

St. Matt's Midweek Update – 18th July 2025



I hope you have had a good week!

If you have children in school or you work in education, you're nearly there!! I know some schools break up today but some carry on into next week.

We've got the St. Matthew's School year 6 leavers' service in church on Monday, which is always a really special time of looking back and saying goodbye. Do keep all those starting new schools in September in your prayers.

This week I read a poem which really struck a chord with me, and I wanted to share it with you.

It's called "I Hate God (But I Met Jesus)" by Rev'd Jon Swales.

It is quite long, so I've added it at the end of this newsletter, but essentially it is about a woman who is homeless and is in the depths of despair and blames God for her situation. She is angry with God and the church. But when she is offered the compassion and kindness and unconditional love of Jesus through Christians reaching out, she sees the real God, through His son Jesus.

She sees that,
"Jesus didn't flinch.
Didn't preach.
Didn't condemn.
He moved towards."

So many people around us are disillusioned with church, are angry at a distorted image of God, but don't know the real Jesus. They are not going to come into church on a Sunday, so we must (and we do) reach out. We need to reach them with the kindness and compassion of Jesus. We need to meet them where they are, and offer small acts of love that meet their basic needs.

That's what being an inclusive church means - we want everyone to see the non-judgmental love of Jesus for them through us. We don't want barriers to get in the way of people meeting God.

Sometimes we are put off by people's brokenness, their anger and bitterness, their mess. But this poem reminds us that everyone is made in the image of God, and everyone matters and deserves to meet Jesus - compassionate, kind, welcoming, loving Jesus.

So this morning, as the community larder is in full swing, I'm praying that people will see a glimmer of Jesus as they are offered kindness and food. You may not be able to volunteer in any of our ministries, but please cover the volunteers and all those connections in prayer.

Notices



This Sunday (20th July) we have our main 10am service with communion. Anthony Hammill will be finishing our Joseph series for us, and there will be groups for children and youth. The Bible passage is Genesis 45:1-28.

Next Sunday (27th July) we are into the summer holidays, so we will have the first of our summer family services. We will all be in church together and I will be kicking off a series on the "I Am" sayings of Jesus.



Men's breakfast - Saturday 26th July

Kevin is holding another men's breakfast in his wooded garden on 26th July, 7am until about 9.30am. It will be a very informal gathering but will be nice to spend time together.

Suggested contribution of £2 please - there will be a donations pot on the day.

Please email Hannah or message Kevin directly if you intend to come; we will then forward the address.



A few things coming up over the next couple of weeks:

Monday 21st July - St. Matt's School year 6 leavers' service in church

Monday 21st July - PCC meeting

Wednesday 23rd July - Mission prayer meeting

Saturday 26th July - Knitting Hub

Tuesday 12th August - prayer meeting

Could you join a team in September?

Last Sunday we talked about needing another couple of people to help at Ignite, just once a month from September (Tuesday evenings 6pm - 7.30pm).

We had one person come forward, which is great, but she can no longer help with Deeper, so that leaves us a couple of people short at Deeper now, again for once a month from September (Monday afternoons 3.30pm - 5pm).

The summer is a great time to think about whether you can join a team, and maybe your routine will change from September. Do come and talk to me if you would like to get involved with any of our groups and ministries.



Lost property

There is still a fair bit of lost property at the back of church. If any of this is yours, please pick it up on Sunday or let me know it belongs to you! Thanks.

Summer Reading Challenge in Kent libraries

If you are looking for things to keep children occupied over the summer, the annual Summer Reading Challenge for children has launched in all the libraries in Kent, and to support the Challenge, libraries in Tunbridge Wells district will be holding free activities and events for children and families.

More information about all the events can be found here www.kent.gov.uk/libs

Do be in touch with me in the office if you need any help or support.

I hope you have a lovely weekend.

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Registered charity number 1185772

"I Hate God (But I Met Jesus)" by Rev'd Jon Swales

It was raining.
Sideways rain.
Hard, mean,
Leeds rain.
The kind that says:
You're not welcome anywhere.
She stood outside,
soaked,
smoking the last of her rollies,
muttering curses
like liturgies for the lost.
Then she saw the collar—
white,
stupid,
clean.
And that was it.
"You lot make me sick."
She shouted through the wind.
*"All God's ever done is ruin me.
Took my kids.
Took my home.
Took my f***ing dignity.
If he's in charge,
what the hell is he playing at?
He's sending me to hell,
that's what."*
No one argued.
We just waited.
When she calmed down a bit,
we let her in.
She came in
because it was dry.
Not for God.
Not for prayer.
Just a chair
and a break from the storm.
We made her tea.
Milk first.
Four sugars.
Gave her one of those
Aldi knock-off Penguins,
the kind with no joke on the wrapper.
She took it like it mattered.
(It did.)
And she matters,
not a knock-off,
but an image-bearer.
Loved.
Life may not have given her dignity,
but we will.
And that day—
we told the story.
Jesus stepping ashore,
meeting the man
cut and chained,

rage in his throat
and demons in his bones.
And she watched.
Didn't blink.
Eyes narrowing
like she recognised the script.
"That's me,"
she whispered,
half-defiant.
*"I've been the tombs.
I've been the scream.
I've been the cut-up mess."*
But Jesus didn't flinch.
Didn't preach.
Didn't condemn.
He moved towards.
*"The Son is the radiance of God's glory, and the exact
representation of his being."* (Hebrews 1:3)
"Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father." (John
14:9)
She'd worshipped a monster God.
A sky-fist with a big stick.
But this Jesus—
he came close.
He bore the scars.
He told the storm to shut up.
And something in her shifted.
No altar call.
No glowing hands.
Just weeks later,
mid-cuppa—
Milk, four sugars,
she prayed:
"Jesus... thank you that you love me."
That was it.
No fireworks.
Just an image bearer,
A wounded soul,
soaked in grace
and drying out
slowly.
She still swears.
Still smokes.
Still slips out
when it gets too much.
But she follows now—
not the God she hated,
but Jesus:
Compassionate & kind.
Scarred like her.
And she's changing.
Not all at once,
but like spring
after a long,
a very long,
angry winter.