

Vital Signs



Bethel Christian
Fellowship
Easter 2016



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The Well

The Well will be shutting for a very exciting refurbishment on 24 April, will be closed for just a week, and then opening again on Tuesday 3 May. We look forward to seeing you for a newly sparkling cuppa soon!

Are you interested in volunteering in The Well, for a lot or a little time? Please contact Gordon.





The First Rose....

Winter's over, Spring is here, Easter's coming.

I was in the market on Saturday morning. We had just finished putting up the egg stall, otherwise known as 'The Jesus Tent'. It was a cool February morning with a bright sun. I was struck by the display of primroses laid out on a long stall. About six different varieties of the most amazing colours. Pink, red, purple, lighter violet, yellow. The flowers contrasting beautifully with the darker green leaves. Each one slightly different, and yet all so obviously from the same family of plants.

Primrose the name, means the first rose or first flower. In most of Europe it is one of the early spring flowers. A beautiful expression of nature in the middle of Witham market!

These wonderfully textured, vibrantly coloured flowers speak effortlessly of an outward beauty, and it is easy to see a Creator's hand, and think of spiritual things. Martin Luther is quoted as saying "Our Lord has written the promise of resurrection, not in books alone, but in every leaf in springtime."

Spring may offer the promise of new beginnings, may cause us to move with new energy and hope, but Spring in itself is not resurrection. Spring seems more like revival, a new season, a coming to life again of dormant promise that was already there.

In Romans 10 verse 9 Paul wrote "if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved." Here is the central point and

main key to salvation and eternal life - to believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The dark cold days of winter give way to the brighter warmth of spring. It is the power of the resurrection life in us that enables us to cope with our deepest losses, the heartaches and struggles of our lives. Easter is an occasion to believe, to go deeper, not to put on a brave face, and say "I am fine."

By contrast to the superficial appeal, the joy of Easter speaks tenderly to the pains that plague you. Whatever loss you lament, whatever burden weighs you down, Easter says, "It will not always be this way for you. The new age has begun. Jesus has risen, and the kingdom of the Messiah is here. He has conquered death and sin and hell. He is alive and on his throne. And He is putting your enemies, all your enemies, under His feet."

Whether it is resurrection, or revival, the beauty of the primrose is a picture, a metaphor. And Jesus himself explains it best. In Matthew chapter 6 Jesus said - "Consider the lilies of the field and how they grow. They do not work or weave or sew, and yet their garments are stunning. Even King Solomon, dressed in his most regal garb, was not as lovely as these lilies. And think about grassy fields - the grasses are here now, but they will be dead by winter. And yet God adorns them so radiantly. How much more will He clothe you, you of little faith, you who have no trust?"

Gordon



Swishing Party 9 April

A swishing party, with three course meal, is to take place at Witham URC on Saturday 9 April and you ladies are all invited! It is a fundraising event for Saltmine - a Christian theatre group. Tickets for the event, which will be at 7 for 7.30pm, will be £5, and available either at the URC or from Anna Faro who is helping organise it.

Please check your diaries and consider coming along to this event, which is ticket-only and open to anyone, those from church and your other friends. Please also start putting aside good quality clothes and accessories (belts, jewellery, but not shoes please) to "swish". If you would like an explanation of how the swishing works please speak to Anna Faro!

Jesus and Me

When I'm sailing through life's ocean,
And encounter a stormy sea,
I will not be frightened,
For Jesus is with me.

When walking through the darkness,
And the darkness dims my sight,
I will not worry,
For Jesus is my guiding light.

When troubles press upon me,
Everything seems dark and drear,
I will not be discouraged,
For I know Jesus is near.

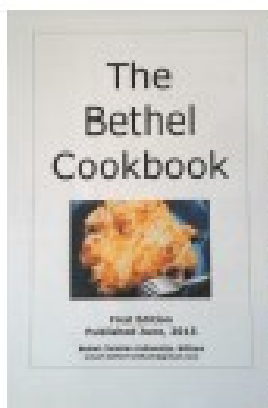
When things start going wrong,
And failure comes my way,
I shall not give up hope,
For I know Jesus will save the day.

And when my time comes to an end
I will not despair,
I will face the end with courage,
For I know Jesus will be there.

When death comes calling,
And I walk Heaven's street,
I will be oh so happy,
For Jesus I will meet.

John Cox

Bethel Cookbook 2016 Edition!



Every year our youth group goes to the New Day week up at the Norwich Showground in Norfolk. They have a great time and we as a church always do some fundraising to help with the costs of the trip. I'm pretty certain you'll be hearing from me again about fund raising ideas. This is just the first.

One of the things we did last year, at Pauline's suggestion, was to publish a Bethel Cookbook. It contained almost 30 recipes of many kinds, each of which was contributed by a member of the Fellowship. It made a decent contribution to the New Day Fund. We sold it at £2 a copy though many people generously gave more than that.

I've been asked to produce a volume 2 for the same purpose this year. We could, of course, also re-publish volume 1 for those of you who didn't get a chance to buy one last year. If you'd like one please let me know.

Unfortunately the response to my plea for recipes this year has been disappointingly low. If you have a recipe to contribute please send it to me asap. If possible electronically - if not then written on a piece of paper! I will collate them and, if we get sufficient, publish another volume in a few weeks' time.

As before, they need to be in the usual format for recipes - a title, a list of the ingredients needed and the amount and then a description of how you actually turn the ingredients into the dish!

Alan Battley

Witham Community Day

On the 11th June a Community event will be held in Witham park celebrating the Queen's official birthday! Many different organisations will be having stands and displays. This is a family event and there will be lots to do!

As a church we have an area. This is very exciting and is a fantastic way to show Witham town what we do as a church. At the moment we are looking at 3 gazebos, crafts, tea, coffee and cake. Displays showing photos of different activities, for example toddlers, cafe church, the Well and bread club.



The gazebos will be very brightly decorated with balloons and bunting. Helium balloons with the Bethel logo will be handed out and T shirts worn by helpers.

I think the event will be great fun and a great witness but we will need some help. Below is my wish list!

3 gazebos

Helpers for tea and coffee

Helpers with craft

Helpers to hand out balloons & cards

Helpers to set up and clear away

People to specifically pray for the event.

Lots of homemade cakes! I know we are good at that!

There will probably be other things nearer to the time. If you can help. Please speak to Jenny Wijekoon, Sarah Moon or Gordon.



Next Bethel Games Night!

Another evening of board games will be held on Saturday 19th March at 6 p.m. and will finish at about 9.30 p.m.

If you have small children, please feel free to attend for just some of the evening.

For details contact Suzy Taylor.



Baptised For the Dead?

Over the past few years every now and again I have a go at researching my family roots. Although there doesn't seem to be any famous, or infamous persons listed, there are one or two folk whom I feel are worthy of investigation. I know that on my mother's side all our family came from either Cressing (Suttons) or Rivenhall (Finches) and worked on the land - my grandfather worked as a horseman at Cressing Temple and my great grandmother was a straw plaiter. My father was born in Barnstaple, North Devon, moving to Witham with other members of the family who were employed by the Pinkham glove manufacturing company from Bideford/Torrington North Devon. However, both my grandfather and great grandfather worked for the London & South Western Railway at Exeter and Barnstaple.

My mother and father married in August 1941, during the Second World War, while my father was serving in the Royal Army Medical Corps. I was born in 1943 and have no remembrance of my father, as he contracted tuberculosis and died shortly after the end of the war in January 1946. His name appears on the Witham War Memorial and there is an Imperial War Grave in the Witham cemetery. I do have relatives in America - my aunt (Dad's sister) married a GI - and there was a rumour at one time that there were distant relatives in Australia (whether as a result of criminal deportation was never ascertained!).

6 What I have come to realise is that genealogy is rather a big business, and that the Mormons are leading experts

in tracing family history. They believe that their members can make covenants on behalf of their ancestors so that they may be reunited in the spirit world, and that the living can be baptised for the dead. Identifying ancestors is, therefore, crucial to the process.

We totally refute such teaching, though in doing so we have to explain what is meant by 1 Corinthians 15:29 "Now if there is no resurrection, what will those do who are baptised for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptised for them?"

Dozens of answers have been suggested. Now it seems to me that Paul was referring to a group of people, probably not Christians, who practiced baptism for the dead. He isn't condoning what they do but is trying to shame those in the church who doubted the resurrection (see verse 12) into realising that even non-Christians believed in life after death. It might have been helpful if he had actually condemned the practice - but the subject of the passage is resurrection not baptism, and his readers would have known full well what he taught about baptism.

The consistent thrust of New Testament teaching, and that of Paul himself, is that baptism follows the new birth and belief in Christ, and that one cannot be saved simply by being baptised. If that is true for the living, how much more so for the dead.

Keith Taylor



Don't Count on Tomorrow

"Tomorrow" is a fitting epitaph for many tombstones!

Long ago, a child prince asked his tutor to prepare him for life beyond. 'There is plenty of time for that when you are old,' the tutor replied. "No," answered the prince, "I have been to the cemetery and measured the graves; and there are many shorter than I am".

A number of years ago a cartoon appeared in three parts. In the first scene there is a young man seated at a desk. At his shoulder Jesus Christ is standing, inviting him to be saved. He politely tells the Lord that he is just launching his career and had no time for anything else.

The second scene shows a middle-aged man. He is heavier now, well-dressed, and his desk is larger and covered with papers and reports. Again Christ stands at his elbow and reminds him to think of his eternal soul.

But again he gives the same answer: no time...too busy...tomorrow.

The last picture shows him as an old man, thin, stooped and grey. He is hunched over the same desk. This time, at his shoulder stands not the Saviour but the gaunt bony spectre of Death. Speaking in hollow tones, Death says, "I have come for you." The aged man, with frightened eyes, says, "Go away, Death, I did not send for you." But Death refuses to be sent away, and the sinner dies in his sin.

Tomorrow is the road that leads to

the town called Never. Tomorrow is the locked door that shuts people out of heaven.

Tomorrow is Satan's word. Those who expect to repent tomorrow usually die today. Don't count on tomorrow!

Be ready – What for? "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this is the judgement" (Hebrews 9:27)

Be ready – Why? "We shall all stand before the judgement seat of Christ" (Romans 14:10)

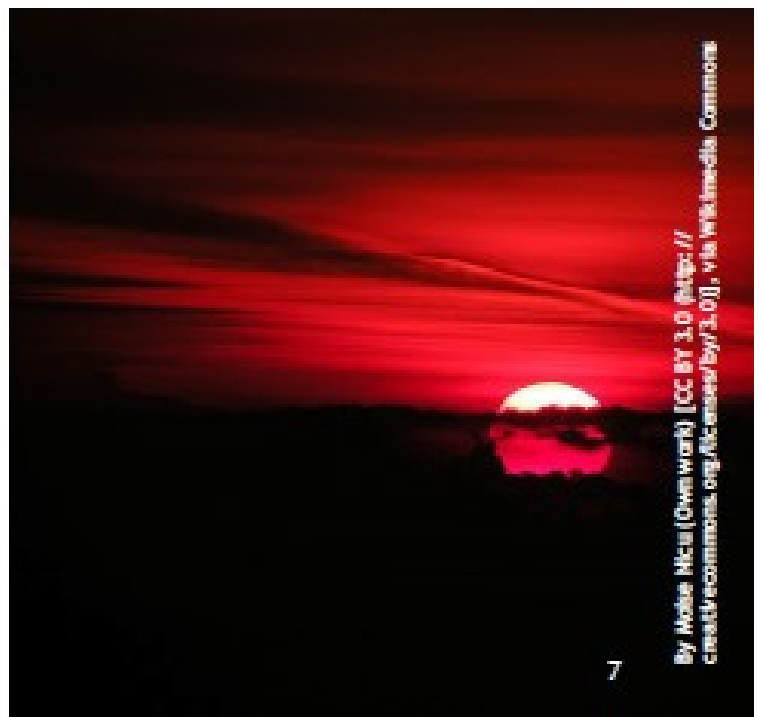
Be ready – How? "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved" (Acts 16:31)

Be ready – When? "Behold NOW is the accepted time, NOW is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2)

(By George Sweeting, American Tract Society)

Printed many years ago, but still relevant today

Brian Pease.





An Update from the Gordon-Hancock's.

We're experiencing a mild Ohio winter, which means gusts of wind blowing in 15-20°C temperatures one day and then the next day it's below freezing. We've only had one decent snowfall that allowed Liz and the girls to get outside and build a snowman.

We are all enjoying learning how to share space and get into a new routine. Mealtimes now involve seven people sitting round the table - Liz's grandmother also lives with her parents - so we are a four-generation household. (But since Grandma Stocking is in her 90's, it sometimes feels like there's a third child in the house.) Liz finds that she starts the laundry and it is miraculously finished and folded on her bed within the same day. There are some serious perks with living with your parents! It might all still feel like a novelty, but equally, there is something spiritual about sharing living space with extended family, learning to compromise, and discovering hidden benefits of sharing responsibility for maintaining a home and raising children. It feels like we are exploring what it means to live and be in community, like the early church.

Bob loves his commute to work - he walks down the stairs into the basement, where his office (think man cave) is located. And he really enjoys being five hours behind in terms of time zone because it takes most of the pressure and politics out of his job, as most problems are solved before he finds out about them! (If you didn't know, Bob has kept his UK

job and works remotely - by the power of the internet. That was one of many miracles that God ordained to allow us to relocate to Ohio. The other is that he's on his parent company's payroll here in the US, which gives us medical coverage - an essential over here.)

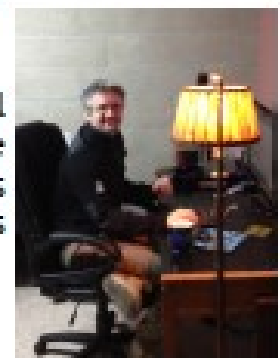
Alenah and Isla wake up every morning and rush to get dressed so they can run down to the kitchen to say hi to Grandad before he leaves for work. Liz's parents are thrilled to have their grandkids around all the time because they've been deprived of day-to-day interaction for the last couple of years.

On the food front, Bob misses bacon, salad creme and Ribena - the only bacon Americans seem to eat is streaky bacon. Thankfully, we found both salad creme and Ribena in a large supermarket and were able to take it home for a small fortune. (The small salad creme cost \$6/£4!!) And Bob has been introduced to 'pork scrapple', also called 'head cheese' or 'pan pudding' which is crumbled don't-ask from a pig, served like sausage alongside eggs for breakfast.

We would appreciate prayers over new playmates for the girls, and discernment about what our next step should be (in terms of buying our own house or staying with Liz' parents permanently)... We know God brought us here. Starting a new life takes time, and the flesh wants to rush it; so discernment and the wisdom to choose to rest in God are top of the prayer lists for us.

We hope you are all well and continue to be blessed with the Spirit's presence as Bethel has been in recent months.

God Bless!





Bread Club!

The second Bethel

Bread Club was a great success, with loads of children and adults turning up on a very wet and windy Saturday morning to have fun together.

As a mum of young children, I was especially grateful to Jenny Wijekoon for organising some excellent children's craft activities as part of the club. Emily (age four) came away with a beautifully decorated glass jar, a Valentine's card (for me!), having had a go at child-friendly sewing and with some great experiences which we both enjoyed (what was there not to like about cake pops?!). There were plenty of other kids, and a few adults were also having a go at the crafts, which was great fun.

Centre stage were the tables with the bread-making, of course. Amanda Harrison took two groups of bakers through a helpful teaching session which was simple enough for children to join in with. Then after everything had been baked, we all ate it together - along with a yummy smoked salmon dip which Sarah Moon oversaw the creation of in the kitchen.

There was a great mix of people, some Bethel some not, which made it feel like a real community event. Roll on the next one!

Bread Club runs on the second Saturday of the month in the Bethel building, 9.30 to 1pm. Contact Jenny Wijekoon, Sarah Moon or Amanda Harrison for details and come and enjoy the fun for yourself!

Anna Faro



Braintree Area Food Bank

The foodbank is experiencing a severe strain on its current finances, largely as a result of higher rental charges for the warehouse. Would you consider giving the equivalent value of your food donation as a cash donation until further notice? Any donations can be placed in our weekly offering bag in an envelope marked 'food bank'.

We also urgently need tinned vegetables, long-life milk (1l and 500cc) and small jars of instant coffee.

Thank you so much in advance.

Answered Prayers



25 February 2016

William Daniel Watts
born 9.57 a.m.
weight 3 lbs 5 ozs.

Oliver Noah Watts
born 9.59 a.m.
weight 3 lbs 9 ozs

Zachary Samuel Watts
born 10.02 a.m.
weight 3 lbs 15 ozs.

Dear Bethel Church family,

We feel so blessed and thankful for the safe arrival of William, Oliver and Zachary and have great joy over their birth. We would like to extend heartfelt thanks to each and every one of you, for your prayers, generosity, support and love, in both practical and emotional ways. We praise God for His faithfulness in the delivery and the days following. All our boys are now breathing on their own and off their drips and we have good reports from the staff every day. We are loving all the cuddles! Please continue to pray for healthy growth and development in the Neonatal Unit and for good health for us as any illness means we cannot go into the unit. Thanks again and God bless you all.

David and Liz Watts

Carla Searle's friend Lynn is really grateful for everyone's prayer in regard to her rare type of Leukemia and has been feeling a lot better day to day since people at Bethel started praying for her. At her last visit to the consultant she found out that although she's run out of treatment options she's not getting any worse, praise God! Lynn has asked that we keep praying for wellness and for energy for both her and her husband who is also very unwell.

Juan Carlos' father-in-law had hip surgery in Spain in December. The operation was successful and he is recovering well. He is already walking although must do so with crutches. Juan asks for your continued prayer to strengthen his father-in-law's relationship with God.

Answered prayers:

Early contractions on Monday were successfully delayed and an emergency c-section was avoided.

Liz was able to return home for a night to prepare for a planned delivery on Thursday morning with no more contractions forcing emergency treatment.

After being told that enough incubators may not be available at Broomfield hospital, three were available and waiting when the triplets were delivered.

Liz and Dave would still love to hear from anyone who has words of knowledge or prophecies for them or their boys.

Celtic Daily Prayer - Inspirational prayers & readings from the Northumbria Community.

Something from this book really touched me lately when I was reflecting on the losses our fellowship has known last year. I thought I would share it with the Fellowship:



"Nothing can fill the gap when we are away from those we love, and it would be wrong to try and find anything. We must simply hold out and win through. That sounds very hard at first, but at the same time it is a great consolation, since leaving the gap unfilled preserves the bonds between us. It is nonsense to say that God fills the gap; He does not fill it, but keeps it empty so that our communion with another may be kept alive, even at the cost of pain." (Dietrich Bonhoeffer).

Anna Faro






Sermon Round Up

To listen again go to <http://www.bethel-witham.co.uk/index.php/sermons>

- 6 March - David Brett: Romans 15 & 16
- 28 Feb - Gordon Crick: Romans 14 & 15
- 21 Feb - Glen Tappin: Romans 13
- 7 Feb - Gordon Crick: Romans 12 #2
- 31 Jan - Gary Fisher: Romans 12 #1
- 24 Jan - Keith Taylor: Romans 9-11 #2
- 17 Jan - Keith Taylor: Romans 9-11 #1
- 3 Jan - Gordon Crick: Romans 8 #3

AN ANALYSIS OF ROMANS

The Power of God to Salvation from start to finish

		SALVATION OF GRACE  BY FAITH	SANCTIFICATION BY FAITH 		INSTRUCTION FOR	
	LOST WORLD 		THROUGH THE SPIRIT	THE JEWISH QUESTION	PRACTICAL CHRISTIAN LIVING 	PERSONAL MATTERS AND SALVATIONS 
INTRODUCTION		THROUGH THE BLOOD		PAST-PRESENT-FUTURE		
1:1-7	1:8-3:20	3:21-5:11	5:12-8:39	9:1-11:36	12:1-15:33	16:1-27

Easter Services at Bethel

Sunday March 20th - Palm Sunday service, 10.30am Maltings Academy
Tuesday 22nd March - Easter prayer and worship 7.30 pm Bethel Building
Wednesday 23rd March - Easter prayer and worship 7.30pm Bethel Building
Thursday 24th March - Easter Communion 7.30pm Bethel Building
Saturday 26th March - Easter Saturday March of Witness 11 am
Sunday 27th March - Easter Sunday Resurrection Day Service

Easter March of Witness

Churches Together in Witham
invite you to the
29th EASTER MARCH OF WITNESS
on Saturday 26th March 2016

Starting from the River Walk path by
the bridge in Newland Street at 11a.m.

Bring a banner if you can!

Join us afterwards for hot cross buns
and a hot drink at the Holy Family &
All Saints church hall in Guithavon
Street.

Refreshments will also be available
throughout the morning from 'The
Hub' in Newlands Precinct.

See you there!

For more information
contact David Brett

"I definitely believe in God. How
can you look at anything and not be
overwhelmed by the miraculousness
of it all!" Chris Martin, Coldplay.

May the God of Hope fill you
with all joy and peace as you
trust in him, so that you may
overflow with hope by the
power of the Holy Spirit.

Romans 15:13

BCF Leadership Team

Gordon Crick (Leading),
Gary Fisher,
David Cameron, Chris Taylor.

Bethel Christian Fellowship meets: at 9.30am on the second Sunday
of the month for a cafe service and at 10.30am on all other Sundays at
Maltings Academy, Spinks Lane, Witham.

www.bethel-witham.co.uk
bethelwitham@googlemail.com
01376 520705