the Christian worker MAGAZINE
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HAPPY NEW YEAR 2026

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Front cover image by kalhh from pixabay.com. Free for use. Above: Primetime 2025.

EDITORIAL AND PUBLICATION

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Editor-in-Chief: Trevor Williams

twilliams195@hotmail.co.uk

(0115) 837 6895

195 Hickings Lane, Stapleford, Nottingham NG9 8PJ

Production Editor: Jon Galloway

jdgalloway@mac.com

(07906) 060618

5 Aklins Lane, Netherburn, Larkhall ML9 3FH

Treasurer: Jenny Sparks (CW account: HSBC 40-45-03 91059533)

Website:

Header Design: Kevin Nicholson

UK Congregation Directory Online: www.churchesofchrist.co.uk

Facebook: www.facebook.com/christianworkeruk

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

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MY PERSPECTIVE

A New Year

Welcome to the New Year of 2026! I found this poem which, I think, expresses what a New Year should be.

Share your gifts and talents,
listen with your heart.
Do the things you dream about
but don't have time to start.
Pick a bouquet of flowers,
show someone that you care;
Be gracious and forgiving –
life is never fair.

Hold on to your courage:
you may need it down the road,
We all have a cross to bear –
it could be a heavy load.
If you practice all these things
no matter where you roam,
You may find both sun and rain
but you'll never feel alone.

The author is given as 'unknown'. I don't know if this person is a Christian or in any way acknowledges Jesus but the sentiments expressed are among those we ought to have

Showing that you care is what being a Christian is about, along with being gracious and forgiving. It continues to astonish me that some Christians expect everyone to be there for them yet are never there for others. Too often we try to pattern how we live on those around us – and we live in a 'give me' society – rather than looking at how we need to be there for others.

What if someone doesn't do for us what we think they should be doing? Could it be that our expectations are too high? Could it be that we aren't aware of the cross that the other person is having to carry? Could it be that in looking for what someone can do for us we have forgotten what it is to be gracious and forgiving? Sadly life isn't fair and contains both sun and rain, both good and bad. But isn't both sun and rain needed for the earth? Perhaps there are blessings we often overlook when we seem to be getting more rain than sunshine in our lives.

What are your dreams for this year? What are your plans? Many seem to live life expecting things to just happen, yet one phrase that continues to go through my mind is this: to fail to plan is to plan to fail. This is a concept that we find in the pages of Scripture, although expressed in slightly different ways.

"Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows." (Galatians 6:7 NIV)

"Remember this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously." (2 Corinthians 9:6)

This is such a simple concept yet often we fail to apply it in our lives. We know that if we plant tomato seeds then we will grow tomatoes. And we know that if we plant nothing we will get nothing. Yet how many think that they will be able to know and understand God's word without spending time studying? How many think that they can live for themselves and still reap eternal life?

As we enter a New Year, spend more time examining yourself and less time criticising others. In this way we not only prepare for eternity but we will also have a fruitful life now.

Jon

CONGRATULATIONS!

Lillie-Grace

Three immersed in Loughborough!

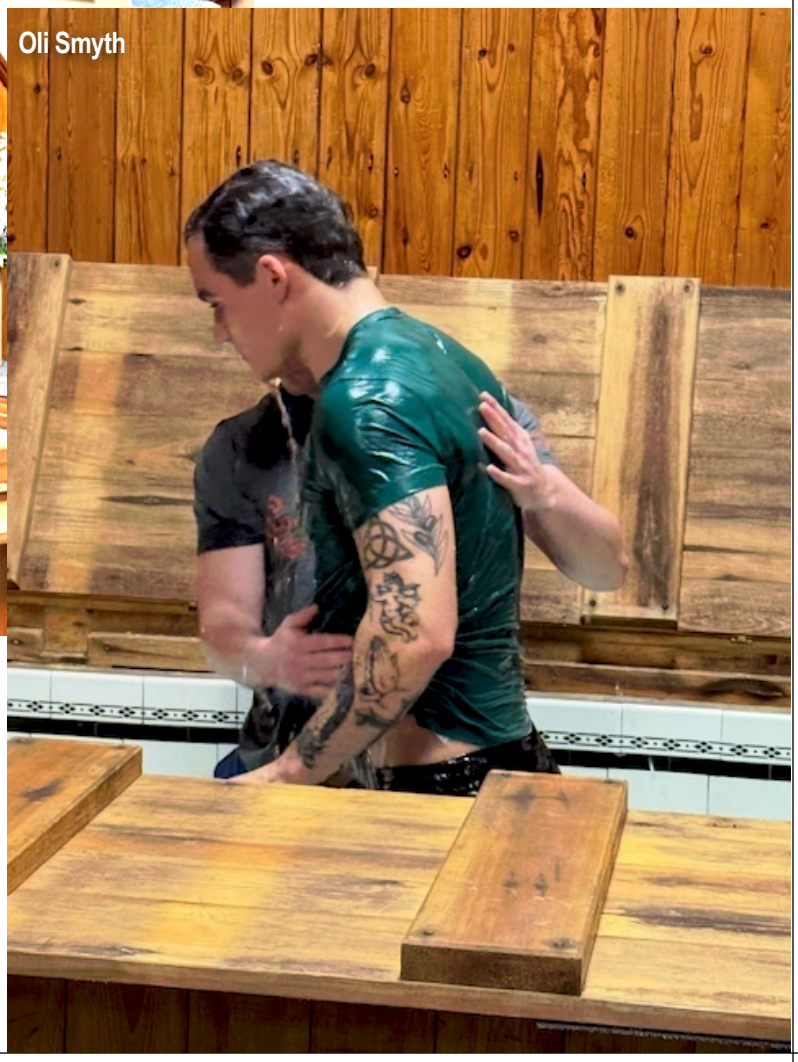
The Christians at Loughborough are pleased to share that two have been added to our number.

Lillie-Grace P.W. was immersed into Christ on Sunday, 16th November and **Charlotte C.** was immersed on Friday, 5th December. We praise God for his grace. Please pray for our sisters as they begin their walk with him.

Also on 23rd December, **Oli Smyth** gave his life to Christ. Please pray for him as he starts his walk with the Lord.

Calum Hill

Charlotte


Oli Smyth

BRITISH BIBLE SCHOOL NOTES

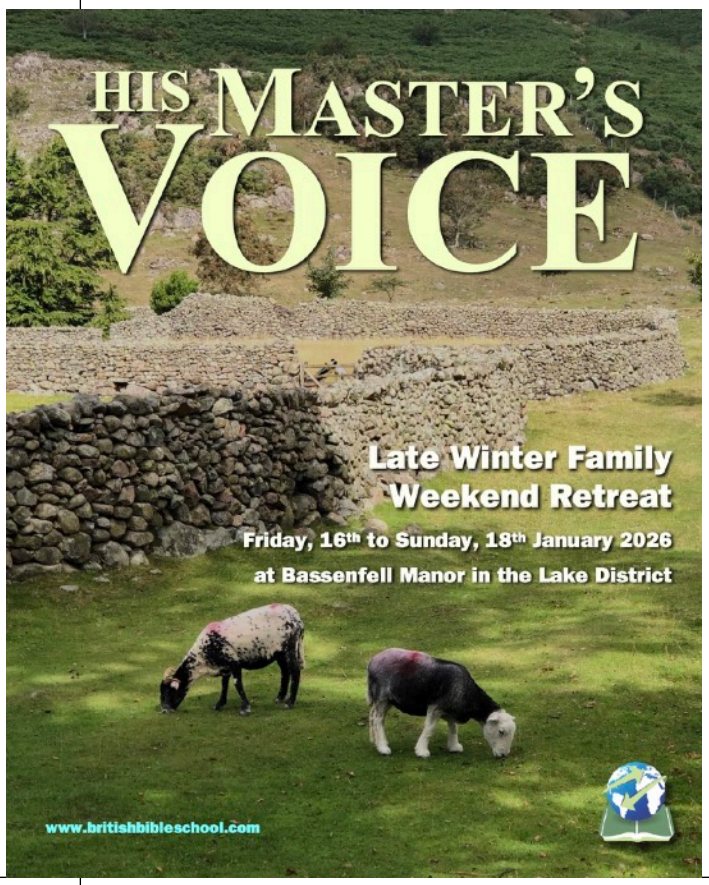
Past and coming events

Online Evening Classes

When we began our Online Bible Classes in March 2020, we really had no idea for how long they would be continuing. Now, nearly six years later, we are still conducting two classes online each week with regular attendances and lots of visitors along the way. Over the months and years new connections have been forged and a growing sense of belonging has evolved, whilst newcomers are always made welcome.

All of the teaching sessions from this past year are now accessible on our YouTube channel, along with many from earlier years. In time, many of these will be replaced with properly made recordings, but for now they serve as a useful reference, particularly for those who have been a part of the live online events.

We will be beginning a new twelve-week round of classes on 5th January 2026, and you will be welcome to join us at any time. On Monday evenings we will be looking at the book of **Ezra-Nehemiah**, and on Thursdays at the first eleven chapters of the book of **Genesis**. Classes begin at 8pm and details will be available on our website, including relevant links.



Weekend Family Retreat

We are looking forward to hosting our Mid-Winter Weekend Family Retreat from 16th to 18th January 2026. At the time of writing we still have just a few spaces available, so if you are wanting to be with us then do please register as soon as possible. Details can be found on our soon-to-be-renewed website.

Autumn Study Week

Even though the new year is just beginning, we are looking ahead to our Autumn Study Week later in the year, and would love to have you join us. This will take place from 26th to 30th October 2026 at Bassenfell Manor in the northern Lake District. This year's studies will focus on the *Synoptic Gospels* – Matthew, Mark and Luke – examining them within their first century context, and with particular interest in their relevance to mission today.

For further details and registration, please look on our website. This week likely coincides with some English and Welsh half-term holidays, so this might enable more to come than on previous years.

Thank you for your continued interest and support of the work of BBS. May God bless us all, that we might be a blessing to those around us.

Patrick Boyns
britishbibleschool.com

FAMILY NEWS

ILKESTON

The youth in Ilkeston have enjoyed a couple of fun events recently. On 29th October we hosted a pumpkin carving party with several from the local community enjoying the fun. There were some very creative pumpkins with prizes given for 12 years old and under and those over 12. Each child went home with a goody bag of sweets and a little book about how we can be like pumpkins and let our light shine for Jesus.

On Saturday, 8th November, we welcomed 38 young people and adults from across the UK for our youth day. The theme was "Rooted" and taken from Colossians 2:6-7. We had lessons led by SJ and Aaron Sparks and the games were organised and led by Jonathan Limb. There was lots of singing and laughter. We were filled spiritually and also physically thanks to the delicious food prepared by sisters from the congregation. It was a joyful and encouraging day for everyone who attended.

Thank you to all who came and supported us and may there be many more youth days planned in the future!

Jennifer Sparks

PRIMETIME WEEKEND

The Bedminster congregation in Bristol held their biennial event for the over 40s, Primetime, the weekend of 24th-26th October. This year the focus was on the book of Ezekiel, with "Corruption to Salvation" being the theme of the weekend.

A great time was had by all who attended, with 21 'prime-timers' on Friday and 35 on Saturday. Lessons were presented by Prince Ntim, Trevor Williams, Jason Snethen, Stephen Woodcock and Godwin over the weekend. These talks explored the concepts within Ezekiel, discussing potentially why this was a book that is not often taught or preached from. Learning along this journey the 'why' behind the reasons leading to the events in Ezekiel, about Ezekiel as the man and as a son of man, and the hope within Ezekiel.

Prince opened on Saturday with an overview and discussing the call of Ezekiel. Trevor led us in a lesson starting at the significance of 'Ezekiel bread' to the role of bread throughout the Bible, and baked a range of breads from Ezekiel bread, showbread and challah loaves, which went down very well at the end of the lesson.

Jason led us through the difficult area of the Oracles of doom with a Birdwatching exercise amongst other themes, getting us to examine the text and see the love that God has for his people then and now; that people lean into and sadly away from God; and finally that what you say in God's name is a binding agreement irrespective of who utters those words. A very interesting perspective was put on Ezekiel's being unable to speak unless he was speaking God's words to the people. How amazing that would be if the only things that came out of our mouths was God's word – just think of the time that you would save not having to apologise when we speak swiftly or harshly and the positive effect that would have on other Christians.

We followed this with some free time and games, which is normally what we do for a youth weekend, but these were not only well received but requested for next time. Much laughter, conversation and fellowship was had by all who participated in them, a good contrast to the material we were studying.

Trevor Williams speaking at Primetime

Family News

Stephen had the toughest assignment of the day, the session after our evening meal, covering the realisation of the people that things were not going to go back to normal. They had broken the covenant with God with a wide variety of sins, but it was the idolatry that was the most hurtful to the Lord. We looked at the assigned duties Ezekiel had as a watchman and reflected how that we were also watchmen today with the same requirement to speak God's word. This is coupled with our personal responsibility to acting when God's word is heard. Our responsibility is to tell, but as long as we tell, the responsibility on how they react is the individual's alone.

For Sunday morning Bible class Godwin lead us in a study covering the restitution of the people, challenging us to reflect on how this affects us in our lives both in the past and today. Although we allow fifty minutes for our Bible study on a Sunday morning, I forgot the time and we ran over significantly. After worship a fellowship meal was was enjoyed by all.

We'd like to express our thanks for all who made this weekend such a great experience, from the speakers for their messages to the young people who helped out in the kitchen and cleaned up after us old folk!

It was a fantastic weekend. The next Primetime will be the first weekend of October in 2027 – we will confirm the theme and date later.

Martin Nelson

Fellowship and fun at Primetime

Stephen Woodcock speaking at Primetime

UPDATE FOR CLARKSTON

Change of contact from Ian Johnstone to Billy Wood – 53 Barbana Road, Thorntonview, East Kilbride G74 5DX. Phone: 07487 559379. E-mail: willwood1958@icloud.com.

Billy Wood

REPORT FROM CORBY

2025 was a great year of spiritual and numerical growth as we have deepened our love for God together. Here are some of our highlights from the past year…

We welcomed into our midst Akwasi Anning; Kate and Nigel Hardy (previously with Northampton); the return of Robert Anderson, Jim McKeown and Carol McKeown making our hearts glad with memories and their loving presence. We look forward to hearing Jim speak again.

Congregational meetings – we are now holding these on a monthly basis and much has been achieved from these with great attendance and input. We recognise the need for more structured

leadership and early in the new year hope to appoint a congregational leadership with a view to preparation for elders and deacons in the future. Alongside this, our charity commission work has made great progress and is nearly at the point of registration. New trustees will be appointed to ensure we are not only legal but looking after our assets for future generations. This has been a huge task and thanks go mainly to David Harland who has taken care of much of this responsibility for the congregation over the years.

Building a Strong Congregation – Peter Tinto led a series of Bible Studies on six aspects of congregation growth and there was discussion as to how we might put these into practice. Graeme Morrison also led two men's **training classes** which were well attended and enjoyed.

We have been studying "The Sermon on the Mount" in our Tuesday night studies led by Graeme Morrison, Dave Carscadden and Peter Tinto. The attendance and the singing have been so uplifting and the teaching has challenged us to put the lessons into action.

Outreach/Community – one of our aims is to be more outward facing into our community and we are forming links and relationships to this end. In October we said yes to being involved in an outreach/foodbank event for Corby, not only donating food but also setting up a stand with other community groups to share what we do. This was a truly fantastic experience where our theme was what Jesus said: "I am the bread of life".

We were able to give out free Bibles; a tote bag with coasters; pencils with a verse printed on them; a leaflet about who we are with an invitation; some water and a snack; and some seeds to grow. We also had a rolling power-point of scriptures and banner of the Books of the Bible. Our stand was vibrant and we held many conversations with others who now know who we are. Our Sunday school children sang many choruses. From this we seek to have more involvement in other town-wide events. We have a partnership now with the local council and 'Community.org' who funded our costs and who want to work with us more closely in the future to support vulnerable people in Corby. Our new Outreach group, led by Nigel Hardy, will ensure we promote Jesus and salvation in our community.

Trek to the Sahara! – Kuda, Tapi, her husband and Kudzai were busy again raising funds for their Charity "Coppafeel" for breast cancer awareness, research and treatments. They have raised over £8,800 so far between the Trek and a concert at our building by "Bel Canto" – our Corby Mayor was in attendance too. Uplifting was the word. Well done.!

We have so much to be grateful for, always remembering those who have gone before and strived to keep Corby a place where Christians meet and continue to serve Jesus. Grace and peace to all.

Iris Tinto

AROUND THE WORLD

MALAWI

The time is not in our hands and we have to work for the Lord as much as we can. And glory be to our God.

Lungster Mlotha

Lungster teaching in Malawi

We have been involved in at least 800 congregations being started in Africa numbering 50,000 Christians. The numbers may be higher as we have encouraged self-governing, self-financing, and self-propagating groups of Christians – we keep hearing of additional congregations that have been formed. For example, one of those we taught many years ago made contact recently with news of helping 200 new congregations begin in another part of Africa. The Lord is the only statistician who really knows the numbers of those saved, and faithful, during extensive outreach in many places over many years.

We have been actively involved in Christian leadership training workshops in many African countries and have had good results. David Murphy was an agricultural trainer and had a farm in Zambia near the Congo border. He provided premises for accommodation and classrooms for leadership training for Christians in both

CONGO TO CAPETOWN

Long-term British missionaries return from Africa

We fell in love and married in our home town of Birmingham in January 1971 and, with the encouragement of Christian friends at the Summer Lane congregation, went immediately, on faith that the Lord would provide, to the African mission field. The Christians at Summer Lane had more than a century of experience of sharing the good news of Jesus and shared with us how to tell others about Jesus. Early encouragers were Trevor Williams, the late Marc Mountford, and a later encourager has been Trevor Ralph. We have served for more than a half century in Africa.

Chester with two teen-aged Christians

Zambia and Congo. His uncle Frank Murphy was a British missionary who planted helped begin congregations in Lusaka, Zambia's capital, in the 1950s. He worked as a nurse-tutor during the day and spent time as an open preacher at night in the townships. We are in contact with congregation leaders over a wide area of Africa from the north of Congo to Cape Town in South Africa.

Our three children, Mary, Kim, and Ian, were born during our time in Africa and assisted in different ways at different times with the African mission work. Mary, for example, was very effective in organising the Bible correspondence programme. Kim was with Chester on a preaching and teaching visit in bush areas of the Congo when their vehicle was ambushed and surrounded by an armed militia group. Kim helped her Dad with giving out Bibles and Christian literature to the men with the guns. After Chester preached the good news of Christ to the armed group, they were told by the militia leader to continue with their preaching journey. When there were baptisms at a river, Ian would watch out for crocodiles. All our children now live in England.

In the Eastern Cape we helped begin a children's home which has rescued more than 25 abandoned children who might otherwise have died. The director of the children's home is Agnes, a retired widow.

Residents of the children's home

Angela with Agnes, director of the children's home

Chester is unable to drive or to travel now due to advanced Parkinson's affecting his mobility. He has retired from the his work in Africa as he approaches his 83rd year. Our contact details are:

Chester and Angela Woodhall
Apt 14 Boldmere Place
Sutton Coldfield
B73 5FU

Angela's phone number : 07794 054015
Chester's phone number: 07944 330286

Chester and Angela

Chester is a graduate of the London School of Economics and was able to teach in the Universities in South Africa. His passion was to serve Jesus and immediately after they became Christians he began preaching and helping begin congregations in a variety of places. Some will know Chester and Angela while others will know nothing about them. Chester is now virtually housebound but is still anxious to pass on the message of Good News. Chester is one of a number who have moved on from the Summer Lane congregation to serve around the world. –Trevor

APPEALS AND UPDATES

PHILIPPINES

It was another tough mission to serve those affected by typhoon Kalmaegi in Cebu. Homes were buried in mud; cars piled on top on each other; and people numbed by the loss of their earthly treasures.

These are the same families hit by a strong earthquake on 30th September and by another super-typhoon Fung-Wong. Three disasters hit within six weeks. It was as if wrath was being poured on them.

Our small team helped several families by bringing them food packs, mats, pillows, blankets and home-cooked meals. It was one of the most unpleasant scenarios we've seen, but people are thankful for what has been provided.

We went as far as a mountain village where almost a hundred families lost their homes to the violent floods brought about by the heavy downpour. We stopped on the side of the mountain where people lined up for our home-cooked meal. It was such a treat for them to be given something warm and recently cooked. In the evacuation centres where they are staying temporarily, lunch usually is made of canned goods and instant noodles.

We are very grateful to be able to help these people. We are humbled by the opportunity to cook for them (200-300 people) at a time.

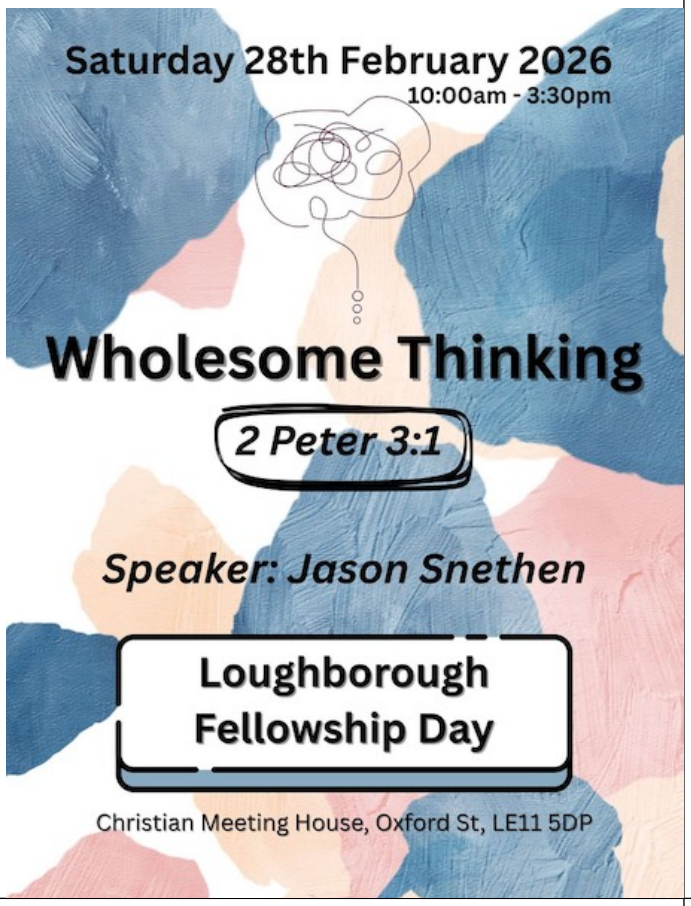
Thank you for helping in this work. It is far from over. We are sending another small team by mid-December to do a mini-medical mission, and another team the following month until our funds run out.

Please remember us in your prayers as we find ways to serve these families. Pray that we will get to show them the love of Jesus. Give more if you are able.

Gigie Carranza

As far as I know about £2,300 has been sent to the Philippines after their latest disaster. On their behalf let me say thank you to all who gave. The Christians in the Philippines are working hard together to help people get homes and their lives into some sort of order. They continue to ask for financial help and for anyone who wishes to send through the *Christian Worker*, we are happy to forward the funds. Our details are on page 2.

Trevor



NOTICES

Double Honour Retreat for 2026

Free rest and respite week for couples who are Christian workers in southern Normandy, subsidised by Double Honour Ministries.

The next retreat will be 23rd-26th March 2026.

All accommodation and meals included.

$150 towards travel.

Visit the Double Honor website for details.

https://doublehonorministries.com/retreats/

La Maison de Perrine website:

Faithworks-lachapelle.com

Note: if you would like to attend the 2026 retreat in France, please let us know.

NOTICES

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST AT NEW CROSS – LONDON

PREACHER WANTED

The Church of Christ at New Cross, London, invites applications for a Dedicated Gospel Preacher to serve and labour with the congregation.

We are seeking a man who is:

- **Maturing well spiritually by being actively involve in the church for many years.**
- **Formally educated (Bible college or Sound Doctrinal Knowledge).**
- **Sound in doctrine and faithful to the teachings of the New Testament.**
- **Preferably married, maintaining a godly home.**
- **Experienced, with at least ten (10) years of effective preaching and teaching.**
- **Capable in pulpit management, with a proven record of leadership and communication.**

Applicants should provide:

- **References from two (2) congregations within the Churches of Christ.**
- **Two (2) audio sermon samples.**
- **A detailed résumé or CV highlighting ministry, educational background and number of years as member of the Church of Christ.**

Additional Information:

- **A yearly review will be conducted.**
- **Application deadline: *31st January 2026.***

📧 **Email: admin@cocnc.org.uk**
📞 **Frank Ansah-Brown: +44 7956 746 945**
📞 **Hogan Udo: +44 7801 494 938**

"Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season…" – 2 Timothy

Funds to help in relief for the Philippines and Jamaica are currently being received by the Christian Worker. If you would like to help, please donate to the CW account (HSBC 40-45-03 91059533). Cheques can be sent to the Christian Worker, ℅ Trevor (see page 2).

DIARY

January

5th – British Bible School evening class: "Ezra-Nehemiah" – new class led by Patrick Boyns each Monday, 8.00-9.00 pm, for twelve weeks. Links to join the class can be found on the BBS social media and website: www.britishbibleschool.com.

8th – **British Bible School evening class:** "In the Beginning…" (Genesis 1-11) – new class led by Jon Galloway, each Thursday, 8.00-9.00 pm, for twelve weeks. Links to join the class can be found on the BBS social media and website: www.britishbibleschool.com.

15th-17th – British Bible School Winter Weekend Family Retreat. Venue: Bassenfell Manor, Cumbria. For more information and to book a place visit our website: www.britishbibleschool.com.

31st – British Bible School evening lecture by Patrick Boyns,, 7.30 to 8.30 pm on Zoom. Links to join the lecture can be found on the BBS social media and website: www.britishbibleschool.com.

February

7th – Cumbernauld: Men's Day – "The Name", 10.00 am-4.00 pm (breakfast will be served at 9.30), at 2 Carron House, Carron Way, Cumbernauld G67 1ER. Contact: Graham McDonald (graham@gmcd.net).

16th-22nd – Gemünden, Germany: Advanced Bible Study Series – Tuesday-Friday ABSS I, Friday-Sunday ABSS II. Contact: abss.gemunden@gmail.com or Paul Brazle (brazle.paul@gmail.com).

21st – Liverpool: Gospel Meeting, 6.30 pm, at 1 Picton Road, Waterloo, Liverpool, L22 8QH. Contact: Charles Yankiah (cyankiah@hotmail.com or 07359 750645).

27th-28th February – Kirkcaldy & Hyvots Bank: Joint gospel meetings – "What This World Needs", 7,00 pm (Friday in Kirkcaldy and Saturday at Hyvots Bank), speaker: Aubrey Boyns. Contact: Nick Wilson (hnickwilson@icloud.com) or Alan Moyes (alan.J.Moyes@gmail.com).

28th – Loughborough: Fellowship Day – "Wholesome Thinking", 10.00 am-3.30 pm, at Christian Meeting House, Oxford Street, Loughborough LE11 5DP. Speaker: Jason Snethen. Contact: Jason Hill (j.hill147@hotmail.co.uk).

March

21st – Kirkcaldy: Annual Social, 1.30 pm. Speaker: Ian Starrs. Contact: Allan Hughes (allan580@virginmedia.com**).**

21st – Liverpool: Evening of songs, 6.30 pm, at 1 Picton Road, Waterloo, Liverpool, L22 8QH. Contact: Charles Yankiah (cyankiah@hotmail.com or 07359 750645).

23rd-26th – Double Honour Retreat in southern Normandy, organised by 'Double Honor Ministries'. All accommodation and meals provided plus $150 towards travel. For details: https://doublehonorministries.com/retreats/.

28th – British Bible School evening lecture by Mark Hill, 7.30 to 8.30 pm on Zoom. Links to join the lecture can be found on the BBS social media and website: www.britishbibleschool.com.

April

3rd-5th – European Bible Lectureship: "The New Testament Church". Venue: Jugendherberge Duisburg Sportpark, Kruppstraße 9, Neudorf-Süd, 47055 Duisburg, Germany (near Dusseldorf). Cost: Adult – €75, youth (10-18) – €60, children (6-9) – €40, below 5 – free. Register here: https://forms.gle/ANp4AexzFdnu6JV27. Contact: eubiblelectureship@gmail.com or +49 15122 374151.

24th – Liverpool: "Scheme of Redemption" Bible study evening, 6.00 pm, at 1 Picton Road, Waterloo, Liverpool, L22 8QH. Contact: Charles Yankiah (cyankiah@hotmail.com or 07359 750645).

Diary

May

23rd – Liverpool: Gospel meeting, 6.30 pm, at 1 Picton Road, Waterloo, Liverpool, L22 8QH. Contact: Charles Yankiah (cyankiah@hotmail.com or 07359 750645).

30th – British Bible School evening lecture by Steve Whitehead: "Esther", 7.30 to 8.30 pm on Zoom. Links to join the lecture can be found on the BBS social media and website: www.britishbibleschool.com.

June

20th – Reading: "Song Fest" from 1.00-6.00 pm at the Crescent Resource Centre, Warbler Drive, Lower Earley, Reading, RG6 4HB. Food will be provided, please let us know of any allergies. For enquiries please email: readingchurchofchrist@gmail.com.

27th – Liverpool: Annual All Day Fellowship, 10.00 am- 4.00 pm, at 1 Picton Road, Waterloo, Liverpool, L22 8QH. Contact: Charles Yankiah (cyankiah@hotmail.com or 07359 750645).

July

3rd-10th – Camp Heatherbell: "More than a name. Venue: Compass Christian Centre, Glenshee. Cost: £195. For more information or to be sent an application, contact: admelbarr@gmail.com.

24th-26th – European Youth Lectureship: "The Young Shall Grow", hosted by the Edmonton (London) congregation. Venue: St Mary's Church of England High School, Lieutenant Ellis Way, Cheshunt, EN7 5FB. Ages 18 and above. Speakers: Douglas Attuah, Benjamin Archen, and Calum Hill. Contact: S. Ofori-Dwumah (edmontonchurchofchristuk@gmail.com).

25th – Liverpool: Gospel meeting, 6.30 pm, at 1 Picton Road, Waterloo, Liverpool, L22 8QH. Contact: Charles Yankiah (cyankiah@hotmail.com or 07359 750645).

25th – British Bible School evening lecture by Jack Paton, 7.30 to 8.30 pm on Zoom. Links to join the lecture can be found on the BBS social media and website: www.britishbibleschool.com.

August

30th – Liverpool: Praise and Harmony with Keith Lancaster, 10.00 am, at 1 Picton Road, Waterloo, Liverpool, L22 8QH. Contact: Charles Yankiah (cyankiah@hotmail.com or 07359 750645).

September

18th-20th – **British Bible School** Autumn Weekend Family Retreat. Venue: Letton Hall, Norfolk. For more information and to book a place visit our website: www.britishbibleschool.com.

26th – British Bible School evening lecture by John Griffiths, 7.30 to 8.30 pm on Zoom. Links to join the lecture can be found on the BBS social media and website: www.britishbibleschool.com.

29th-2nd October – European Vision Workshop in Romania (details to be published soon).

October

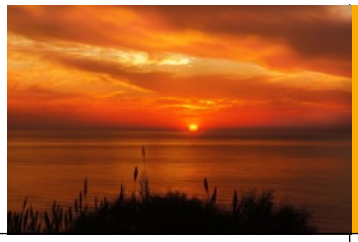
24th – Liverpool: Evening of songs, 6.30 pm, at 1 Picton Road, Waterloo, Liverpool, L22 8QH. Contact: Charles Yankiah (cyankiah@hotmail.com or 07359 750645).

26th-30th October – British Bible School Residential Study Week at Bassenfell Manor: "The Synoptic Gospels". Contact: study@britishbibleschool.com.

November

21st – Liverpool: Gospel meeting, 6.30 pm, at 1 Picton Road, Waterloo, Liverpool, L22 8QH. Contact: Charles Yankiah (cyankiah@hotmail.com or 07359 750645).

28th – British Bible School evening lecture by Jon Galloway: "Influential Christians from the Past", 7.30 to 8.30 pm on Zoom. Links to join the lecture can be found on the BBS social media and website: www.britishbibleschool.com.



THE FINAL WORD

Give thanks

I wonder how many of our reader enjoyed all their Christmas presents? Did you have any unpleasant surprises or anything you did not like? Did you take anything back to the shop to exchange the gift?

Giving and receiving are two difficult roads to cross. Jesus taught it was more blessed to give than to receive but that in itself is complicated. Yes, it can make the giver happy, but it could embarrass the receiver who perhaps has nothing or very little to give back.

We need to learn how to give as well as receive. When we give to the young, we cannot expect to receive anything back and sometimes we receive not even a thank you. Thanks is a gift that must be taught. Of course, no one wants to receive the talcum powder that we gave away from a raffle prize – we need to learn to give from the heart and receive with a gentle and warm spirit. Not everyone is thankful, not everyone's gift is generous.

At the communion table we give thanks for the bread and the wine. This is a demonstration of our faithfulness for the gift of life that is given to us through Christ. For those of us who have been in long time service to him we may hear words or phrases used over and over again. The prayer of thanksgiving should be well thought out before it is expressed. Those who hear have the responsibility to be prepared to eat and drink 'the thanksgiving' – the Eucharist.

We draw near to each other and to God in communion to bless and to be blessed. Here we meet God who in the body of Christ gave himself that we might live. We say thank you by eating a small piece of bread and drinking a small cup of grape juice. We remember who Jesus is – we remember his personality and his love.

In the giving and receiving of this sacred food we recommit ourselves to Christ and to his body, the church. Our lives once lived for ourselves are no longer our own; we belong to Christ and live to serve him. It is sometimes hard to love all our fellow Christians, yet Jesus loves all who will surrender to him. The gift of communion notes divine sacrifice, a gift for all. As we share together may our hearts rejoice and be thankful.

Bless us O God, and in our thanksgiving may we bless others in your name. Amen

Trevor