time to get us something we wanted, or if they couldn't afford it, to get us something we liked. My parents were quite poor as my Mum was disabled, she had Scoliosis and there was no such thing as a disability benefit back then. I think I was a teen when that came about. It was quite interesting and often amusing looking through the book with my sisters. I found it funny when they got a bit older and began to circle male models in shorts or underwear saying it was because his face was cute or he had big muscles. I didn't get it. I thought they were daft. You can't just put a person in your shopping basket! I just had thoughts that I wanted abs like that when I get older, or that a particular beard style looked good and I wondered what I would look like with that beard. I'm sure those were not the same thoughts my older sisters had. Then one day I discovered the lady models in swimwear and underwear and it was like a light bulb moment. I finally understood my giggly sisters. That was how I realised I am attracted to women and not men, but I think I had been ignoring some clues already.

Other kids used to talk about a boy that went to Ben's special needs school. He was older than me. It was rumoured that he used to sneak off after playing at the local BMX track to look at taboo pictures of girls. Chalk it up to whatever you want, but I was curious. I wondered what the models looked like without the clothing. I don't recall having any particular thoughts other than that basic

level of curiosity, but I went along to the BMX track and waited for him to leave. I was like a spy following him stealthily to the local fields as he disappeared into the tree line. I knew the tree line well as my Dad had taken me net fishing a lot in the brook that ran through there. So I knew there was a cave of empty space that the trees created. I entered by the only way in and found him sitting on his jacket, on the muddy floor, looking at his Mums shopping catalogues ladies underwear section. In fact, I think there was even some of the same model's in it that was in my Mums catalogue, only he hadn't drawn circles or placed ticks like I had in my Mums book. I often wonder if my Mum ever saw those markings and what she must have thought. If she did she never said anything. She died in 2001 so I will never know.

Who we are attracted to is not how we identify ourselves and to be honest, I was told there are two sexes, male and female and we are what our body is at birth. I never questioned this until I came to St John's and felt I had the freedom to ask questions and explore who I am. I had worn so many masks for so long; even I didn't know who I am. I braved coming out of the closet as Lesbian while at my previous church, or if you like, I took some masks off and stopped pretending so much to be some peoples idea of 'normal' and an 'evidenced Christian'. This wasn't greeted well by many. I claimed the title of being a gay woman based on that notion of being in a female body at birth and being attracted to women. It made sense back then, or at least I thought it did. One misconception is that LGBT people are attracted to everyone they see. I can assure you this is not the case. Sure, I can tell if someone is attractive just like other people can. I believe every person has attractive qualities whether male or female or other. I have even been inclined to compliment others on their looks or smile, but it doesn't mean I fancy them. There is a difference between being aware that one sex is more appealing than the other and meeting someone who can make your heart sing or skip a beat; someone you would do anything for. Then there is that thing called love which doesn't seem to have anything to do with physical parameters. Love is inside out, not outside in! For me, unless that box is ticked, I'm not interested no matter how attractive a person is.

As for gender identity, I have never matched my body. Even as a child my best friend was a boy. I chose to play with him and my younger brother over my sister's and Ben's sister every chance I got. I thought more like a boy than a girl. I wanted the boy's clothes and shoes. In the home I played with a Rubik's cube and toy cars, built forts and tents out of the clean wash basket. When my Dad had to fix the car, I was right there as his apprentice, tools in hand. As an adult I have preferred to do things like airsoft and paintball, usually while fending off comments from people about how it isn't usually a woman's thing. Lockdown enabled me to live without an alternate identity mask for the first time in my life. I had never spent so much time at home being unmasked me before. Then there was talk of the lockdown starting to lift and I felt panic and knew I couldn't go back to putting on the mask to go outside again. It seems that I like having less IBS symptoms that the hidden stress of mask wearing causes. I decided it was the right time to leave the mask off and be even more me with others. Not that I am a different person, but just free to be more authentic on the outside to whom I am on the inside. *Henry Slamaker*





Thoughts

The Eco news has been going for some time and I thought I would take a pause from the tips. We are living through difficult times and we know that the earth is facing major changes which affect all life on the planet. The weekly suggestions are a small part in helping us all to take action and alter how we think and live our lives. It is not easy. I have been interested in how the processes of industry, farm production and over use of earth's resources has affected the environment for many years. I still have a couple of magazines from the 1970s which covered these topics and were sobering then. Even though I feel concern I have not responded in an active way. Life's events have come along, like they do for us all, and often for me that has been all that I could cope with. Action is needed now from those in power and who run industry, we could help by contacting them to make changes. Maybe you have watched the programme- Extinction: The Facts - upsetting but worth viewing. I would also recommend reading Greta Thonberg's little book 'No one is too small to make a difference'. She is able to put clearly into words what we may be thinking but are unable to explain. We need to work together. The actions we can take like recycling, using less plastic or travelling less can all help and of course we need to continue to pray for our world and for guidance. We can also help by writing to our MP or supporting an organisation such as Friends of the Earth. It is important to find the topic ,issue or area of concern that means something to us, we can ask about this when we pray. In a recent bible study we looked at Acts and wisdom which was helpful in providing a way to think about our actions and what we decide to do by thinking of what we want, what is right and what is wise. This may be helpful in deciding what we do in our everyday lives in relation to climate change. Doing what we want may not be best for the planet, think what would be right then what would be wise. *Christine Rodrigues*



Last weekend I was delighted to receive an email from Dianne Lodge (now living in Norfolk). She had read last week's article about John Rich and it reminded her of her childhood. She says: "I remember the path from the churchyard to Coney Green and there was a large tomb on the left immediately before the gate. When we were children there was a sort of ledge on it which we used to play on." She wondered if that was the tomb of John Rich but the tomb to which she was referring is actually that of Henry Michael Evans and his family, who coincidentally also lived at Cowley Grove, just like John Rich (but later). Sadly this tomb is in a bit of a poor state having suffered over the years at the hands of graffiti artists. It's position doesn't help as it sticks out from

the line of the hedge so is not offered any protection.

Just the other day, I was asked by a local dog walker about the privet hedge, he was at a loss to understand why some gravestones had been placed in the middle of it. The answer is simple really, the tombs were there first and the hedge was planted around them. In the early 1800's the churchyard was not large enough for the needs of the parish. It was decided therefore to take a piece of land from Coney Green to the south of the existing churchyard and divide it by a public footpath. Therefore the land to the south of the footpath is an extension to the original churchyard. This new piece of land was consecrated in 1819 but as we know it was not sufficient for very long as the new cemetery down the hill came into being in 1867.

Another problem in the 1800's was that the churchyard was in a neglected state smothered in nettles and other weeds (sound familiar???). Workers were paid for 6 days to clear the weeds at a total cost of 11 shillings and 9d. And just to add to the problem, there were pigs roaming about breaking up tombstones and causing danger to "His Majesty's subjects" upon the road. The vestry minutes record that the owner of all pigs found at large and offending will be prosecuted!

I don't think we shall see pigs roaming around Hillingdon Village again in our lifetime but I did think that having a few goats in the churchyard would save us the job of mowing (only joking!).

Christine Bartlett



The Tomb of Henry Michael Evans.



It's hard to believe that what we see today is the same Tomb as in the previous picture.



Samaritans Purse Operation Christmas Child

At the end of August I shared with you via the online link that St John's will again be supporting this amazing charity.

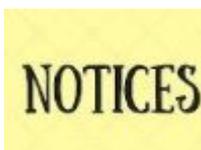
The Covid -19 global pandemic has disrupted everyday life for millions of people all around the world. Samaritans Purse have looked into ways in which they can modify their collection and processing, following strict government guidelines so that the process is safe and to ensure that boys and girls around the world know that they have not been forgotten during this time of fear and uncertainty.

This year it would be great to reach out and give a gift to as many children as we can. In preparation for this I have ordered plenty of boxes, so you longer need to worry about wrapping up the boxes. I have also ordered plenty of the leaflets which explains how to pack your shoebox. If you would like to support this appeal please contact me via email on stjohnshillingdon@gmail.com or by phone on 07972 618584.

I am happy to drop and pick up boxes following government guidelines.

All completed boxes will need to be ready for collection by w/c 8th November at the latest.

You can also pack a shoebox online by giving a donation of £20 and Samaritans Purse will pack a shoebox for you, just click on this link for more information <https://shoeboxonline.samaritans-purse.org.uk/> *Nikki Bell*



Harvest

This Sunday 27th September is when we are celebrating Harvest. Our charities for this year are 'Water Aid', 'Christian Aid' and 'Hillingdon Foodbank'. In order to give to one of these charities, please use the 'Harvest 2020' section of our website where you can give using your card.

Outdoor Services, Church Opening and Getting Online.

For several reasons, including the rising coronavirus cases in the area, we are not currently planning on having another outdoor service this autumn. We are planning to open the church again in November and will give dates and details in this space as soon as we can. Please let us know how we can help you to get online if you haven't taken that step already. There are a whole host of advantages to beginning to use the internet and it is well worth the effort, It may be easier than you think! It is also so useful in keeping in touch with friends and family too. If you are online already, do encourage someone new to join us online on a Sunday and/or a Wednesday morning.

Audrey Buckingham's funeral.

Thank you to everyone who came to support the family of the late Audrey Buckingham a total of 14 members of St. John's lined the church wall on the Uxbridge Road. Please continue to pray for Margaret, Mark, Pauline and other members of the family at this time.

Service for Ife Obgonna

There were many of us who joined together on Zoom last Sunday evening to pay tribute to Ife and thank you for all who came or were in prayer during this time. Please continue to pray for Tochi, Chigo, Mimi, Ogo and other members of the extended family at this time of reflection and adjustment.

NHS COVID-19 App for phone

Available to download from today. There are bound to be some teething problems although good to become familiar with the App.

CHEQUES

Payable to:
Hillingdon Parochial Church Council
St. John's Church
Royal Lane
Uxbridge
UB8 3QP

STANDING ORDER

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