

CHRISTIAN WORKER



Congregations work together



Three new Christians!



BBS residential study week planned in 2017



**An original poem:
"What is my value?"**

From the editors:

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The *Christian Worker* is published monthly as a news magazine for Churches of Christ in the United Kingdom.



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Deadline: 21st of each month

December and Christmas season is upon us! This is one of my favourite times of the year, as the nights are colder and darker and the Christmas lights begin to come on. For many, we have already had the first and even second snowfall of the winter (at least we have had these in East Kilbride!). We look forward to time with family and friends and exchanging gifts with those we love.

There are some great opportunities for Bible study and fellowship in 2017. The British Bible School have just announced a residential study week to take place at Bassenfell Manor near Keswick (in the Lake District) from 6th-10th November. Although not everything is in place yet, the week is booked so if you can, plan to take time to be with us! This will be a great week for those who are involved with regular teaching at their home congregation or for anyone who wants to learn more from God's word. The full programme will be announced as soon as plans are in place.

Also there is the Advanced Bible Study Series which is held each February in Gemünden, Germany. Although all the presenters are not yet confirmed, we do know that Tony Coffey will be teaching. The date for the week session will be 13th-17th February, with the weekend session being 17th-19th February. A more full programme will be announced soon.

As we look back over the year, there have been both happy times and sad times. Take time to give thanks to God for the blessings that he continues to shower on us so lavishly. We can be thankful for our families, both our physical ones and our spiritual family in Christ. It is so easy to dwell on perceived failures and disappointments. Instead, let's remember who we are as God's children and be thankful for what we have in Jesus!

Jon

Prayer

*For the beauty of this birth,
For the power of this new life,
For the fulfilment of your plan,
For the change in world history,
O God, we give you thanks.*

Spotlight: Congregations join together

For the past seventeen years, congregations in the west of Scotland have been holding a joint outreach meetings involving three congregations. Initially these were the Clydebank, Stirling and East Kilbride congregations.

Later the Cumbernauld congregation became involved and more recently the three have been the Lomond, Clarkston and East Kilbride congregations.



The idea behind joining together was that three congregations committed to supporting each of the three nights would produce a good environment to bring our friends to as well as to help promote harmony amongst the congregations involved. Until this year, each congregation would host one night of the three-night weekend series of lessons. Also, by pooling our resources we could bring in speakers that might otherwise be prohibitive due to travel cost for one congregation to do by itself. We were able to bring in some speakers from the USA including Mack Lyon, Gene West and Dan Chambers. Speakers from the UK have included Joe Nisbet, Michael Gaunt, Ian Starrs and Mitch Vick.



This year our speaker was Nick Wilson from Hyvots Bank. He had spoken in the past for all three congregations and we felt that he would present encouraging lessons for those who attended. Although the Christians at Lomond did not feel they were able to host one of the meetings, they were committed to supporting these outreach events.

On Friday night we gathered at the East Kilbride meeting place. 32 Christians were able to come along. Nick's lesson was interesting and relevant and a good time of fellowship was enjoyed by those who were there.

Saturday evening the meeting was at the Duff Memorial Hall in Busby where the Clarkston congregation meet each week. 37 were able to meet together for another good evening of fellowship and encouragement.

This year, for the first time, we decided it would be good to host a joint Sunday morning meeting as well. What better way to proclaim our unity in Jesus than to break bread together? This year the East Kilbride and Lomond congregations joined the congregation at Clarkston for their morning worship. It was wonderful to see

62 Christians meeting together to break bread and spend time around God's word. Following the worship there was a time of fellowship with coffee, tea, and various home-bakes, so that all could enjoy more time together.

All-in-all, it was an uplifting weekend of fellowship with one another and around God's word. We look forward to doing this again next year!

We would encourage congregations that are in reasonably close proximity to consider having similar meetings. The attendance boost is encouraging. Being with Christians you don't normally get to spend time with is good for all. And it does send out a very positive message – these are Christians that are serious about working together for Jesus.

Jon Galloway

Devotional Thought: "Forty years passed"

The clocks of heaven do not seem to tick as the clocks on earth. We want what we want now. To have to wait another five minutes in a queue is just too long. We want to cross the world faster than we have done so before. We hurry our children to be more skilled, more grown up than their peer group, and we want to retire earlier than anyone else we know. The only thing we don't want to come quickly is the time of our death. Even then, by some social calculating, we decide if it is too soon or even too late.

How many of us have cried, "God give me patience and give it to me now"? Everything has to be instant for us and we hate to wait. Life's successes cannot come fast enough, the problem is the race to any success must last long enough for it to be of value. No pain equals no gain.

The Hebrews of old had to wait 40 years from the time they left Egypt to start to move into the land they could call their own (read Deuteronomy 2). We wonder how many days the people must have grumbled about this. Camping may be fun

for a while but not for years on end. Many fail to ask the question, "why did all of this have to go on?" Let scripture answer itself. The generation of fighting men that had left Egypt would not be entitled to see the Promised Land because of their unfaithfulness. God was patient even if the Hebrews were not.

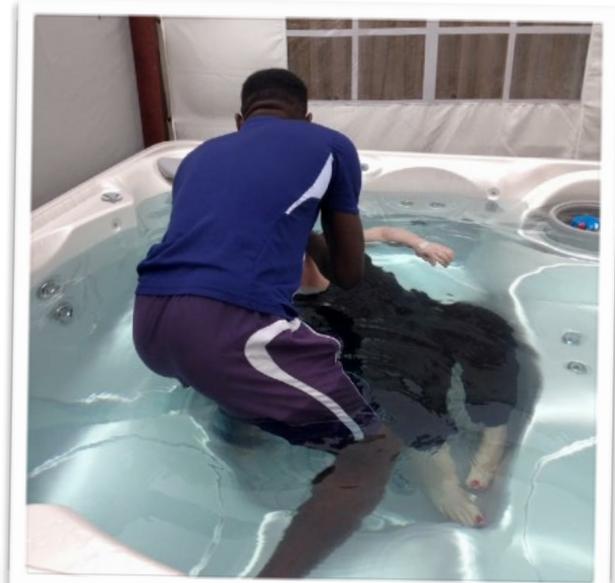
So what has this to do with us? Do we leave unfaithfulness hanging around our necks so that we cannot attain our spiritual goals? Many who have given their lives to Christ may still be held back by the foolishness of decades, even 38 years. Restoration, renewal must be grappled with to attain the fullness of new life, but the past can be a terrible pain, a heartache that brings us to tears. But we have a choice to either maintain our grief, letting it be forever new, or cast it aside and march into the promised land of the blessings of God. Even God motivated the Hebrews to go onwards. What do we need to get us moving again? The cross has had its sacrifice, what else is needed?

Trevor Williams

Congratulations!

Reading: **Rebecca Coleman** was baptised on 3rd September by Allen Bossman. They had previously worked for the same company. Rebecca is now reaching out to her family and friends.

Craig Benjamin



East Kilbride: **Isabella Cass** was baptised by her father, Basil, on 7th November. The Cass family have been part of the congregation for the past six year and we have watched Bella grow up from an infant. Basil thanked those who had been influential in teaching her in the classes and lessons. Basil and Yvonne also take time to read and discuss the Bible with their children.

We pray that Bella will grow into a Christian young woman who is faithful to the Lord and will lead many to know Jesus.

Jon Galloway

Northampton: We rejoice to share with you the news that **Herbert Essah** gave his life to Christ on Tuesday, 15th November. Being brought up by Christian parents, Ben and Grace, we share their joy. We would also like to thank those who have taught Bible classes locally and at camps and Youth Weekends. All these together have been a great encouragement to Herbert and are helping our young people discover that the message of the gospel is for them.

Mark Hill



Tom King



It is with great sadness that the congregation of Kirkby-in-Ashfield reports the death of Tom King, aged 81, on 9th September 2016.

Tom served the congregation on Beulah Road and was involved in many different capacities. For about fifteen years, he ran the Sunday school which became a thriving and popular group. Many parents of the children visited us on occasions. Three became Christians and are still worshipping with us today. He also served other congregations throughout the country as a preacher and teacher. His messages were always practical and designed with the clear intention of helping and encouraging Christians in the service of their Master.

Tom's brother-in-law, Doug Melling, from the Longshoot congregation in Wigan, conducted the funeral service at Mansfield Crematorium. Over four hundred came to pay their respects. Doug outlined Tom's achievements: he worked as a head teacher in his professional capacity, but also worked voluntarily in numerous groups, notably the local hospice. He was also chairman of Mansfield magistrates. Tom always said that his successes were due to his strong, compassionate Christian beliefs, which carried him through many a crisis. He placed great emphasis on the importance of family and loved spending time with them. He leaves his wife, Janice; his daughter, Margaret; son, Tim; four grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

Tom always had a welcoming and encouraging word for everyone he came into contact with and we shall all miss his presence. However, we take great comfort in knowing he has gone to a better place.

Margaret Neucombe

Directory Update

LEICESTER

New Meeting place: West Gate School, Glenfield Road, Leicester LE3 6DG (use 'Community Door')

Sunday meetings: Bible classes 10.15 am, Worship 10.50 am (following classes)

Midweek: Wednesday Bible Classes 7.00 pm (at Newfound Centre, Pool Road, Leicester LE3 9GH)

Contact:

Paul Hill (w. Janet). ☎ (01509) 554995 📱 (07804) 653690

💻 paulh41@hotmail.co.uk

We were never called to be 'members of the church', whatever that might mean, but rather we were called to be followers of Jesus. Followers of the teacher from Galilee who had come to show us God in all his fullness. As followers we are learners, and the way we have chosen is a way of learning – learning of God, learning of life, learning of how to live our lives in such a way that honours God and respects our fellow beings.

This is not to say that all are to be academics or that all are to devote themselves to rigorous Bible study, but all are to be learners. And if we are all to be learners, then some must teach as together we follow the Lord Jesus by learning of him and by walking in his ways.

The British Bible School has always had as its essential aim the desire to teach others, that they might teach others also. This is a principle that Paul shared with Timothy and one which makes perfect sense among a community of learners. The idea that learning from others teaching the words of God is somehow optional is frankly absurd. It should be very much a part of our walk with God. So we continue to work hard to

do what we can to help others be better prepared to serve others in the word.

Residential Studies

To this end we are immensely excited to announce our first residential Study Week to

be held in November 2017 in the Lake District in the north of England. This will be run along similar lines to our Study Weekends, inasmuch as we plan for an intensive study event, but being a residential event

allows for much more flexibility and opportunities for learning. The dates for your diary are: 6th to 10th November 2017.

We will be making more details available shortly, but you might like to make a note of these dates and share them with any who might be interested. The event will be open to all who wish to engage themselves in some serious Bible study, and may be of particular interest to those already teaching within their local

assemblies. And the cost? We are confident that the cost including food and accommodation will be under £150. More information will be forthcoming (britishbibleschool.com).

Patrick Boyns



Family News

Leicester: Due to our growth this year the congregation in Leicester will be moving to a new meeting house approximately one mile from where we are currently meeting. Please note that Wednesday classes will remain at the centre on Pool Road.

We will be meeting in West Gate School, Glenfield Road, LE36DG (use the 'Community Door'). Sunday classes will start at 10.15 am with worship following the classes.

Wednesday classes will continue at the Newfound Centre, Pool Road, Leicester, starting at 7.00 pm.

Paul Hill

Loughborough: On the weekend of 11th November, the congregation meeting in Oxford Street, Loughborough, hosted a youth weekend. Young people came from all over the United Kingdom to enjoy a time of fellowship, fun and study around God's word.

Our theme for the weekend was POWER UP! The speakers for this weekend were Mark Hill, Calum Hill and Guy Sandison. They helped us realise the importance of relying on God's strength and not our own, as well as the importance of God being our power source.



The weekend provided a great opportunity to catch up with friends and make new ones. We enjoyed playing games together and also visiting the Loughborough town street fair.

Thanks to everyone who came along and helped make this an enjoyable and encouraging

weekend with like-minded young people.

Liam Bates

Reading: We will be bringing Durant (singing group) from the USA for a nine-day long event. They will arrive on Saturday, 27th May, and depart Monday, 5th June. The main event will be a large singing event which we are calling RISE (Reading In Song event). We have booked space in the Loddon Valley Leisure Centre which can hold 700 seated and 300

standing. We plan on two sessions. The first will start at 3:00 pm and be somewhat of a workshop. Anthony Lancaster and William Gooch will lead this session of worship. The second, at 6:30, and will be a concert by Durant. We are inviting all who can to come.

During the week, we will be doing outreach via song throughout the city (on the High Street, in malls, in parks, on buses, etc.).

Craig Benjamin

Around the World

Pakistan: For the past thirteen years I have been back in Pakistan. The Lord's work is growing day by day. The Bible College is continuing and we have now trained more than fifty young men from Karachi to Peshawar to teach and preach the Good News. Lord willing we will graduate our next class in April. We request that you remember this in your prayers.

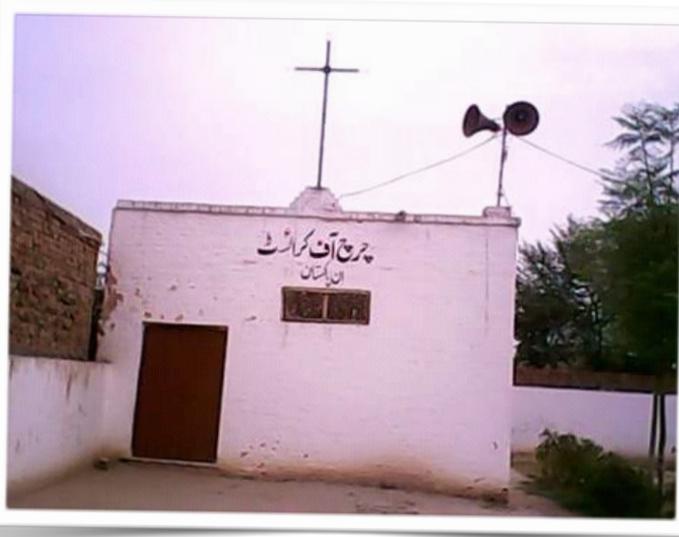
We have more men who want to attend the Bible College and are hoping to find funds to help them. We would also like to restart our adult literacy programme. This helps people with their reading so that they can read the Bible for themselves.

We are thankful for your continued prayers, concern, and support for the work we are trying to do in Pakistan. If anyone is able and would like to visit, we would welcome you to come and see the work here first-hand.

Remember us in your prayers as we continue to pray for you that may God bless you.

Naeem Sabir

(Naeem is a British Bible School graduate.)



Malawi: I want to share with you what the Lord has done to us at Jomo from last month up to this month. It has been a time

of blessings to the Lord's Kingdom and am pleased to say that we have baptised many at list every sunday, we baptise one or two. Today we baptised one, last week two and was a family and next week we will baptise one. I preached to him and accepted Christ and has made a decision to be baptised the next sunday. But

actually i want to share you the last week baptism, it was a family but the wife was expectant and from the look of things the time was due and i was really warried and i

was saying how is it going to happen but the Lord is faithful always and things just went very well and today i received a note which was to let us know that there is a baby boy which was born two days ago. There was

joy in the church when the news was announced to the congregation.

Tomorrow i will be out to the places i am also helping the congregations together with preachers i am descipling them and we will be at three central places where



cogregations will come together and will be taught about this killer disease HIV/AIDS. I have invited fellow evangelist who will be phacilitating because they are well trained in this filled. So tomorrow up to Wednesday we will be at Jimankhwe c of c where twelve congregations will meet, then from Wednesday afternoon, we will be at Khuyu, where nine congregations will meet up to Friday noon, then finally, we will be at Mpherembe c of c where



nineteen congregations will be together. So each congregation will send five participants but for the hosting congregation will have more participants. I have organised these seminars because i have seen how acute the problem is within the family of God is. Though the challenges are: the rains, because people are busy in the gardens as it is about rain anytime from now; our mobility from place to place and shortage of food which has been the limitation of having more participants. Your prayers are highly needed. God bless.

Lungster Mlotha

(Editors' note: we decided to publish Lungster's report 'as is.' We hope you found it both informative and enjoyable. Lungster is a British Bible School graduate.)

New Zealand: I don't know whether you heard news of the earthquakes we have recently had in New Zealand. They have mostly been centred in North Canterbury in the north east of the South Island, but many have been felt in Wellington and other parts of the country. I certainly felt the first big earthquake just after midnight the Monday before last and the first aftershock, but not many of the aftershocks which have continued since. There were two deaths with the first one and some injuries. As far as I am aware all the Christians affected by the quakes are safe with little damage. Our church building got through the earthquake safely too, with just

a few things falling off shelves. I certainly got through unscathed and felt quite secure in the retirement village where I live, knowing it was built to high earthquake resilience standards, and that there were



people nearby should I need help, which I haven't.

The main area of damage has been the east coast road and rail routes and

the town of Kaikoura which has been cut off because of the damage to the transport routes. This is very difficult for them as they depend on tourism (whale and seal watching, surfing and walking in nearby countryside) and the export of seafood for their income.

Wellington once again got through without too much damage. The central business district was closed down for Monday and Tuesday while they checked for external damage which could be dangerous for traffic and pedestrians,



with some areas being cordoned off until they were made safe. The National Library building was closed while being checked by structural engineers (as most other buildings are being done) and was considered safe to return to as it should have been, being built to high earthquake resilience standards, and upgraded during refurbishment in 2009-2012. There were areas where books and periodicals had come off shelves, and some computer screens had fallen over which was hardly surprising considering the length of the quake and the rolling motion. The reopening of the building was delayed because of concerns regarding the safety of two neighbouring buildings but these were cordoned off allowing safe access for staff and we reopened for staff only on Monday. We should be ready to resume services to the public next Monday.

We have been warned to expect further aftershocks including one at least the same size as the initial one, possibly even larger. We have all been reminded to ensure we are prepared with essential emergency food and water supplies, and a 'get-away' bag in case we have to evacuate at short

notice. Of course we have absolutely no idea of when such an event might occur, which certainly reminds me of the necessity of being ready for Christ's return at any time.

Anyway I am fine, keeping well and doing what I can now.

Trish Godfrey

(Trish is a graduate of the British Bible School.)

Greece (Athens): Summer at Omonia went by very fast. We are thankful to God for having poured His rich blessings over his people once again, through a number of gracious "good news" to our soul-winning efforts. We rejoice as we have been happily surprised with what God has done to souls opened up to the gospel of hope and true salvation during the last four months.

Eleni met the first refugees in Mytilini, the capital city of the island of Lesbos, where she visited as a volunteer, right where the rubber boats arrived daily from Turkey. Later, as some refugees over at the Omonia Square asked her street and bus service information, they were invited to the church building. By word of mouth, more and more refugees joined. They had heard of God's ministry at Omonia, even "while riding the bus", they said. What is really of importance is not the offering of food or clothing service. Anyone can offer a salad and a piece of chicken, a sumptuous pasta plate, a rich soup, a dessert and a cup of tea and cookies. It is so easy! What matters is exactly what we sing about in the hymn "They'll Know We Are Christians..." It is the psychological support to those who

have escaped death – physical and spiritual alike. It is the love of God that never ceases, a story repeated every day, a story of people who care to serve, because Jesus showed the way!

On Tuesdays and Thursdays the Omonia church facility is packed with families and singles who enjoy a time of peace (and free fast Internet), a place far from the noisy camp; a place where love abounds, a place where past heartaches and experiences are shared, understood in love and healed

through prayer. This is something altogether different from the clothes being offered and the hearty meal menus, right from Eleni's cooking team.

There have been cases during these two weekly "community days" that one



hundred thirty-five souls showed up. Before every community meal, there is a 30-minute Bible lesson on God's provision through history (Abraham, David, Joseph, Daniel, Job), translated into Arabic and Farsi (Dari – the language spoken in Afghanistan). The session is then completed through in these languages.

During Sundays we have an average of thirty-plus refugees who attend both our Bible study and worship. Eleven of them have happily surrendered their life to Jesus through baptism.

They proclaim Jesus boldly, as they now partake of the symbols of the Lord's Supper – living examples of faith before the eyes of their fellow refugees! Very bold of them! God at work!

Alexander and Eleni Melivrytos

Appeals Update

There were several appeals for funds in last month's *Christian Worker*. Thus far the following amounts have been donated to these good works:

Greece – £1500
Philippines – £1570
Haiti – £5687.50

These funds remain open for further donations. Many thanks to all!

Trevor



Poem: "What is My Value?"

An orphan stood out on a street one night
Engulfed in the shadow of a moon filled light
The child stood still as the world passed by
Seeking for answers to the question of why.

Whilst standing he noticed a figure moving near
Until the light revealed a face so radiant and clear
A young orphan girl walked close to his side
Her head held up high with an expression of pride.

She said to the boy, "Tell me! How do you feel?"
The boy's sad face lifted in readiness to reveal.
He had waited a long time for a moment to share,
And longed for a person who would listen and care.

"I feel worthless in life and of no value at all,
With a world of big people, I am useless and small.
I am angry about life and feel the scales are unfair,
Others have everything and all I get is fresh air."

"Why was I born and then cast out on the street
Why can't I have the best shoes on my feet?
Why can't I sit on a fur rug near a fire?
Or have a Christmas with a family, sharing
songs from a choir?"

"Everything that I own I have battled hard to receive,
I am left to myself to show sorrow and grieve,
Fear eats away from deep within my soul,
I feel that at times my life will be swallowed
up whole."

The boy slid down the wall, buried his head
in his knees,
He looked at his life like it was plagued with disease,
He rocked back and forth distressed and annoyed,
"If only I could fill this darkness and void."

The young orphan girl who was lending her ear,
Opened her arms and subdued the boy's fear,
She held the boy tight and refused to let go,
And whispered the words, "You are perfect you know."

"It is not how we look or the goods that we own,
It has nothing to do with the places we've grown,
The colour of our skin or the language we speak,
It simply boils down to the things that we seek."

The orphan girl and the boy sat on a small
piece of lawn;
Then she pulled out her Bible that was
tattered and torn;
Her face beamed a smile for she knew of God's power
And the feast that she held for the young boy
to devour.

"Romans 1:20-23: she shared of God's power,
that is radiant and bright –
You can see the creator declared through
your vision and sight.
If your life is in darkness, then the answer is found,
In opening your curtains and simply looking around.

God speaks through creation and the
message is for all,
From the richest to the poorest like an
orphan on a wall.
He doesn't measure you by the treasures
you've acquired,
Or the powers and rankings to which you aspired.

Regardless of circumstances and your status on earth,
The land or the background of your family at birth,
God is seeking to find those who follow His way,
Counting all blessings through the hours of
each day."

Turning to Ephesians 1:3-8 she read out each line
Speaking of God's plan before the creation of time.
"Jesus Christ the most Holy and blameless man
Was to suffer and die as a sacrificial lamb."

"So, what is your value from the passage above
When clearly the creator showers on you all his love?
Not with silver or gold or a mansion to dwell
But to adopt you his son and declare all is well."

"Redeemed from the darkness of Satan and sin,
You will then feel renewed like a powerful king,
You're no longer an orphan, depressed on a wall,
But a saved child of God who can finally stand tall."

Written by Paul Hill

Advanced Bible Study Series



Join us in Gemünden, Germany...

13-19 February 2017

ABSS I – Monday pm to Friday noon

[Presenters will include Tony Coffey (Dublin)]

ABSS II – Friday pm to Sunday noon

To request complete programme information or book your place, contact ABSS Coordinator:
Paul Brazle (brazle.paul@gmail.com)

European Ladies' Retreat
at Burg Lichtenberg, Thallichtenberg, Germany **2017**
March 2-5

From Roots to Fruits

The ladies of the churches of Christ in Zurich and Schaffhausen invite you to a weekend of fellowship, study and worship. The registration link and further details will be sent out by email and will be posted on Facebook. The registration form and even more information are available on our website.

Please reserve the date, tell your friends and sign up fast! Registration is open until December 15, 2016. After this deadline there are only limited beds available due to the booking policy of the youth hostel. So... SIGN UP NOW!

Infos
<http://europeanladiesretreat2017@gmail.com>

European Singles Retreat

...and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds...
Hebrews 10:24

Welcome!

Save the date:
21-23 April 2017
15-17 September 2017

December

2nd-3rd – **East Kilbride**: British Bible School study weekend on “A Letter to the Ephesians” (part 2). Teachers: Patrick Boyns and Jon Galloway. Friday beginning at 7.30 pm; Saturday beginning at 9.30 am.

January 2017

20th-22nd – **Bassenfell Retreat** at Bassenfell Manor (Lake District). Theme: “More About Jesus.” Organised by the British Bible School. (Now fully booked!)

February

4th – **Cumbernauld**: Men’s Day.

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.

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 – **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>.

11th – **Great Barr**: Bible Seminar.

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).

April

8th – **Kirkcaldy**: Annual Social.

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

May

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

June

3rd – **Reading**: RISE (Reading in Song event) – 2 sessions with Anthony Lancaster, William Gooch and Durant, at Lodden Valley Leisure Centre: 3.00 pm singing workshop and 6.30 pm Durant programme. Contact: Craig Benjamin (csbjlb@gmail.com).

July

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

August

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.

The Final Word: "The Thrill of Jesus' Birth"



I love Christmas – not necessarily all the hype – but I love the food, time with my family, concerts, the food (did I mention that?!). But most of all I love looking at my Bible and remembering the thrill of reading about the birth of Jesus. It starts right there in Matthew 1 with all those long names. This may be boring to some but for me it is exciting. If you notice in the Old Testament, every time there is a list of generations there comes a change in the story – Matthew goes right in and starts a new story the same way his forebearers did.

The first verse just overflows with information, “A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham.” Jesus’ name means ‘Saviour’ and the Greek word ‘Christ’ is the same as ‘Messiah’ in Hebrew. At last the Messiah, so long awaited had come! But there needed to be proof and what follows is Matthew’s way of dealing with this necessity.

David was the great King. On the death bed of Jacob in we read: “The sceptre will not depart from Judah, not the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs and the obedience of the nations is his” (Genesis 49:10). This was the prophecy that the kingly line would come through Judah and David was the first king from Judah. The throne of David was to be established for ever (1 Chronicles 14:10). We know through reading the scriptures that the kings stopped ruling in Judah in 586 BC at the fall of Jerusalem. But Matthew gives the genealogy of Jesus to prove that he was a direct descendant and therefore heir to the fulfilment of the prophecy. It is little wonder that the wise men go looking for “the one who has been born king of the Jews.” At the close of his life above the cross was written these words: “This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.”

The second part of verse 1 says that Jesus was the son of Abraham. Again a scripture is fulfilled: “... and all the peoples on earth will be blessed through you” (Genesis 12:3). What Jesus came to do was of universal concern. “But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself,” Jesus said (John 12:32). Then, of course, Jesus instructs his followers to go into all the world (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16).

The genealogy continues and in verse 17 we read about three lots of fourteen generations. Our minds immediately say there were therefore 42 generations mentioned, with David being the 14th generation. We do not think in numbers but the numerical number of David is 14. There are only three letters in his name DVD – D has the numeracy of 5, V of 4. It shouts to the Hebrew readers that Jesus is the King in David’s place. Note also the end of verse 16 and verse 17 we find the word Christ (Messiah) – this is Jesus!

Now of course the text about the birth of Jesus continue through chapter 2. We are introduced to dreams and at least four fulfillments of prophecy: 1:23 = Isaiah 7:14; 2:6 = Micah 5:2; 2:15 = Hosea 11:1; and 2:18 = Jeremiah 31:5.

Let me encourage our readers to read through the whole of these two chapters and then go over to Luke 1-3. It is a good exercise to compare and contrast the two passages and draw out the beauty of God becoming flesh and dwelling among us. Then before you eat even more read Philipians 2:6-11 one more time and be amazed.

Enjoy the holiday and enjoy the study.

Trevor