

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

June 2010
Monthly News



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HAPPY FAMILIES?

The concept of 'Family Service' can be very unappealing to those of us who are single, divorced, widowed, childless, single-parent families, or for some other reason do not fit the stereotype of a 'Happy Family'. Loneliness is arguably the great pandemic of our time. But God has an answer – his family. Jesus didn't come to found an institution called 'the church', he came to draw us into a family. In fact, he thinks of everyone who hears God's word through him and puts it into practice as his brother, sister, or even mother! (Luke 8:19-21). Paul talks about 'his whole family in heaven and earth' deriving its name from God the Father (Ephesians 3:14-15). This wonderful reality was hinted at in the Old Testament too:

A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling. God sets the lonely in families. (Psalm 68:5-6)

After knowing Jesus more, the thing I care about most is that our churches become happy, healthy and growing families. St John's is small enough to feel like a family in its own right. Kingfisher Church and St. Thomas' are more like 'families of families' where smaller groups within the whole provide a place for belonging, care and close relationships to develop. Usually, this means being part of one of our **cell groups** and I would really encourage you to make this a priority. Colin and Vicki Turner and Jayne Goldstone at St Thomas', and Alison Bennett at Kingfisher, will be happy to help you find a cell to join. But for those who are unable to attend a cell, for various reasons, there are other 'families' within the whole, such as our Junior Church groups, Beracah, homegroups and so forth.

It delights me that our church family in Trowbridge and West Ashton is healthy and growing, but one sadness for me is that it gets harder to know everyone personally or to have you round to my house. That's why the **Summer Evenings at the Vicarage** are very important to me. With the help of our small groups, it gives me the opportunity to invite everyone in our three congregations to spend an evening at my home (details on separate page). I really do hope all of you will be able to make it to one of these evenings, and look forward to seeing you there.

Allan

A Very Important Conference

Last week over twenty St Thomas & Kingfisher members had the opportunity to attend this remarkable and ground-breaking conference at the Colston Halls in Bristol. The conference lived up to its claims to be 3 days of radical release of God's Healing Power.

Mark Stibbe, formerly Vicar at St Andrew's Chorleywood and now Director of the Father's Heart Trust was on brilliant form, teaching passionately about the need to rid ourselves of the spirit of orphanhood, to recognise and receive the love of the Father, and to take our places as part of his family

Until this conference Bill Johnson, (Bethel Church, Redding, CA) was Allan's 'best friend who he has never met'. This was rectified at a Leaders lunch on the Thursday when some of us were privileged to attend a lunchtime Q & A session generously hosted by Elim Church. Bill was emphasising the importance of getting and remaining close to God and learning to strengthen ourselves when things look tough. He talked about getting back to the secret place; of concentrating on what the Lord has done and is doing, rather than what he hasn't done and/or might do.

The conference majored on the theme of Christians from all denominations and none working together to 'love Bristol' (and the South West) and this was epitomised by a short prayer session at the beginning of the conference where the senior leaders of the denominations in Bristol prayed over the conference and the speakers. The extemporary prayers of the Roman Catholic minister were truly beautiful and profound.

Perhaps the most exciting thing about the conference was experiencing the enthusiasm and passion of the 'Love Bristol' Team. This team has as its leaders three young pastors from the Woodlands Community Church, and they are crazy in taking risks to bring the love of Jesus to their city. This particular team, through the home group/cell they lead which meets at a coffee bar in Stokes Croft, organised this major conference and obtained these high level speakers. – apparently they had 'hooked' Bill Johnson by sending him a list of 40 outrageous reasons why he should come to Bristol!

Emphasising the need to practise what you hear, the group had arranged for practical healing on the streets, treasure hunting etc

sessions every day, so each afternoon Bristol city centre was overwhelmed by large numbers of Christians carrying God's love into it's midst. The groups came back with wonderful stories of healing and God's love and power being made manifest.

The healing, both physical and spiritual was also much in evidence in the main auditorium! – Colleagues were able to use their gifts to bring people into the Kingdom.

To give a flavour of the break-out sessions, one of the speakers was Tyler Johnson, who is the leader of 'The Dead Raising Team', who have been officially authorised by New York State to be able to attend any disaster situation in the State to pray for raising the dead. He had some wonderful (success) stories to tell!!!

There was also the opportunity to take an open top bus tour of the spiritual heritage sites around Bristol, and to see the places where Wesley and Whitfield preached. The conference was also about opening the spiritual Wells of our heritage.

Perhaps the most important point about the conference is that it emphasised and confirmed the way Allan has been leading our church, with the emphasis on our personal walks with God; on carrying the presence of the Lord with us wherever we go and expecting to change the spiritual atmosphere around us; on expecting to see and experience God's signs and wonders as an expression of God's presence, and using this to bring others into the Kingdom.

For more information about the conference, contact Allan, or speak to any of those who were there:

(Allan, Marjory, Jane & David, Graham & Stella, Ian & Jayne, Michael & Marina, Marco and Maria, Ken & Yvonne, Kevin & Judy, Mel, Andrew S, Rosemary, Margaret, Joy, Barbara, Sherrie, Peter, Lorraine - and Stephen Ball and Colin who joined our party.)

We have purchased a full set of the main conference speeches, which will be available shortly for loan. Please contact Margaret in the office to go on the list. If you wish to purchase your own copy, they are available for download at Release2010.org

Blessings

David & Jane

JAPAN RE-VISITED

AN EVENING OF MUSICAL NEWNESS PROVIDES SPIRITUAL REFILL

The weekend had arrived, there was music on the bill, but this was not my usual Friday night venue. From the vantage point of my Sunday seat I soon became enthralled by what I was hearing.

First on stage was a representative of The Bible Society who was supporting not only tonight, but the entire tour. His delivery and approach underlined the fact that being a Christian is far from boring, leaving me with an eagerness to learn more about their work.

Musically the first offering of the evening came from Freddie Kofi who's set a mixture of self-penned songs alongside well known secular hits from the great and the good interspersed with testimony that was both heart rending and encouraging accompanied by enlightening insights into how Freddie has been inspired as writer, performer and person.

Freddie's obvious love of The Lord gave those secular songs a God given edge that presents such songs in a new light. There were audience participation numbers sung with a relish and spirit not often found in secular venues.

It was time for the main act of the evening. Hailing from Australia the four members of 'The Sons of Korah' took to the stage with an enthusiasm that exuded peace. Their musicianship was of high expounding both a sense of fun and the Word of God in a manner accessible to all.

Part Sermon part Concert their Set took us on a journey through The Psalms that was enlightening helping me see them afresh.

I became thirsty and drank from his word until content, but ready and eager for more.

I let this experience immerse me, drenching me in peace amidst my Brothers and Sisters in my spiritual home.

By Neill Cadmore

It all started with a telephone call just as we were having breakfast one morning in 2008. It was the OMF Director in Japan on the line asking if we would consider coming once again to run the OMF Guest Home while the managers were on Home Assignment. We prayed and gave it time before accepting yet another challenge although this time we knew what to expect as we had already done the job for a year in 2005/6.

Arriving in Japan last October we found that little had changed; the people, the shops the prices and even the rail fares were still the same. Unfortunately this did not apply to the £/Yen exchange rate so we found our costs almost 50% higher. This illustrates the problem facing OMF and other missionary societies when the £ or \$ slide on the world market.

We enjoyed a period of gradual acclimatisation with very few guests the first week. This gave us time to visit the Tokyo parks to enjoy the vibrant autumn colours. Running the Guest Home is always a mixture of quiet periods followed by frantic activity and we were soon into one of those periods. Even then life in a land that is so different from our own makes mundane things like shopping or travelling interesting if you cannot read the labels or the signs!

So what is different about Japan? We have found many surprises and realised that, despite having lived in Asia for four years, we were very unaware of many aspects of life in Japan. Although it is different it is in no way threatening or unfriendly, even in the huge, very crowded, city of Tokyo. Most of Japan is covered in steep sided mountains and so the big plain around Tokyo has become the centre for almost everything including OMF which has offices in a suburb about 20 mins. by train from the centre.

Perhaps the most familiar item of Japanese manufacture is the motor car and you would think that most of the people in this urban sprawl would drive to work but it is so tightly packed that would not work. Instead a vast rail network of trains carries the huge volume of commuters into work each day. From our local station trains ran every 10, minutes, each with 15 carriages and full for most of the day. And how do all these people get to the station -- by car? No -- by bike! At our local station the "bike rack" was 2 storeys, about 100 x 50yards and must have held several thousand bikes!

Now you may be thinking that as the car is at home all day the wife will use it for shopping etc but this is not so, she will also cycle to the supermarket on a daily basis This is still the traditional family relationship, the man goes to business and the wife is proud to be the homemaker and to be seen busy about the house in her apron. There is change underway but as always in Japan they take change slowly.



The Chapel of Adoration at Ichikawa, Tokyo is where we worshipped most Sundays

We probably believe that Japan business is really efficient --how else do they make the cars so competitively priced or their trains run to the second? What we found hard to understand is how they do these things and yet have many people performing seemingly unnecessary jobs. Every supermarket has a bike park attendant, even the smallest road works and building sites have a uniformed attendant with a light stick and whistle to direct you around it; we once counted 10 men repairing a relatively small hole in the road. Maybe this is a better way than paying people 'benefit' for doing nothing?

It does not take long before you realise that, despite all the technical stuff this is still a very traditional society particularly when you encounter their appreciation of art, music, poetry and literature. This influence of tradition also applies to religion; to be Japanese is to be Shinto (or Buddhist -- or both) Around 1% are Christian and the church is growing slowly. It is however very traditional with very few charismatic or renewed congregations. Young Japanese who study overseas often accept Christ there but then find a real problem with the traditional style of the usual Japanese church when they return home. Another barrier to conversion is family pressure; parents can become very upset if their children will no longer be able to offer prayers for them at the temple once they are dead. For those families that do believe life is still difficult because the long hours that men spend at work make it hard for them to play the father role properly, let alone get involved with running the church. So do remember our brothers and sisters in Christ in this nation that is prosperous materially but very needy spiritually.

In a short article it is difficult to convey the many differences and also the delights of living in this culture but this short light hearted description of a stay in a traditional Japanese Inn may help you to see just how different some things are-

As you enter remove your shoes and put on the slippers provided. When evening comes go to your room, strip off and put on your 'Yukata' (=dressing gown - provided by hotel). Go down to the 'common bath' (segregated) remove your Yukata and shower thoroughly at a washstand and then enter a VERY hot pool along with all the other bathers until you are well cooked! Dry yourself, put on your Yukata and go to dinner. Be prepared to sit on the floor for this! Afterwards retire to your room where your futon is laid out on the rush mats on the floor and sleep well - still wearing your Yukata. Rise in the morning and bathe again if you wish and consign your Yukata to the laundry -- clean ones issued each day. Breakfast is likely to be rice, smoked fish, pickles, omelette and - as always - Miso (fermented bean curd) soup.

Now that is being different!

Martin and Margaret Wakelin

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The Historic Pilgrims' Chapel
at **Chapel Plaister**
Open for Public Viewing
The 12th Century Pilgrims' Chapel
at Chapel Plaister (near Box),
restored in 1999,
will be open for Public Viewing
between May and September 2010
on Wednesdays from 2 - 4pm
Individuals and parties welcome.
Visits by parties at other times by arrangement.

The roadside chapel is located on the east side of the B3109 (Bradford - Corsham road) at the top of the hill, approx 1 mile north of Fiveways. Off-road parking available.

Coffee Morning, Saturday, 15 May, 2010



May we sincerely thank all those who helped in any way; attended or donated to the coffee morning on Saturday, 15 May in West Ashton Village Hall. The morning's activities provided fellowship and an eye for a bargain. It was good to see so many attending and to hear such a friendly banter. Even the weather was kind.

All proceeds were given for the window repair. The event raised £881 and with a donation from the Parish Council and some monies already in the window account, this should secure the necessary £1,200 to cover all repair work that was caused due to the unfortunate Church burglary. Thank you again for your time and generosity, a splendid effort by many.