

the Christian Worker MAGAZINE

December 2021 • Vol 53 No 12

Story of
Redemption –
tool for
outreach

Preparing for worship

Updates from Romania and
Malawi

John Morgan goes home

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**Front cover: Story of
Redemption
workshop at
Northampton; above:
first snow of the year
in Scotland**



EDITORIAL AND PUBLICATION

The Christian Worker Magazine is published monthly as a news magazine for Churches of Christ in the United Kingdom. The first issue was published in January 1969.

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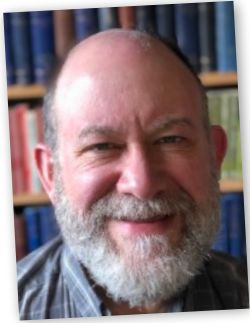
Former Editors: Albert E. Winstanley (1969-1973; 1980-1987); Robert C. Eckman (1973-1980); Graham A. Fisher (1987-2014)

All articles and news items should be sent to **Trevor Williams** by the 21st of each month. Late items may be accepted until the 25th. Publication is the first day of each month.

To receive The Christian Worker Magazine as a free pdf, send your e-address to jdgalloway@mac.com. Professionally printed copies are available at cost. Please contact Trevor for details – twilliams195@hotmail.co.uk.



MY PERSPECTIVE



**We must be
united on
God's word
and the
good news
of Jesus**

Another year draws to a close

It is hard to believe that here we are in the last month of 2021. It seems the year has sped by way too quickly! The pandemic is still with us and not only continuing but a new variant has surfaced, causing concern for our politicians. Fortunately, we know who is in charge and can place our trust in him! That is not to say we should not avail ourselves of what medical treatments there are but ultimately it is God who will deal with this pandemic. Let us be praying that this will happen soon!

As we approach the end of a year I've always found this a good time for reflecting on the year that is drawing to a close. Although we have made it to the end of another year, have we grown in our faith and in our knowledge of God's word? I am reminded on the importance of spending time in God's word. The psalmist wrote, "The unfolding of your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple" (Psalm 119:130 NIV).

Have we had light in our lives this past year? Part of the year was once again spent in lockdown, which should have given us additional time to be reading and studying God's word. If we have not availed ourselves of time for Bible study, either through our local congregation or through the British Bible School's online classes and modules, let me encourage you to make time in the new year to spend time involved in those things that will help us to grow spiritually.

Are we closer to our brothers and sisters in Christ? Online meetings are not the same as meeting in person – I

think we would all agree with that. It is good to be worshipping in person again, to be able to not only worship God physically in a group setting but to have conversations with other Christians and to meet up with them through the week to encourage each other. When Paul wrote to the Christians in Thessalonica he reminded them to "encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing" (1 Thessalonians 5:11).

I have grown increasingly alarmed at the division I see in many countries between those who follow the government guidelines to wear masks and those who refuse; between those who have been vaccinated and those who refuse vaccinations. When I hear Christians taking similar very strong positions I become fearful. The world is dividing over these things. May Christians not allow these to define us and become divided over such worldly views. We may hold strong convictions on both sides of this debate, but our loyalty must always be to our Teacher and not to our own views. May we always be united in Christ and not divide over whether or not we have been vaccinated.

Yes, another year is drawing to a close. May we use the dawning of another new year to bring us closer to our Saviour, closer to each other, and better prepared for eternity. May we centre our lives on what is of ultimate importance. May we find ways of reaching others with the good news of Jesus.

Jon



New Evangelistic Film Series Comes to UK!

Why the Northampton Church of Christ is Excited about the "Story of Redemption" Film Series

By Mark Hill



Story of Redemption Seminar Follow up team at Northampton Church of Christ

Many years ago I went on a mission trip to Russia. A good friend I met there, missionary Joel Petty in St. Petersburg, contacted me recently about one of the ministries he is involved with, Next Generation for Christ, which produces the "Story of Redemption" (see <https://storyofredemptionfilms.com>)

He explained that the Story of Redemption is an excellent video series (with .pdf or printed lessons) for sharing the gospel. It has been used around the world and available with subtitles in more than 40 languages, as well as voiceovers in several languages. It has been found to be effective in the U.S., Russia, Croatia, India, Peru, Israel, Singapore, Kenya and other parts of Africa, among other places. Used at teen camps, in the U.S. in seeker small groups and one on one lessons. Via zoom or in person.

Each lesson has a short video about 6-7 minutes long, with a study guide and discussion questions. There are 8 core parts to the main series with about 4 videos in each section, with evangelism, discipleship, and English learning tracks of various lengths. The series is free of charge for missionaries and ministries outside the U.S.

Joel recommended I meet up with the author of the series, James Nored, when he visited England, something I couldn't do at that time.

We later met online with a few others, and I asked the congregation in Northampton if we could host a seminar about this series. It took place on Saturday 13th November. The Sunday prior to that James preached, and what he said and the way he said it filled us with anticipation for the seminar.

We had people in the building, on Zoom and watching on YouTube. James explained how these videos and discussion questions provided are used around the world

to teach people about Jesus and the story of redemption. It is simple to use, yet the questions lead to deep thoughts. To use it we do not need to invite people “to church”. Wherever you are with a laptop, tablet or mobile phone, you can watch the video with someone then ask them the questions provided.



Though the seminar was about learning how to use the series and follow the process, the discussions that we practiced were deep. Afterwards every comment heard was positive and the phrase that kept being repeated was “I’m excited about this,” Even I am excited and I’m an Englishman!

At the close of the seminar James asked us to think of two people we would like to share this with and reach with the gospel, then pray for them, which we did. Our house group is going to meet weekly and continue to pray for those people and we will consider how best to approach them.

Another house group, when they have completed their current study, will leaflet the area inviting people to the house or online to see the films and discuss them at their weekly meeting.

We know this is something others can use. So please do get in touch for more information. If you remember how successful the Jule Miller filmstrips were in reaching out I do not need to convince you that this is something we can now use in today’s online world.

People abroad have signed up to study with someone, but teachers are needed. Could you do that from the comfort of your own home? Be a missionary abroad without leaving home? Get in touch for more information and training to do it.

One of the things that James encouraged us to do is to start reaching out to our networks and share the series with them. Through one of our elders, Greg Contell, connections have already been made in South Africa. Perhaps you would like to join the next online meeting Friday 3rd Dec at 5 pm ([CLICK HERE](#) to join or contact us).

Naeem Sabir in Pakistan, a graduate from the British Bible School has students waiting for a teacher. Can you help? There are so many opportunities.

As we come out of the pandemic lock downs, I know many people didn’t want to just get back to normal as far as our church life is concerned. But what could be different? THIS IS!

The difference is we no longer need to only invite people to church for that hour on Sunday or midweek. We can invite family, friends, neighbours to watch a short video and chat about it. Anytime, anyplace, anywhere.

In this way we will not just be doing evangelism, but we are being evangelistic.

Our sincere thanks go to James Nored for providing a way for disciples today to truly go into all the world and teach the gospel.

To learn more about the Next Generation for Christ ministry, go to www.NextGenerationforChrist.com. To check out the SOR film series, go to www.StoryofRedemptionFilms.com. To find out how to receive the SOR series for free or join an upcoming meeting or training, contact Mark Hill at marks@uwclub.net or James Nored at jamesnored@gmail.com.

AT REST

John Morgan (Hindley)

1944-2021

John departed this life on 11th October 2021. He leaves behind his loving wife Jeniffer, children Allison, Jonathan, Julian and Bethan and their families, including grandchildren Benjamin, Eleanor, Samuel, Caitlin and Evie; all saddened in grief but united in love and mutual support.

John and Jeniffer were married in 1966 in



Ayr, Scotland. In their younger years John and Jeniffer were supported and guided by families grounded in the truth of the Word of God.

The theology of John was of a practical nature. He was in great demand in the congregations as a preacher of the gospel and a teacher of a syllabus based on the Word of God. In the community John was recognised as a man “who went about doing good”.



Immediately after his death, his Facebook page was filled with accolades: “A lovely man; a true gentleman; a true legend of Hindley; open and transparent and an all round good guy; always encouraged



people; a special man who made you feel loved and valuable.”

The same people recognised his motivation: “He was a tireless servant of his Lord; he was everything that epitomised goodness; John always practised his beliefs; a great worker for the Lord; a hero of his faith; an earthly loss, a heavenly gain.”

A Hindley bereavement group founded by John is testimony to his heart for God’s people. One member of the group said: “he encouraged and supported the bereaved always knowing the right word.”

He created a weekly publication, aptly named ‘The Encourager’, which was read locally, nationally and latterly internationally.

He was a living example of “God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works”. John understood that “God had prepared these beforehand and that we should walk in them”.

His working life also reflected his love for his community. He was a master

AT REST

grocer who created a shop which not only produced the best of provisions, but which became a social/community centre for the people of Hindley.



“On behalf of me and my family I would like to thank everyone who has phoned, sent messages, cards and, most of all, love and prayers. They are too numerous to contact individually but nevertheless much appreciated.

“A special mention to the church at ARGYLE STREET who worked hard in the background to get as many people in the building as possible and also the new congregation at Aughton who provided the Zoom at short notice. Of course a very special thank you to Brother Ernest Makin who gave John a wonderful tribute. 2 Timothy 4:6-8.”

Jeniffer Morgan

I can think of no other fitting ending than a poem defining the “measure of a man”. (*In editing the poem, I have replaced the personal pronoun, ‘he/his’, with the proper noun, ‘John’.*)

Not – How did John die?
But – How did John live?
Not – what did John gain?
But – what did John give?

These are the things that measure the worth
Of John as a man regardless of birth.

Not – what was John’s status?
But – had John a heart?
And – how did John play his God given part?

Was John ever ready with a word of good cheer?
To bring back a smile; to banish a tear?

Not – what was John’s church?
Not – what was John’s creed?
But – Had John befriended those really in need?

Not – What did the sketch in the newspaper say?
But – how many were sorry
when John passed away?

These are the things that measure the worth
Of John as a man, regardless of birth.

Ernest Makin





BRITISH BIBLE SCHOOL NOTES

Autumn Study Week

At one point it was looking as if our Autumn Study Week was going to have to be put on hold, yet again, but thankfully all was able to proceed as planned. We knew that the number of students was going to be slightly fewer than in previous years, but as we well know it is the quality and not the quantity that matters most. This year's class were a delight to teach, and all in all it was a jolly splendid week.

Although things got off to a rather hungry start – our food delivery was about seven hours late – emergency rations were secured and, as has been said, all's well that ends well. By the time Tuesday morning's full English breakfast was served, memories of the peckishness of the previous evening were soon forgotten.

Bassenfell Manor is not only an ideal venue for our start-of-the-year Family Retreat, but it also serves well for this Study Week, providing an excellent opportunity to immerse ourselves in the word of God, far removed from the hustle and bustle of everyday life. Our module for the week was the book of Acts. Although considerably more time could

be spent in dissecting each passage of the book, the purpose of the week was to provide a more contextual study in light of the message of scripture as a whole.

We even managed to squeeze in a short ramble on the Thursday afternoon, enabling us to enjoy some of the magnificent beauty afforded by the Lake District.

And speaking of the Lake District, we are looking forward to returning to Bassenfell Manor again in January for our Late Winter Family Retreat from 14th to 16th January 2022. Do please visit our website for further information and a Registration Form.

Please remember the work of the British Bible School when you pray. Please remember those who teach, those who lead, and those who help to support our work in so many different ways. If you would like to hear more of what we have to offer, please do get in touch with us and let us see how we might serve together as we move forward in the service of Jesus.

Patrick Boyns
britishbibleschool.com





READY FOR WORSHIP

‘When you come together, everyone has a hymn, a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of this must be done for the strengthening of the church’.

This passage from 1 Corinthians 14:26-33 seems to be almost forgotten among many congregations. It has been noticed that there is often an attitude among Christians that if their name is not on the plan to do something that Sunday morning that no preparation needs to be done – other than turn up. That notion is not good for the Lord’s people. All of God’s people need to be ready to serve in whatever capacity.

We start off by arriving at worship in plenty of time – this way we can see if we can encourage others and find out if we can do something to help out. When we arrive late we have left all responsibility to someone else. This is a poor display of our faith. When we are in the meeting we

need to join in and be led by the Spirit of God. What a privilege to be able to encourage others, to share our faith, to rejoice in our Saviour. If we are asked to pray, are we prepared? Thoughts must to be in our minds to be prepared. We need to have a mindset that we are part of the whole, that we are there to serve and we are ready to serve.

Sadly there seems to be a feeling among many that ‘we go to church’. Of course we do not, we are the church. History has shown many forms of worship, usually having one or two only in a leading position; the congregation go to watch how they perform. This is not how the first Christians worshipped.

When was the last time you went to worship feeling excited to hear what our brothers could share or how we might be so touched by hearing others that our hearts leapt with joy? When was the last

time you went wanting to share with others because you no longer belong to yourself but to your brothers and sisters in Christ?

Our text teaches ‘when you come together, everyone...’ Everyone is important, everyone can serve, everyone can be a child of God, and everyone has something to say. Worship is not led ‘from the front’ but in the hearts and minds of the disciples of Christ.

Trevor





FAMILY NEWS

EDMONTON (LONDON)

Our Men’s Workshop was on 10th July with the theme: “A Healthy Church”, and the corresponding scripture text was taken from Ephesians 4:15-16. The main speaker for the day was Patrick Boyns (Principal, British Bible School). The event was once again hosted on Zoom with fifty who logged in from the UK and throughout the world.

After the lesson, those who attended were split into groups for discussion. Four topics were considered, one by each group: “Effective Church Management”; “Sound Doctrine”; “Organisation of the Church”; and “Functions of the Church”. Group leaders reported a summation of their discussions back to the entire group.

The final topic dealt with men’s health: “Hypertension (Causes and Effects)”. This was presented by Otchere Mireku of the Edmonton congregation.

It was another good day of study and discussion.

S. Ofori Dwumah

area, the meeting place is going to be sold and the proceeds put to good use for other work. In the building there are currently pitch pine wooden pews (which originally came from the church meeting place in Liverpool), a solid oak communion table, and books which once belonged to Albert Winstanley (that his family do not need). If anyone is interested in any of these things, please contact us on robannlizzie@hotmail.com for more information.

Martin and Ann Price and Joanna Brown (the Trustees)

SUMMER LANE (BIRMINGHAM)

We collected items for the ‘shoe box appeal’ and we collected food for our local food bank.

The picture is of some at Summer Lane coming together for the shoe box appeal. With the generosity of the Christians we were able to fill 21 boxes. Also, we collect food for the St Basil food bank.

Trevor Ralph

ULVERSTON

We thank God for the presence of the congregation in Ulverston since 1876. It was the home of Walter Crosthwaite and latterly Albert Winstanley.

As there is now only a small number of Christians in the





AROUND THE WORLD

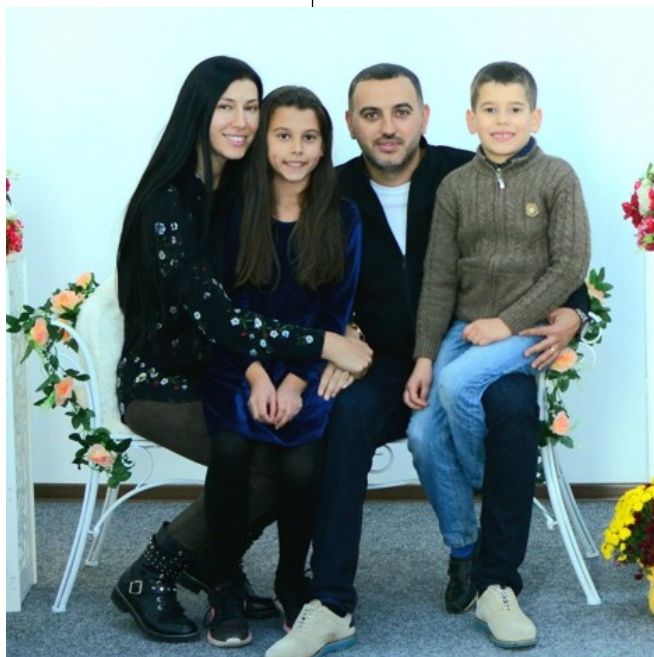
ROMANIA

Romania has had a chequered historical past but with a present population of about 19 million it has only really been a self-governing country since 1989. There are about 15 congregations in our fellowship, averaging in size between 10-50 people; a total of about 350-400 Christians. Most of these are aged between 25-50 years with a few older people. They hold classes for the young and Sunday Schools. They have a national camp, called Hope Camp held in the mountains each year. Once each year they try to go into schools and kindergartens to distribute Bibles to the children. This is done with the help of Eastern European Mission who prints them in Romanian.

American missionaries began the congregations after the revolution in 1989, only one of whom has remained in the country. They also have three full-time preachers, one of whom is Claudiu who has written an article for us. Please pray for this nation that the Spirit of God will lead and direct the Christians there. –Trevor Williams

Claudiu Murtaza, your brother and fellow servant in the Kingdom of God to you all who have been sanctified

through the precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ and sealed with the Holy Spirit for the day of redemption. Peace and grace from our Father in Heaven and from our Lord Jesus Christ.



I do not know all of you in person. But my Father in Heaven knows all of us way before we were even formed in our mothers womb. And he called us to be his holy family here on earth. So I am writing all these things from my heart to you all who, because of Jesus, are my precious family in faith.

I know things haven't been easy in the last year. There was a lot of suffering in the world and Christians were challenged to keep on shining, proclaiming the gospel and trusting that the Lord is always in control. And it wasn't an easy task.

I do not know if this pandemic resulted by the hands of man, or if it was Satan's work or God's plan. But I do know that this pandemic was allowed by God to happen for a reason. And I pray we will come out of it as strong as steel when it is forged in fire. Dear brothers and sisters, our world is in desperate need of saints. Not just people who go to church but people who are the body of Jesus Christ. People who are known for their radical love for the Lord and for his will, who are strong and mature in their faith, who are fully assured of God's love and who live daily with a fervent desire to share the most wonderful news this earth ever received – that there is salvation in Jesus Christ!

The pandemic was a moment of sifting for the congregations in Romania and I believe for Christians everywhere. Some were called to repentance and now they are stronger in faith than they have ever been. Others were tempted by Satan and now they struggle in their faith. But I believe no-one will come out of this being the same person we were before. Sometimes God decides that it is time to prune his vine. And he does that

AROUND THE WORLD

because he loves us and doesn't want us to lose our purpose here on earth which is to bring fruit for his glory.

He also decides from time to time that the whole world needs to remember that we all depend on him completely for every single breath that we take. And I believe the coronavirus pandemic made that very clear to many. And the fact that God still allows trials to come upon us is good news, because he shows us he cares and he wants his people to be ready for his son's return. It also reveals to the world that his patience has not come to an end. He desires all men to come to repentance and be saved. It is not the time of trials that we should be worried about. We should be truly worried of the days when God decides to be silent and just let us all reap what we sow.

What did the pandemic bring for the Christians in Romania? I believe it was a time of serious reflection and a time to make a firm decision about "who do we want to serve". I pray many of us made our election sure and we decided that from now on we will serve the Lord with all of our heart, mind, strength and soul – because there is no plan B. So what we always need to do is return to plan A which has been clearly revealed to us in the Bible.

Something I know that I do not want to happen is to go back to the 'normal' we had before the pandemic. I'm just asking: Were Christians that fervent for Christ and for the lost before coronavirus? Were our



marriages strong? Was our faith so shining before the pandemic that we just want to go back to what it was? What if this pandemic was God's way of telling us that maybe it is time to start living again in his normal and stop living in the world's normal? A normal as we read in Acts 2:42-47.

Christians in the New Testament never prayed for God to keep trials away from them. They always prayed to God to strengthen them so that they can be faithful in the midst of trials which they always expected to come upon them one way or another. God never promised us that all things will be good but he promised that all things will work out for the best for those who love the Lord. So I pray that we trust him with all of our heart for he is always good and faithful.

I do not know, my beloved brothers and sisters, what tomorrow holds for us. But I do not worry about tomorrow because I know my God is already there. Maybe for some this sounds like a cliché but I truly believe it. I believe that as long as Jesus Christ is in our boat there will be no storm big enough to make us sink, and there will be nothing strong enough to separate us from the love of God that we have received through Christ Jesus our Lord.

I will end this message with the words of the apostle Paul from 1 Corinthians 15:58: "Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain."

Claudiu Murtaza



MALAWI

The seed and fertiliser project for the last growing season went very well and it was one of the best and most successful in recent years. The harvest has been very good and each project has benefitted. Each beneficiary has harvested enough for the family consumption and the surplus is able to be used to pay back the loan.

THE SUCCESSES:

The success of the project came in because of the following reasons:

- 1) The rains came at the right time and it rained very well from the beginning to the end of the growing season
- 2) The crops were planted at the right time and well cared up to the time of harvest.
- 3) The funding and the purchase of fertiliser, and its distribution was at the right time.
- 4) The fertiliser was also put on the ground at the right time.

The above facts contributed to the success of the project for the last growing season. Because of this our beneficiaries have been able to pay back the loan at a good time though five are still yet to pay back. They are late paying back because of market and where to sell their produce but we do hope they are able to do this soon.

THE CHALLENGES:

- 1) Due to Covid-19 there was less mobility and less supervision of the projects.
- 2) Because of this challenge few crop pictures were able to be sent.

There has been another challenge of not submitting this update report on time just because of the new fertiliser prices. These have had to be increased from what we paid last year.

THE WAY FORWARD

It has been seen that those on the project are doing very well because they have fertiliser at hand when

the rains start. So they do the planning with the hope that they are ready and as a result they do their farming for each activity at the right time and indeed they make a difference in the community as a whole.

So I would like to propose and request the funding to the project amounting to nine hundred thousand kwacha (K900,000) for this growing season for the purchase of seeds and fertiliser.

On behalf of the beneficiaries, I want to thank you all for your love and the heart of helping the needy. Indeed they are making a difference both among the Christians and to the community as a whole.

Lungster Mlotha

The churches that Lungster works among have tried a variety of ways to help both in evangelism and relief from poverty. He reports that many have been immersed and two new congregations started.

Among the projects are the development of a mill to grind corn, their staple diet, which was started a couple of years ago. It is maintained by the Christians who make a small charge for those who can pay. Any profit goes to maintenance, and to help support local preachers. Those who cannot pay are not charged.

The goat project was also started a couple of years ago. Each year as new goats are born these are passed on to those in need, providing milk, dung, sometimes meat and a skin to sit on if death occurs.

To date eleven orphans of various ages are being supported through school with £540 sent this year to help out. They have five more orphans they would like to help.

Lungster sends a huge thank you to the British brethren who financially help out. Geoff Daniell is willing to act as treasurer for Malawi funds and will gladly send you details to help out. Contact him on 01275 891763.

Trevor Williams

NOTICES

Born To Be King

Late Winter Family Weekend Retreat

**Friday, 14th to Sunday, 16th January 2022
at Bassenfell Manor in the Lake District**

www.britishbibleschool.com



**A TRIP OF A LIFETIME
TO THE BIBLE LANDS OF
ISRAEL & JORDAN**

2022

January 22nd – February 3rd

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**LIMITED
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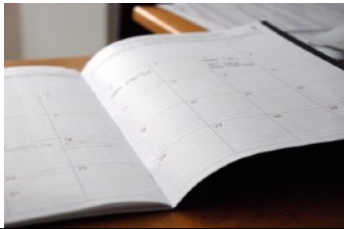


I'm sure that we can all agree that the past year has been challenging in many ways. It's now over a year since our first lockdown so as we emerge from this why not join us on a trip of a lifetime to the bible lands of Israel and Jordan. This will be a journey of spiritual refreshing, growth in bible knowledge and understanding all in the company of your brothers and sisters in Christ.



**If you are interested in joining us please contact
Ian Stars for further details.**

email: jes22ian@msn.com



DIARY

December

11th – **Great Barr (Birmingham)**: An Evening of Prayer and Psalms, 7.00 pm. Contact: Sola Adeosun (sola.adeosun@gmail.com).

18th – **Second International Ladies’ Day of Songs, Prayers, Scriptures and Exhortation**: Join sisters from around the world in prayer, songs & scripture reading. Contact: Bernie Wells (docuklm2021@gmail.com).

January

14th-16th – **British Bible School Family Retreat** at Bassenfell Manor. Register at: <http://britishbibleschool.com/news-and-events/upcoming-events/bassenfell-manor-family-retreat-2022>. Contact: Patrick Boyns (study@britishbibleschool.com).

22nd -3rd February – **Trip of a Lifetime to the Bible Lands**. Contact: Ian Starrs (jes22ian@msn.com).

February 2021

14th -20th February – **Advanced Bible Study Series in Gemünden, Germany**. Space this year is limited to 30 people due to Covid restrictions. Hotel rooms will also be available in the village. ABSS I (Monday-Friday) and ABSS II (Friday-Sunday). Contact: Paul Brazle (brazle.paul@gmail.com).

2nd Annual International Day of Songs, Prayers, Scriptures and Exhortation

Saturday December 18th 2021, 1:30 PM UK

Theme: Unity in Times of Adversity

Hosted by: Daughters of Christ UK (DOCUK) Ladies’ Ministry

Register your attendance here: <https://bit.ly/3nBzxuw>

<p>ZONE TIMES</p> <p>9:30 am Antigua 9:30 am Aruba 9:30 am Barbados 9:30 am Bermuda 9:30 am Canada (Nova Scotia) 8:30 am Canada (Toronto) 9:30 pm China (Wuhan) 9:30 am Dominica 1:30 pm Ghana 9:30 am Grenada 7:00 pm India 8:30 am Jamaica 9:30 am Montserrat 9:30 pm Philippines 5:30 pm Seychelles 9:30 pm Singapore 9:30 am St Lucia 9:30 am St Vincent 2:30 pm Switzerland 9:30 am Trinidad 1:30 pm – 4.30 pm U K 8:30 am U S A (Georgia) 3:30 pm Zimbabwe</p>	<p>EXHORTATION</p> <p>Jamaica U S A (Georgia)</p> <p>SONGS</p> <p>Antigua Aruba Grenada Seychelles St Lucia St Vincent Trinidad UK</p>	<p>PREAYER</p> <p>Barbados Bermuda Canada (Toronto) Dominica India Singapore Switzerland Zimbabwe</p> <p>SCRIPTURE READING</p> <p>Canada (Nova Scotia) China (Wuhan) Ghana Montserrat Philippines St Lucia</p>
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We are encouraged to fast within the 24 hours leading up to the start of the programme, 1.30 pm UK Time.

THE FINAL WORD



When the
time had
fully come

“When the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of woman, born under law, to redeem...” (Galatians 4:4)

It happens every year whether we like it or not, Christmas holidays and New Year. We go back to think of those little ones who have joined us on life’s journey and reflect on those to whom we have had to say farewell. Life is full of comings and goings.

We notice in this text from the apostle Paul that the time had fully come when Jesus was born. This was no accident in history, no folly of the Almighty. We may well think that Jesus should be arriving in the world now when we need him to sort out the problems of the teeming millions of peoples, with worldwide implications of climate change or national and international strains and stresses. Jesus came at the right time, to the right people and for the right reasons.

As Christians we look to the writings of the New Testament to look back to the teachings of Jesus. When those Scriptures were being written the preachers looked back to the writings of Moses and the prophets to prove that Jesus was the Christ. They would have gone all the way back to Genesis 3:14-15 when Satan was cursed; there was one to come who would crush his head.

We read ‘God sent his Son’. This was not to be like the Greek or Roman gods half-man and half-god. Jesus came as Immanuel which means God with us. God came as Jesus though he was born of a woman, the creation of God. Jesus was to be human so that he might know us and fully understand us, and ultimately become sin so that we might be free from it (2 Corinthians 5:21). He made himself

nothing, becoming a servant, to be made in human likeness, humbling himself to become the sacrifice on the cross (Philippians 2:6-11).

Jesus came born under the Mosaic Law a system of 613 specific laws teaching the ways to worship God. No one could ever keep these laws but they pointed forward to the one who could keep them. The Hebrew people were instructed how to offer sacrifices, not to keep God happy but to realise that he is the fount of life and purity. The Lord wanted his followers to be his special people, to love and cherish, to bless and caress, but the people refused and so they needed a Saviour and so God himself, in the form of Jesus, became that Saviour. No ordinary member of mankind was good enough, no Priest, King or Prophet. Only the Creator could live and die and conquer death for his creation.

The Son came to redeem, to buy us back for himself. The cost was his earthly life, suffering, rejection and crucifixion. The resurrection is the gift to all mankind that because Jesus is alive we too shall live. He came for those who were under the Law of Moses and those who were not, to Jews and non-Jews, to freemen and to slaves, to the rich and poor, to men and women, to you and me.

Whatever presents you give or receive over the next few weeks none can be as great as the present God himself has already given to us.

‘For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world but to save the world through him’. (John 3:16-17)

Trevor