

New Territory

Dear friends,

Greetings to all readers, near and far. It is a privilege to be able to write to you in another Newsletter.

The last few months have seen us moving ahead in a number of ways:

- We have welcomed in five new members.
- We have called Chris Fry as another Elder.
- We are about to embark on the final steps in this round of modifications to the building which will update our toilet, kitchen, storage, creche and office facilities.
- We are planning an to stick our necks out for the gospel in an out-reach mission.
- We are also (humanly speaking) about to run out of money!

These are considerable encouragements and challenges.

It is rather like stepping on to the threshold of a new territory—like the Israelites did in the book of Joshua especially in Chapter 14:6-15. This section refers to the old man Caleb. He was one of the few who believed that God was able to get them into the promised land the very first time they approached its

borders. Yet the majority did not have such faith and were condemned to wander in the desert. So the time when he now speaks to Joshua is some 45 years later. I think this little encounter with this very big man has a lot to challenge us.

1. How he used to be

He tells us that in his younger day (i.e. when he was 40!) he was a man of bold faith. “I brought back a word as it was in my heart” (Josh 14:7). In those early days he believed that the LORD God was able to defeat all the enemies of his purposes.

This was a minority view back then. His co-workers “my brothers, who were with me, made the heart of the people to melt” (14:8). He himself did not subscribe to such a defeatist view of God’s power—even though it was true that the Anakim (or Anakites—the notoriously powerful giant-warrior enemies of Numbers 13:31-33) were there. How good for the younger generation to have fearless faith, and a high view of what God can do. “Ponder anew what the Almighty will do, if with his love he befriend thee” Caleb followed the Lord fully (NIV “I followed the Lord my God wholeheartedly” v.8). God has sent us people in their twenties and thirties—young men and women—now is the time to follow the Lord fully!

2. How God had kept him.

But of course for Caleb that was 45 years ago. A lot can change in 45 years. What had been going on in Caleb's life? He says: "and behold, the LORD has kept me alive these 45 years as he said ... since the time the LORD spoke this word to Moses" (v.10). "This word" is the promise of land-possession that Moses gave to Caleb. "The land your feet have walked on will be your inheritance and that of your children for ever, because you have followed the LORD my God wholeheartedly [i.e. fully]" (14:9). In other words, he had lived these 45 years under the sustaining power of the promise of God. What a good way to spend 45 years of life!

How we spend each week and month adds up to how we spend each year. Let us spend our time sustained by the promises of God! We may not even be conscious that this is the factor that is at work—and yet it is so. Caleb had the eyes to look back and see that he was here because of God. Let us have the eyes to see God's faithfulness to us too. "All I have needed the Lord has provided ..."

3. Where he is now.

But where is Caleb now? (We could ask that question of people we knew five years ago, 20 years ago ... but where are they now - spiritually?) Those 45 years had been years of wandering in the desert. Not years of expansive growth, not years of obvious triumph—actually years during which the judgement of God was being worked out. In many ways they were lean years. He could so

easily have become cynical: "I used to believe so many things that years of disappointment have now caused me to question." (Do not confuse this with-maturing of faith, or wisdom.) Is Caleb yesterday's hero who is now winding down for a quiet retirement, which would be very understandable. "Count me out chaps, it's over to you now" Not a bit of it! He is still as strong as ever. 14:11 "As my strength was then so is my strength now". Not weakened, but still strong! He is still up for a fight. NIV "I am just as vigorous to go out to battle now as I was" (more literally: "... so is my strength now, for war, both coming in and going out"). He has not lost the courage or the vigour or the deep spiritual motivation to see God's word prevail, his kingdom progress, Satan trodden down, great victories won for the Redeemer!

The longstanding obstacles just make the prospect of the fight more attractive! "You have heard yourself the Anakites were there and their cities were large and fortified, but, the LORD helping me I will drive them out just as he said" (14:12) The Anakites who were the big disincentive so long ago are still there. But what a trophy that would be after all these years to knock them off their smug pedestal!

We might consider that we have been through a period of "lean years". Have they left us dented and cynical? Or like Caleb, spiritually keen as ever? As our church looks back over 130 years, or 45 years, or 10 years, or the last year, what a challenge to be able to say "Spiritually we are just as strong as ever!" (That is not a

matter of just numbers of course.) The obstacles we face as a church are still much the same. We are placed in a city with a reputation for “cheekiness”, (or pleasure-seeking, or whatever the Holy One would call it). The going is as much uphill as ever.

But what a victory it would be to see some of our friends converted; a group of families from this area beginning to come to church; to see shopkeepers from London Road beginning to ask for prayer; a group of Brighton students bringing their classmates to hear the gospel, or a circle of addicted people having their lives permanently transformed by Christ. Let us have the same strong, energetic faith in the twenty-first century as Caleb had over three thousand years ago.

Yours in his service,

Philip Wells (Elder)

Sunday School

There has been a regular class with Matthew and Chloe during the year; other than breaks that took place over the Easter and Summer holiday periods. There have generally been two teachers covering the sessions.

Sue Sharwood relinquished her role as teacher at the end of July. It is a task that she undertook with care and diligence for over three years. Sue, her husband Ian and Jacob (who progressed through the

Sunday school and came to profess Jesus as his personal Saviour and bear witness through his baptism 12 months ago) have moved to a local church in Woodingdean. We miss them and trust that God continues to use their gifts in the fellowship of which they have become part.

Katy Fry has come into the teaching team this September. We welcome her and thank God for the long experience she has brought to this work.

The need for more children in the class has been a matter for prayer over some considerable time now. In November a step was taken to refresh the image of this ministry to children, following interest expressed by a family in the locality. Maria has joined the teaching team, to lessen the load and to allow two adults to be present when numbers necessitate. Roger will have a lady teacher with him when teaching the enlarged group.

The class was renamed ‘Sunday Club’. It now runs for 15 minutes longer, with a break. At the end of November the family mentioned above were in a position to take it up. First a girl aged six, (also Chloe’s age) attended; then on 3rd December, she was joined by her brother, aged ten.

Please thank the Lord with us and pray for a successful consolidation of this new thing starting amongst the children. We trust that the children will be able to take part regularly and be touched by the Word of God.

Roger Kinross

Be Thinking

Face up to the challenge of relating Christian faith and world view in the climate of thought in a university city.

It was with this goal in mind that 20-or-so gathered on two Saturday evenings in the Autumn for Calvary's first "bethinking" talks.

Many readers will be familiar with the name L'Abri. The original was founded by Francis and Edith Schaeffer in 1955 as an open home in Switzerland, but it has since spawned a number of similar entities around the world. The L'Abri centres are known for their warm welcome and particularly for their breadth of ideas and depth of thought. For several years we have maintained links with the English L'Abri, hosting talks in Brighton given by L'Abri workers. In the Spring terms of 2004 and 2006 these talks took place at Sussex University on weekday lunchtimes. We were encouraged in 2004 by the number of students attending.

However, we took the decision to rebrand and expand for the current academic year. Numbers were down in Spring 2006; probably too low to justify dragging hard-worked L'Abri workers all the way from Hampshire. In addition, weekday lunchtimes were not ideal for others in the church, who would otherwise have attended. The new title for this ministry was "borrowed" (with permission) from the excellent bethinking.org website, which makes available numerous articles and lectures relating Christianity to today's culture, including many L'Abri talks.

Our two Autumn "bethinking" talks were held in the Main Hall on Saturday evenings, after a meal together in the Back Hall. Our own Steve Ellacott gave the first, "Pick and Myth", looking at the power of the story in our society, and leading us to consider the world as God's story. The following week we welcomed Philip and Miriam Sampson who gave us a workshop session on modernity and postmodernity in Christian perspective, "From Big-Brain to Big-Mouth".

We welcomed Philip and Miriam back on Saturday 27th January for the first of our Spring 2007 "bethinking" talks. This was a very challenging study on the subject of the environment. Later in the series Philip Wells spoke on the value of the resurrection for apologetics, and Brian Douglas gave a thought-provoking talk on the ancient Greek idea of story, and its relevance for biblical Christianity today.

True Christianity is always deeply counter-cultural. Let us seek with our brains—on our knees—to understand this. Further details and MP3 recordings of our "bethinking" talks are available at www.calvary-brighton.org.uk/bethinking.

Anthony Smith

Church Secretary

It is quite a while since we had a newsletter. The Upper hall work was completed in time for Brighton & Hove City Mission to move in by their deadline date. They have seen much blessing, particularly in the expansion of the Basics Bank work since the move.

Our planning application for improved signage and lighting to our frontage failed, but that for the Mobility Impaired Access (MIA) got the 'go-ahead'. We had a bus collide with the frontage wall, demolishing part of it, and the bus company insurers agreed a settlement, including the use of the money towards the new MIA work (The company is part of the 'Go Ahead Group!'). The work has now been completed and the railing have been painted and look superb.

Other refurbishment work has continued, the completion of the ceiling to the west passageway included. The next stage is being planned at present to upgrade the kitchen and toilet facilities and the entrance, together with storage and creche space. We plan to use a legacy from the late Win Hughes towards this (pray the this would not be too much delayed or eaten up by executor costs!), but there will still be a shortfall of funds available. We do need much wisdom to know the way forward with these plans.

But, the Church is not the building! It was good to welcome Martyn Butcher into membership at the end of last year. On Sunday March 4th Brian and Jordan Douglas, Ross & Nicola Harper and Christina Summers were also received

into membership. The same day the vote on the calling of Chris Fry to the Eldership was announced as unanimous and Chris has accepted the call. We indeed pray that as a church we will 'march forth' under God's hand into a new phase of the spiritual battle in the gospel work here at Preston Circus.

But with blessing, so often comes adversity. Elsie Taylor has had health problems, but has been able to meet with us on many Sunday Mornings—putting the MIA access to good use with her wheelchair! We have not seen Colleen Moss amongst us for quite a while now but pray that it will be possible for her to join us soon.

Brenda Ellacott arrived back at Christmas from a skiing holiday with a shoulder injury. It proved not to be as serious as feared and has now been discharged by the consultant without the need for surgery, though will need physiotherapy over six months.

Chris Wingate was thought to have suffered a stroke on New Year's Eve after we came home from Church. This left her initially with a loss of right field of vision in both eyes and some loss of taste and memory. The stroke clinic referred her for an urgent MRI brain scan and on Monday 26th Feb was immediately put on a course of steroids. Following an urgent admission on Monday 5th March to Hurstwood Park Neurosciences Centre, on Thursday 8th she underwent a three-hour+ brain operation to remove a malignant tumour ('1½ golf balls' in size).

On 16th March, before coming home, we saw the consultant oncologist to learn that the next stage will be radio- and chemo-therapy five days a week for six weeks. We are in the Lord's hands and we pray that his gracious will might be done. Some of our readers have been aware of the situation, and we thank you all for your concern, encouragement and prayers.

Angeline Joseph too needs prayer as health problems are being investigated and others face important decisions concerning study, employment and housing.

Ray Wingate (Secretary)

Ohhh la la la Compadres!

Hola Amigos. Te cuento un poco de Compadres...

Well it's been around 2 years since the "Compadres" formed from the old "Khlurb". We have had some memorable occasions together; notably our walk on the seven sisters. Gaby and Harry are regulars and Alex has been. We are praying that Harry and Gaby will one day take a personal commitment to follow Christ. Pray that Alex will want to get involved and share his Christian faith and more youngsters to join!

Mark Rayfield

Sussex Gospel Partnership

“An new army of gospel workers for Sussex,, was the ambitious vision proposed by Proclamation Trust President David Jackman at the launch of the Sussex Gospel Partnership (SGP) on 3rd March 2007. Some 330 delegates from 37 churches met for a day at Bishop Hannington Memorial Church, Hove. The SGP plans to build on existing bible-based, cross-denominational activities, for example the South Coast Ministry Training Course (“Cornhill by the sea”) currently running from its base in Eastbourne. Sussex stretches from Chichester to Rye, a distance of some 80 miles. This includes a number of areas where bible-based gospel witness has little or no presence and FIEC church plant expert Eric Harmer called on the Partnership to meet the challenge of planting gospel churches such places.

The rationale for SGP partnership was presented in some exegetical detail by David Jackman: the early churches shared together in the gospel, in spirit, in resources in suffering. Steering-group Chair Andrew Cornes (All Saints Crowborough) elaborated on this theme, proposing that working together (Ephesians 4:15,16) referred not only to every church member working together, but every church working together. David Sprouse (Cuckfield Baptist Church) talked about the possibilities of pooling resources for training, and William Taylor (St Helen’s Bishopsgate) urged us to compassion for the lost in our generation. Bishop Wallace Benn gave his support to the venture while pleading for churches not to lose contact with their

own networks and groupings.

The SGP is clearly in its early stages: how much of that vision will make it into reality? It will be fascinating to see how God might use and bless this venture.

More details on

www.sussexgospelpartnership.org.uk

Philip Wells,

SGP describes itself as “A partnership of Bible-centred churches in Sussex working together to train leaders, strengthen and plant churches and advance the gospel”

Calvary International Cafe

The aim of CIC is for people of all nations to come together, encouraging one another, helping to form friendships that will perhaps last a lifetime. We have a short Bible study at most meetings. We have been encouraged with a steady flow of Koreans starting with Kim who was the first ever person. Pray that more will follow.

With the development of the new England quarter perhaps there might be an opportunity for students on our back door to find something out far more richer than any language; that language being the word of God.

Mark Ratfield

Congratulations

Congratualtions to David and Elizabeth Muddle on the birth of Eben Edward on 14th May.

Who are We?

Calvary Evangelical Church is a registered charity, no. 1089327.
To find out more about us, check out
www.calvary-brighton.org.uk