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## Church Family News

July 2015

Dear Church Family,

We continue to be blessed by all that God is doing amongst us and through us. It is always encouraging to hear stories from individuals of how God has given them opportunities to share their faith or how individuals have seen God's faithfulness worked out in their lives. For example, several people have told me how they have been inspired by the recent *Life on the Front Line* course to be bolder in their personal witness. And so we continue to pray for more fruit to be borne from our individual lives and from our corporate life together as a church.

Following Michael's question to the APCM the PCC have considered how they can best address this. At the heart of Michael's question is the issue of how we can ourselves grow in discipleship but also better help those exploring Christian faith, to themselves be followers of Jesus. The PCC decided that this should be the core of our enquiry, particularly as this imperative is also a focus for our Deanery; i.e. how can the churches of Bath better equip our congregations as disciples and help them to reach out to those outside the church?

As part of this enquiry we feel it is vital to hear from as many of the church as possible, both those who attend very regularly and those who may not come so regularly. The best way to do this, so that everybody's voice is heard, is through a short questionnaire. This will come to you online if you are on email or, for those not online, paper copies will be available. The most important thing is that we hear back from as many people as possible so please complete it yourself and also encourage others to complete it. We will be engaging the help of a highly respected church consultant to look at the results and to lead our PCC away day in the Autumn to help us make decisions for the next season in the church's life. The PCC wants to ensure we both celebrate everything God has done within our church over so many years and then build on these strong foundations as we look ahead. We hope the questionnaire will be available in August and can be completed during the month.

One proven way of going deeper in our faith is by participating in a small discipleship group where we can engage with God's Word and other Christians in a more personal way than in a service. The Prayer Course during Lent and, again, the more recent *Life on the Front Line* course were good examples of how much value there can be in sharing together in a small group. Those who attended gave very positive feedback. Indeed, the most common feedback I heard from our recent Start Course held on a Sunday morning centred around the value of sharing with one another rather than just being talked at. We therefore plan to have four new Life groups in September. Those who are already members consistently testify to how helpful they find these groups and so we would encourage you to join one if you are not in a group already.

Helen and David Hyde's group will multiply into two groups with Jason and Val and Michelle leading one group and David and Helen continuing to lead another. A whole new group will start, led by Cas, Heather and Dennis. Furthermore, Kara and Harvey plan to lead a Family's Life group on alternative Sunday evenings where children are also part of the group. There will be sign-up sheets available soon for these groups.

It is wonderful to see the new staging almost complete now and it has been well used already with the Bathford choir being the first to hold a performance using the new stage. Two weddings have also been conducted from the platform giving everybody a clear view of the bride and groom and, of course, it is increasingly being used within our services. The church is immensely grateful to our fabric team who have put so much work into planning this project and to all who have made it happen. We particularly extend a huge thanks to John Smart who has worked long and tirelessly, far beyond the call of duty and overcoming various technical problems, to craft such a beautiful end product. This will look even better when the red carpet is laid on it and a specially designed hand rail is fitted, but again we are grateful to John for making even a temporary arrangement look so beautiful. Please do pray that this new facility will serve to both enhance our worship and enable us to build ever-stronger links with our community.

I hope that those of you who are in need of a break will find a measure of rest and relaxation over the Summer holiday period. I am aware that not everybody goes away during the Summer but a lot of activities do close during August so do keep an eye out for those who might be feeling especially lonely. Why not invite them for the fish and chip lunch and film on Monday, August 17th in church and/or the picnic in the Vicarage on Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> August from 12pm. Please bring a picnic and a chair or a rug (in the event of wet weather we will cancel).

I am writing this on St Swithun's Day and am looking forward to our St Swithun's weekend when we hope many will feel welcomed into the church.

Thank you to you all, who do so much to cover the multitude of tasks to keep the ministry of the church in Bathford alive and well, bless you all.

With love and prayers

Jane