

the Christian Worker MAGAZINE



September 2023 • Vol 55 No 9



Six new Christians!

**British Bible School Autumn
Events**

**Book Review: Autopsy of a
Deceased Church**

CONTENTS

- 3 MY PERSPECTIVE
Busy-ness
- 4 CONGRATULATIONS
New Christians in East Kilbride, Cumbernauld, Northampton, and Edmonton (London)
- 5 BRITISH BIBLE SCHOOL NOTES
Running from God
- 7 AT REST
▪ **Ricky Gallon (Livingston)**
▪ **Gordon Robertson (Clarkston)**
- 9 THE DESTRUCTIVE NATURE OF PRIDE
Thoughts by Trevor Williams
- 10 FAMILY NEWS
▪ **Cumbernauld updated information**
▪ **Northampton youth outreach**
▪ **Edmonton youth outreach**
- 12 AROUND THE WORLD
▪ **Persecution in Pakistan**
▪ **Training in Malawi**
▪ **Update from Ukraine**
- 14 BOOK REVIEW
Autopsy of a Deceased Church
- 15 DIARY OF EVENTS
- 16 THE FINAL WORD
"I don't understand you God!"



EDITORIAL AND PUBLICATION

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Front cover and above: The beauty of God's creation seen in the countryside of South Lanarkshire.



MY PERSPECTIVE



Are we
really
busier than
people of
the past?

Busy-ness

I don't know what your life is like, but mine seems to always be very busy. My wife and I often have a joke between us: when I am less busy I'll get around to doing whatever it is that needed to be done. But that time, so far, has never arrived.

From observation it seems that there are fewer people willing to do those things that need to be done, which means that those who are willing to do them end up with more to do. Several years ago someone observed that within a congregation it was 20% of the Christians who ended up doing more of the work, with 80% doing very little. I recently heard that the current figures are even worse: it is 10% on average who are active with 90% doing very little. That, to me, is disturbing.

Why are people not willing to do more? The work that some people do does take up quite a bit of time. No longer do we work eight hours, go home, and the rest of the time is ours. Far too often more is expected from us if we wish to be successful in our chosen careers. As we only have 24 hours each day, something has to give. Often, due to the pressure of deadlines, being active in the local congregation is what is sacrificed.

At least with my chosen work being a teacher of God's word, I don't have the option of not showing up to teach – if I didn't I wouldn't be doing my work! But what of those who are employed in what we often call 'secular work'. How do we create time to be as involved as we can in the work of the Lord?

Two observations may be appropriate – one is looking at successful people and the other is from God's word.

Have you noticed that people tend to do what they want to do? If something is important to them they find the time to do it. Perhaps that is part of the key. Do we desire to be involved in the Lord's work in addition to our own chosen field? When I began my 'working life' I was a school teacher and I was working with small congregations. My days were spent in the classroom grading papers and my evenings were spent preparing lessons and making needed visits. But that was my choice. It was what I wanted to do. Perhaps we need to take a look at our own lives and determine what those things are that we value and want to do.

A thought that has always helped me is something Jesus said: *"So then, don't worry saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear?' For the unconverted pursue these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But above all pursue his kingdom and righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. So then, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Today has enough trouble of its own."* (Matthew 6:31-34 NET).

Perhaps the real problem is that we don't trust God enough. We worry about having what we need to live but God already knows that we need these things. Rather than centring our lives on providing our needs Jesus said to may God's kingdom and righteous our priority. If we do we will have all that we need. Think about it!

Jon



CONGRATULATIONS!

A young man welcomed in East Kilbride

We are pleased to inform you of a young man who has recently given his life to Jesus. While visiting with his family in the United States he made his decision and was immersed in the Tennessee River. We welcome him into our fellowship in East Kilbride.

Jon Galloway



Another added to the Lord in Cumbernauld

We wanted to share the good news that **Alfred Odiba** decided to give his life to Christ on Monday, 31st July.

After his family became part of the congregation at Cumbernauld he told us he wanted to become a Christian. After thinking about it for a while and discussions at Camp Heatherbell he made his decision. Another new brother for us all to celebrate!

Nicole Barr

Three added in Northampton

We were overjoyed on Sunday 16th July to witness three new births into Christ: **Salome** who came along one Sunday to check us out after moving into the neighbourhood, **Alex** who was invited to come and look by Zoe, and **Michael Agyeman** whose parents taught him the gospel. Alex brought around twenty family and friends to witness his becoming a Christian. We welcome all three into our family and are thankful for a very encouraging and joyful start to the Lord's Day.

Mark Hill



Another added in Edmonton

Rejoice with us as we celebrate the baptism of yet another soul. On Sunday, 20th August, the Lord added **Jeremy Yeboah** to his body.

S Ofori
Dwumah





BRITISH BIBLE SCHOOL NOTES

Running from God

Have you ever been given something to do that you did not want to do? When this happens, if you are like me, we tend to find something else to do, anything but what we have been asked to do but don't want to do.

This is the situation we find when we begin reading Jonah. God told him to go and warn Nineveh of their impending judgment by God. But Jonah didn't want to go. Why not? Because he was afraid the people of Nineveh would change and God would forgive them and not destroy them.

“Oh, LORD, this is just what I thought would happen when I was in my own country...because I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in mercy, and one who relents concerning threatened judgment.” (Jonah 4:2-3 NET)

Rather than obey God and head for Nineveh he found a ship sailing the opposite direction, boarded it, and headed as far away as he could. Or so he thought. The problem for him was God could not be escaped so easily.

Most of us know the story of Jonah (one, by the way, that Jesus considered to be historical and pointing towards him). Jonah tried to escape and God sent a storm. Jonah ended up getting thrown into the sea and was swallowed by a great fish God had prepared. For three days and three night Jonah prayed from the inside of the fish.

We often view what happened to Jonah as a story for children – and children are entertained by it and can learn from it. But really it is about the futility of trying to escape from God.

Although we usually don't go to such extremes, Christians today still try to escape what we find we are to do in the pages of Scripture. We are told to take the good news of Jesus to all who are around us (Matthew 28:18-20). But how many of us look for excuses to not tell anyone? Sometimes we would do anything to keep from having to be involved in any type of outreach. It is almost like we are ashamed of being a Christian (see Mark 8:38 if that is the way we feel).

What about preparing others to be able to carry on after us? Paul told Timothy, *“And what you heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful people who will be competent to teach others as well”* (2 Timothy 2:2). Are we preparing those who are faithful so they can teach others? Are we willing to be taught more of God's word so we can be competent to lead God's people as well as teach those who aren't Christians?

The British Bible School exists to help prepare Christians to serve. If you would like to learn more about Jonah, join in our Thursday evening online class the first two weeks of September. And join us for study weekends and study events that are held throughout the country. Let us take our responsibilities as God's people seriously!

Jon Galloway

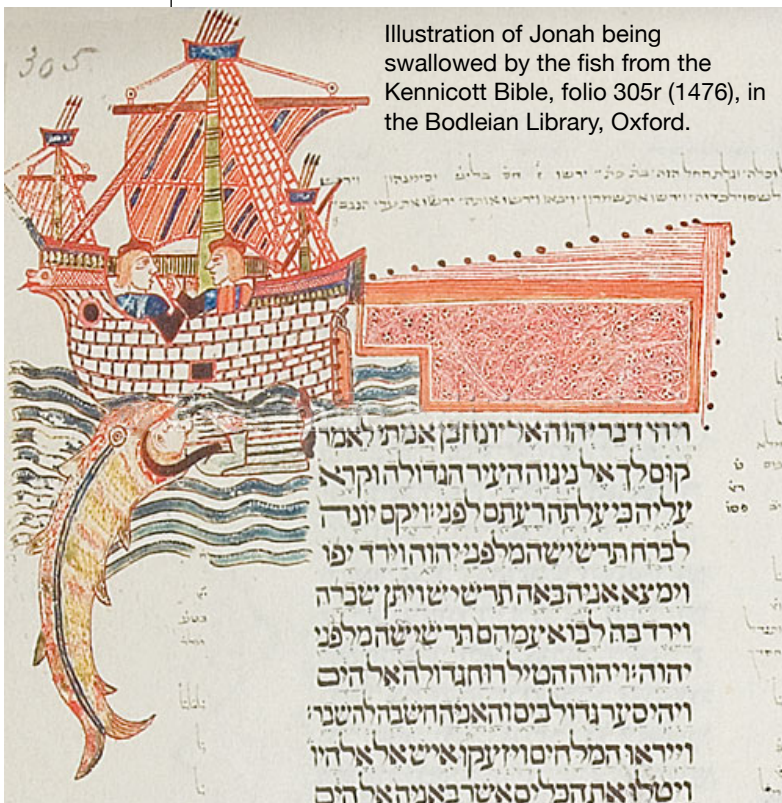


Illustration of Jonah being swallowed by the fish from the Kennicott Bible, folio 305r (1476), in the Bodleian Library, Oxford.

British Bible School Notes


British Bible School Annual General Meeting

The British Bible School Annual General Meeting will be held on the 25th September 2023 at 7:30 pm. The meeting will be at the Northampton Church of Christ, Christian Fellowship Centre, Shadowfax Drive, Northampton NN3 8DB.

The formal agenda will be concerned with matters relating to our annual statement of accounts and reports on the aims and objectives of the School as set out in our Charity Commission application. The only other possible item of business will be a change in Trustees if necessary.

The meeting is open to all 'Friends of the British Bible School' and anyone interested in the work of the School.

Jack Paton (chairman)



LOOKING UP TO JESUS

Autumn Weekend Family Retreat

Friday 15th to Sunday 17th September 2023

at Letton Hall in Norfolk

www.britishbibleschool.com



THE KINGDOM OF ISRAEL

British Bible School Autumn Study Week

Bassenfell Manor, Bassenthwaite, Lake District

Monday, 6th to Friday 10th November 2023

- Three full days of study and reflection away from the cares of life
- Delightful accommodation, good food and decent company
- All inclusive cost: £180 per student

Ricky Gallon (Livingston)

The congregation in Livingston is saddened to announce the death of our friend and brother in Christ, **Ricky Gallon**. We also take comfort from knowing that he was faithful to the Lord right up until he left this life behind on 1st June.

Ricky spent fourteen years in the Army, where he trained as a chef. His skills in catering were later to be put to the service of the Lord, assisting in Christian youth camps, and encouraging young people in their faith.

We were blessed to have Ricky as a part of our congregation for more than thirty

years. He was a very humble and gentle servant of Jesus Christ who loved being with those he saw as his spiritual family. As a 'people person' he was usually first to warmly welcome visitors into our fellowship. He enhanced our worship by his sincere, meaningful reading of the scriptures.

When he became ill and had to go into hospital, his acceptance and courage were exemplary. Each hospital visit began with an encouraging word from Ricky to the visitor, and concluded with a prayer.

We miss our brother and keep his daughter, Kellie-Marie, and his grandchildren in our prayers.

John Mooney

Gordon Robertson (Clarkston, Glasgow)

It was 23rd August 1951 when Gordon was born in Ayr, the son of James and Janet Robertson.

Gordon attended Ayr Academy and then graduated from the University of Glasgow in the mid-1970s. Throughout his youth he was an active member of the Boys' Brigade and continued his association with them throughout his life. After University, Gordon was admitted to a graduate training programme with the Commercial Union Insurance Company. He rose to the supervisory role where he continued until he retired.

It was in 1978 that a 'pen-friend' relationship developed between Gordon and Maria Eldridge of Toledo, Ohio. That friendship grew when they eventually met



and soon blossomed into a romance, which led to marriage in January 1981.

But it was not only romance that blossomed between Gordon and Maria; together they came to faith in Jesus Christ and were baptised into Him in 1984. They were faithful Christians at the congregation in Ayr and then at Clarkston from 1990. Gordon and Maria have made a significant contribution to the congregation at Clarkston – everyone has

At rest

benefitted from their faith, love and commitment to the cause of Christ.

It was on 9th August 2023 that Gordon died in Springhill Care Home, Kilmarnock.

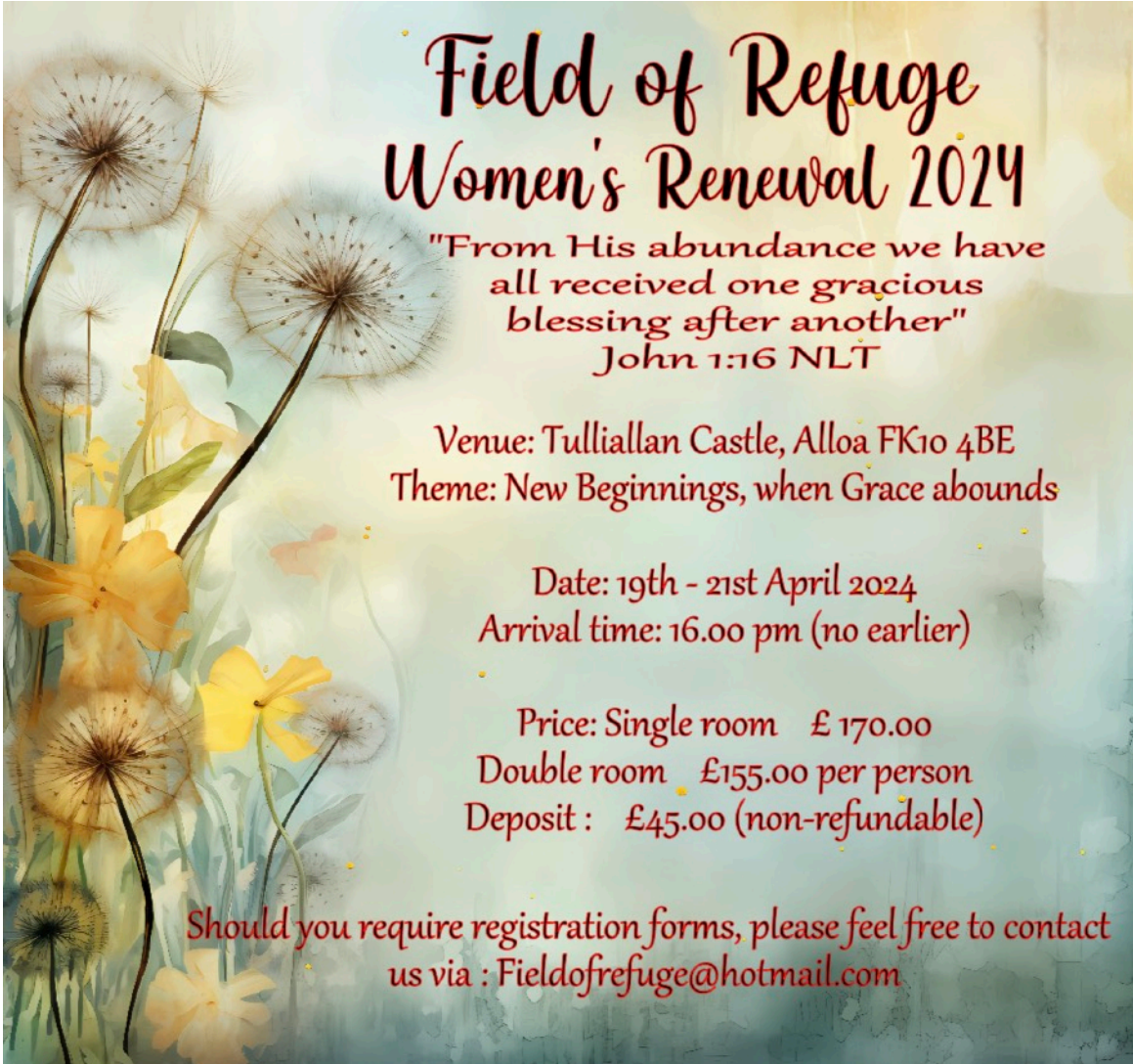
My association with Gordon has left me with insights into his life. It has often been said that Gordon had a great sense of humour, but there was more to Gordon than simply the ability to tell a funny story, much more.

He was a man of many interests. Railways fascinated Gordon, and he could expand at length on all the ins and outs of running a railway. He was also an amateur watchmaker: he spent time stripping down watches and discovering how they kept such good time; he would then rebuild the watch but not always returning them to their original state.

I don't think it is widely known that Gordon was a lover of poetry and something of an accomplished poet in his own right, and it was in conversations regarding literature and poetry that I began to discover that he was a man of profound insights into many aspects of the world we live in.

But the most significant insight that many benefitted from was in his study of the Bible. His lessons and contributions to Bible Classes held in Gordon and Maria's home in Kilmaurs on a Tuesday morning revealed a man who had come to know God and the blessings of faith in Jesus. Gordon has now received his reward for faithfulness and we thank our God for his life of service and love.

Jack Paton

A poster for 'Field of Refuge Women's Renewal 2024'. The background features a soft-focus image of yellow flowers and dandelion seed heads against a light blue and green wash. The text is in a dark red, serif font. The title 'Field of Refuge Women's Renewal 2024' is at the top. Below it is a quote: '"From His abundance we have all received one gracious blessing after another" John 1:16 NLT'. The venue is 'Tulliallan Castle, Alloa FK10 4BE' and the theme is 'New Beginnings, when Grace abounds'. The date is '19th - 21st April 2024' and arrival time is '16.00 pm (no earlier)'. Pricing is listed as 'Single room £170.00', 'Double room £155.00 per person', and 'Deposit: £45.00 (non-refundable)'. At the bottom, it says 'Should you require registration forms, please feel free to contact us via : Fieldofrefuge@hotmail.com'.



THE DESTRUCTIVE NATURE OF PRIDE

‘Now I praise and glorify the King of heaven, everything he does is right, and his ways are just. And those who walk in pride, he is able to humble.’ (Daniel 4:37)

King Nebuchadnezzar had conquered many countries and was able to call himself Emperor. Babylon produced its own magnificence and the king thought he had done it all by his own power. He really thought himself as near to being a god as was possible and failed to give honour to The Lord Almighty. For a while he lived like an animal until he realised that he needed to be a servant of God, that he was mortal, the same as everyone else.

Pride is a poison that few know that they are drinking. Dominating pride in the work place makes everyone uncomfortable and want to leave. It destroys families as it belittles children and those needing help, and ultimately it consumes the marriage relationship through its domination. Pride always demands what it wants and finds itself never in the wrong.

Even in the church we can find people who are filled with pride, thinking they are a better teacher or preacher than anyone else. Criticism is the byword of those who are filled

with self-pride. It is a poisonous chalice that can cause division in a congregation. It will destroy leadership and make a mockery of the vulnerable whom they would call weak. Pride is often seen in men but is not absent from women.

Sadly, the shame of all this is that Christ is brought down and, after being trampled upon, is ignored. If we are to boast of anything, we should boast about the Lord, his mercy, his grace and his sacrifice. Only when we empty ourselves of ourselves can we truly see what is good.

Never boast, nor brag, but rejoice in the goodness of God who grants us every blessing in Christ. (1 Corinthians 1:31)

Trevor Williams

FAMILY FUN DAY

Saturday 28th October 1 pm

Free Entry

Come Along And Enjoy A Whole Day Of Fun For Free
Aughton Village Hall, Winifred Lane, Aughton, Ormskirk, Lancashire, L39 5DH

<p>Activities: Face Painting Games (All Ages) Puppet Show Skits Singing</p>	<p>Free Lunch: After all the fun has finished, you are welcome to stay and have a free lunch with us at 4 pm.</p>	<p>Evening Activity: At 5 pm, we're hosting a meeting with our guest speaker Jason Bragier from the US. Jason will be talking about 'The Importance Of 'Family'.</p>
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Refreshments and Snacks are provided FREE of charge
Organised by the Aughton church

Contact:
Mike: 0787 9444 267



FAMILY NEWS

CUMBERNAULD

Please update the congregation information:

Christians: 64 Children: 18

Meeting place: 2 Carron House, Town Centre, Cumbernauld, G67 1ER

Send post to: [church address] FAO Secretary (Nicole Barr)

info@cumbernauldchurchofchrist.uk

Sunday meetings: Bible Study 10.00 am, Breaking Bread 11.00 am, Evening 6.00 pm

Midweek: Tuesday Children’s Bible Study 6.30 pm, Youth Club 7.30 pm. Thursday Adult Bible Study 7.00 pm

Contacts:

Secretary: Nicole Barr.

secretary@cumbernauldchurchofchrist.uk

Evangelist: Adam Barr (w. Melanie). 07889 631218

adam@cumbernauldchurchofchrist.uk

Evangelist: Graham McDonald (w. Beth). 07748 787744.

graham@cumbernauldchurchofchrist.uk

Website: www.cumbernauldchurchofchrist.uk

Graham McDonald

Our youth had been invited to come along to learn about King David and King Jesus. Never too sure how many to expect, we were thrilled to have around forty come along. We sang some action songs followed by a few minutes of the film. We then paused as a question was asked and answered. This was done throughout the seven-minute film, causing the children and youth to understand what it means for Jesus to be King of our lives. They enjoyed a craft of making a crown which was followed by a royal banquet of burgers and hot dogs (what else would a king eat?).



It was a great evening, and something we plan to repeat often – both for our Bible class children and as an outreach. If you would like to see the curriculum and discuss how it can be used where you are, please do get in touch. Our young adults would love to travel and host such evenings for any who would like their help.

Mark Hill

NORTHAMPTON

‘Story of Redemption’ for Youth

On Sunday evening, 30th July, it was our privilege to host a youth event we have not tried before. James Nored, his wife Becki, and daughters Emily and Kaylee were with us. James spoke in the morning and gave us an update on his work with “Next Generation for Christ” and the Story of Redemption Films.



Family News

EDMONTON (LONDON)

On Saturday, 29th July, the youth of the Edmonton congregation had their first outreach programme. This programme involved singing, teaching, playing games, and socialising. The objectives were to sing in open areas and to raise public awareness, and then capitalise on that to talk to the people who stayed around. We also decided to use this opportunity to connect the youth to one another and build their confidence through interaction, tract sharing, taking photos and videos, eating, and playing games.

After the introduction, we divided ourselves into groups. Each group consisted of two males and

two females and gave each group tracts to share and return to the assembly point later.

After this, we had our lunch and socialised a bit more. Then we went on to play football. The teams were Genesis FC and Revelation FC. At the end of the game, Genesis FC won by 4 goals to 3. The match was very competitive and one of the most interesting parts of the programme as all were cheering for their team to win.

The latter part of the programme was very good as everyone became familiar with each other, making fun, socialising, and singing songs. In all 41 youth were in attendance.

The number of people who turned up was good.

Instant feedback was taken as everyone was excited and called for more events like this. There were no casualties as the event was successfully carried out. Based on the success of the programme we plan to organise the same event on a yearly basis among the youth across the UK.

Isaac Osei Ntim





AROUND THE WORLD

PAKISTAN

A Muslim mob burned seven churches and attacked many groups of Christians. They claimed that two Christians boys blasphemed against the Muslim holy book, the Quran. Christians are very afraid and many were injured. Please keep us in your prayers.

Naeem Sabir



am pleased to say that they did a great work without any disappointment.

The wife of an elder, who was a team leader, says the programme was very good and the sisters taught very well indeed. At the end, four women were immersed by the preacher.

Lungster Mlotho

UKRAINE

We are doing well in spite of the war. Our work with orphans is slowly returning to normal. One of the orphanages where we helped rebuild the bomb shelter is already housing children again. So far there are not many children there, only 45 (previously there were between 120 and 250 children). I have started visiting these children again to talk, play and teach God's Word. I visit three times a week with different age groups.

The refugees from eastern Ukraine are starting to feel at home here – many have found jobs and have found schools for their children. It is nice that these people have started to wonder how they can be useful to us and how they can help.

MALAWI

I have been training Christian sisters at Jomo for three and half months to become teachers. I also shared with them the topics to teach. They had a chance to then present their lessons. I

Since the beginning of the war, we stopped running the service offline and ran it online. But since the beginning of September we will resume meeting live with people in our area. In mid-October I plan to begin a youth work at our congregation to attract more young people from our neighbourhood.

About our needs. A projector and one of the



Around the world



sitting at it together and having a class. Clothes and shoes have been provided for the children so far. We don't need anything else for September/October yet. We would be happy to accept any help as possible.

Thank you for your care, prayers and support.

Ivan Prokopochuk

printers at the orphanage burned down. The projector is used for the children to watch movies, video lessons, etc. There are a total of three printers in this boarding school. So they are asking for help to buy a projector and one printer. Also, each visit I spend about 1200 Ukrainian Hryvnia (UAH) on food for the children (tea, sandwiches, sweets). I plan to buy a ping pong table for our church facility, which is handy for playing with the youth as well as



Venue: Our new building at 9 Sanvey Lane, Leicester, LE2 8NG

Men's Day

All Welcome

Spiritual Growth

Deflated? Coasting? Inspired? Find the keys to success

Saturday 28th October 2023, 10am-3pm

Gary Smith and Paul Hill (Leicester)
David Condor (Lubbock, Texas)

Plus introduction to the Leicester Bible Institute
by Mike Wilson (Lubbock, Texas)

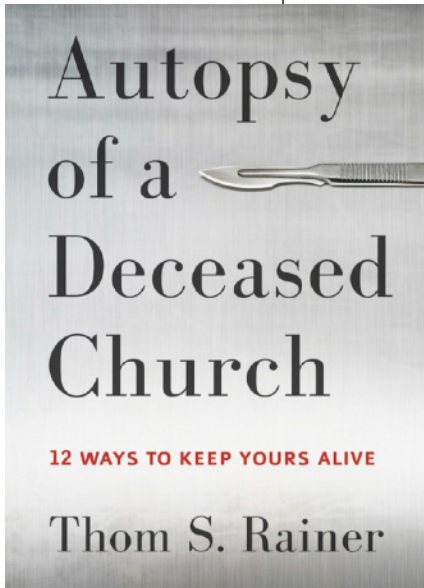


Leicester
Church of Christ

leicesterchurchofchrist.co.uk
Email: info@leicesterchurchofchrist.co.uk
Phone: 07804 653690 for more details



BOOK REVIEW



Autopsy of a Deceased Church by Thom S. Rainer. Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2014. ISBN: 978-1-4336-8392-3 Hardcover: £21.09 Kindle: £5.49

This is one of the books that was recommended during the recent leadership seminar organised by the Kirkcaldy elders. If you have ever wondered why congregations are not as effective as they were fifty years ago, then this little book may open your eyes to ways in which we need to change and begin to think differently.

The 103 pages of this book are divided into two subject matters. Part 1 is 'The Autopsy' and Part 2 is 'Is There Hope for a Dying Church?'.

'The Autopsy' is based on research the author did as he looked at churches that were dying. Were there common traits that he could see that people need to be aware of? Keep in mind that this is based on a broad spectrum of different denominations, but in reading the book I could recognise many things I have seen in congregations throughout this country.

What are the indicators that a congregation is dying? Here are a few that were mentioned:

- The congregation wasn't involved in the community where they were located
- No attempt was being made to reach the community
- Emphasis was on what had been done in the past
- Funds were spent on the local congregation, not outreach

- Arguments were about what individuals wanted
- The congregation rarely prayed together
- Most didn't know why they existed
- Facilities were deteriorating

I don't know if any of those resonate with you, but many of them did with me. Although written from an American perspective, much of this translates across the Atlantic to us.

So what is the solution? The last part divided this into three sections: for congregations that were ill; for congregations that were very ill; and for congregations that were almost dead. Most of the solutions centred on being willing to make an honest appraisal of what we are doing, be willing to change to meet a new generation, make specific plans for outreach, and praying about it.

I would recommend this book to any who are interested in congregation growth.

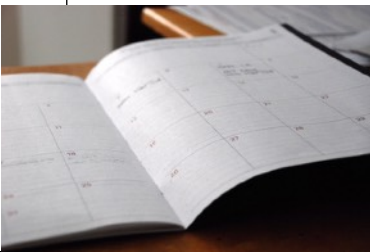
Jon Galloway

A thought about giving

A brother of long standing recently wrote to me to let me know that, because of ill health, he could no longer attend worship. He listens to worship on Zoom, which he finds encouraging, and celebrates communion by himself. He began to realise that he was not sharing in the offering and sent me a cheque to pass on to the congregation where we attend. He now hopes to do the same thing for other congregations.

Sadly, there are a few Christians who cannot be part of a regular congregation, but it would be a blessing to them if they also gave an offering to a congregation to help financially in their work. With so much to do, it takes us all to help out.

Trevor



DIARY

September

2nd-3rd – East Kilbride: British Bible School Study Weekend, 9.30-4.00 on Saturday; Bible class and worship on Sunday. Contact: Jon Galloway (jdalloway@mac.com).

4th – British Bible School evening class: “Romans, part 1” taught by Jack Paton each Monday, 8.00-9.00 pm, last class on 11th September. Links to join the class can be found on the BBS social media and website: www.britishbibleschool.com.

7th – British Bible School evening class: “Jonah” taught by Jon Galloway each Thursday, 8.00-9.00 pm, last class on 14th September. Links to join the class can be found on the BBS social media and website: www.britishbibleschool.com.

9th – Reading: SongFest – “Songs of Hope and Joy”, 1.30-6.00 pm. Lunch will be served plus time for children’s songs and fellowship. Venue: Crescent Resource Centre, Warbler Drive, Lower Earley, RG6 4HB (ample parking on site). Please send in numbers for catering purposes. Contact: message4heidi@outlook.com.

15th-17th September – British Bible School Autumn Family Retreat at Letton Hall: “Looking Up to Jesus”. Registration on our website: <https://britishbibleschool.com/news-and-events/upcoming-events/letton-hall-family-retreat-2023>.

23rd – British Bible School quiz night: a light-hearted, educational Bible quiz hosted by Steve Whitehead, the first Friday of each month from 8.00-9.00 pm. Links to join the quiz can be found on the BBS social media and website: www.britishbibleschool.com.

30th – Kirkcaldy: Devotional Evening, 7.00 pm. Contact: Alan Moyes (alan.J.Moyes@gmail.com) or christianwoman@btinternet.com.

October

7th-8th – East Kilbride: British Bible School Study Weekend, 9.30-4.00 on Saturday; Bible class and worship on Sunday. Contact: Jon Galloway (jdalloway@mac.com).

27th-29th – East Kilbride: Joint Gospel meetings, guest speaker: Mark Hill. Friday: 7.00 pm at Clarkston (Busby Memorial Hall), Saturday, 7.00 pm, and Sunday, 11.00 am at East Kilbride. Contact: Jon Galloway (jdalloway@mac.com).

28th – Aughton: Family Fun Day, 1.00-3.30, and Gospel Meeting, 4.45-6.00. Contact: Mike Glover (07879 444267 or mike97glover@gmail.com).

28th – Leicester: Men’s Day – “Spiritual Growth”, 10.00 am-3.00 pm. Speaker: Gary Smith, Paul Hill, David Condor and Mike Wilson. Contact: info@leicesterchurchofchrist.co.uk or 07804 653690 for more details.

November

4th – East Kilbride: Devotional Evening, 7.00 pm. Contact: christianwoman@btinternet.com.

6th-10th November – British Bible School Autumn Study Week at Bassenfell Manor: “The Kingdom of Israel.” Further details and registration can be found at <https://britishbibleschool.com/news-and-events/upcoming-events/autumn-study-week-2023>.

25th – Castlemilk (Glasgow): Devotional Evening, 7.00 pm. Contact: christianwoman@btinternet.com.

December

16th – East Kilbride: Devotional Evening, 7.00 pm. Contact: christianwoman@btinternet.com.

January 2024

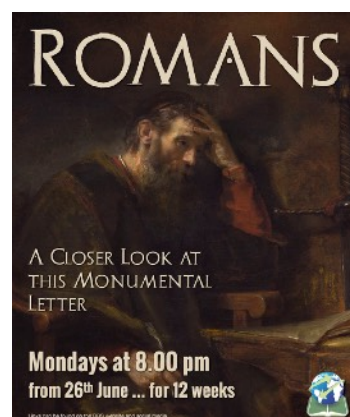
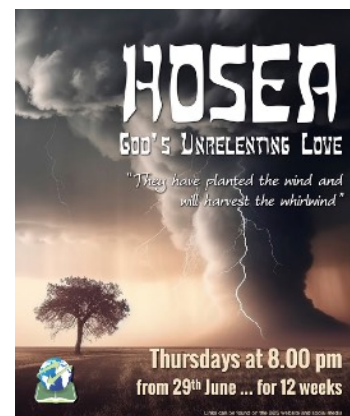
13th – Livingston: Devotional Evening, 7.00 pm. Contact: christianwoman@btinternet.com.

March

29th-31st – European Lectureship 2024. Venue: Verona, Italy. Contact: Kojo Mensah (kojom262@gmail.com).

April

19th-24th – Field of Refuge Women’s Renewal: “New Beginnings, When Grace Abounds”. Venue: Tulliallan Castle, Alloa FK10 4BE. Cost: £155 per person sharing a room (£170 for a single room); £45 deposit on booking. Contact: fieldofrefuge@hotmail.com.



THE FINAL WORD



**"I don't
understand
you God!"**

Why is it that bad things happen to good people? The question has been asked since time immemorial and has never fully been answered. Recently I heard a lesson based on the life of King Hezekiah from 2 Kings 18. He was one of the best kings Judah ever had. His Dad, King Ahaz, was one of the worst, evil, scheming, murderous, and hateful man any young boy could have. All sorts of idolatry were encouraged until Hezekiah became king.

At the age of just 25 this new monarch ousted idolatry as much as it was physically possible. Places of idol worship were smashed to pieces, broken down and cut up. Even the sacred symbol made by Moses at the time of plague and made by the order of God himself was destroyed because it had become an idol and was worshiped by the common people. Hezekiah was a true hero, a truly great leader, and example of faith. Yet he was not always the winner. Nothing was easy for him and bad things happened to him. We wonder why – why did God not make things easier for him? No one could have been on God's side more!

I don't know anyone who is trying to be faithful who is without difficulties. Sometimes those problems start as a child, with parents who are selfish, ungodly or even cruel. It is the privilege of parents to develop their children's body and mind, guiding, caring and loving their offspring, but we know that is not always the case and can make headline news to sicken our stomachs. Many a teenager has listened to the tales told by their so-called friends and have gone down a slippery slope of self-destruction.

But many young people have stood against the terrors and disappointment of parents or siblings or friends to stand on their own feet and make a life for themselves and have pledged their

allegiance to a crucified and risen Jesus. I am only too aware that some may have to live their lives fighting against their social background to live a life of faith. These soldiers of Christ are then often hit with the problems of life dealt in a thousand different ways and we wonder 'why?'. Why is it that those who are struggling for Christ seem to be let down by God and are attacked one way or another. And we cry out, why God do you have to make life so difficult, we just don't understand you?

I know I cannot answer this great question, but this is what I know and believe: that God so loved the world that he gave himself as a man to live and to die and to conquer death so that we may live in Heaven with him. But it is not only pie in the sky when we die that is on offer. By standing firm in Christ and with Christ the poorest of all can be raised up by being offered support and encouragement. The weak can become strong, those with physical or mental difficulties can find a way forward.

We must not dare to leave the side of our Saviour; the everlasting arms of love are opened wide to the weakest of all his people. Then when we go through what seems the Valley of Shadows even of death we will not be frightened. God is on our side – even when we don't understand him.

*To even try to understand you Heavenly Father is too much,
We look, we pray, we study, we try to search the unsearchable,
We are confused for though you have promised to be near, you seem far away.
Grant us eyes to see you, ears to hear you, hearts to love you',
And faith to be satisfied.*

Trevor