

St Thomas', Trowbridge & St John's, West Ashton

December 2009 & January 2010
Monthly News



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A very Happy Christmas
and a Blessed New Year
to you all
from Allan
and the Staff team

2010

SOMETHING TO TELL YOUR CHILDREN YOU DID

There is a strange dilemma facing us in the Christian world at present. On the one hand, we must not buy into the vacuous celebrity culture of the day by creating our very own set of Christian celebrities. We can easily put successful church leaders, popular speakers, authors or worship leaders on a pedestal, turning them into unreal, all-too-perfect figures. This helps no-one, least of all the people themselves, if they start to believe the hype around them. On the other hand, we still need pioneers and trail-blazers and to show us the way from the safe and familiar to the 'greater things' Jesus promised we would see. Such people are generals in God's army and role models who inspire his people to 'know their God and do exploits'.

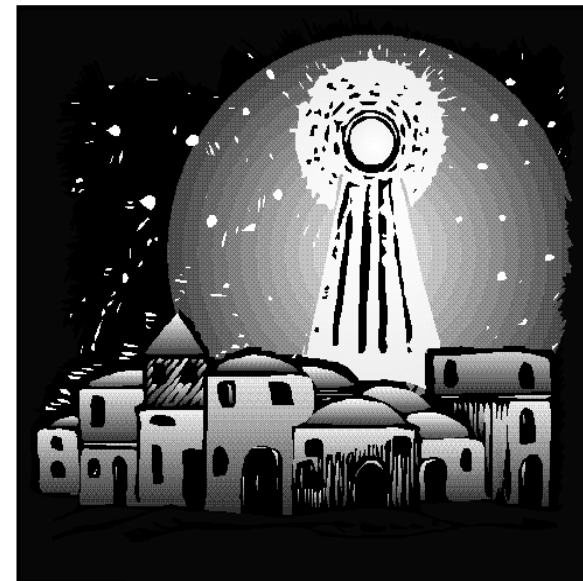
One such trail-blazer and role model in my own life over the last couple of years has been Bill Johnson, and it would be ungracious of me not to acknowledge the huge benefit I have received from his ministry. I have been to conferences where he was speaking, read all his books, listened regularly to his free message downloads and even been to visit his church in Redding, California. I would recommend anyone to do the same. In particular, if you get the opportunity to hear him speak, take it. I have a hunch it may be one of those things you will want to tell your children (or grandchildren) you did. I have always regretted not taking the opportunity to hear John Wimber speak live at the time he was making frequent visits to this country.

The first time I heard Bill Johnson, in Harrogate in 2007, I didn't like it! His delivery seemed awkward and I came away the first day feeling uncomfortable and asking, 'What on earth is he on about?' On reflection, I think that was largely because my mind couldn't process his teaching to begin with, and because I always kick against anything new which challenges my comfort zone. However, I went back for more and never looked back. I quickly

realised that he reminded me of my old mentor Clem, in the sense that his words were feeding my hungry heart, even though my mind was struggling to catch up (it did eventually!) This, of course, is exactly how the words of Jesus affected his hearers and we are supposed to speak, in the same way he did, words that come from the Father.

There is an opportunity to hear Bill in Cardiff from 8-10 February; details can be found on the following link <http://www.citytemple.info/heaven2earth> The title of the conference 'Heaven2Earth' reflects his core message that the preaching of the gospel of Christ must be accompanied by a radical demonstration of the presence of his Kingdom through encounters with God and signs and wonders. He frequently talks about 'heaven invading earth' and that, of course, is precisely what happened the first Christmas and has never stopped happening since.

Allan



PRAYER: THE FIRST RESORT

Let me take you back a few years, to a point in my life when I was briefly engaged. We had excitedly signed the forms, a decision had been made. Between us, we would fund the purchase of a Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle. The choice of Van had been made, first payment placed, delivery taken. Greater joint independence beckoned.

Then it happened. Our relationship cracked, crumbled, became mutually irretrievably damaged, and then disappeared completely.

The flow of communication between us ebbed drastically, and then froze completely. Added to which, my own perception of The River of God was becoming stagnant.

We split up, but in order to move on. In order to cut all ties we needed to sell the van, thus allowing myself to be rid of a frankly troublesome time and once again venture on to my 'God prepared pathway'

Adverts were placed; word of mouth was utilized, drawing no response.

One week at House Group my mind was still pre-occupied. I had tried everything to sell the van, thereby finding a route by which to get my life back on track and had adopted the attitude of calling upon prayer as my last resort. Despite this, from somewhere inside me, a small yet strong voice said "remember the van" Suddenly it became clear to me that, although my hot-line to God had apparently developed a fault; His to me was working. God had been talking but I had stopped listening! When it came to prayer requests I was last in the circle, compared with those that had gone before my own pending prayer request seemed so mundane.

Nevertheless I opened my mouth hardly in control of the words I spoke. Most of what is written above poured into the room. With the group I prayed that somehow God would find a way of selling the van.

Next morning I received a message; not only had someone telephoned expressing an interest in the van, but they wanted to buy it!

Since then, my relationship with God has grown (and continues) to grow in strength, He has provided the means by which I have been able to purchase a van of my very own. But much more importantly, I now use the mighty power of prayer as a first resort!

By Neill Cadmore

St Thomas 'Outside Giving' 2009

At its November Meeting the PCC allocated our 'Outside Giving' (the church's tithe) of £20,000 as follows.

Home:

Breakthrough Trowbridge	£2,000 (already given)
Alpha International	£1,000
Alpha UK	£1,000
New Wine	£1,500
Soul Survivor	£1,500
UCB	£1,000
Cell UK	£ 500
CPAS	£ 500
Reserved for special need	£1,000

Overseas:

It has been decided that for some of our overseas missions we would support individuals working for the missions. Each of the following to receive £1,250.

AWM	Majed and Anna Tinawi and family
OMF	Martin and Alison Clarkson Webb working at the International office in Singapore in management and member care
MAF	Half to Ben and Ann Sibthorpe and family working in Chad and the other half to general funds.
Bible Society	Albanian Link
Mercy Ships	Andy and Brenda Cole, Chief Engineer and HR Manager on the Africa Mercy
Sudan	General Funds
CSW	General Funds
Central Asia	General Funds.

The X factor

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it. There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world.”

(John 1: 1-9)

Christians have often suspected that calling Christmas ‘Xmas’ was a secular attempt to manoeuvre Christ out of a mention on his own birthday. If you take the religion out of the festival you can make it as commercial or as materialistic as you like. Or else you can turn it into a ‘family festival’ especially for the kids. Whichever way you do it, Christ has become ‘X’, as remote as an algebraic sign.

Although I barely scraped through my maths finals, I do remember that ‘X’ generally stood for the baffling part of an equation which it was your job to figure out. It was the unknown quantity which you had to struggle to decipher. And I suppose for many people Christ is a bit like that, a mysterious unknown figure who refuses to be removed from life’s equation. He is the supreme X factor.

Whoever he was, X certainly started something. In three short years he lit a fire that 20 centuries of human history have not been able to extinguish. He did it without ever appearing on coast-to-coast TV, without writing a single book, without catapulting round the world in a jet plane. Nor did he appear to have the right training for such a big undertaking; born into a peasant family and working as a village tradesman, his curriculum vitae would have contained no degrees from the best schools or universities.

But X was good, devastatingly good. There was no room in him for hatred or lust or revenge or cruelty and his peerless character has a way of showing us up so starkly that we are either driven to despair or trapped by its magnetism. The trouble is that the dark side of our nature is so delicious and addictive. As X said of us, we love the darkness and are more at home with it than we are with the light. He saw our poor old planet as dominated by darkness and he saw himself as its true Light, its only home.

Sometimes at Xmas there does seem to be a bit more light around, some love, kindness and goodwill. People laugh a bit more and the kids are full of excitement and anticipation. It almost seems as though a bit of X is coming through and we wish it would last. But often the armistice only lasts for about 24 hours and then we are back to business, back to darkness, to anger, lust and revenge.

You know it is crazy that we do not stick to X when once a year we get a tiny glimpse of how he can change things and how his mercy can wash away the past and give us a new start. Those who open up to him permanently find that the Light comes to stay and that it challenges and opposes the darkness inside of us. It is then that X ceases to be the unknown factor and becomes the solution to the whole equation.

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, Light of the world, come in today, come in to stay and make our lives Christmas every day. Amen.

From: Window on the Word by Michael Cassidy
founder of African Enterprise
and author of many books.

Exhibition of
Cribs from the World

from a unique private collection
by Libby Purves and her family

at

Salisbury Library

Market Pl, Salisbury SP1 1BL

Tel: 01722 324145

from Sat 5th - Tues 22nd December 2009

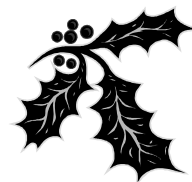
Library opening times:

Mon 10am-7pm; Tue, Wed, Fri: 9am-7pm; Thur: 9am-5pm

Entrance free

Voluntary donations invited, in aid of
Wiltshire South's Guiding County Home at Berwick
and Hope and Homes for Children

Trowbridge Rainbows, Brownies & Guides have taken part
in the competition held to find just one crib to join the collection.



A Christmas Concert
by **Cantamus**
St. John's Church,
West Ashton,



on Tuesday 8th December 2009 at 7.30pm
to include a glass of mulled wine and mince pie.
Tickets £4, children under 15 free,
from Jo Watkins 01225 753196.
Proceeds towards church organ fund.



Buy for someone special a virtual 'baby' brick for Christmas. Your generous present will help support the NICU 'space to grow' Campaign to build a new Neonatal Intensive Care Unit for sick and premature babies at Bath's Royal United Hospital. The recipient's name will be permanently recognised at the hospital. For more information call 01225 825691 or visit www.foreverfriendsappeal.co.uk.