

CHRISTIAN WORKER



**Bassenthwaite
Family Retreat**

Four new Christians!

**Planning for a new
year**

**Challenges for
Christian Growth**



From the editors:

Contents

Front cover – main photo:

Bassenthwaite Family Retreat;
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Bassenthwaite; Christmas meal in
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What better way to start a new year than to think about growing as a Christian and to make plans to enable growth to happen? It would seem that growth is on the minds of Christians throughout the UK just now and this is reflected in the pages of the *Christian Worker* this month.

A good number of us were able to spend the weekend together at the Bassenthwaite Family Retreat. This was a great time of encouraging each other in our lives as Christians. Two words seemed to characterise the weekend and were used by many who were there: 'family' and 'helping'. There was such a great atmosphere that made the weekend seem like a family reunion, with everyone pitching in to help out with whatever needed to be done. The lessons and activities brought us closer to Jesus and helped us to think about what he taught. A wonderful weekend!

Our 'Spotlight' this month is about plans that congregations are putting into place for the year. Many of these plans centre on reaching out to those around us with the good news of Jesus. But also included are plans to help Christians grow. We hope that reading about the plans that some have made can help spur us all to think about the mission Jesus has given us as well as the need to grow.

We have included some of the thoughts that Thayer Salisbury presented at a recent seminar in Sheffield. He was speaking about the need for growth and emphasised what healthy Christians and congregations look like. Although many did not get to hear him while he was here, we hope his thoughts will be an encouragement to us all.

The plans many congregations have made are reflected in our 'Diary' this month – as you will see, there are two full pages of activities that are planned throughout the length and breadth of the country. Some of these are outreach events while others are designed to help us grow as Christians. Many years ago Christians were known for supporting each other's activities. We need to get back to doing that, because we are all in this together. Look through the list of what is happening and determine to support what we can. Let's be an encouragement to each other this year.

Jon

Spotlight: Congregation planning

As an old year ends and a new one begins, many congregations begin to plan their work for another year. As Trevor pointed out in his “Final Word” last month, the need to plan is vital, not only for one year but for the next few years.

Having a plan for where we want to be next year, in five years, and in ten years helps us to focus on what we should be doing together as Christians to see the good news of Jesus taken throughout our various communities as well as to plan for spiritual growth among Christians. If we want to reach the point where

congregations have an organised Biblical leadership we need to plan for this to happen – it won’t happen by accident! Even if we want to individually grow to be more like Jesus this year, we have to make personal plans and invest time in God’s word so that we can grow.

Several congregations have taken up Trevor’s suggestion from last month: “Let us know your plans and hopes. We can work with each other, support each other and pray for each other.” We have published some of these as our ‘Spotlight’ section this month. We hope that this will stimulate others to think about what they can do for the Lord this year. As you make plans, let us know about them and we will include them in a future issue of the *Christian Worker*.



Eastwood: We have been planning our outreach meetings on a particular pattern since 2006. The aim, as with all Gospel outreach work of all those who engage in such work, is to reach people looking into what life is all about, who Jesus is, what sin is, why we need Jesus, what is salvation and all things related to the good news of Jesus.

Our meetings in the format that we have adopted are generally well received by a mix of visitors from various backgrounds. Our visitors are not by any means just those from other congregations, but over the years we have had many people from

different religious backgrounds represented one way or another.

The general format has a good mix of both old and modern hymns, Bible readings to support the lesson and

prayers throughout the evening. The meeting is preceded by a time of welcome and refreshment at 6.00 pm, including snacks and drinks, which lasts for about an hour. This provides an opportunity for people of mixed backgrounds, people that in many cases have quite differing views, to meet together in a friendly, welcoming environment to hear the word of God. Very often the meetings, including the welcome and refreshments, will extend up to three hours with many staying to discuss aspects of the lesson or other issues arising from the discussion whilst participating in a

Jon

further time of refreshments. We usually have attendances in the region of 35-50.

Each evening is preceded by extensive preparation work that is both physical and prayerful, which begins the end of the previous year with a meeting to determine the theme and subjects along with suggested speakers.

For each evening we have 1250 A5-size double sided full colour leaflets printed, which are distributed around the area one week before the meeting. We also print 25 A4-size posters, which are put up in local shops, homes and cars. We put up two A2-size posters and display these outside our building. This is all backed up by the prayers of the congregation, both individually and collectively.

For 2017 we are reverting back to a lesson style that we used in the past, where the lesson is presented in two parts, the first usually being the inquiry and the second being the response. In some cases we are planning to have two shorter lessons by two different speakers, whilst in others just one speaker dealing with both parts.

The overall theme for 2017 is “*Jesus the Saviour*.” The four evening lessons will be “Jesus the Creator” (February); “Jesus the Forgiver” (May); “Jesus the Messiah” (August); and “Jesus: Prophet,

Priest and King” (November). The details and breakdown of these lessons are listed in the ‘Diary’.



Come along and support these evenings if you can. You will be warmly welcomed.

Adrian Limb

Reading: The Reading congregation will be hosting RISE (Reading In Song event) as an eight-

day outreach to Reading and the surrounding area. The a cappella singing group *Durant*, from Nashville, Tennessee, will be joining us from Saturday, 27th May, to Sunday, 4th June. They will be singing throughout our community for the entire week. We will be meeting people on the streets, at the station, in the parks, on the buses, and more.

The event will culminate with a ‘Praise and Harmony Workshop’ on Saturday, 3rd June, from 3:00 to 5:00

p.m. This will be followed by a concert featuring *Durant* from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Both of these will be held at the Loddon Valley Leisure Centre on

Rushey Way in Lower Earley, RG6 4GD.

You are welcome to join us for the events on 3rd June and our worship on 4th June at the Crescent in Lower Earley RG6 4HB.



For more information, visit our website: rise2017.org. Be sure to 'like' us on Facebook: RISE. If you need further information contact Craig Benjamin: 07598 198225 or CSBJLB@gmail.com.

Craig Benjamin

East Kilbride: For the past few years, we have been choosing a verse (or verses) to emphasis throughout the year. This year we are centring around two verses. The first is 2 Peter 3:18 – *"But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity."* We need to grow to be more like Jesus and imitate him in our lives. But to do this we must also grow in our knowledge of Jesus. To that end we are encouraging all to become Bible readers. Each week we record the number of chapters that have been read the previous week, as a way to encourage us all in our reading God's word.

The second verse we are emphasising is Romans 10:15 – *"As it is written: 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!'"* All are encouraged to think of ways

that they can 'speak a good word of Jesus' as they live their lives each day.

We are in the midst of putting together a plan for the congregation for the coming year. The core of our plan centres on the mission that God has given us to "go and make disciples of all nations." The plan is built around outreach activities. Some of

these will be based on what the Eastwood congregation is doing – I have been privileged to be part of over the past years. We plan to continue the very successful joint-gospel meetings that we have been having

with area congregations since 2000.

We are also planning to host an event to invite other congregations to attend, probably in June. We are planning some in-house training, as well as more social evenings for the congregation. Our goal is to try to have something we can be working towards every month or two months.

We will announce more as our plans come together. As always, keep us in your prayers!

Jon Galloway



Aylesbury (Buckingham Park): Towards the end of 2016 we came to realise that our weekly midweek Bible studies had run their course with it becoming increasingly difficult to find a day and time that suited most people most of the time. Our new programme “Eye Opener Studies”, devised by Graham Fisher, may be of interest to others. He has written a series of essays, each taking four sides of A4, covering certain aspects of the faith, though not in a basic way, and each with an activity or discussion starter at the end. One article is issued to all members once a month and then we decide how best to use them. Some study together as a family, some merely read the material without attempting the assignments, and some use the material as a springboard to independent study. Once a month those of us who are able to meet together do so and discuss what we have discovered.

No doubt others could use them differently and perhaps adapt them for outreach. It will be launched in greater detail in the February edition of *The Voice* and the March CW, so



watch out there to see what it is all about or contact Graham (GAFisher888@aol.com) for further information.

As a congregation we spent time looking at where we were and where we wanted to be, if it is the Lord's will, with a series of round table discussions and planning meetings. We agreed that one thing we needed to do was to raise our profile on the Internet

by improving our website. We can then feature this in our advertising and publicity so that interested locals can find out something about us before they come to one of our meetings. Our Website Task Force has been headed up by Learie Bacchus and has utilised the enthusiasm and talents of our

younger Christians. If your congregation has a website we have probably had a look at it and may well borrow some of your good ideas. You will be most welcome to do the same once

ours is up and running. We will let you know through the CW once it is ready.

Steven Whitehead

Christian Growth and Challenges

If our children are not growing, we are naturally concerned. When Christians are not growing spiritually, we may feel a similar concern. The right reaction to a lack of growth in a child would not be to put the child on steroids but to check the child's diet and overall health. So it is with Christians. Congregations are not growing, in the Western world at least. Some of the problem may have to do with factors beyond our control. But some of the lack of growth may be caused by problems with the overall health and the diet of the Christian.

Realising we cannot prescribe some spiritual steroids that will bring instant spiritual growth, it would be more useful to consider some spiritual health issues that may be holding back our growth.

When a group of Christians seem to be relying too much on themselves – their plans, their programmes, their perseverance – they are not bringing glory to the Lord. Christians with a weak prayer life, whatever their good qualities, will not point people to Jesus. Rather than seeking a magic programme that will cause us to grow, we need to be praying more often and more fervently.

And let us enter into these prayers not as a means of controlling the Lord and forcing him to grant us growth. Let us pray humbly, submitting to his will and his timing.

Christians that are spiritually healthy are active and

effective in praising their Lord. Our primary reason for praising is that the Lord is indeed worthy of praise. But praise often has an effective, although often overlooked, side-benefit. Praise is often an aid to evangelism (Psalm 35:18; 40:9-10; 68:26). Therefore we must never bring our second-best efforts to the work or worship of the Lord. If we show up to work on time, we ought to show up to worship on time. We ought to prepare for worship as we would prepare for an important client at work. Our best effort, in every respect, ought to go into our worship. Otherwise our worship dishonours rather than honours our Lord.

Spiritually healthy Christians are also active in proclaiming the gospel. The gospel is not a new law that we have to keep that replaces the old law that the Jews were supposed to keep. The gospel is good news to proclaim, not a new law to enforce. The heart of the gospel is what Jesus did in his death, burial and resurrection. To present the gospel we must speak of Jesus crucified (1 Corinthians 2:2). The matters of first importance in the gospel are Jesus' death, burial and resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). Yet,

while the gospel is primarily the proclamation of the death and resurrection of Jesus, there is something that needs to be obeyed (2 Thessalonians 1:8). There is a response that is needed.

If we take care of the spiritual health of Christians, growth will come if it is God's will.

Thayer Salisbury

(adapted from his lesson at Sheffield)



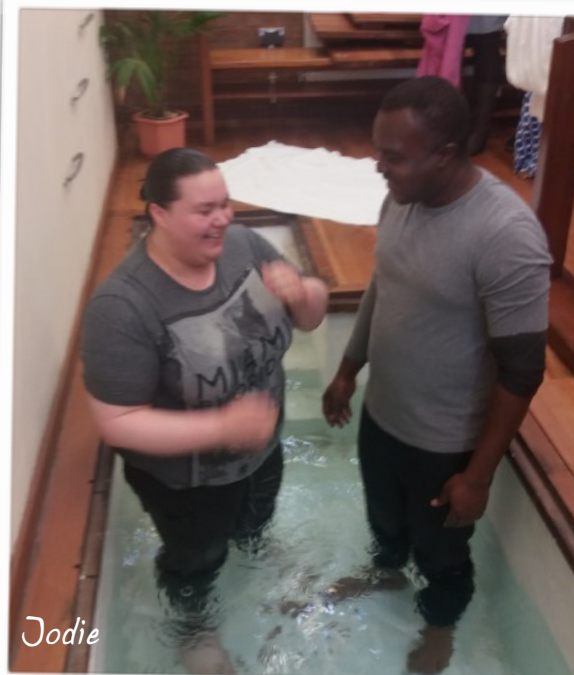
Congratulations!

Birmingham (Summer Lane): We are happy to announce two more who have been immersed into Christ. **Jodie** became a Christian on 6th November. **Priscilla Addo Boateng** (wife of Ernest) was baptised on 22nd December. Please keep them both in your prayers as they begin their new life in Christ.

Trevor Ralph



Priscilla Addo Boateng



Jodie

Stirling: The congregation at Stirling rejoice in the addition of another soul to the Lord's body. On 27th November, 19 year-old **Hannah** put on the Lord in baptism at the church building of the Livingston congregation. The whole Stirling congregation met with the Livingston congregation for their Worship Service, and the baptism took place afterwards. Hannah has been attending our worship for two years, along with her mother and sister, both of whom are part of the congregation here.

Please rejoice with us as we seek to guide and support Hannah in her new life of service to the Lord.

Dick Carter



Stephen Marsh

Liverpool: We rejoice as after much prayer and Bible study **Stephen Marsh** gave his life to the Lord on Thursday, 12th January. Please keep him in your prayers as he begins his new walk with the Christ.

Charles Yankiah

A Good Start to the Year

Set amidst the beautiful scenery of the northern fells, Bassenfell Manor proved once again to be an ideal location for what has now become our annual winter family retreat. Following the success of last year's event, we were fully booked this past weekend with every single one of the 69 bed spaces taken.

Intentionally rather informal, the weekend is intended to be a peaceful retreat within a relaxed, welcoming family atmosphere. With



ages ranging from just a few months all the way towards being not so young as we might once have been, there was a true family feeling to the event. Every one willingly gave of themselves, serving each other in the spirit of Christ, and it was a joy to be with others travelling the same well-worn route.

Our theme for the weekend again focused on the teachings of Jesus; and the presentations given considered the nature of his authority, his encounter with Zacchaeus, and a number of his more 'radical' sayings. The singing of praises to God was a true joy to behold, as well as being most encouraging and uplifting for all.

We are so thankful for all who came along and who helped to make the event such a success. We are already booked for the same weekend next January, but in the meantime we shall be returning to Bassenfell Manor for a different kind of event in the autumn.

Residential Study Week

We will be hosting our first residential Study Week in November and working our way through one of our practical modules. "Walking with God" is a module that

challenges us to think about our personal faith and discipleship. Students will be encouraged to assess their spiritual development and be offered practical ways

to further their spiritual growth. Please see our website for more details as they emerge and for enrolment/registration.

Thank you for your continued support of the ongoing and growing work of the Bible School. Some of you will know that we are in real need of additional funding on a monthly basis, so if you or the congregation of which you are part would like to help, then please either get in touch or visit our website for further details.

May God bless each one of us as we strive to serve him by his grace into his glory.

Patrick Boyns

www.britishbibleschool.com

Called Home

Freda Lewis

1940-2016

We report the passing of our sister, Freda Lewis, who had been a Christian for many years. Freda and Ken, her husband of 54 years, lived in Merthyr Vale, South Wales.

Freda's great-grandfather had been a member of the Salvation Army but was led closer to Jesus by Sydney Black, one of the leading evangelists of the day, in 1865.

Freda passed away on 1st December, aged seventy-six. The funeral was held at Llywdcoed Crematorium with Christians, family and friends attending from various places.

Ken is very thankful for the extra help and support given from the Bristol congregation.

Trevor Williams

Family News

Liverpool: After a period of intense studies and prayers the congregation have appointed the following elders to oversee the work of the congregation here: Samuel Appiah-

Anane, Gareth Davies and Charles Yankiah.

Please pray for us as we seek to do God's will.

Charles Yankiah

Bristol: Praise God for His continuing mercy and love as He guides us into ever increasing fellowship and service. We were truly blessed on 25th December as we shared together a meal of fellowship and service. The atmosphere was one of love and joy as we

opened up our building to those who were lonely and in need. 62 of us shared lunch, gifts and festive fun together. This included several from our community who

desperately need God's love and joy in their lives. It was an honour to be vessels of that love and joy. It was especially encouraging to see the enthusiasm of Christians to reach out to those who are lonely. May God bless all who make the decision daily to walk with God by putting the needs of others before the needs of self.

*Jason & Heidi
Snethen*



Ilkeston: The Christians in Ilkeston were busy during December organising ways to reach out to their community. At the turning on of the Christmas lights in the town, many from the congregation were present and passed out leaflets advertising their planned 'toy service' as well as their worship on Christmas Day. Even the children were able to help get the leaflets out!



Jenny Sparks organised the 'toy service.' Toys were brought in and collected on

Sunday, 11th December. These were then distributed among local families who were experiencing difficulties.



There are so many ways that we can truly make Christmas a time of giving to those in need around us.

Trevor Williams

Around the World

Philippines: It was a nostalgic trip to the north from 2nd-5th January. Tuao holds a special place in my heart. Eleven years ago, I helped organise a medical mission in a remote village in East Tuao called Taribubu. A Filipino maid in Singapore, Mildred, dreamt of having a congregation in her hometown once she retired from her overseas job. God heard her prayer. Taribubu has since then been blessed with faithful evangelists and a thriving congregation. The congregation grew both in number and in spirit. Then came Super Typhoon Lawin (international name: Haima) which struck



eleven weeks ago and destroyed many houses as well as properties and crops in five provinces in the North. Tuao was one of the worst hit areas. Many of the Christian's homes were damaged including the congregation's chapel.

Last week, my small team of three went back to Tuao. Dr Evelyn is a physician working for the National Bureau of Investigation while Orlan, a nurse, serves as an evangelist in Isabela. Dr Eve and I made the eight-hour bus ride to Santiago, met Orlan and his family in their home, and traveled three more hours to Tuao. When we

arrived, we went to visit a family in San Luis. A few women and children were already waiting for us.

Maribel, 9 years old, is an epileptic. She is the size of a three-year old child, a frail and sad looking little girl. She is obviously under-nourished. We will care for her by providing nutritious food to restore her back to good health.

Quite a number of children there are under-nourished and a bit too small for their age. We will need a regular feeding programme for them which will also be great for the congregation to build relationships with their neighbours.

More than 100 women and children were seen and visited. Two of our outstanding cases were that of an elderly woman with a huge lump (goiter) on her neck. She will need to have that removed through surgery. Another elderly woman suffered from acute psoriasis. Both her feet are also badly infected. It will be a long, painful process to heal her but it can be done.

On our last day, we went to visit another remote village called Iguig. We went from house-to-house visiting those from the congregation who were affected by the typhoon. It was heartbreaking to listen to

their stories of how they survived the strong winds and rains the day that Haima struck. Thankfully, there were no

casualties, although their tiny worship area was heavily damaged.

Most people in the north are farmers. With their source of livelihood destroyed, it was encouraging to see their determination to survive. With what little they have

left, they offered warm hospitality to us. This trip was such a blessing!

Thank you for your kindness in helping me to serve the Lord in this way. There still is so much need there. Many of the remote villages are without any form of help from anyone including the local government. Lord willing, I hope to go back in a month or so and plan to spend time focusing more on the needs of the children.

As I write, the Bicol region in the south also needs our help. Another typhoon struck on Christmas day. My mother's family is from that region. While I realise that we cannot help

everybody, we can make a difference on some people's lives. I pray that help may be available to them, too.



Gigie Carranza

Notices

Marriage

...made in heaven?

**Saturday, 11th February
6 pm - 9 pm**

Calling all married and engaged couples! Isn't it time you treated yourselves to a night out on your own? We'd like to invite you to an evening of food and fellowship, with a talk from Trevor Williams on the subject of marriage. It's 'the season of love' so make it a date!

**Loughborough church of Christ meeting place
Oxford Street, Loughborough LE11 5DP
Contact: Steve Perriman (perriman@tiscali.co.uk)
Jason Hill (j.hill147@hotmail.co.uk)**

This event is FREE (husbands take note!) but it would be helpful to know numbers for catering purposes.

Two Study Weekends ... One Beautiful Letter

Aberdeen

393 George Street, Aberdeen, AB25 1EQ

Friday, 24th February 7.00 to 9.00pm

Saturday, 25th February 9.00am to 4.30pm

Friday, 24th March 7.00 to 9.00pm

Saturday, 25th March 9.00am to 4.30pm

Teachers: Patrick Boyns and Jon Galloway
www.britishbibleschool.com

Paul's letter to the Ephesians takes us beyond this realm and into the heavenly places. Though the theological implications are vast, there is a wealth of practical instruction that cannot be overlooked.



HEBREWS

One of the most significant books in the New Testament in helping us understand the work of Christ in the context of the calling of Israel. Here we take a thorough look at the arguments presented for the supremacy of Christ – as vital today as when first written.

Northampton

Christian Fellowship Centre
Shadowfax Drive

Friday, 31st March 7.30 to 9.45pm

Saturday, 1st April 9.00am to 5.00pm

Friday, 28th April 7.30 to 9.45pm

Saturday, 29th April 9.00am to 5.00pm

Teachers: Patrick Boyns, John Griffiths and Steve Whitehead
www.britishbibleschool.com



Adult weekend

(organised by Morley congregation)

theme: "Spirit"

(focussing on individual spiritual growth as well as how to support each other)

7th-9th April

venue: Mankinholes YHA,
Todmorden, West Lancashire

contact: Kelsey O'Donovan
Glowing_flame@live.com

(07846) 467213

(there is a Facebook page – contact Kelsey for details)



February

4th – **Cumbernauld**: Men's Day, 9.30 am-4.00 pm.

10th-13th – **Cumbernauld**: Young Adult/Youth Retreat at Rowardennan Lodge Youth Hostel – "H₂O". Cost: £30 for two nights or £35 for three nights. Bookings: nicole8barr@gmail.com.

11th – **Loughborough**: "Marriage...made in heaven?" – an evening of food and fellowship for married and engaged couples, 6.00-9.00 pm, Speaker: Trevor Williams. Contact: Steve Perriman (perriman@tiscali.co.uk).

11th – **Eastwood**: Quarterly Outreach meeting: "Jesus, the Creator" (1-Physical creation, 2- Spiritual Creation), speaker: Graeme Morrison; light refreshments at 6.00 pm and lesson at 7.00 pm. Contact: Adrian Limb (cofceastwood@aol.com).

13th-17th – **Gemünden, Germany**: ABSS I (Monday evening to Friday noon). Speakers include Tony Coffey (others to be confirmed). For further information or to book your place, contact: Paul Brazzle (brazle.paul@gmail.com or +32488 481 082). (Follow group on Facebook – <https://www.facebook.com/groups/697781630273815/>)

17th-19th – **Gemünden, Germany**: ABSS II (Friday evening to Sunday noon). For further information or to book your place, contact: Paul Brazzle (brazle.paul@gmail.com or +32488 481 082). (Follow group on Facebook – <https://www.facebook.com/groups/697781630273815/>)

24th-25th – **Aberdeen**: British Bible School Study Weekend. Module: "A Letter to Ephesus" presented by Patrick Boyns and Jon Galloway. Friday: 7.00-9.00 pm; Saturday: 9.30 am-4.15 pm.

24th-25th – **Scotland East Coast**: Joint Gospel Meetings – Friday at Kirkcaldy and Saturday at Hyvots Bank (Edinburgh), 7.30 pm. Guest speaker: Ian Starrs. Theme: "A Life Worth Living."

March

2nd-5th – **Thallichtenberg, Germany**: European Ladies Retreat – "From Roots to Fruits." Cost: €120 (payment when you arrive). Venue: Jugendherberge Burg Lichtenberg, Burgstraße 12, 66871 Thallichtenberg, Germany. Sign up by 15th December. Additional information: <http://elr.yolasite.com/details.php>.

10th-12th – **Northampton**: Youth Weekend – "God on Trial" (we need witnesses for the defence and plenty of jurors). Contact Mark Hill (northamptonchurchofchrist@gmail.com, (07434) 956692 or through Facebook).

11th – **Great Barr**: Bible Seminar.

18th – **Leicester**: Gospel night at 39-45 Pool Road, Leicester LE3 9GH, speaker: David McNutt; light refreshments at 6.00 pm and lesson at 7.00 pm. Contact: Paul Hill (07804 653690).

20th – **Leicester**: Evangelists' meeting, 10.00 am-2.00 pm at Newfound Pool Centre, 39-45 Pool Road, Leicester LE3 9GH. Speaker: David McNutt with news from congregations and a buffet lunch. Contact: Paul Hill (07804 653690).

24th-25th – **Aberdeen**: British Bible School Study Weekend. Module: "A Letter to Ephesus" (part 2) presented by Patrick Boyns and Jon Galloway. Friday: 7.00-9.00 pm; Saturday: 9.30 am-4.15 pm.

25th – **Manchester (Stretford)**: Special meeting, lunch at 1.00 pm followed by a speaker at 2.00 pm. Contact: Pilomon (dr_mpraja@yahoo.co.uk).

31st-1st April – Northampton: British Bible School Study Weekend. Module: “Hebrews” presented by Patrick Boyns, Steve Whitehead and John Griffiths. Friday: 7.30-9.45 pm; Saturday: 9.30 am-5.30 pm.

April

8th – Kirkcaldy: Annual Social, 1.30 pm. Speaker: John Mooney.

21st-23rd – Gemünden, Germany: European Singles Retreat. Information: <http://www.singlesretreat.net>.

28th-29th – Northampton: British Bible School Study Weekend. Module: “Hebrews” (part 2) presented by Patrick Boyns, Steve Whitehead and John Griffiths. Friday: 7.30-9.45 pm; Saturday: 9.30 am-5.30 pm.

May

12th – Eastwood: Quarterly Outreach meeting: “Jesus, the Forgiver” (1–Consequences of sin, 2–Solution to sin); light refreshments at 6.00 pm and lesson at 7.00 pm. Contact: Adrian Limb (cofceastwood@aol.com).

20th – Manchester (Stretford): Special meeting, lunch at 1.00 pm followed by a speaker at 2.00 pm. Contact: Pilomon (dr_mpraja@yahoo.co.uk).

June

3rd – Reading: RISE (Reading in Song event) – Praise and Harmony Workshop with Anthony Lancaster, William Gooch and Durant, at Lodden Valley Leisure Centre: 3.30 pm. Also at 6.30 pm a singing programme by Durant. Contact: Craig Benjamin (csbjlb@gmail.com).

10th – Stockwell: Ladies’ Day. Contact: Bernie Wells (07904 303347) .

24th – Northampton: Men’s Day. Theme: “All with one accord” (ways of promoting unity and togetherness as Christians). Speakers: John Griffiths and Patrick Boyns. Contact: Mark Hill (northamptonchurchofchrist@gmail.com).

July

8th – Edmonton: Men’s Workshop. Contact: Charles Banin (charlesbanino@aol.com).

August

5th – Leicester: Ladies Day.

12th – Eastwood: Quarterly Outreach meeting: “Jesus, the Messiah” (1–Prophesied, 2–Fulfilled); light refreshments at 6.00 pm and lesson at 7.00 pm. Contact: Adrian Limb (cofceastwood@aol.com).

13th-18th – British Bible Camp.

24th-26th – European Christian Workshop at Lancaster: *Shalom*.

September

9th – Great Barr: Annual Fellowship Day.

15th-17th – Gemünden, Germany: European Singles Retreat. Information: <http://www.singlesretreat.net>.

October

7th – Manchester (Stretford): Special meeting, lunch at 1.00 pm followed by a speaker at 2.00 pm. Contact: Pilomon (dr_mpraja@yahoo.co.uk).

November

6th-10th – British Bible School: Residential Study Week at Bassenfell Manor, near Keswick.

11th – Eastwood: Quarterly Outreach meeting: “Jesus: Prophet, Priest and King” (1–Prophet, 2–Priest & King); light refreshments at 6.00 pm and lesson at 7.00 pm. Contact: Adrian Limb (cofceastwood@aol.com).

The Final Word: "A Better Way"



"But I want to lay out a far better way for you." (1 Corinthians 12:31 MSG)

After the chaos of Christmas, New Year parties and freezing weather, the world has been thrown into the American glitter of choosing a new president. Like Brexit, the outcome for some was joyous, for others an unmitigated disaster. Politics has been like a hovering storm over the western nations for months. The Scottish referendum perhaps started things off and it seems as if no nation is happy with the outcome.

However we feel about the past, we all have to look forward to the future. For the chocolate-maker, flower-seller and card-producers, February is an important month: it is Valentine's Day and money is to be made. Most older guys are quite happy to pass over this particular celebration, but it can be a day of anxiety for many a teenager and possibly for the 'keenager.' Love can be fun but love can certainly hurt. Love for someone else, love for Christ, love for nation and even love for self can all bring their problems.

The Apostle Paul writes about the generous gifts of the Holy Spirit in 1 Corinthians 12. As he writes, it is possible to feel the pain he felt for those early Christians who had been given so much to share but wanted the gifts for themselves. Somehow they had it in mind that by receiving something special from God made them better than someone else. They really had made a mess of things. So gently and graciously Paul directs them to the greatest gift of all, a way that was far better than anything else. It was, of course, love. To fully understand and get this message right we would probably have to live life over and over again several times. Sometimes we do not love ourselves; suicide levels show this to be true. Love for others is a hit and miss affair and long-term relationships can be terminated in the space of a day. Love for nation can also be variable depending on where we live and what we individually like or do not like. Then we have love for Christ. The Christian dedicates themselves to Christ only to slip back one way or another. To worship systematically week after week, year after year, lesson after lesson, sermon after sermon, seeing the same people, same place, same singing can be a drain on the most spiritual of us. Love has to be constantly renewed, constantly thrilled, constantly looking forward. The love that Jesus has for his people is constant, the blood shed on the cross of Calvary is still red and the cries of the Saviour still shout out: "For you I die, for you I live, for you I love." Whatever our personal feelings are about the state of politics let us all find the way that is far better for everyone of us.

Trevor

Prayer

*Father God, we pray for all leaders of nations,
Let them be genuine in their thinking and in their actions,
When they feel superior to others let them remember the sacrifice of Jesus.
Now we pray for ourselves, may your love guide and sustain us,
Thrill and forgive us, motivate and activate us.
Help us to feel the roughness of the cross and see the blood of sacrifice,
And open our ears to hear the shout of love from Heaven above. Amen.*

