

Calvary Newsletter

Autumn 2013

Times and Timing

'My times are in your hands' (Psalm 31:15)

Much of Psalm 31 is uncomfortable reading. The writer has experienced (and continues to experience) great personal hurt and distress. He tells of: danger, testing, soul anguish, bodily weakness, desertion of friends, lies, uncertain future, rejection... What a list!

So it truly is a cry of faith when he says 'My times are in your hands'; not just the good, pleasant, comfortable times, but the dark, difficult and discouraging ones as well. And he clearly says this not as a fatalist but as someone who believes that God's personal touch ('your hands') is on the whole of his life in both its bigness and its intimate details. What God? The faithful, promise-keeping, shepherding God; the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and (though he couldn't see this yet), the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and, therefore, by grace and through faith, the God of every believer in Jesus Christ. Every Christian can read himself/herself into these lines and say, hopefully and notwithstanding life circumstances (and they surely can't be much more challenging than those of the psalm) 'My times are in your hands'.

Not only so, but we can say with Paul '*we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him.*' (Romans 8:28). What a bold and astonishing statement; one that flies in the face of natural reckoning but proven by countless Christians in every age. God finds a way of



using all that we experience for our good, not just rescuing us from the dark and difficult parts of life but actually using them in some currently improbable and mysterious way to achieve 'good'. I think we should add to this the thought that nothing that happens to us is random. The sequence of our lives and the daily events are no mistake. The God in whose hands our times are is also the God of perfect timing. '*At just the right time*' (Romans 5:6) and '*When the time had fully come*' (Galatians 4:4) apply to the coming of Jesus Christ but also find an echo with us when we read '*All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be*' (Psalm 139:16).

One day all this good work of God in his people will be brought to its rich and joy-filled conclusion, as well expressed by John Newton:

Since all that I meet shall work for my good,
the bitter is sweet, the medicine is food;
the pain felt at present will cease before long;
and then, O how pleasant the conqueror's song

Christian, if you are going through a very hard time or sharing the pain of someone who is in a dark place, then there is comfort and hope in these truths. What a wonderful God; what a privilege to be in his care and keeping!

In Christ,

Chris Fry (Elder)

The class of 2013 at Baldaeus College.



Photos From Philip Wells' Trip to Sri Lanka

Full report inside.

Below: Rural congregations in Batticaloa. That's Philip at the back with the halo.



A baptism in the sea at Mannar



Sri Lanka Visit March 2013

It was a great privilege to be invited again to go to Sri Lanka this year. The invitations came from Baldaeus Theological College in Trincomalee, and also from the Mannar Church, both of which we support financially. I was also warmly welcomed by Pastor Muralee to accompany him on his trip to visit and encourage his network of churches in the area of the east coast, further south than Trincomalee. On this occasion the time was rather pressurised by the need to return to help with preparations for our daughter Ellie's wedding in April. This made arranging mutually agreeable dates a bit tricky. I flew out overnight on 19th February arriving in Colombo at 08.30 after a period of 14 hours in transit. They picked me up in a rented van and encouraged me to rest till three in the afternoon at which point we continued the eight hour road journey to Mannar. Some further rest time was factored in, along with a Mannar elders' meeting on Thursday and a visit to the Mannar mainland people (plus chickens) on Friday.

First up on Saturday was a sea-baptism for four of the young people in the congregation including Thabitha, the daughter of our dear friend the late Pastor Jothi Hoole. This was followed by whole church study sessions in John 17. By God's grace there was a positive response to these sessions, and they were also attended by people from the Mainland congregation and the Keeri congregation. On Sunday the combined congregations met together again and concluded with a shared meal (curry!).

Over to Trincomalee

On Sunday afternoon Pastor Muralee, accompanied by Principal Huthin Manohar, came to transport me from the east coast to the west coast, a four hour journey. We set out in bright sunshine but travelled beyond sundown and had the misfortune to drive into a mound of earth set ready for road repairs. We were unharmed, and the vehicle did not suffer immobilisation, although the steering made a very unsettling noise. Please be aware that Satan can hinder travel as he did in the days of the apostle Paul. Prayer is vital.

The programme of teaching the book of Revelation began on Monday mid-morning and continued with four sessions per day through to Friday lunchtime. It was quite concentrated work—and I am pleased to say that there were positive responses to the teaching, and the style of teaching. "I can actually understand what is being said!" was the sort of response. Light relief was provided by a swimming outing (sea bathing)—a little boisterous for me. We also visited a nearby hotel which I had previously visited with the dear founder of the college Principal Dr Charles Hoole. The place had gone up-market and there was a glittering buffet and a

swimming pool. Flat calm swimming under the stars on this occasion.

Having finished the teaching sessions I was in the hands of Pastor Muralee who took me to a bible study at his church on Friday. On Saturday we departed to visit an impoverished fellowship in rural Batticaloa, and then we moved on to a combined group meeting in a rural area. Sunday was spent with the Batticaloa church. I preached again on John 17:1-5. One attender said he was greatly struck by the truth of God's sovereign choice to bless. In the afternoon we met with a newly planted urban fellowship in Chankalady.

Through floods ...

The following day it rained and I was confined to my quarters. Then we made the journey up country to visit the friends in Kotagala. During this journey there was heavy rain. We had to negotiate a wide and deep flood: I really expected to have to wade through, but God protected us and we completed the journey as planned. I was taken to preach the gospel to an assembly of Hindu people. "They'll understand about Christ being a sacrificial Lamb" I was told, "because in their devotions they sacrifice lambs themselves." Lastly was the return trip to Colombo. It was a joy to meet Ragavan and Niusia and their daughter Mimi. We had lunch together before being delivered to a Western style hotel for an air-conditioned night before setting off for the airport at 5.30 in the morning.

Conclusions

It was a great privilege to meet these saints of God, especially those with whom bonds of affection have been forged over many years. They meet as Christians and labour in Christian work in conditions which are far more tough and basic than our own. Finance is at a low level. It is difficult to find work. The menfolk might well be forced to move away to earn money to send back to their families—or not. Dangers of travel and risks to health are evident. There is also the temptation to minister simply where there is an input of foreign money, regardless of the integrity of the gospel message and the integrity of those involved. Yet despite all this the gospel continues to be preached and people continue to come and turn from idols to serve the true and living God and to wait for his Son from heaven.

We are blessed to have this precious link with believing people. We are able to send money in a regular way, and also to share in the blessings of the word of God in a personal way. Please continue to pray for the work of the Kingdom of Christ in Sri Lanka.

Philip Wells

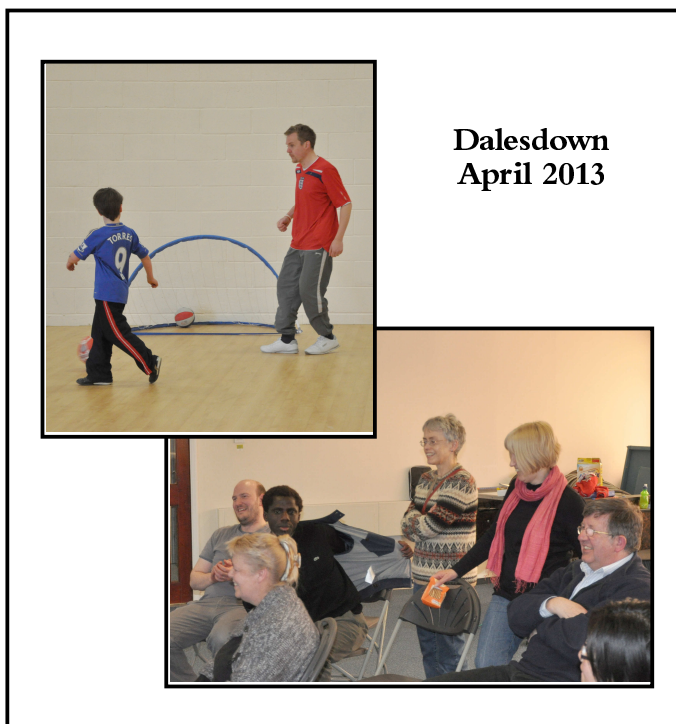
Church Weekend Away

Thirty folk congregated at the Dalesdown Christian Conference Centre on the evening of the Friday after Easter. All the generations were represented from grandchildren upwards. The centre is located at the top of a south-facing slope, looking out towards the South Downs in the beautiful environs of Ashurst, West Sussex. Dalesdown is a well equipped and comfortable centre with spacious rooms for indoor activities. Although it was dry weather, the temperatures had not really turned Spring-like by then!

A profitable and enjoyable time was had by all; several were able to come over on the Saturday and still more for the worship service held on Sunday morning. The good number of young children had sessions led by Katy and Maria while Pastor Philip gave consecutive Bible talks for the adults from the book of Revelation. These were interspersed in a varied programme involving five-a-side football, other fun activities and a brilliant sketch performed by Ben and Anya. Everyone joined in with a country walk: there were wild deer seen at the edge of a nearby wood. There was a prayer meeting each morning before breakfast, the first in a sequence of delicious meals prepared by our excellent caterers 'Heaven Scent' (Kerry, her husband and their daughter Donay) who cooked and served these for us. It was great to have fellowship with them.

Dates have been reserved to return next Spring and enjoy the blessings of a three day church family weekend together once again.

Roger Kinross



Maureen's Testimony

Maureen Burton was baptised on 19th May 2013



I was born in Brighton in Upper Lewes Road. My father was a brick-layer. I had a twin sister who died when she was only three days old. I have two surviving sisters, Marie and Jennifer. I have been blessed with a daughter, Shelagh, and a granddaughter, Annette. I grew up in the Coombe Road area in Brighton. I was taught about Jesus in school so I know lots of Bible stories.

I first came to Calvary Church when I met Mark and Rachel, who then lived upstairs in Cleremont Terrace. Mark invited me to come to a Musical Evening at the church on a Saturday, about four and a half years ago. There I met quite a few other people who came to church. I was impressed by the people at Calvary, and their faith in Jesus. I was then invited to join a 'Glad You Asked' course where people could ask questions about Christian faith, followed by a 'Christianity Explored' course led by Patricia Deacon. By this time I had started coming on Sundays and to a bible study with Maria on Wednesdays. I felt that I could ask any questions I liked and learned a lot more about the Bible from this study. Before my husband Brian died, he made a commitment to Jesus. This made me feel left out because he now had something I didn't have. So when I came to Calvary and was asked if I wanted to do some Bible study, it seemed the right thing to do. I think I have always respected the bible, but I didn't quite understand that it spoke to me personally. I questioned why my husband was taken away from me at 62 years of age. When I came to church and when Chris or Phil spoke, I would have questions in my mind about this. They always had an answer. Every time I heard the bible being taught each week, I realised none of us is good enough to come to God by ourselves. I know I'm not good enough: no-one is but because Jesus died for me, I can go to be with him. All I have to do is trust in him.

Maureen Burton

On the Record

Ministry of the Word

Preaching has relied less on outside speakers during the last few months, with the regular input from Christ Church Haywards Heath (for which we were very grateful) now ceased. Pastor Philip Wells has led us into an understanding of the spiritual battles of the Christian life from Romans 6 to 8 and also opened John's gospel, including an encouraging Easter series. More recently on Sunday evenings he has led us to consider the working of Christ in the church, and how to give an answer for the hope that is in us. Chris Fry presented a Sunday morning series entitled 'Farming Today' on the challenges of preaching the gospel in the sceptical atmosphere of modern western Europe, and also some studies in revival history, complemented by a fascinating DVD on two Wednesday evenings on the life of Charles Spurgeon. I have been conducting a Sunday evening series in 1 Corinthians, examining the forces that can tear a church apart, and how they can be resisted. We have of course also welcomed visitors, notably John Stevens, National Director of the FIEC, and a representative of the True Freedom Trust which supports Christians struggling with same-sex attraction.

Calvary International Café

This Saturday evening meeting for international students has had its ups and downs in numbers. It has covered a large variety of topics on British culture, including English puddings and cricket! Many who come are believers and it is good to have their fellowship, but it also provides an opportunity to share the gospel with students who are not Christians.

Food, glorious food

In 1 Corinthians 12, the description of the Lord's supper is much broader than just what we think of as communion. Eating together is a natural social occasion for humans, and we meet together in a range of activities centred around eating. A monthly church lunch is backed up by hospitality focused on visitors offered by church members. The men meet most months for breakfast, sometimes with an evangelistic theme. In May we welcomed Tony Jackson of the Christian Motorcyclist's Association. An Easter Monday walk was followed by a delicious tea at Lorna's in Rodmell. And on 29th June we held another Calvary Supper and Musical Evening, this time in support of the Fire Service Benevolent Fund.

Let's get away from it all

As reported in the last issue, the Arundel Youth Hostel is now closed, so instead we had a weekend away at

Dalesdown, as reported in this issue. Ben Alltimes also organised a men's camping weekend called 'Platoon', from Friday 3rd May (evening) until Monday 6th May (lunchtime), .

Births and new births

On 19th May, Maureen Burton and Aaron Reeves were baptised. Pastor Philip reminded us from Romans 6:1-14 that we share with Christ in baptism. On 14th July we held a thanksgiving for baby Seth William Muddle.

Young adults

The regular fellowship and bible study for young adults meeting at Ben Alltimes' house is proving popular and has attracted Christians from other churches as well as Calvary people. Recent studies have been in the book of James.

Far away places...

Earlier in the year, WEC missionaries to Mongolia, Oddbayer and Sara, with their baby son Daniel, stayed with us as Oddbayer improved his English at Olivet Language School. On 10th March they shared some of the challenges and opportunities presented by Mongolia.

...and a bit nearer home

On July 10th there was a combined prayer meeting for local FIEC churches at Christ Church Haywards Heath. John Stevens (FIEC Director) spoke. On Good Friday, we met for a joint service at Montpelier Place Baptist Church. We were informed of the struggles facing the work there, and we regret to report that the church has now ceased operations. On a more positive note, several Calvary people attended a cream tea in August celebrating the re-opening, with the support of an American group, of the old Providence Chapel. This is now renamed West Hill Baptist Church.

Keeping busy

Apart from the pressures of pastoring the church and visiting Sri Lanka, Philip Wells continues to be heavily involved in the London Road Local Action team and London Road regeneration projects. Meanwhile our other elder, Chris Fry, has been carrying forward plans to purchase the freehold of our building from the Railway Mission. This would seem to be in the best interests of both parties, but involves us in committing a large amount of money. We trust that the Lord will provide.

London Road outreach week

As I write this piece, community chaplain Ben Alltimes is leading a distribution of literature in London Road, from 26th to 30th August. As well as support from Calvary people, we are thankful for some support from other churches.

Steve Ellacott

The letterhead picture shows Arundel Castle and river, taken during the last Arundel Church Weekend, October 2012.

Calvary Evangelical Church

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