

NEWSLETTER

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NATIONAL LEADERS' DAY CHARTS WAY FORWARD

The national Leaders' Day held at the Hinckley church on the 2nd March was a resounding success. 55 leaders turned up, representing 16 of our congregations. Tim Aho coordinated the day from the front as we considered some of the history of our movement, visited some of the more recent developments, and looked forward to future expansion..



The day began with worship led by Kevin Miller from the Global-scope team ,which is currently ministering to students on the University of Birmingham campus. Several of the churches and emerging church plants shared brief three minute reports of what God is doing with them.

Fran Desjardins of the Light-

house Fellowship in Oadby says, "It was so encouraging to be with so many other leaders."



Before lunch, we broke into groups to discuss ways in which the Fellowship operates as a network. The information reported back from the groups was collated on the overhead screen, commented on, and will be edited into a document to be circulated to all those who were present. Copies of this report can be obtained by any church in the Fellowship that requests it.

The day provided plenty of opportunities to talk with old friends, meet new ones, and swap ideas. Lunch time saw many new relationships and potential partnerships between churches being formed.

After lunch, representatives spent time in prayer for one another and for the network to which we belong.

The findings of the small groups will not only be presented as a report, it will also form the basis of some of the future planning on the part of the National Leadership team as they continue to meet to evaluate progress in our network of churches and as we look for ways to move forward together.

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EDITORIAL

In this issue we concentrate on the Leaders' Day held at the Hinckley Church at the beginning of March—an occasion that sounded a positive note for all who were there.

It is good to learn of all the activities aimed at extending God's kingdom that many of our churches are engaging in. Good, too, to see that it is not only the bigger churches that are actively engaging with their communities. Activity is a matter of degree of commitment, not merely a function of size and I was impressed to hear of what many of our smaller churches are currently achieving.

It was also impressive to hear stories of larger churches partnering with smaller neighbours to pool expertise and, sometimes, personnel. This is the way forward for us to become a more vital network of churches. Because of our current size, we do not have many financial resources but we do have a vitality and a willingness to share our experiences and to encourage one another with stories of the journey that we are on.

If your church is struggling it might help to more purposefully plug into the energy of the whole group as you seek to move forward. Simply holding on, is not an option for growth.



Best wishes,

Richard

honouring our earthly mums—much as that is to be recommended. Rather, it emerged, 'Mothering Sunday,' or 'Refreshment Sunday,' goes back to the custom of relaxing the fasting period of Lent for one day in favour of a more indulgent diet. Along with this went the practice of smaller parish churches returning to the larger or 'mother' churches which historically gave them birth. One ceremony which was commonly adopted was for the united congregations to join hands as they circled around the outside of the mother church building - often the cathedral or a minster church - in order to pray for it.

There is something profoundly missional about this practice. It signals the fact that, historically, there was a recognition that churches were meant to give birth to other churches. In return the 'daughter' churches owed a debt of care and support to the congregation that gave them birth as much as the other way round. What if our established churches were able to go back to historical roots and adopt the same practice? Not that of joining hands to circle an existing building, but that of existing churches working at giving birth to daughter churches. Replication is an important part of our function both as human beings and as congregations.

In the 16th century 'Mothering Sunday' was also a day when girls who had left their villages to work as domestic servants were allowed the day off by their employers to return home to observe this custom of returning to roots. Often they were given a cake to take home as a gift for their natural mothers. This is what gradually shifted the emphasis from a missional practice to a merely naturalistic recognition of motherhood.

Perhaps there is also something to be learned from allowing this cultural shift!

SEASONAL THOUGHT

It seems along time ago now, but in in the days leading up to Easter several members of our congregation decided to follow the custom of observing Lent.. As with most of the churches in our Fellowship network, we do not normally adopt liturgical practices, but we decided to explore some of the practices of other traditions and it proved to be a thought provoking exercise.

One thing that came to light was the discovery that 'Mothering Sunday' originally had nothing to do with



06/02/2007

PRAYER FOCUS -

TUNBRIDGE WELLS IS THIS MONTH'S FEATURED CHURCH

The last year at the Church of Christ in Tunbridge Wells has been one of transition in many ways. In January of 2007, Cliff Allen, our minister of 18 years, announced he was being called by God to take a more active role in co-ordinating and facilitating mission activities on a townwide basis. While this did not happen immediately, it set the wheels of transition in motion.



In February 2007, a team from the US spearheaded a lot of much-needed redecoration in the church building. We now have a hot water feed direct to our baptistry, as well as to our kitchen. Carpet tiles that had lasted over 20 years were replaced with new ones, missing ceiling tiles were replaced and much of the building was painted and decorated. Easter 2007 saw a few baptisms in the Church, as a result of an Alpha Course we ran in co-operation with 5 other churches.



In August 2007, we welcomed Rodney and Beryl Cowell, recently retired from ministry in New Zealand. Rodney and Beryl ministered with us for 3 months and played an invaluable role in helping the church along in the transition of life together without Cliff being in an

active leadership role, as well as helping Cliff to make that same transition. During that time, Rodney, along with Dan Yarnell, helped to set in motion a plan of action to enable the church to move on in ministry

Our Leadership Team of Ann Foster, Jean Barling and Suzanne Owen have given excellent leadership over these past several months continuing to lead and guide the church through this time of change. Church members have responded positively to the challenge of taking on ministry roles within the church.

So where are we today? We continue to be actively engaged and involved in our local community through a variety of children's and youth clubs. We join in a quarterly children's celebration with several other churches in our area, combining our Sunday Schools. We work in partnership with 5-6 different churches to offer a summer Holiday Club.



Several of our young people will be involved in a NOISE project, again, working in partnership with other churches to make a real difference in a particular part of Tunbridge Wells. We are blessed with committed and dedicated children's and youth workers in the congregation.

It is likely that we will begin to actively seek a minister, at least on a part time basis, to take on much of the pastoral / teaching roles within the church. We are praying for God's timing and provision in this matter. Cliff continues to be involved in much of the outreach and discipleship aspects of the congregation, but is no longer involved in the day to day leadership. We are engaging with HOPE 08 in a variety of ways

as a church, mainly in joining with others to make a bigger impact. We will be involved in an Easter witness in our shopping precinct giving out balloons and Fairtrade cereal bars.



We will once again be involved with an Alpha Course in co-operation with 6 other churches. We regularly feed 80-90 people each week and are beginning to see real momentum develop from these courses. Our group on the course just finished in December. It was quite international with people from Venezuela, Columbia, Spain, Indonesia, Czech Republic, India, Pakistan and Zimbabwe. Our next Alpha course begins in September. We believe God has given us HOPE and a future and we are trusting Him to lead us on as we serve Him and make Him known where we live, work and worship.

CHURCH PLANTING GIVING

Members of the Church Planting task group have covenanted together to move the process forward in every way that they can. As part of this commitment each member of the group has undertaken to give monthly into the Church Planting fund.

We are inviting you to join us in this endeavour by sending a 'one off' or monthly cheque to the fund or by making out a standing order however small or large. We cannot achieve our objectives without finances so please consider giving to this project. **Cheques should be made out to: 'The Fellowship of Churches of Christ in the UK' and should be sent to the treasurer.**

A walking miracle!

Jubilation for Jan as she takes first unaided steps for nearly 24 years

By Ian O'Pray

A WOMAN who has had to use a wheelchair for nearly 24 years has spoken of the miracle of being able to walk for the first time without pain.

Jan Turner (58), of Langdale in Flockney, was diagnosed with spondylosis - degeneration of the spine - almost 24 years ago and has had to use a wheelchair ever since.

The pain in her lower back, hips and right leg made it excruciatingly painful to walk even a few metres.

But after a Boxing Day 'miracle', Mrs Turner is now able to walk around town, jump up and down, and even touch her toes with no pain at all.

Mum-of-two Mrs Turner, who is blind, was staying at Harborough friend Anne Pridmore's house at the time. 'I went to bed and all of a sudden I had a dreadful hot flush, then a warm sensation down my back, like pins and needles, then no pain.'

'I normally struggle to get out of bed but this time I positively leapt out of bed and landed on my feet. I found I could walk, then I jumped about and even touched my toes. Since then I haven't used my wheelchair at all.'

A committed Christian who worships at the Central Avenue



● Jumping for joy...as Jan Turner is able to walk again. (Picture: Andrew Carpenter/0012302-24)

It was compounded by an existing congenital nerve condition at the base of Mrs Turner's spine. She said this condition and her blindness were caused as a result of her

A membership and services manager for the UK Disabled People's Council, she used to work for the Harborough Council for Voluntary Services.

Not many people believe in miracles any more. In fact, most people are sceptical and always try to find a rational answer to a miraculous event. Some will go so far as to disbelieve stories people tell them, even if they can actually see for themselves. They will say it's a hoax or a lie.

Here's one that can't be avoided, Jan is an Elder of the Wigston Church, a Worship and Music Leader and an important member of the church's Leadership team. She is also blind, and has been virtually wheelchair bound for over 20 years suffering from incessant and terrible back pain, only able to walk a few feet with the aid of sticks.

That was until Boxing Day 2007 when she awoke in the middle of the night experiencing an overwhelming sensation in her back. Soon she realised the pain she normally suffers had gone! She was able to get up, touch her toes and even jump up and down (something she had not done in years!) The next day she walked over a mile unaided and in no pain. Since then she has been going from strength to strength.

Jan wants to share her miracle with others to encourage people and tell them how wonderful God is. She has since appeared on local radio and in the local newspaper. Whatever you may think, those of us who know her, can testify to the power of her miracle. She doesn't need her wheelchair anymore! We believe in God's miracles — DO YOU?

The Jennings File - Things have been very busy with, ministry, MA administration issues and teaching, and PR stuff (which I'm rather slow on).

On ministry issues things are very good. I'm now the elder responsible for teaching and preaching in my local church and I've set up a rota that means that we have a balanced pattern of preaching and teaching using the best of our regular preachers.

The Lord has given me a particular grace to prophesy over people as I'm baptising them. Thus far I've baptised over 30 people in this context - mostly teenagers as one of the youth leaders in my Church is an amazing evangelist and she - keeps 'em coming! (I've tried to tell her that any believer can baptise but this is problematic because our congregation has loose connections with the Methodist Church and is limited by their understanding of ordination.)

I had one sister this last weekend to whom God wanted to show his majesty and power. I had a chance to pray for her before the baptism and the Lord indicated that she had a lot of fear over committing herself to Him. I was able to address some of this in the scriptures we looked at before baptism - stressing her right to become a child of God and the fact that baptism was a kind of death that cuts the ties with the past.



The flag of Ghana

It turns out that she was part of a royal family which usually means ties to particular deities here and she was concerned about an ancestral curse. I was able to encourage her by stressing that the curse and the person to whom it applied was nailed to the cross with Jesus and that a new person would rise from the waters of baptism who would be a co-heir with Christ, and so it was!

*Best wishes
Brian*

FAMILY FUN AT SELSTON

As part of Hope08 the Selston church is planning a family Fun Day in conjunction with Holly Hill Primary School in the village. Elder Roger Jones says, "This is a great opportunity to serve the community as half of the profits will go to school funds while the other half will be donated to our Malawi development project."

A number of fascinating events will take place on the day including making your own pot on a potter's wheel, and children's events, including a Christian clown and the statutory bouncy castle! There will also be a 'Quiet tent' for meditation where information on the local churches will be on display

The East Midlands group of churches will be rounding the event off with a joint act of worship. Any churches in the Fellowship network are welcome to join us on the day (July 12th).

The Church Planting Task Group is still pursuing an ambition to reach our to Polish immigrants and, maybe, even to plant churches amongst them with the help of Polish church planters.

To his end we have been in conversation with the Polish Evangelical Alliance in Warsaw which is led by two Church of Christ pastors, Maui Duliwat and Andrew Bajenski. Andrew heads up the Warsaw Christian Fellowship, the largest evangelical congregation in Poland which has itself planted out 10 other churches in the Warsaw area.



The Barbican gate in Warsaw that once protected the city against invaders

We realise that this project is too big for us to undertake on our own so we are also in conversation with a number of churches from other denominations and also with the European Christian Mission, based in Northampton. ECM's director Richard Tiplady is keen to help us move the project forward and, together with the Polish EA we are calling for a day consultation later in the year bringing together churches, agencies, and Polish Christians in this country, to see what can be done to minister to Poles who have arrived on our shores.

Grayson Jones, pastor of the AOG's International Christian Church in Doncaster writes: "Things are going well here with growing links with Polish community. We have our third team coming in the end of March and then another at the end of April. We have English classes and other things on a regular basis and we are hoping to baptise two Poles who have committed their lives to Jesus - God is good!"

We want to see his church's example being followed by evangelical churches throughout the nation as we

The Apostle Paul helped mentor Timothy as a young leader in the early church. Training up new leaders is the indispensable responsibility of each generation so that the good news of Jesus is passed on. Training up Christian leaders can be sharing the faith in your own family and in your church family, or even through the work of others.

Brian Jennings is one person from the UK Fellowship of Churches of Christ who is helping train leaders in Ghana, West Africa. [See report on previous page]. Brian serves at Ghana Christian University as a lecturer. He helps train Ghanaian church leaders, serves as liaison for accreditation with the University of Wales, and helps supervise student research projects.

Various individuals and churches in the Fellowship are already partners with Brian. They pray for him and support him financially. At the present moment, Brian is in particular need of an additional £300 per month to enable him to continue serving in Ghana. Will you consider how you might partner with Brian?

If you are able and would like to support Brian as he makes disciples in Ghana, please send your cheque made out to IFMC* and post to Tim Herbert, 49 Yarningdale Rd, Birmingham B21 6LT. You can also email him if you have any questions on herbsgardens@blueyonder.co.uk.

If you would like to give online, an electronic transfer can be made to the FCC Missionary Account #0000 7906, sort code 40-52-40. As always, if you are a tax-payer, do let Tim know. We can then claim the tax back from the government and give even more support to Brian as he makes disciples at Ghana Christian University.

* The IFMC (International Fellowship Missionary Committee) is the Fellowship task group that serves as a UK support team for Brian.

Leading in Difficult Times

Leadership has always been crucial to God's purposes in seeking to bring his life and love to a needy world. His primary agent in the world is his people, the church, as we seek to demonstrate through our life together what the Kingdom of God is like. As we move between seismic changes in our culture and world, effective leadership is primary to assist us to chart the often turbulent waters of change and yet continue to serve and transform the world by the power of the Spirit.

Training, coaching, mentoring, spiritual support, these are some of the ways that leadership is working towards this, and our own network is actively involved in this process both in the local congregation and in the shaping of education and national expressions.

In a small single verse in 1 Chronicles chapter 12, the author mentions the men of Issachar (verse 32). He notes two characteristics that I believe summarise what expressing leadership is all about: they knew what season they were in and they knew what to do. That, in my view, is our challenge; to discern prophetically what the Holy Spirit is doing in our world, to understand and comprehend the challenges and opportunities of a changing world, and then to have the wisdom and the courage to move ahead into the next steps.

My daily prayer is for all of our leaders to have the humility to seek the Lord's guidance, to have the knowledge to discern the changes in culture, and to have the courage to take the plunge – and lead!

Dan Yarnell



LEADER'S DAY TESTIMONIES

A LONG AND WINDING ROAD

Martin Robinson reflects on the March Leader's Day



The recent Leaders Day held at Trinity Lane, Church of Christ, Hinckley, offered an

important moment to review the past so that we might more clearly see the future. As we think back over the past 25 years, three things are clear. First, it was very important that we invested in church planting because today some of our largest, most lively churches are ones that have been planted since the formation of the Fellowship. These churches currently provide much of our national leadership and vision.

Second, it is obvious that we have not planted enough new churches to generate the sense of movement that we all long for and, third, transitioning our existing churches towards growth has been harder than most of us imagined when we began on this particular journey.

As the day unfolded I was thrilled to hear of the vast amount of activity currently taking place in so many of our churches.

As we look at the future, we are faced with three huge challenges. First, can we plant more churches than we have planted in the last 25 years by 2010? Second, can we plant the kind of churches that will

reproduce again quickly? Third, can we resource our existing churches so that we can all feel part of a dynamic growing movement?

The steps we will be taking over the next year are all intended to address these three challenges. In particular, the covenant document that we are all invited to consider should help to give us all a sense of participation in a common task.

[Details of the covenant document which church representatives took away with them will soon be circulated to all Fellowship churches to consider—look out for your copy in the near future. This document invites us to consider making specific commitments to our future development as a network of churches.]

Endorsements:

"I enjoyed [the day] immensely. I would like them more often but I realise it's a lot of work for some people. Certainly the Hinckley meeting was most useful to get the views of the smaller churches and to hear about the more successful churches was encouraging."

Frank Salt, Saltney Church of Christ

"The recent Leader's Day at the Hinckley church was a great day of encouragement and blessing. Driving from Tunbridge Wells means an early start and the hassle of traffic around the M25 and M1, but it was worth it to be able to share in the day. Stories shared from other

about what was happening in their setting were truly inspiring. What struck me most was the creativity and diversity within our small network of churches, and the manner in which we are now able to value, appreciate and celebrate those characteristics.

The day was a re-affirmation of our desire to be part of the Fellowship, for our desire to network together, to be inter-dependent. We may not have any mega-churches in our Fellowship, but there is a mega-passion and commitment as churches to engage with our local community in practical, meaningful and relevant ways.

The day only lasted 4 hours, and it took Ann, one of our elders, and I 6 hours round trip to drive, but it was worth it. We came away uplifted, inspired, and glad to be part of a group of churches who are journeying together to become all God wants us to be."

Cliff Allen—Tunbridge Wells



FOR YOUR DIARY

- **28th June - Delegates' Conference, Lighthouse Fellowship, Oadby, Leicester.**
- **12th July Family Fun Day—Selston**



THE FELLOWSHIP OF CHURCHES OF CHRIST

Articles To:
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