

light into dark corners

the newsletter of the Zephaniah Trust
registered charity 1036478
29th year Summer 2022

Special Holiday Club Edition !



Cirque du Zeph - Holiday Club 2022

We'd not done this "live" for a couple of years because of Covid, so although the flame had been kept alive online, we didn't know how many children to expect. Adverts went out on social media and in Shipley schools and to our clients from previous years. Numbers, although not the pre-pandemic 70 a day, were around a busy thirty to forty every day.

The whole thing was written by Julie (not that everyone believed that - so good!) and she managed to get the circus theme running alongside the Zeph-verse (**Zephaniah 3:17**).

We did things from a menu every day that the children chose from in small (ish) groups: workshops included ZephAssociate Daryll Hackett fitting us in between family holidays to show us how to juggle and spin plates; running around games; and we made things (see page 4). John's scheduled poetry workshop had to be cancelled because he fell ill and was unable to finish the week - for the first time in thirty (30) years!

All together in the church (with the chairs taken out and the congregation mostly at home), we sang a lot (see page 3) and told jokes (we'll spare you those). As of old, there was a picnic lunch where parents and carers could come and an invitation to the Sunday session (aka Shipley Baptist church morning service). This is available to watch <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VWnGV1fS464&t=5s>

The Zephaniah staff were brilliant, coping with John's absence (knew they would!) and our volunteers are always key to the running of the holiday club - (photos right - including our ever-present, if disguised celebrity guest). It was good, as always to have some ex-holiday clubbers now too old to register helping out as junior leaders.



We sang....

The Lord your God is with you
He is mighty to save
He will take great delight in you
He will quiet you with his love
He will rejoice over you with singing.

Zephaniah 3:17

The above is the verse we claim at Zephaniah as “ours.” It’s why we are known as the Zephaniah Trust. That vision of God being so happy with his creation - us - that he can’t help but sing. Singing is always a big part of our Holiday Club. This year’s special song is below...

When it’s all dark and scary
And I need a smiling face
I want to hear you sing for joy
And feel your warm embrace

I want you to be happy
I want to see you smile
I want to hear you sing for joy
‘cos then I know I’ll...

Sing with you
Sing with you
Sing with you some more
Sing with you
Sing with you
Sing with you, my Lord.

John Froud
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A bigger band but not as many children as in the Cathedral for the Church School leavers’ service...



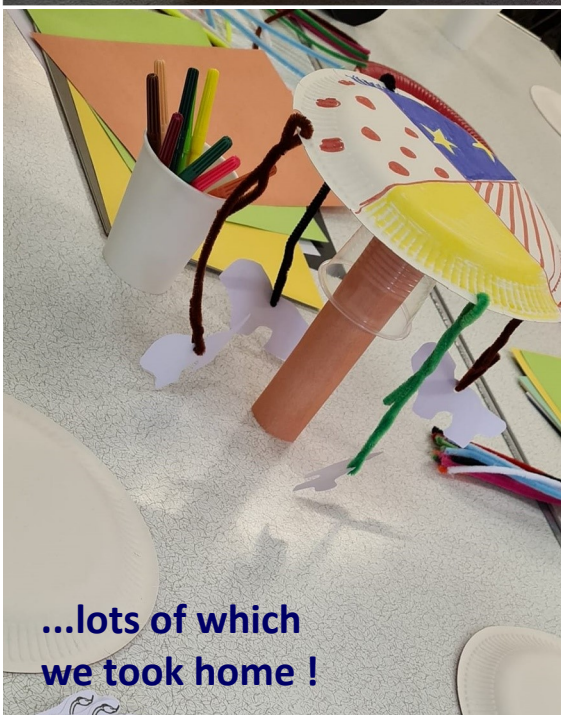
...and some smaller children too, but all enjoying the singing - with God!



...and we made things...



...often from rubbish...



...lots of which we took home !



...and we watched five episodes of “the show”



As ever, the drama required the suspension of disbelief as an unlikely group of dramatis personae and a puppet treated us to a daily soap opera of the trials and tribulations of the **Cirque du Zeph** - a circus blessed with a number of dodgy, if not actually inept acts - and an Inspection to pass.

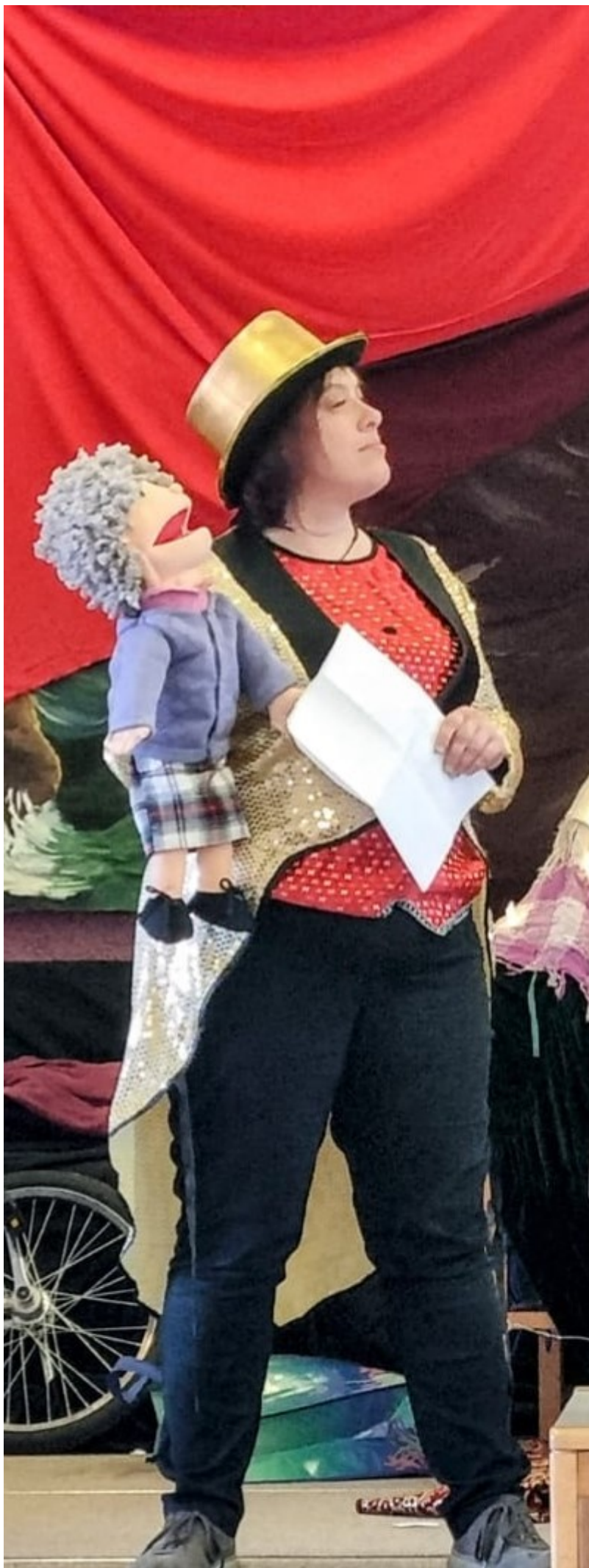


Guesting, as often, from St Paul's, **Chris Clough** was an admirable villain as the Inspector - very like Ofsted.

Boxoffice Betty, played by **Yvonne**, reprising her Victoria Wood character and the Ringmaster, **Natalie** previewing her new role as Zephaniah administrator can be seen in the next pages.



The box, seen here front stage - a **Very Important Parcel** - was NOT to be opened until the last episode. A message that the children reinforced every time someone went near it. It was like a Pantomime. Oh, yes it was! **Julie's** script could be made available...



A warm zephwelcome to Natalie!

The role of Ringmaster at the *Cirque du Zeph* would seem to be an apt one for our new administrator! Getting the almost trained wild horses to be in the right place at the right time, doing something approximate to the right thing is a daunting task, but Natalie Whiteley gets our vote as, “The woman most likely to.”

She has been working as parish administrator at St Cuthbert’s, up the hill in Wrose, and also at St James’ on Bolton Rd, so she is familiar with the trials of office life: emails, invoices, photocopiers, deadlines... and the things that interrupt and interfere with your plans for the day. (That’ll be the staff).

A regular taker of assemblies at Blakehill, she will be able to continue with those, with John and on her own, and she has been used to fronting Re:wind events at St Cuthbert’s.

We are looking forward to her taking over the toddlers group at Shipley Baptist Church, also from Jenny, and linking that into our **ZephFamily** events which post-covid, we can re-launch.

Natalie’s mum and dad, June and Graham, have been volunteering with us for years, and her daughters, too!



Yvonne as Victoria Wood as **“Boxoffice Betty”** in the show:
the same Yvonne who has been leading innovative outdoor prayer spaces in the **Spen Valley** schools this term...



So good to be able to make the most of the dry summer and take prayer out of the classroom and into the school grounds...



Julie on Zephaniah 3:17 – The Whole



We spent our holiday club week thinking about the Zephaniah verse – Zeph 3:17 – one line at a time.

**“The Lord your God is with you.
He is mighty to save.
He will take great delight in you.
He will quiet you with his love.
He will rejoice over you with singing.”**

But when we look at the verse as a whole, what does it mean? What does it look like in practice? It can be hard to root what we read about God in real life, can't it? So, for our holiday club Sunday service, I decided to explore a time in my life when, looking back, I knew each line of that verse to be real – and I saw what it looked like.

When I was almost 13, I was diagnosed with a life-threatening illness. It was a bolt from the blue. My life, for at least six months, would revolve around stays in hospital, treatment, tests. That hospital ward became mine and my mum's second home.

On that first night in hospital, I felt ill. I had a chest infection that just wouldn't shift. All I wanted to do was sleep. But my mum made me do our nightly Bible reading from the notes she bought. It was Psalm 91.

“Those who go to God Most High for safety

will be protected by the Almighty.

I will say to the Lord, ‘You are my place of safety and protection.

You are my God and I trust you.’

God will save you from hidden traps and from deadly diseases.

He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you can hide.

His truth will be your shield and protection.

You will not fear any danger by night or an arrow during the day.

You will not be afraid of diseases that come in the dark

or sickness that strikes at noon.”

Coincidence? Maybe. But I don't think so. Those words stayed with me throughout everything that was to come. I revisited the Psalm many times.

“THE LORD YOUR GOD IS WITH YOU”

I had four courses of treatment spaced over six months. The illness went into remission after the first one – and stayed there. The doctors told us my best chance was to have a bone marrow transplant, that they could test my parents and siblings to see if they were a match. My oldest brother, in his twenties at the time, requested the same numbing magic cream that my four-year-old sister had. Turned out that removing the dressing caused more pain from ripping out the hairs on the back of his hand than the needle would have done! It also turned out that he was the closest bone marrow match you can be without being twins.

I do need to say at this point that I don't know why some people are fortunate in this way and others aren't. I also need to say that I believe if God could just heal everyone, he would. Anything else doesn't make sense to me in the light of a God who is love. And I think he's ok with that belief. I do know that God is there, through every step for everyone, whether those are steps into light or into shadow. For me, those steps – into remission, into bone marrow matches – were what the next line looks like.

“HE IS MIGHTY TO SAVE.”

You might think a hospital ward full of sick children and families facing the darkest of days – a place where not all of the children recover, where the staff face daily

trauma and immerse themselves in struggle – you might think a place like that would feel heavy, stifled, sad. Don't get me wrong – there were times when it, quite rightly, did. But it was also one of the most delightful, most laughter-filled places I have ever been.

Those families, from their different places and different backgrounds, instinctively formed a supportive community and it was beautiful. We enjoyed one another's company. I remember once, four of us were sent to an adult ward because our ward was full. We weren't thrilled about it. Our parents did a McDonalds run to cheer us up. My mum was just finishing putting clean bedding on my bed when one of the other parents came across to help her – and accidentally swept my almost-full milkshake right across the clean sheets. It was, to us, hilarious!

I remember making a nurse laugh so hard she had to stop and repeatedly compose herself before moving on to do the next child's checks, and another – a Leeds fan – who made a bet with me (a Man Utd fan at the time) that Man U wouldn't do the treble that year. Memorably, they did – and he spent a morning wearing my Man Utd cap as penance.

It was a place of playfulness, laughter, joy and delight. Those things were every bit as valuable and important, as nourishing and necessary, as the medical care and the support in the darkness.

“HE WILL TAKE GREAT DELIGHT IN YOU.” “HE WILL QUIET YOU WITH HIS LOVE.”

The bone marrow transplant went well – I took the record for the fastest exit from isolation in the bone marrow unit (the only record for being fast I have ever been close to!) – but it didn't last. A reaction between my body and the bone marrow meant I had to return to hospital for months. The doctors didn't know how to fix it. They were giving me daily blood transfusions – and I was bleeding out as fast as they were putting it in.

Then, one weekend, I went home for an afternoon visit. The new minister from our church popped round to pray for healing and anoint me with oils – something he did and that my mum had requested. I'll be honest, I found it all a bit weird. I went back to hospital that evening. And slowly, things began to change. Slowly, I became better. Months later, a doctor who had no idea of the events of that visit home, mentioned that specific date as the time when things, inexplicably to the medical professionals, turned around. It took years for the damage to fully heal. But heal it did. I refer you again to my caveat at the end of the previous section – I don't know why some people are not healed in an earthly way and I do believe that, if he could heal everyone, God would. But for me, in those moments when hope was scarce, the people who stepped in to offer some – the minister, the doctors and nurses, my parents and siblings, my best friend – they were everything.

Looking back, I can see how that season of my life was a time when God was real and known and tangible and present. He was there, in and of himself and through the people who surrounded me. God is often most visible in other people – and sometimes we are so blinded by the ordinariness of this that we forget to see the divine.

Towards the end of my treatment, my mum's milkshake-flinging friend wrote her a card. Her daughter hadn't survived. The card thanked my mum for her friendship and support – and it asked a question: “Are you a Christian? Because you have felt like everything a Christian should be.” There, in that lady's darkest pain and grief, she had seen and heard God – in my mum.

“HE WILL REJOICE OVER YOU WITH SINGING.”

This is what God looks like. He is with us. He is mighty to save. He takes great delight in us. He quiets us with his love. He rejoices over us with singing. And this is what we should look like too.

Imagine a world where every community, every gathering point of people – every hospital, every school, every street, every workplace, every local council and national government – looked like that. And don't forget – there are many, many places where people *do* look like that. Our job is to see it, to recognise it, to amplify it, and to join in.

That's what the verse looks like. Go to it Zephyrs.

It's Time to Say Goodbye.

Thank you for all your prayers and good wishes since my announcement of my departure in the last newsletter. I have appreciated them all.

Since that newsletter, our house has gone on the market, and (hopefully) been sold. The sale is currently making it's slow progress with the solicitors. I have just been offered a job as an administrator in the Politics department at York University, so I shall be returning to my academic roots. Gratifyingly, it was the first job I applied for, and I was relieved to get something so quickly. I start at the beginning of October. Thomas got a good solid set of GCSE results which were more than enough to start his BTEC at York College. He enrolled on Friday and starts in a few weeks.

Your prayers would still be appreciated though. Alex and I are leaning towards extending Alex's house rather than moving, so Thomas and I will need a rental for a year. Rentals in York are in short supply at a price we can afford. Please also continue to pray for my mental health. I have been surprisingly unstressed, but that may change as I actually have to pack my life into boxes.

I have worked at Zephaniah for longer than I have worked anywhere else. It is a unique organisation where the idea that everyone is made in God's image and is therefore of infinite worth runs through what it does and how it does it like a golden thread. I will miss that. My colleagues - past and present - have always been more than just colleagues, and knowing that they have always been there for me when I've needed them has meant a lot. I will miss them. I will also miss working part time. You might like to pray that I manage with a full time job for the first time in 20 years!

I took a step of faith thirteen years ago, and I have never regretted it. Moving on now, equally feels the right thing to do. Uprooting myself is hard, but sometimes a plant has to be re-potted if it's going to continue to grow. I know that God has already gone ahead of me to prepare the way, He goes with me as I go, and He's going to be following along behind me to pick up the pieces when I mess up.

I will be working alongside Natalie throughout September, helping her settle in, and hopefully imparting all the stuff that's in my head. We'll have the coffee on. If you are passing, please call in to say 'hi' and 'goodbye'. To everyone that I won't see, thank you for all your support and God bless. I shall miss you all.





Sept 9: Shipley Baptist /
10: Chelmsley Wood
Baptist Church /
15: Earby Cricket Club /
24: Redcar, St Peter's /
30: Todmorden,
Roomfield Baptist Church
Oct 1: Barnsley,
Sheffield Rd Baptist /
8 : Birstall, St Saviour's/
15: Driffield, New Hope

autumn
tour
2022



“if I close my eyes”
John Froud in concert with Cath

a Zephaniah Music promotion
01274 580817 johnfroud@zeph.org.uk

The legend that is ***Ishmael*** is
coming to do our Light Party !
October 31 (natch !) 6.30pm

A free event - but you need to tell us
how many adults and how many kids...



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