

## Character matters

In one of the pre-General Election commentaries it was suggested that what we really needed were men and women MPs of 'wisdom, integrity and character'. Indeed! The expenses row was another reminder that, historically, failures in public life have typically been issues of character rather than poor policy. There may be little to distinguish the policies of the mainstream UK parties but the presence or absence of individual and corporate 'wisdom, integrity and character' is an immense difference. Christians of all people should be deeply concerned about such issues because it matters greatly to our Heavenly Father.

The new king Solomon surely got it right when offered boundless choice he chose wisdom as God's gift; and we know how right that was because of the LORD's lavish commendation and reward. (2 Chronicles 1:7-12). Not that all that looks like 'wisdom' is actually the kind that pleases God. One of my favourite passages is James 3:17 & 18 where having described the ugliness of a self-centred, manipulating, battling kind of 'wisdom' (and there's plenty of that abroad), James says: "But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness." What a beautiful picture! What a beautiful home, or workplace, or church where this kind of wisdom is constantly

exercised! How much of the character of God, Father, Son & Holy Spirit is seen when this kind of wisdom is on display. See Galations 5:22 & 23. And we're all called to this; to be living, thinking, planning and interacting in this way. This should be more and more evident as we grow as Christians. We thought about this in a recent Sunday morning sermon (2 Peter 1; 18th April) and saw that it's every Christian's responsibility to 'make every effort to add to your faith, goodness; and to goodness knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control etc.' Such a life is not, as Peter puts it 'ineffective and unproductive'—in fact it's extremely fruitful and brings much glory to God.

How are we doing (by God's help) in this matter? As I write a well-known Christian speaker in his 60s has just begun an eight month break from writing, sermon preparation and preaching; disappearing almost totally from the public eye to address, as he puts it, 'ongoing character flaws'. What a wise man; prepared to take radical action because he knows that in God's eyes Christian character really matters and if that isn't right then everything else is shaky. We all need to take stock, repent where we need to and, by God's help, move forward.

In His grace,

*Chris Fry*

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## Supper and Stories — Friday 19th March 2010

As part of the nationwide 'Passion for Life' initiative, and following a number of 'charity suppers' at the church, we decided to hold a development of this kind of event more overtly referencing the Good News of the Christian gospel. The aim was to personally invite friends and colleagues to an event where along with a good meal and music they could hear a couple of personal stories of people who had become Christians and what this now meant to them.

In the event we were delighted to have a full Main Hall with more than twenty guests, a delicious meal (thank you, Maria et al), good music (thank you, Tim Wells), helpful and engaging life stories (Angela Nowak and Peter Croft) and many words of appreciation. This is bridge building and, person by person, a further link in a chain of trust and respect which makes a pathway for the Gospel.

*Chris Fry*



# Election Hustings

## April 29th 2010

The UK General Election in 2010 was one of the most closely contested in recent history. No one could predict what the outcome would be – “there will be a Conservative government”, or “there will be a hung parliament”, or even “Labour will be back in power”. The excitement was heightened by the real possibility of Brighton Pavilion Ward electing the UK’s first Green Party MP.

We have believed, as a church, for some time that God has been calling us to have input into the civic life of the City, and this has particularly led us, carefully and prayerfully, into involvement in community issues. Overseas readers may have varying reactions to the idea of a gospel church getting involved with the political world of corruption, greed and intimidation. Our answer would be that, by God’s grace, UK politics retains values that have a lot to do with the Christian history of our country. It is still possible for politics to be conducted with fairness, persuasion (rather than intimidation), and honour (hence the shock and disgust when MPs were found to have claimed excessively on their expenses). We decided to arrange a “Hustings” meeting shortly before the election, for the prospective parliamentary candidates of the principal parties to sit on a panel together and answer questions from the audience. As we planned we had no sure idea as to when the election would actually take place, who would come to the event, how many, how the audience would respond, or even (until the afternoon itself) whether all the candidates would turn up! In the event, by God’s grace, the Green, Labour, and Lib-Dem PPCs were in attendance. We had one substitute and one late apology. Our halls were full, including the mezzanine floor and with the shutters open. There were about 150-160 people. Chris Fry chaired with fairness and firmness. The PPCs answered with respect, good sense, and articulate arguments.

Our prayer was that God would be honoured as we provided this forum as a service to the community. Our prayers were answered. There were several emails of appreciation from members of the public who had attended. As with all Calvary events this was a team effort – but great credit is due to Christina who gave unstintingly of her time and effort from start to finish to make this the success that it was. We give the glory to God.

Footnote: incidentally the final result was that Caroline Lucas (Green Party) was indeed elected as MP.

*Philip Wells*

# Gates Room

On Friday 14th May, Keith Rose, Chairman of the Railway Mission formally opened the Gates Room, a top-to-bottom refurbishment of the area which was built to accommodate a rapidly developing work amongst children in 1895. Mrs Elizabeth Gates, founder of the Brighton Railway Mission, laid a memorial stone that year (we have the silver trowel used for the occasion on display in the Main Hall) and our historic and present connections with the Railway Mission are neatly expressed by the renaming of the area after Mrs Gates.

The refurbishment work involved gutting out the old partitioned space and installing dry-lined, well-insulated, internal walling; replacement windows; a lowered false ceiling; full height cupboards; a kitchenette facility; new and refurbished fire doors; ceiling and wall lighting; wall-mounted heating; carpeting and a large flat-screen television for visual aid and training purposes. Once again generous and timely giving has enabled us to fund this final piece of the jigsaw of the refurbishment of the Calvary Church Buildings, begun in late 2004. Not only is the Gates Room a comfortable and welcoming place to meet but by careful use of the area dimensions we’ve been able to produce more spacious accommodation.

The facility has been appreciated since the turn of the year by the Sunday Club, International Café, mid-week church gatherings for prayer and bible study, a monthly prayer for revival meeting, the ‘Glad You Asked’ evangelistic course (begun in May) as well as ad-hoc small group gatherings, use by the City Mission and community events.

Shortly before the formal opening ceremony I read of a rather similar development in 1769 when a patron of the converted slave-trader became Christian-minister, John Newton, refurbished a room in a building to accommodate the increasing numbers attending the mid-week meetings of the Olney Church which John had begun to pastor five years before. To mark the occasion John and his close friend William Cowper each wrote a hymn. Cowper’s hymn began:

*Jesus, where’er Thy people meet,  
There they behold Thy mercy-seat  
Where’er they seek Thee Thou art found  
And every place is hallowed ground*

with a fourth verse:

*Here may we prove the power of prayer,  
To strengthen faith and sweeten care,  
To teach our faint desires to rise  
And bring all heaven before our eyes*

This would surely be our longing as well.

*Chris Fry*



### **Opening of the Gates Room**

Left to right: Chris Fry, Keith Rose, Philip Wells, Steve Ellacott. Ray Wingate took the photograph.

The room is now light and airy with a modern feel.



# Church Secretary

In a break from a 30-year tradition, this section of the newsletter has been given a new author, following a change in the roles played by the deacons. Having served for around five years as Acting Treasurer, it was becoming more than clear that Ray Wingate was doing too good a job to be described as Acting, so that part was dropped, and Ray is now the Treasurer. At the same time (agreed by the elders and deacons in November and the members in January) I took over from Ray the role of Secretary, which Ray had held since 1978. (I had been deaconing since May 2007, with responsibility for administration.) Since the last newsletter, work has been completed on refurbishing the old primary room, which in December was re-opened as the 'Gates Room', named after Mrs Elizabeth Gates, who founded the Brighton Railway Mission in 1876. A formal opening took place on Friday 14th May, to coincide with the biannual review meeting with representatives of the Railway Mission. We hosted a General Election hustings event on 29th April, for the Brighton Pavilion Constituency. There was standing room only, with the mezzanine floor filled to capacity and seating extending beyond the folding wall into the Back Hall.

A significant development in the life of the church has been the launch of a new group, 'Next Step', for three- and four-year-olds on 28th January, led by Maria Wells and Katy Fry. This is another area of community involvement, in addition to the Parent and Toddler group

and the involvement church members have in various community groups. In particular, Christina Summers has continued to work part-time for the church (through her company, Kairos Time Management), focusing on engaging with the local community, evangelism and discipleship. It was agreed to extend the contract supporting her for a further 12 months, until 19th April 2011.

Philip Wells took the first part of his sabbatical during the month of February, and the second stage lasts from the end of May to late July. This has been a time for rest and reflection, as well as an opportunity for much-needed building and decoration work to be done on his study room. We have been grateful for support from Haywards Heath Evangelical Free Church, who have been providing visiting preachers for us on Sunday evenings during the second part of the sabbatical, while Chris Fry has been preaching on the Sunday mornings. Bob Calderwood, one of our members, had moved to Redditch with Pat Morris-Owen in 2006, to continue to care for her. Sadly, she passed away on 7th March after a long period of very poor health. Two other members, Ross and Nikki Harper had a blessed Good Friday (2nd April) with the birth of a baby boy, Solomon. We gave thanks for his arrival at a special morning service on Sunday 13th June.

*Anthony Smith*

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## Next Step

'Next Step' is the name of our new preschool group, which runs on Thursday afternoons and is for children from two to five years. Katy Fry and I started the group on 28th February 2010 and since then, we have had varying degrees of success. It takes time, of course, for parents to become aware of a new group, even though it has been on the Family Information Service of the local council since its launch. We have also advertised it at our Toddler Group. More recently, our mums have been coming more consistently, and we now have four families coming most weeks. We have a rota of volunteers who help each week.

As a creche facility lasting two hours, we are not required to register with Ofsted, but I have made sure that

the necessary legal requirements are in place. I am encouraged by the response, so far, but look forward to receiving a few more families. Our afternoon includes many of the usual playgroup-type activities, and we always read a story from the Bible, and sing some non-confessional Christian songs.

While Katy was away in Australia, it was quite a task to do everything that is required alone, though Ray and Elisabeth are a great help. Please pray that we would be able to offer a quality service, and that many families may be reached for Christ.

*Maria Wells*

### Apology

The article **Regeneration in London Road** in the last issue, which was attributed to Philip Wells, was in fact written by Christina Summers.

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