

Upcoming Events at BCF

Saturday 12th January - 11am, Prayer on the Streets. Meet at the Bethel Hall, Church Street.

Wednesday 16th January - 3pm, afternoon tea at The Well. £8 per ticket available from Margaret and/or The Well, limited tickets available. All monies raised going towards NewDay.

Saturday 19th January - 7pm, Bethel Quiz Night at the Bethel Hall, Church Street. All monies raised going towards NewDay.

Saturday 26th January - 7pm, Engage Worship at the Bethel Hall, Church Street.

We have prayer meetings before church every week if you would like to join us! We meet at 9.30am in the school canteen at Maltings before normal Sunday church, and at 8.30am before breakfast church. This is a great opportunity to pray for the church and other needs.

All welcome!

Breaking of Bread – First Sunday of the month

Bethel Christian Fellowship meets:

* at 9.30am on the second Sunday of the month for Breakfast Church and

* at 10.30am on all other Sundays at

Maltings Academy, Spinks Lane, Witham.

www.bethel-witham.co.uk
bethelwitham@googlemail.com

01376 520705

Facebook: @bethel-witham

Church office at The Well Coffee Shop, Guithavon St, Witham.

Edited by carolbowerman@googlemail.com All images © Microsoft clipart unless otherwise stated

Bethel Christian Fellowship

Vital Signs



January 2019

Engage Worship

SATURDAY 26TH JANUARY @BETHEL
HALL, CHURCH ST, WITHAM



A TIME OF WORSHIP WITH YOU AND GOD . A SPACE TO SEEK HIS PRESENCE

Engage Worship

The foundation of Engage Worship started with Pete Harrison & myself being inspired by a worship evening we had seen elsewhere. We felt led by God to create a regular event where we spend around an hour or so focusing on worship.

For those who don't know what the evening consists of, we meet together at the Bethel Hall and create an ambience with coloured lighting. This gives a sense of being free in the Spirit and gives the opportunity as you want. There is a sense freedom to share from the front words

and pictures from God within the context of the gathering. We encourage people to pray with one and other but ultimately this is a good opportunity to get real with God in a personal way.

It starts at 7pm and the aim is to finish by 8:15pm. Please join us! Our next date is the 26th January.

Luke Taylor

2 Corinthians 3:17 *Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.*

Book Review:
Nevertheless
by John Kirby

For a really readable, uplifting story of faith in the midst of debt, I'd very much recommend 'Nevertheless' by John Kirby. John is a gifted Yorkshireman who came to Christ during a dark period in his life in which his marriage was falling apart and he was overwhelmed by the debt some unwise business decisions had led him into. Struggling with supporting himself and his two young daughters, he rented his house to a pastor and his wife who had just moved to the UK from Norway. The pastor invited John to church and God got a hold of him! Although he was still to go through some very hard times, John was destined to set up CAP (Christians Against Poverty) which God uniquely prepared him for by leading him on the path to being debt free.

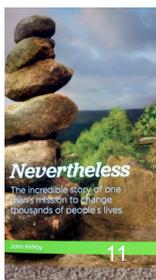
The battles John had to fight to get creditors off his back gave him a determination to help others who were trapped into debt and feeling hopeless and despairing. CAP now does that for thousands of people in the UK, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and very soon America.

When CAP started though almost no-one supported John, and he found it so discouraging pressing forward with what he was sure God had called him to. Over the months he kept believing that God would provide the finances to sustain the charity, and God came through - often leaving it until the 11th hour! Bit by bit, prophesies came in to encourage the work, small amounts of funding were secured and volunteers became full time workers, often in the knowledge that there was not enough money in the bank to pay them!

John kept a diary during that time which he uses extracts from to show his desperation in the face of the discouragement, and also the times when he had faith in that desperation. It's so encouraging because we often only hear of miracles in retrospect, when everything has fallen into place, but to read of his day by day faith battles and then see what God did is really amazing. It chimes very much with what Gary preached about on November 18 - pressing on in faith.

I hope you are able to get hold of the book and be really blessed.

Anna Faro





Vision

Proverbs 29:18 *Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he. (AV)*

When God shares a Vision for the Church it is a great way of focusing our eyes upon the things of God. As believers, we need to have that so we can use the giftings which God has given us to use. Being Pastor of Bethel Christian Fellowship is a privilege and to be charged with leading the Church in a mission for souls who don't know Jesus is my dream job.

What is Vision?

Vision is the bridge between the present & the future. Without it we perish or go "unrestrained," as the New American Standard Bible puts it. Vision gives pain a purpose. Those without vision spend their lives taking the path of least resistance as they try to avoid discomfort. The level of sacrifice that a vision requires will determine the size of the people who follow. Sacrifice separates the small from the great (A quote by Jesus Culture)

What is our Focus at Bethel Christian fellowship for 2019?

Fringes

God shared that we should reach the fringes at Bethel with Jesus Christ this year. There are many who do not know Jesus as their Lord and Saviour and they might be husbands, wives, children, parents, friends or work colleagues. You know who they are. We have so

many and so it is a mission field which is close to home and our heart

How will we do it?

We will pray and pray for them. We will be bold and share our faith with them. We shall pray with an expectancy that they will know the Lord Jesus. We shall equip the church to reach out. We shall also pray for ideas which are Holy Spirit led. We love them so much that it does matter, if we didn't then we would not have this same passion. We have had the week of prayer and we have been praying for all of them, which is the start.

Matthew 9:37

³⁷ Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. ³⁸ Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."

Mathew 18:19-20

¹⁹ "Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. ²⁰ For where two or three are gathered together in my name, I am there in the midst of them."

More of the Holy Spirit

We need to be bolder in our faith, we need to be embracing the Holy Spirit and His leading and exercising the Gifts of the Spirit. It is only through the Holy Spirit will we see revival break out.

Chris Taylor

Welcome all to *Vital Signs* this month!

December was a really busy month with lots of Christmas activities and it was a good month for reaching others with the good news of the birth of Jesus Christ. Onto January, we have an exciting few months with what I feel God is going to do with us as a church. I shared this vision with you all in the meeting on the 6th January and I have shared it again on page 10 of this *Vital Signs* as a reminder.

January always brings fresh eyes as we start to look towards Easter. As a church we have been following a preaching series on the Holy Spirit which will conclude at the start of February. We had a fantastic evening on the 26th November with a time pursuing The Holy Spirit. He really did move that night. I love leading the meetings where everyone comes out with the same motive: to have more of God! It is the right

environment to see God heal and perform miracles - and this is my heart for Bethel Christian Fellowship. We hope to hold more of these pursuing God evenings this year.

In February, we are starting a new preaching series called, "Be Real" which will cover topics which do not get discussed so much. My prayer is that every preacher opens their heart to the weight of these topics and projects that reality for the congregation to feast upon.

Be Blessed

Chris

Romans 8:31 - *What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?*



BCF Leadership team:
Chris Taylor (Pastor)
David Cameron, Gary Fisher

Did you wear a poppy?

Did you wear a poppy for Remembrance Day last year? If not, why not?

“All war is wrong,” say some. “The Bible says ‘You shall not kill’ - isn’t that clear enough?” “Millions of young men gave their lives to protect our freedom”, say others. “They should be remembered and honoured - and copied if necessary.”

My own family shows the different views. My grandfather was in the Royal Artillery, taking part in several famous battles in 1918, while Betty’s grandfather was a ‘conscientious objector’ and spent some time in Wormwood Scrubs prison!

Having watched some of the events commemorating the 100th anniversary of World War One Armistice Day and noticing how much Christian language, Bible readings and prayers are included, I did a little research into Christian attitudes to war, as I know some of us at Bethel are more enthusiastic about having the two minutes silence in our service than others.

‘Christian Pacifists’ hold that as Jesus taught us to love one another - even our enemies - taking up arms cannot ever be right for Christians. Jesus also said “Blessed are the peacemakers” in the famous ‘Beatitudes’ in Matthew 5. Quakers hold this view, and many evangelicals as well. Keith Newbitt, a member of BCF who died two years ago took this view and served in the Friends Ambulance Unit in France as part of his two years national service in 1958-59.

The Bible provides some other perspectives, however. Solomon, the wisest king who ever lived, said that in Ecclesiastes 3 v8 that there was “a time for war and a time for peace.”

Reading the doom-laden prophecies of Jeremiah, one can see that conquest by foreign armies was seen as God’s righteous punishment of a sinful nation.

David the shepherd boy and later as king certainly believed in fighting to defeat evil oppressors!

Proverbs 24 v6 advises a careful weighing up of arguments for and against going to war and Jesus himself uses the same imagery in his appeal for total commitment in Luke 14 v31.



The Well Coffee Shop, Guithavon Street

We are back and open for the New Year! Why not pop in for a coffee, sandwich and perhaps a chat? We are open Monday-Saturday, 10am-2pm.

If you are looking for a new challenge for a new year, why not think about volunteering with us? We have a variety of roles which you could fulfil. We especially need staff on Fridays, could you help? Just ask at the counter when you are next in!

Love is shown by little things, by attention to small daily signs which make us feel at home. Faith grows when it is lived and shaped by love. That is why our families, our homes, are true domestic churches. They are the right place for faith to become life, and life to grow in faith.

From *The Thoughts of Pope Francis*
(Submitted by Anna Faro)

Sermons to Come

- 13 January Breakfast Church: Elders
- 20 January Harriet Sleight: Life of the Spirit - Love
- 27 January Chris Taylor: Life of the Spirit - Tongues
- 3 February Dann Smith: Life of the Spirit - Prophecy & Healing
- 10 February Breakfast Church: Keith Taylor





Nudging Ourselves Up a Step

I gave a talk on December 30th at Bethel, and used this graphic. I talked mostly about the importance of being grateful, and having an attitude of thankfulness. But there is so much more to be said, and I want to tell you briefly about the power I have found, from nudging myself up a step, just one step higher.

Nudge is a lovely word, it is not in the Bible, as far as I know. The dictionary defines it as to push something or someone gently, especially to push someone with your elbow to attract the person's attention. Now this I have learned, that I can nudge myself along, when I need spiritual attention. Here is how it starts. I am feeling low, borderline a bit desperate, I need to feel the love of God. I have found that I can always find something to thank God for - recently at work I was feeling a bit like this, and so I started with 'Thank you, God, for the life you have given me,' a glance out of the window, 'Thank you, God, for a car to take me home through the rain.'

Something happens inside when you start giving thanks. In spiritual terms I think you lift up a gear when you take

your mind off this material world and just thank God for who he is. This is a nudge, an important one. The word Hallelujah probably means simply Praise The Lord. There is power in saying these words out loud.

Psalm 100 says 'We enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise. Through the gates of thanksgiving into the courts of praise.' I have nudged myself up a step. Consider the phrase "Praise Ye the Lord". It is personal. I am praising the Lord. Say these phrases out loud, practice on your own. "Bless the Lord O my Soul" "Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised". Praise focuses on how great our God is and nudges us to a higher perspective. "I will lift my eyes up to the hills."

And then I feel the wonder of recognising the truth that Jesus is my saviour, and that in him I am loved, ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven. As the hymn says: 'Here is Love, vast as the ocean.' My soul is nudged closer to the presence of God and I am nudged to recognise that this is worship. Worship applies these truths, of giving thanks and praise, and results in acts of service to God and to others.

Since I stopped being Pastor of Bethel I have been reflecting on the way that the busyness and activity of Church can fill our lives. When I stopped all this activity and busyness I rediscovered something. That God is here for me, in everything I do, however mundane. And I am learning again to give God thanks and praise. It is gentle and uplifting, it is simple, but it is also life shaping and so very powerful.

Gordon Crick

Over the centuries, a view has developed that argues that because we live in a fallen world, evil must be opposed, by taking up arms if necessary. This is called the 'Just War' theory and proposes three fundamental 'musts' for going to war. There must be a 'just cause', e.g. a defence of a nation's freedom. There must be a 'just means', e.g. reasonable treatment of prisoners. There must be a 'just ending', e.g. reasonable treatment of the defeated enemy.

Finally, a controversial view was taken by the famous theologian and pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who felt that such was the overpowering evil of the Nazi regime, he believed he should support a normally sinful action to try and overcome a much greater sinful action. He took part in the plot to assassinate Hitler.

I think all would agree that war is a terrible thing. Let us pray this new year that we are spared having to decide what we would do if called upon, and for those who have found themselves around the world in this devastating situation.

David Brett



The Annual Bethel Trivia Quiz!

We will be having our annual trivia quiz on Saturday, 19th January.

The quiz will begin at 7 p.m. at the Bethel Hall. It will cost £4 a head to take part and that will include refreshments at the half way stage.

Teams can be from four to six people and you can either arrange your own team in advance or just come along on the night and join a team at that stage.

Any profits made this year will go to the fund to help pay for our youth to go to New Day this year.



OUR CONCEPT OF GOD

Matthew 6:5-9

We can't reach higher in prayer than our concept of God; if we see God as some austere being far away, we'll never be able to approach Him confidently in prayer. At the beginning of His prayer example, Jesus reveals God as a family God, one who's our "Father". Encouraging such intimacy in prayer didn't make Jesus popular with the religious people, but the sinners, tax collectors, prostitutes and those who were despised in society were attracted to Him because they saw in Him relevant answers to the problems they faced in life. Jesus came to introduce them to God and to bring them into a personal relationship with Him as their Father.

In a very real sense, God isn't His name but His job; Father is the name by which Jesus reveals God to us. God wants us to progress from a business relationship to the intimacy of family. Jesus came to reveal God's paternal love for us - (see Romans 8:14-17). The literal translation of the word "Abba" is "Daddy", not even the mature paternal word "Father"; it would be among the first words learnt by any Hebrew child. (4:13-16).

I believe that the Lord wants us to have a childlike simplicity in prayer. Jesus teaches us that we're not to keep on babbling, nor will we be heard for our many words; putting on an unnatural voice will never encourage people to develop a natural walk with God. God wants us to be ourselves when we pray. Even the childhood concept of praying with our "hands together and eyes closed" is unhelpful, because, although it may at times aid concentration, it further increases the feeling of unnaturalness. We can "look the Lord in the eyes" knowing that we're forgiven. When Jesus prayed, rather than bowing His head, He "looked towards heaven" (John 17:1).

No special posture or language is required in prayer; God wants us to relax and enjoy a natural love relationship with Him. He's interested in every area of our life, there should be no "secular" and "sacred" division in the Christian life. There's no area of our life that we should hold back from the Lord; there's great release in pouring our heart out to God. Whatever you share, He won't be shocked - He knows how you feel anyway! (See Hebrews 4:13-16).

God's your Father; He loves you so

much. God could never love you any more than He does right now! Do you realise that He loves you as much as He loves Jesus? Jesus said, in John 17:23, "You... have loved them even as much as You have loved me". Isn't it wonderful to know that we're loved so much. We're unique and special to the Lord, He has "summoned you by name" (Isaiah 43:1) and has your name "written on the palm of His hand" (Isaiah 49:16). God is "our Father", one to whom no problem is too small and insignificant; and He's "our father in heaven", to whom no problem is too big!

Prayer isn't just making requests, it's communicating with the Lord and should be the most natural thing for the Christian. Jesus exhorts us always to pray and Paul tells us to pray continually but this doesn't mean that we walk around with our eyes closed. What it does mean is that we should always be in fellowship with the Father, every minute of every day.

There's an old song that we used to sing that goes something like this: "He walks with me and He talks with me, and He tells me I am His own. And the joy we share as we tarry there, none other has ever known." Does He walk with you and talk with you? Do you walk and talk with Him?

Keith Taylor

#Food Bank Sunday

You can support this ministry by either bringing some articles and putting them in the container by the welcome desk at church on the first Sunday of the month or by taking a brown envelope from the welcome desk, putting some cash in it and putting it in the offering when it's taken during the service.

