

Bethel Christian Fellowship

Vital Signs

Easter 2018



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Prayer at BCF For 2018

The over-arching theme - a Year of Growth

In 2018 we are believing for growth in all dimensions: inward, upward, in our relationships with others, but crucially growth in seeing people saved and changed by Jesus Christ.

This requires investment, application, time, training and resources - to support the growth we believe God is calling us to we need to grow in giving and financial provision.

Making a Success of Succession

Chris Taylor will initially take over my role leading the church by working three days a week, increasing from the current two days, but would like to work full time in this position - which obviously has an impact on the church budget for next year.

This matter is now open to the Fellowship for consideration and prayer, and we will consider officially in June whether God's heart is for this now or for this later on.

The Future of The Well

The Well remains a significant, visible and enduring outreach centre for BCF. We believe we should extend our lease of the Well but we need to pray for:

- * a sense of confirmation and purpose for the Well
- * cooks and team leaders prepared to work day to day there
- * insight into our most effective means of support for Amanda and her team.

Gordon Crick

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Edited by carolbowerman@googlemail.com

Truth Speaks to Power!

The front cover of this magazine presents a striking image. Truth written on hands, which seem to be reaching out, maybe in prayer, maybe just in imploring, please give me truth!

One of the striking phrases used in our current preaching series on the Old Testament prophets, has been the assertion that these prophets all in some way spoke truth to power. The most obvious example was that of Nathan, who confronted King David with the truth about David's own, personal sin. In that instance, the prophet's word was heard, and repentance followed. However for many of the prophets the words of truth were not heeded, and appeared not to change the world.

Easter brings us to a single truth, which has changed the world. To quote at length from James Allan Francis - *One Solitary Life*:

Here is a man who was born in an obscure village, the child of a peasant woman. He grew up in another obscure village, where He worked in a carpenter shop until He was thirty, and then for three years He was an itinerant preacher. He never wrote a book. He never held an office. He never owned a home. He never had a family. He never went to college. He never put his foot inside a big city. He never travelled two hundred miles from the place where He was born. He never did one of the things that usually accompany greatness. He had no credentials but Himself. He had nothing to do with this world except the naked power of His divine manhood. While still a young man, the

tide of public opinion turned against Him. His friends ran away. One of them denied Him. He was turned over to His enemies. He went through the mockery of a trial. He was nailed to a cross between two thieves. His executioners gambled for the only piece of property He had on earth while He was dying - and that was his coat. When he was dead He was taken down and laid in a borrowed grave through the pity of a friend. Nineteen wide centuries have come and gone and today He is the centrepiece of the human race and the leader of the column of progress. I am far within the mark when I say that all the armies that ever marched, and all the navies that ever were built, and all the parliaments that ever sat, all the kings that ever reigned, put together have not affected the life of man upon this earth as powerfully as has that One Solitary Life.

But even this fails to bring out one singular truth about Jesus - He rose again, from the dead. We believe Jesus' words. We are born again through the Holy Spirit, to eternal life. And in our turn we can speak truth to power.

This world is full of powers; powers of materialism, sex, celebrity, gambling, alcohol, drugs and many other things that hold us down. Let's speak this truth to these powers. Let this truth change your world this Easter.

You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

Gordon



Making Jesus Known

Making Jesus known is still priority one. Multitudes of people have no knowledge of Jesus and no hope for the future. So many, in the absence of the gospel, opt for secular philosophies and false religions, and in the UK a very high number of people continue to reject church.

Sometimes we need to face just a few simple facts. People, created by God to live forever with Him and for Him and to find fulfilment in Him, have instead turned to their own ways. Having rejected God and rebelled against Him, history testifies to the disastrous consequences of this rejection and so does life all around us. People are lost; many sense it and some even know it. Aggression, violence and death are in the ascendance.

Nevertheless, the truth is still with us. God loves His world and His people and has made a way of salvation. Jesus Christ, God the Son, came into the world and paid the full price of our selfish rejection and rebellious sin; He overcame its effects and its consequences. Corruption and death were defeated by Him through His

death and resurrection. He's our Saviour, and turning from ourselves to Him, believing in Him and identifying with Him will lead us back to God. Jesus is the one way and the sure way to life, love and hope. This is the message, the gospel of truth, and its power to redeem and reconcile us to God is the most potent force in the universe.

Given these two facts - our hopeless condition and God's gospel of love and power - there's only one possible response; to live and speak that people we meet will come to know the message.

This isn't easy for most of us; we feel convicted by it and want to defend ourselves. Nevertheless it's true. If we're prepared to quietly face such a conclusion I think the following may assist...

Allowing the Holy Spirit to strengthen us as we face the situation and the need.

Being baptised in the Holy Spirit and filled with His power so that we're not struggling to be witnesses in our own



strength.

Making ourselves available to the Holy Spirit on a daily basis so that we'll recognise 'divine appointments' and have courage and wisdom in taking them.

Being willing to hear God's call personally to leave everything and serve Him wherever He sends us.

Getting our minds filled and thrilled with the message and our hearts moved with compassion.

Placing a greater emphasis on the desperate need of those not yet saved and a corresponding decrease in the pursuit of personal blessing and fulfilment.

Getting to know God inwardly and really (so much of our Christianity is in external things) so that, in His time and way, we may be moved by His love.

Keith Taylor

*"Then Jesus said to His disciples "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into His harvest field".
(Matthew 9:37)*



*"Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" And I said "Here am I, send me"."
(Isaiah 6:8)*

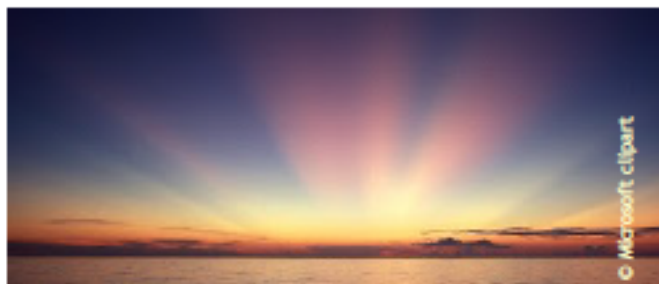
*"You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be my witnesses..."
(Acts 1:8)*



BOOK REVIEW

Liturgy of the Ordinary

by Tish Harrison Warren



Mel Cameron lent me this book after she bought it in the summer, and it has been a huge blessing to me. I would recommend it to anyone, especially (but not exclusively!) over-tired parents!

I read this in very short chunks, five minutes or so a night, so it doesn't require a prolonged time of concentration or energy. But the author, an American clergywoman, gently and articulately sets out how we can find God in our every day, however busy or distracted we are.

She names her chapters after every day events - waking, making the bed, brushing teeth, losing keys etc and writes humbly about her own attempts to find God in the mundane and the frustration which can often be our experience.

My favourite chapter is the last one: Sabbath, rest and the work of God. She talks about whether many of us have forgotten or given up on the idea of the Sabbath, and what we might be forfeiting in terms of our minds and bodies by doing so. She says in Jewish culture, the day begins with sundown - so the first act of the day is rest! I'd often wondered why in Genesis it says 'and there was evening and there was morning, the first day' but this is what it reflects - the Jewish approach.

She writes:

"This understanding of time is powerfully reorienting, even jarring, to those of us who measure our days by our own efforts and accomplishments. The Jewish day begins in seemingly accomplishing nothing at all. We begin by resting, drooling on our pillow, dropping off into helplessness.

Eugene Peterson says 'The Hebrew evening/morning sequence conditions us to the rhythms of grace. We go to sleep and God begins his work'. Though the day begins in darkness, God is still at work, growing crops, healing wounds, giving rest, protecting, guarding, mending, redeeming. We drop out of consciousness but the Holy Spirit remains at work.

In his brief theology of sleep, Scottish pastor John Baillie writes that 'in Christ, we wake up better men than we went to sleep'. If it is hard for us to believe that God is at work in us and in the world even while we sleep, it reveals who we truly think is the mover and maker of our lives and spiritual health".

I could go on, but it'd be better for you to find a copy for yourselves and read it!

Bless you all.
Anna Faro



The 5x Love Challenge

I came across an interesting post whilst scrolling through Facebook last month. It was on a health and fitness page and this is what it said:

THE 5X LOVE CHALLENGE For VALENTINE'S WEEK!

Quick! Can you name 5 things about yourself that you love?

Did you just suddenly become very uncomfortable? If so, you're not alone. We're going to turn that around this week. This week, we're going to focus on a little self-love and boosting our self-esteem.

Your goal: write 5 things you love about yourself every day. Here's the catch- they need to all be DIFFERENT! :-) I know you can do this.

Why are we doing this challenge? When I'm working with clients, I hear a lot of people constantly beating themselves up and not giving themselves enough credit! You are all AMAZING... and I want you to truly believe that (because it's true!).

Take a little bit of time and think about the things you appreciate and love about yourself. It can be pretty much anything.

This post was not from a Christian website, but it so easily could be, maybe should be. Surely this would be a great exercise for all of us in our Christian life. How often do we dwell on our unloveable characteristics? Our failings? How much we have let down God today or fallen short of what we really wanted to achieve for God this week?

Paul felt this too - "I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do." (Rom 7:15)

But this reminded me that if we have accepted Jesus as our saviour, that this is NOT what God sees. We need to remember that we are beautifully and wonderfully made (Psalm 139:14) and to remember this every day. We need to dwell on the wonderful things God has changed in us, in our characters. God doesn't need us to keep going back to that old failing which we can't forget about even though we have repented of it. We need to re-grasp what he has done for us, understand that in him we are new, amazing creations (2 Cor 5:17).

Valentine's Day with it's sugary declarations of love is now long gone, but why not try this challenge this week, but rephrasing it like this - what five things does God love about me today? If you open your heart to God, it really isn't as difficult as it sounds. Jesus died for you, so there really must something about you that he loves. If he can find it, then so can you.

Maybe this Easter we can have a clearer idea of what his love means to us personally, in an everyday, doing the chores, kind of way. God loves you so much, and you can love what he's made of you too.

Carol Bowerman





On Overcoming and Chronic Illness by Tanya Marlow

When you have a chronic illness, at least in the beginning, people urge you not to 'give in' to your illness. They do it automatically, for it is the thing our culture says to those who are stricken in some way.

'Don't let it get the better of you!' they urge. 'Don't be defeated!' - as if we have got bored of battling, and slacked off with a Mars Bar, leaning on our shield, forgetting we ought to be sword-wielding.

But I remember being a child and standing in the sea in France. I was in the shallows, paddling and laughing. Suddenly, a huge wave came out of nowhere. For what seemed like ages, I was thrown into limbo by the wave, submerged in an underwater prison.

For as long as I was under the water, I felt lifeless, powerless, moving only where the wave wanted me. Then the wave spat me onto land, and I coughed and spluttered while my body recovered from being slapped very hard by a ton of water.

That's what it feels like to be struck by tragedy - whether by illness, grief, poverty or loss. This is what it feels like to be in a limbo season of life.

It's not a battle: it's losing your foothold and swirling beneath the waves. You cannot overcome when the

hard times come; you are overcome.

This is our reality. But it is not the only story. We see Jesus: who overcame death, literally. He defeated evil.

This is why John's gospel talks about overcoming not in terms of something we do, but what Jesus does for us. It doesn't mean we don't lose our foothold or get swept into tragedy. It just means that when we do, we can grab onto the hand of someone who isn't swayed by the waves and can help us through.

Crucially, if we tell Christians they should overcome, we fail them. It is not our job to overcome. Christ has done it, and Christ will do it for us.

All we can do in suffering is reach out a desperate hand. Fortunately, that is all we need to do.

'I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.'
John 16:33, NIVUK

Submitted by Anna Faro

<http://tanyamarlow.com/on-overcoming-chronic-illness/>

Published online 27th October 2017

Tanya Marlow is an author, speaker, broadcaster on faith and spirituality, and campaigner for those suffering chronic illness.

Churches Together in Witham
invites you to the 31st

EASTER MARCH OF WITNESS

Saturday 31st March 2018

Starting from the bottom of The Grove
shopping precinct at 11a.m.

*

Bring your family and friends on our shorter,
safer route through the two shopping
precincts.

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.

*

For more information phone David Brett on 01376 617308

New at *The Well*

The Well now do fabulous skinny options!

You name it, we do it.....all drinks are available to be made in skimmed milk. Great for your waistline and taste delicious. My personal favourite is skinny hot chocolate with hazelnut syrup - yum.

Skinny Breakfast - so filling and very healthy! To complement our popular All Day Breakfast we now have skinny breakfasts. You get bacon, egg, plum tomatoes, wholemeal toast, choice of fruit and a glass of fruit Juice. Made with *frylight* rather than oil.

We also have new generous children's lunchboxes for only £3.99. You get:

- A colourful lunchbox
- A choice of sandwich, toastie or teacake
- Choice of fruit
- Drink
- Borders Biscuit
- Crisps
- Swip swop crayon
- Mask to decorate
- Activity sheets

Organic Homemade Soups

Our lovingly made homemade soups are going down a treat. Made with top organic ingredients, you can really taste the difference from shop bought.

Amanda Harrison

Homemade Apple
& Parsnip Soup.
Yum!



Volunteers needed for Tuesdays and every other Monday! Please speak to Amanda Harrison or pop into The Well if you're interested!

Mother's Day Vouchers

Mother's Day is around the corner. So we have created the perfect present....Cream Tea Vouchers presented in a beautiful card. The Well do fantastic high quality cream teas in a relaxed and friendly environment. Come and see us for more details.

Easter Holidays

Easter Holidays are almost here. So, why not bring your kids along to The Well Coffee Shop?

We have a fantastic children's menu and a great selection of drinks.....they will be in heaven!

Easter Holiday Special Offer: 2 for 1 on children's meals.

Activities include:
Balloons - Mask making - Drawing and colouring - Stickers - Quizzes



Food Bank Sundays at Bethel First Sunday of the Month

Please bring a food item to leave in the box near the welcome desk at Maltings! If you forget or would prefer to donate cash, we have brown envelopes on the Maltings' welcome desk which can be placed in the offering bag when it comes round during the meeting.

For your guidance, items preferred for food bank donations at present include:

Cereal bars
Tinned cold meats
Tinned spaghetti
Tinned tomatoes
Packet mashed potato (no tins please)
Tinned sponge puddings
Packet custard (no tins please)
Sugar 500g
Tea bags (40s only please)
Easter eggs

There's an abundance of baked beans, pasta, chocolate spread, peanut butter and toiletries at present so no more are required at this time.

Thank you to everyone for your donations.

newday
Fundraising
Events 2018



Every year the Fever youth group go to the *newday* Week in Norfolk which they love and which is a tremendous blessing to them. They pay for most of their costs but we raise funds as a church to pay for the things that remain to be paid on top.

The first fundraising event will be a Quiz Night at the Bethel Hall, Saturday 24th March. Doors will open at 6.30 p.m. with the quiz starting at 7 p.m. Tickets are £2.50 per person, with teams of approximately 6 people. You can bring along your own snacks and drinks, but we will also be selling tea, coffee and cakes to raise extra cash. To book in a team please leave a note at The Well, or contact Georgia by email at georgiacameron17@gmail.com.

Then, on Saturday 28th April (roll of drums) it's this year's 'Bethel's Got Talent', 5 p.m. at the Bethel Hall. More details on this to come!

And finally for now, we are selling cakes Sunday mornings in the cafeteria at Maltings after the morning meetings. They go down a treat with your tea or coffee and all donations will be appreciated. Suzy Taylor will be organising a cake making rota, so if you're a cake maker please stick to the rota to avoid wasted cakes. If you haven't spoken to Suzy but would like to provide some cakes then please have a word with her to be added to the list.

Breaking of Bread
First Sunday of the month

BCF Leadership team:
Gordon Crick (leading)
David Cameron
Gary Fisher
Chris Taylor

Donations for Witham
Foodbank on the first Sunday
of each month please!
Food or cash accepted.

#foodbanksunday

Easter Services at BCF

Maundy Thursday, 29 March
7.30 pm Evening of reflection &
worship at The Bethel Hall, Church
Street.

Saturday 31 March
11am Easter March of Witness
through Witham Town Centre

Sunday 1 April
10.30am Easter Sunday Family
Celebration, Maltings Academy

Bethel Christian Fellowship meets:

* at 9.30am on the second Sunday of the month
for a café service and

* at 10.30am on all other Sundays
at

Maltings Academy, Spinks Lane, Witham.

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