

March 2025

Dear praying friends,

Last Sunday was sort of typical for us. I don't know if it speaks of life in our particular context, or British society as a whole. Are people such a mixture of life and muddle everywhere? I feel incapable of helping anyone. (Good job I know someone who can, I suppose.)

Let's start with Dwaine*. He was supposed to be manning the AV desk, but clearly forgot, and didn't even show up. He's a lovely young man, soon to be married. But he operates on a different wavelength somehow, not quite getting basic drive and responsibilities in church life. He has a sincere faith, however, and manages fine at work, apparently.

You may remember Kerry, who died so tragically last year. Her elderly mother, Maggie*, has been coming to church for the last six months or so, with her son-in-law. But she's had a fall, is now bed bound, and is asking for church to be filmed for her. The AV job has got bigger. Thankfully, 17-year-old Will, whose father also died last year, manfully stepped in, removing his hi-viz after welcoming at the door, and took charge.

Then take George*. He faithfully serves in various ways, playing his guitar each Sunday with his own choice of chords and tempo, regardless of the rest of the band. It mirrors his life, wanting the right things, but seemingly unable to see where it's not working. We want to help and grow together, but he seems to think it's all going well - when it isn't.

Stu* was doing the bible reading for the first time, and read excellently. He and his wife moved to Leyland and joined us a year or so ago, and are wonderful, if a little overwhelmed by the complications of life. But it was hard to listen to his reading - Lucy's* phone went off. Instead of silencing it, she let its irritating melody blast out for a while - and in the end answered it and started chatting: 'No, I'm in church ... I can't ...' etc etc. So Steve perseveres with reading from the front of the room; Lucy half whispers, half shouts her (obviously vitally important) conversation over on her side. Matt* whispered to his neighbour, 'How rude - she could have put it on speakerphone so everyone could join in!' I'm silently praying that the Word would not be disrupted any more.

Adrian* was leading the meeting. He closed with words of exhortation: '... So this week, let's be serious about living for Jesus then...' Carol* interrupts: 'Are there any sausages this week?' Adrian tries to recover the weight of the moment: 'It's about living for Jesus...' Carol again: 'It's church lunch next week.' Adrian gives up.

Visitors last Sunday included other Adrian*, with us for the second week in a row. That's exciting - he came a second time! We've been praying for younger men, and

Adrian just turned up, looking for a church, wants to come to our one, has not been to church before, it seems. But it's hard to get much more out of him, as he is mute. Not deaf - but just can't speak. He appears to have mild learning disabilities too. We're so thrilled he turned up - but if anyone has any experience or advice in relating to him, please get in touch.

Then Sunday afternoon included anxious messages: 'What? It was being filmed? It's on YouTube?' For several women in church, it would be very dangerous to have their image on the internet or website. They have to live, in this world of cameras, making sure they are not caught by the wrong ones. But it's ok; it's not for public viewing; crisis over.

On Sunday evenings at the moment, we're playing music with any of the youngsters who want to, and then spending time with some prayers, bible readings and a chapter of The Screwtape Letters. It's been a small handful of us, but lately a few more have come along, including some of the hyperactive church kids, who charge around like a herd of wolfhound puppies, they and their mums all talking at once at a hundred miles per hour. It's a really lovely time - but getting everyone settled to pray together is a challenge. Giggles, tail ends of conversations, quips - I said, 'Let's try and have 20 seconds of complete silence before we pray.' That was difficult, and not just because of the kids, either. It took nearly 10 minutes to try and settle people. And then, finally, 10 seconds into the silence, the door bursts open as Ange* and her two delightful little rascals enter like a fresh whirlwind. 'Forget that!' I say. But eventually we got there and had a good time praying together.



CS Lewis' chapter was about gluttony, something I've been wanting to address for a while - so that was good too. People want a sermon series on the 'seven deadly sins'. That could be very good.

Please would you pray for us? In particular for:

- A couple more younger families with basic stability, to help set a healthy culture.
- Working out the practical running of things following our Building Manager's sad departure.
- Outreach! More relationships and conversations with outsiders.
- A women's worker to join us, part time. (We will advertise shortly.)

With our love, and many thanks for your support and prayers,

Mark Simpson