

# DPC News

Dagenham Parish Church

January '12



Dear Friends,

What ambitions then for the New Year?

Target-setting isn't easy; the best brains in finance will tell us that.

"Who knows what's going to happen tomorrow, let alone next month?" said Bank of England Governor, Sir Mervyn King.

In some ways we do control things more than ever with technology and medicine. But our control is limited. The theme song of New Labour at the start was that things could only get better. They were voted out because we didn't think they did. The Conservatives said there was a mess to clear up. But their game isn't going to plan either. We all have to face up to something hard for us to admit - we don't control our future.

So should anyone have New Year ambitions in the light of this? Yes, 3! First I want to grow in humility. I am not 'the master of my fate', and I'll be more in touch with reality if I'm honest about my weaknesses than confident in my strengths. It's a frame of mind that will replace a proud and independent spirit with one that sees the need for community, and grows in our ability to see our 'inter-connectedness' with others. Second, and related, I want to grow in prayerfulness. I want to live in the awareness that God controls more than I can imagine or think. Paradoxically, when I read the life stories of Christians, I learn that those who pray more, do more. Prayer is never a substitute for action.

Thirdly, and also related, I want to grow in thankfulness. The more I realise anxiety won't add a single hour to my life, the more I'll be grateful for the gifts that God gives me each hour, in the wonderful control he exercises over my life. Jesus referred to the lilies of the field. "If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?" Thankfulness breeds trust - which is the antidote to anxiety. Perhaps the greatest secret to having a Happy New Year.



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Mike Reith

# CORNHILL MISSION

From 5th to 12th February we'll be looking to organise a week of special opportunities for our friends to hear about Jesus.

Every year the little Bible-teaching course that our church is linked to 'The Cornhill Course', sends its students out to conduct 'missions' across the country (and outside it too!).

This year we decided it would be good to use the students linked to Dagenham churches, to do something in Dagenham. And so some of the churches in Dagenham have combined to think of different activities that will involve our students explaining how great Jesus is in an area they are familiar with. This helps them in their training and it helps us in our desire to rescue as many as we can from Satan's kingdom, into the Christ's.

These activities will include schools work, and door-to-door visiting in two 'target areas' to strengthen gospel work there.

On the Saturday of the mission (11th), we'll have a Men's Breakfast (morning), an 'African nations' football tournament (afternoon) and a great Quiz (evening), and there'll be Cornhill speakers at each.

One of the Cornhill students (not based in Dagenham) is a Chinese dentist. We'll therefore plan an evening for Chinese people - a group in Dagenham which we have little contact with. This gets us ready for a national mission that is planned to take place in 2013, where the particular focus is on reaching unreached groups in our community.

As part of this week, I wonder if DPC Growth Groups would like to think about planning a series of 'Murder Mystery' evenings.

These are different evenings of great fun. And the beauty of them is that the pack gives all the help we need in organising one. We had a trial run just before Christmas, and the one non-church person who came to it was very struck by the happy friendships she noticed among Christians.

As part of that evening it would be very easy for a speaker to spend 3 minutes explaining how 'innocent' people all have secrets we'd like to hide (everyone has a motive to kill the victim)... how someone has hidden our past by paying for it to be covered up so we can step into a new life... and how death is always tragic, and yet the evening's joy reveals great clues about what a future beyond death might be like - if it brings us to someone who can wipe away tears and make all things new.

So please get plotting on how to make the most of this opportunity!

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# PARTY TIME 4 SCUDS

Some might say that December is not the time for wearing shorts and T-shirts, yet that is exactly what the SCUDS leaders and members did to celebrate the end of a great term looking at Exodus.

The Minor Hall was transformed into a Tropical Island where we enjoyed a time of drinking "Mocktails" served at our very own cocktail bar.

This was complete with pineapple palm tree, and eating barbequed food (cooked outside by Phil).

Entertainment came in the form of games based loosely on "The Cube", an ITV game show, such as having to walk in a straight line while blindfolded and remembering where a number came in a sequence.

There was also an "I'm a Celebrity" type Bush-Tucker Trial which saw Phil "The Hammer" Hammersley and Rob "The ..... " Riach eating disgusting foods including heart, oxtail and vomit fruit – which they apparently sell in Asda if you're interested! The addition of a Wii and Just Dance 3 was greatly enjoyed alongside hula-hooping and who am I?

An award ceremony commemorated all the funny moments in SCUDS this term, such as worst prison guard and most likely to change the music, each winner was given a tin foil trophy to remember their achievement.

This term we learnt – and hopefully you did too through all-age slots in church – about the Israelites' journey from slavery in Egypt to freedom in the Promised Land, and how this is replicated in the Christian journey from slavery to sin to freedom in Christ.

The whole encouraging series was recapped at the social through pictures taken the previous week which best showed the theme sentence for each talk this term, and this competition was won by the oldest boys group. This term ended with a bang and we're already looking forward to the New Year!

Jess Welsby

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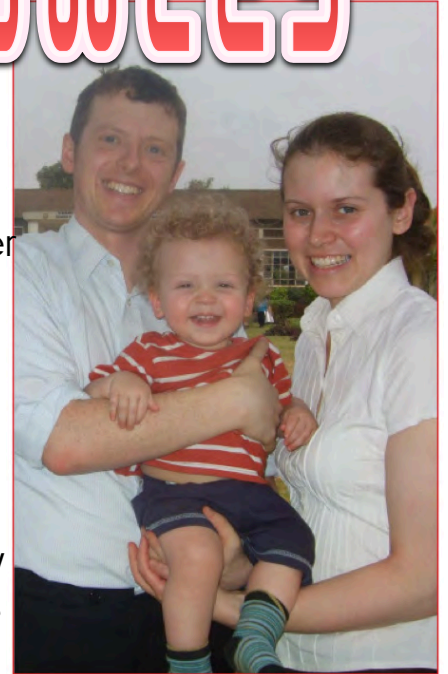
SCUDS in party mood

# CHRIS & ROS HOWLES

Chris & Ros have been in Uganda for 3.5 months. It is lovely that they are settling into their own house, and are adjusting to life in Uganda as residents rather than visitors.

But the new house has had its problems. One of the builders who renovated the house might have been stealing building materials - the roof has already sprung a leak.

More seriously someone had stolen the copper earthing rod - which resulted in Chris getting seriously electrocuted when he used his computer & kettle as a result of a power surge (they come after heavy showers of rain). The person concerned has now been sacked and the Howles' would love the deficiencies to be rectified.



Another challenge has been the noise! Fancy living across the road from a hotel that blasts out Michael Jackson at FULL VOLUME right through the night! (When Mike Reith was in Uganda last January the same hotel kept the team awake - and their accommodation was a long way from the hotel!)

When the hotel isn't seriously blasting out its noise, local Christian evangelists sometimes destroy quiet by blaring out their message of healing and promises of a better life if only people come to their gatherings.

It helps Chris to see how people hide their shallow messages and lack of understanding behind a veneer of very, very loud shouting and hallelujahs. These are the little things that don't affect you too much when you come to spend a week in the college as part of a teaching trip.

But day-after-day... and it all becomes a bit much!

Chris would love to know how to handle such situations with self-control and humility, given he is the foreigner in someone else's land.

However Chris & Ros are very delighted to have the help of Grace - who helps around the house. Simple tasks like washing clothes and cleaning the house which can be done relative quickly in England, can take a couple of day's worth of work over there.

Grace has been especially helpful because Ros is pregnant again, and so is struggling with the extra demands that places on her as well.

They are also very happy to have been given special passes to stay - which means they don't have to leave the country mid January (which is the height of Ros's pregnancy).

Given the bureaucracy in the country, it is a great thing to have this matter settled without further wear and tear on the nerves!

The hospitality they have received in these early days has been gracious and generous. They've had large amounts of rice, beans, stew and Matoke (made of savoury plantain bananas).

The principal of Uganda Martyrs Seminary (Henry) and his family, have been great neighbours. Chris & Ros stayed in their house until their own house was ready for them. Henry is a supportive and constructive boss.

They've also enjoy opportunities to teach and serve the college community already (although this term was mainly about establishing themselves and settling in to their new home and lifestyle. Chris has taught in the college chapel and Ros (a doctor) has started observing and contributing in some health lectures with students. There is so much to do and so they'll need to say 'no' to invitations. Chris will meet with Henry to consider what shape his future involvement as a college lecturer will be.

With a second child due in late Jan/early Feb, they are also very grateful that the quality of care Ros has received leaves them confident it'll be safe to have the baby in Kampala. But it's not easy for her to keep going with the heat, noise and other factors that make it harder for her as the date approaches.

Josh is really happy with the outdoor life. He gets on well with the various cows, cats, dogs, spiders and lizards that inhabit his world. He loves his sticks, stones and mud and is contented in the security of his parents' love. It isn't easy for him in church because there are 150 children under 10, with only 2-3 adults looking after them... with no toys, resources or programme to work with. This can make Sundays quite a challenging time for the family, and Chris & Ros would be delighted to see an effective ministry to children, with a greater willingness in the wider church family to serve in it.

If you'd like to 'see' the Howles and hear them describe their situation, watch them on Youtube...

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WYFUz1wzqp0>

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# FOLLOWING THE BUILDING PROJECT



WOW! - Do you still have the wow factor every time you enter the church?

I do... the smell of fresh paint and the carpets, the lighting, the ceilings, The openness, it's warm, comfortable new chairs, and all so new.

£200k later (with all but £12k coming from our congregation), we were able to move back in on 11th Dec!

2012 - A New Year - A New Church - What next? - A new beginning?



On 'Celebration Sunday' (11th Dec), Matt Fuller, now Vicar of Christchurch Mayfair (but once student at DPC) reminded us we don't just celebrate a new building with good heating and lighting systems, achieved by clever builders. The building may have stood for a few hundred years. But as Jesus told the the disciples marveling at the grand temple in Jerusalem, buildings come and go!

It is the opportunities God creates to speak about Jesus that count. We have made exciting major changes. But it is more glorious to see the glory of God in lives being changed into the likeness of Jesus.

So is it a new beginning? No... because the gospel never changes, Jesus, is the same yesterday, today and forever. He offers the same incredible rescue package to each generation so we have a future. But also YES... it could be a new beginning. Let us be imaginative and open to fresh ideas and opportunities as to how our new building can be used by God to bring glory to his name as we open it to our community.

The last few months have been frustrating work, yet the hard work is still to come. Pray that we will be daringly wise stewards of this great gift.

Wendy Garton

THANKS FOR OPENING YOUR BUILDING FOR OUR COMMUNITY TO USE



Jon Cruddas (MP- right) and John Davies (local councillor) on a visit to the church when it was still a building site... Jon thanked us on 'Celebration Sunday'.

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# CHRISTMAS EVANGELISM

Every Christmas and Easter, DPC members Kurt & Jill Peistrup, put on meals that enable South Asians in their area to enjoy Christian hospitality and a message that points them to Jesus. Kurt explains why these evenings are important...



How do we reach our community with the gospel? It's a large task but we start believing God is the only one who can draw people to himself, and He will save people from every tribe, tongue and nation, and that the gates of hell will not prevail against His church.

So we give ourselves to praying for God to build His church in our neighbourhood. Who lives in our neighbourhood? Our neighbours are mostly South Asians who follow other religions, and are not likely to visit a church. They are more community-oriented rather than individual-oriented. This sense of community can be built over sharing meals together. People who come to faith realise they will likely be thrown out of their family and social community. We need to be a Christian community to support them. Given the people and talents we have, how can we love our neighbours? English classes for ladies, a men's discussion group and hosting Urdu poetry evenings are ways we connect with people and cultures different from us. To engage them as whole families we organise bring & share dinners with all-age games to get people interacting with each other. These activities are not directly evangelistic, but are opportunities to serve in the context of Christian community. They form a first point of contact and are considered "successful" if our neighbours enjoy being in a Christian community. How can our neighbours hear the gospel in a non-threatening way? This is where the Christmas and Easter dinners fit in. It is a kind and appropriate gesture to invite our friends to our special celebrations. There is a talk explaining the meaning of the holiday. It is not pushy, but an honest explanation of the gospel. So, in the context of community, people can hear the gospel and see it lived out in our relationships.

What next? Those wanting to investigate the claims of Jesus and what it is to follow Him are invited to come to a weekly dinner and Bible study, or meet 1-to-1. As people become ready they join our Sunday meeting. We hope they'll experience church to be the caring, serving, worshipping and proclaiming community that we are called be - a place and people to call home. In the end it is not our cleverness or hard work, but God who draws people to faith in Jesus and into the community of the church.



Curry @ Christmas [www.dagenhamparishchurch.org](http://www.dagenhamparishchurch.org)  
- the mixing of cultures

# CHURCH HOUSEPARTY

Come with us to a wonderful weekend away at the end of September (28th to 30th).

High Leigh conference centre is effectively a hotel for Christians wanting to enjoy each others' company and to draw great encouragement from the Bible.



Jim & Lesley Ramsay are planning to come over from Australia to be our speakers. Jim was the Director of Evangelism in the Diocese of Sydney. Lesley still work in that department, but also oversees the women's work in the diocese, and is a great speaker at women's conventions. They bring great humour and a real gift to teach the Bible clearly, and to make it 'livable' in real life.

The cost of the houseparty will be around £108 per person in shared accommodation (cheap for a weekend in a hotel including all food etc - It'll cost £133 for en-suite rooms). If each person saved up just £12 a month from January to September, it'll pay for this holiday. We'll find a way to subsidise families - we don't want anyone to be excluded because of costs. There'll be a mixture of good teaching, feasting, afternoon activities and evening entertainment. YOU MUST COME!

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