

# Church Drive Jan/Feb 2017



## News from St. Giles Church, West Bridgford

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## The Rector Writes.....

*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 v 8

Welcome to the 'Legal edition' of Church Drive this month.

One of the riches of St Giles is the diversity of our church members. We are a church that encompasses within its membership all sorts of people with different backgrounds and occupations. It is great as a vicar to get to know the different 'worlds' we inhabit as Christians during the week as we enter into our different workplaces.

One of the challenges for those of us who are employed is to reflect upon the question - "what difference does being a Christian make to how I approach my job?" Each occupation or profession will bring with it unique challenges and opportunities for Christians whom God has placed into it.

This month I have asked three of our members to reflect out loud upon the relationship between their faith and work as they live out their calling to be salt and light in the legal profession.

As well as being one of our churchwardens **Alison Place** is a judge (a minor one, as she keeps reminding me), and she writes of her experience of praying for those whose cases come before her.

**Sarah Slack** attends our 9am service, practices family law, and is also active within the Lawyers Christian fellowship—she testifies to the sustaining grace of our Heavenly Father in helping her manage a complex and sometimes emotionally demanding caseload.

**Neil Harbinson** is a member of our 10.30am congregation and he draws our attention to the importance of justice and the rule of law in society and of how as a Christian he perceives in this a reflection of God's concern for good order and justice in our communities.

I found these articles fascinating and a great encouragement, I am sure that you will to. May they encourage us to reflect upon our own sense of Christian vocation, however that is expressed, and may they lead us to pray for those who God has called to work in the legal professions.

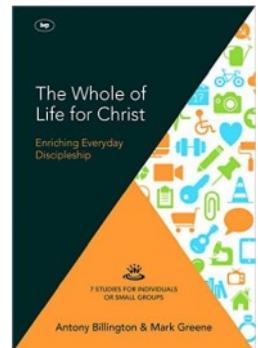
Yours in Christ,  
Lee

## Going Deeper at St Giles

The diocese of Southwell and Nottingham is increasingly focusing it's life around a vision of growing 'younger, wider and deeper'.

If you visit the diocesan website you will see some of the plans and initiatives that are coming into place led by our bishop Rt Rev Paul Williams. At St Giles we are committed to playing our part in making this vision a reality. We want to be a church that is growing younger; reaching wider into our community, and is going deeper with God.

On January 29th we begin a new sermon series exploring the theme of whole life discipleship with the aim of deepening our faith in Christ. We will explore together what it means to follow Christ in every area of life. To tie in with this series St Giles' home groups will be following up each Sunday sermon with a study on the same themes. The study guides have been written by the London Institute of Contemporary Christianity who produced the popular Frontline series we used a year ago. This focus will lead us into our church weekend away at the end of March.



This year we will not be organising separate Lent groups at St Giles but instead using the 'Whole life' material for our studies in Lent. Why not consider joining a home group for a rich time of learning together as we seek to grow deeper in our spiritual life? For more information chat to Lee, Tim or Katie Conley.

# Being a Christian in the Law

## **Alison Place: a judge working in the area of Immigration**

The law, especially the world of courts and tribunals, ought to be one of the areas of work where it is most easy to feel that you are reflecting in your work part of the character of God, who delights in justice. But the system isn't perfect. When I was a solicitor, I would regularly advise clients to settle or not pursue a valid claim, because obtaining justice would end up unjust because of the financial cost involved. As a (very low level) judge, I ask myself how can I reflect the character of God whilst working in the legal system.



On one level, quite easy. As a judge we swear an oath to uphold justice “without fear or favour” and it is a privilege to work in a system where, for the very large part, that oath is upheld on a daily basis. I also strongly believe that it is part of my calling to reflect the character of God in how I run the hearings before me just as much as in the independence of the decisions I make. The majority of people who come into a hearing room would sooner not be there. They usually have little understanding of the system. Where I work as an Immigration Judge, they are usually from another country, often speaking through an interpreter. In my other jurisdiction they are often poor, ill and with little education. It might sound basic, but it's amazing what a difference a smile makes! People don't seem to expect a judge to smile and often visibly relax when I do so. I am sure people give better evidence if they are enabled to relax as much as possible. The better the evidence, the better the chance of a just decision.

I often pray for the people who come before me at hearings. Many come from countries where it is dangerous to be a Christian and are unlikely to have heard the gospel. Even when they are from this country, they are often from clearly godless situations. I pray

knowing that I may be the only person ever to have prayed for them, possibly who ever will pray for them. I also pray knowing that I will forget them and not pray for them again but trusting that God will do something with my prayer, however small and weak.

I also pray for wisdom. Sometimes it is not at all clear what the truth is from the evidence before me; sometimes the law doesn't give a clear answer but leaves me to balance the proportionality of a situation; sometimes the decisions I make result in fairly harrowing human situations. I have to trust that God is in control and is merciful; that he will hold me and those I deal with through any mistakes I make.

So, the justice system is not perfect, but we are nonetheless privileged to have it. I am not able to speak the gospel to those who come before me, and I may have to make decisions that they find distressing, but I can still reflect the compassion of Christ to them in how I do my job.

## **Sarah Slack: a family lawyer, and member of the Lawyers Christian Fellowship**

People sometimes ask what it is like being a Christian in the legal profession. In many ways, perhaps no different to lots of other areas of work. On a personal level, looking back over 30 years as a family lawyer, it has been a very interesting, but challenging career and one for which I am grateful for God's goodness during these years.



I started working as a trainee solicitor with a law firm at their Beeston office. The 2 founders of the firm were Christians with a vision for how they could serve the community through their work within the law. The firm has steadily grown as the Christian ethos attracted both people to work with us, and clients who came to us. Although the 2 founders retired as directors of the firm, the

Christian ethos remains at the centre of the firm. The qualities you would hope for in a lawyer of integrity, trust, honesty and hard work are a given, but over that we are able to have flexibility where needed, and to go the extra mile on occasions without having to justify it in material terms as would be required in some firms. Lawyers are sometimes given a hard time in the press, and lawyer jokes are common, although so are similar jokes for other jobs so we are not alone! My experience however over many years has been of colleagues committed to helping people who have problems, colleagues whose priorities are set by our Heavenly Father, and not by the world.

The problems people face are often challenging. Ecclesiastes 11:6 is a reminder of the urgency of the tasks we have been given: "Sow your seed in the morning and evening. Let not your hands be idle, for you do not know which will succeed". We can have confidence that in doing the tasks God has entrusted to us, we will enable his will to be done. Both in carrying out everyday duties within our jobs as well as we can, but also being aware of opportunities to speak and act in a way in which our faith can shine. I am a member, as are many of my colleagues, of the Lawyers Christian Fellowship, whose motto is from Micah "What does the Lord require of you? To act justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God". That gives us as Christians our focus and aim in our daily work.. In many situations at work there are problems with no easy solutions. In my area of work, with family breakdown, it can be very hard trying to find a legal solution where there is hurt, distrust, and sadness. Where children are involved that is especially hard. Family breakdowns sadly happen to Christians as well as those with no faith, and Christians sometimes carry an extra burden of guilt and sorrow, feeling that they feel they have failed. In many situations prayers for wisdom, support and for God's love to be poured into the wounds people have are a resource we can turn to when problems seem humanly unsolvable.

As we enter a New Year, we can look to the year ahead, with a feeling of peace and hope, knowing that as Christians, whatever comes across our path, whatever problems we will need to tackle, we are not alone, we are sustained by our loving heavenly father. "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me".

## **Neil Harbinson: a Solicitor specialising in Personal Injury Law**



I came into the law because I feel strongly that I want to see people being treated fairly. I want to see justice being done. I found a niche in personal injury claims because it is an area of law that involves striving to obtain justice for people who have been badly injured. It gives me a real sense of satisfaction to see a person whose life has been devastated by a serious injury being compensated to the extent that allows them to obtain some sort of normality and to return, as far as possible, to the life that they had before. The law in this area works to compensate the person who suffered as a result of the Defendant's negligence. There is no sense of retribution. It is a matter of restorative justice rather than punishment of the offender.

In my opinion the best of man-made law is that which attempts to enact divine teaching so it becomes a force for good. We must remember though that all of our country's law is man-made and the best it can be is to be influenced by the divine. It does not replace God's law.

Law is part of the human condition. It provides boundaries, a framework for living with one another; it chastises the wicked and protects the vulnerable. Anarchy, which is the absence of law, leads not to a utopia but to conflict and exploitation. We cannot do without law. We might not agree with every single act and measure that exists but we need its protection, its strictures and its guidance.

In the opinion of Wing Commander Douglas Bader, the double amputee air ace from World War 2, 'rules are for the obedience of fools and the guidance of wise men'. He meant by this that a good dose of common sense is needed at times to ensure that the spirit of the law is followed rather than servile obedience to its literal commandments. Laws can be contradictory; they can be plain wrong. At their best however they do emulate true godliness and

help to create a better society. I reckon Jesus would probably also regard rules as being for the guidance of the wise and the observance of fools. Jesus was quite clear that there is room for God's law and man's law in this world. We see in Mark 12: 13-17 that Jesus had no truck with tax evasion and He saw no contradiction between the observance of God's law and the proper funding of government and public services. Jesus also criticised the lawyers in the Jewish faith whose interpretation of scripture resulted in unduly restrictive religious rituals yet ignored the real point of God's commandments (see Matthew 15: 10-20).

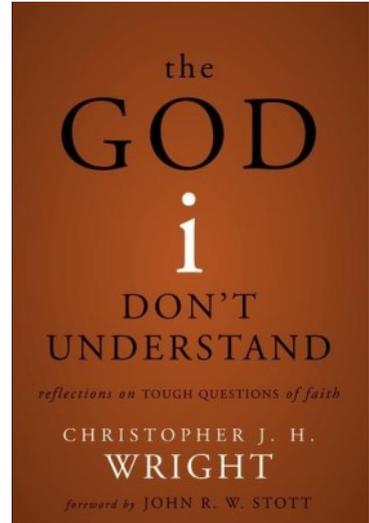
There are many skills that I need to have in my job that they don't teach you at law school. I must be tenacious and a strong advocate for my own clients, especially in discussions with my opponents and occasionally when I have to try to persuade a judge to rule in my clients' favour in court. People who know me well would tell you that I love a good argument and I am never bashful about stating my point of view! It also helps to be a 'people person' and be able to chat with anyone on their level. This is because my clients come from across the entire breadth of society. Empathy is another important attribute. Litigation is scary for a lot of people so I must be able to advise them fully on the process and offer some reassurance when it is needed.



# The God I Don't Understand

Reflections on tough questions of faith by **Christopher J.H. Wright**.

If we are honest, we have to admit that there are many things we don't understand about God. We do not have final answers to the deep problems of life, and those who say they do are probably living in some degree of delusion. There are areas of mystery in our Christian faith that lie beyond the keenest scholarship or even the most profound spiritual exercises. For many people, these problems raise so many questions and uncertainties that faith itself becomes a struggle, and the very person and character of God are called into question. Chris Wright encourages us to face up to the limitations of our understanding and to acknowledge the pain and grief they can often cause.



In this book, he takes on some of the most difficult questions of faith including the problem of evil, the violence of the cross, the end of the world and the Old Testament violence that is most shockingly on display in the Canaanite genocide. He offers some new reflections to old debates and always writes accessibly, charitably, and with due humility given the gravity of the issues.

Wright points out helpfully in the preface that to know God and to love and trust him is not the same as understanding God and all His ways, but acknowledges that for some people these issues are a real stumbling block to faith. Some people have suggested to the author that, as a biblical scholar, he should have these issues sorted out – not so. What he offers are not slick “solutions” to difficult questions but rather he offers “frameworks” within which we might deepen our understanding of the ways of God. He also helpfully makes clear why each of these issues is a problem and a stumbling block for us.

Wright also points out that there are things which God has not made clear to us and comments that living in the light of the things we do understand is enough of a challenge if we are live faithfully. Apart from reading this book for your own benefit, I would strongly recommend it as one to have on your shelves for reference to help in your conversations with friends and family who are exploring Christian faith for the first time.

**Claire Barker**

## Boys Brigade Update

Congratulations to Isaac Kerry –Target n the Junior Section, who has gained his badges.



In the 1st round of the National Chess Competition the Company Section team played well - they won the match 6.5 points to 2.5. Raphael Galea gained 3 points, Nicholas Kerry 2 and Christopher Kerry 1.5. Onto the 2nd round and we were drawn against the 4th Cheltenham, to avoid both teams travelling we met half way at the M42 services at Hopwood! We were victorious 5-4, Nicholas and Raphael gaining 2 points and Christopher 1. This means we have reached the English semi-final and will be playing the 1st Cheslyn Hay Company. The winners of this will represent England in the UK finals to be held in Scotland later in the year.

This year we had two teams in the Badminton Competition, they were Raphael Galea and Sebastian Whitlow, Andy Galea and Adam Price (42nd). They were both drawn in the qualifying group and progressed no further.

We had two teams enter the Unihoc Competition. The 'B' team didn't win any of their games but the 'A' team fared better, winning two out of three which saw them through to the semi-final. In the semi-final they played 17th A and won 2-0. So to the final and they were up against the 32nd and in a close fought final ran out winners 2-1. 'A' Team: Martin Cahill, Nicholas Kerry, Raphael Galea, Patrick Loughran and Jasper Hanson 'B' Team: Kurtiss Baker, Andy Galea, Sebastian Whitlow and Xenis Antcliffe.

**Keith Whitaker, Captain**

# PCC Update

**From meetings on November 16<sup>th</sup> 2016 and January 18<sup>th</sup> 2017**

## **1 Bishop's Initiative**

Lee attended a meeting with Richard Kellet, Diocesan Director of Discipleship and Ministry and other ministers to discuss future action for Resource Churches. Richard will be taking this forward as part of his new role. There will be a Youth Hub in West Bridgford, which will run a 'deeper' Alpha type course starting in February. Our sermons will follow a 'Deeper' theme. Home groups will use LICC material for Lent, with others invited to join.

## **2 Finance**

We agreed to raise our Parish Share by 6% to £117k  
2016 full year accounts were presented, which showed a small surplus. Next year's budget shows a significant deficit, due to Parish Share and salary costs. Please talk to Chris Lane if you want further information.

## **3 Fabric**

The cottage garden is to be tidied  
The quinquennial survey is complete; report awaited.  
Some re-edging is to be done on church carpet.  
Plumber to be called re. odour in the gents toilet in the church hall.  
Please talk to Brendan if you would like further information

## **4 Alterations to the church**

Faculties had been agreed for the audio/visual equipment and only final official approval is outstanding from the Diocesan Registrar. Final quotes are being considered. Please speak to Martin for further information  
A faculty was at the same stage for changes to the south porch and three quotes will now be sought.

## **5 Community Café**

This initiative has had to be dropped as the volunteers dropped out. Please speak to Johanna for more information

**Dizzy Prentice, PCC Secretary**

# Coming up @ St Giles

## January/February/March

### **Monday 6th Feb, 6th Mar 3.45—5.15pm**

Messy Church in church—activities, stories, songs, food  
(no Messy Church in April during Easter school holidays)

### **Wednesday 1st Feb, 1st Mar 7.45pm**

Safe Space in church - group for mutual support and encouragement for those living with anxiety and depression

### **Wednesday 8th Feb, 8th Mar 8.00pm**

Ladies' Evening—please see the bulletin for details

### **Tuesday 14th Feb, 14th Mar 10.30am**

Seniors' Coffee Morning at Bradmore Garden Centre

### **Sunday 12th Feb, 12th Mar 8.00pm**

First Priority Prayer in church

### **Monday 30th Jan, 27th Feb, 27th Mar 8.00pm**

Men's Social at the Willow Tree Pub

### **Friday 24th—Sunday 26th March**

Church Weekend Away @ Hothorpe Hall