

Calvary Newsletter Winter 2015/16

Can God do it?

Dear church people and friends near and far, greetings to you on behalf of myself and my fellow-elder, Chris Fry.

When the LORD was bringing Israel out of Egypt there were times when faith was particularly necessary. For example in Exodus chapter 14 the Israelites had escaped Pharaoh's slavery, but had been guided by God into what seemed like a cul-de-sac—a blind alley. The sea was in front of them. What is worse, Pharaoh had changed his mind about letting them go, and sent his army to chase after them. What were they to do? How would it all end up? Could God get them out of this situation? The people were not convinced that all was in hand: "they cried to Moses, 'is it because there were no graves in Egypt that you have brought us to the desert to die?'" (v11). Of course the LORD did wonderfully get them out of the situation. And he used it to get great glory for himself, AND defeat his enemies, AND save his people thoroughly. He opened a way through the sea. Perhaps they should have believed in advance God would do this!

Over the past months we have seen God leading us. We have received many encouragements, not least increasing numbers attending on Sundays. At the beginning of 2015 we believed it was right to embark on a process of identifying and appointing deacons, and the Lord has seen us through, so far. Let us keep trusting that God will lead and provide for the future. In addition we are actively seeking an Assistant Pastor to come on board for the next three years in preparation for future years. This also is a daunting prospect. Can God see us through this? Or will it all go "pear-shaped"? Here is another call to faith and prayer. Let us trust that God knows us his people, and loves us. We can trust him for today, and tomorrow and the future days. In this way we too can expect to sing- "I will sing to the LORD for



The main hall before a wedding

he is highly exalted ... The LORD is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation. He is my God and I will praise him..." Exodus 15:1

Warmest greetings to you all. May God bless you and those you love.

Yours in his service,

Philip Wells

Reflections on Buying the Building

In the Autumn of 2014 we were able to purchase the freehold of the Calvary Church building from the Railway Mission for the sum of £162,500. This was a significant moment for the church. Here are some reflections.

In 1894 Mrs George Gates spear-headed a successful drive to raise £2,500 by public subscription to purchase the (then smaller) Viaduct Road church building. By an elegant symmetry of God's providence 130 years later, and for a purchase price exactly £160,000 more, we successfully raised the required monies (plus some more to cover legal fees) by the giving of members and friends of the church. £162,500 is a lot of money but is worth comparing against the inflated equivalent in today's money of the original purchase price of £2,500. As £1 in 1894 is worth £111 now; £2,500 then is now worth £277,500! This work has been done by God's goodness and grace, not least in his help to both the Railway Mission and Calvary Church in all the required negotiations and arrangements. (This was reflected in a joint 'Celebration Meeting' held in the church on 18th April 2015). As we have sought to go about this business in a Christ-like way and following scriptural principles, God's blessing has been upon us. Over the last two years a number of new chaplains have been engaged by the Railway Mission and our church membership has increased from 25 to 36. God has enabled us in the grace of giving and has given us a solid precedent for our encouragement and to enable trust and boldness as we look to raise £80,000 to provide 3 years of financial support for an Assistant Pastor. We're looking to make this appointment in 2016. In the matter of the building, we have been able to release the upcoming generations (of Calvary Church and the Railway Mission) from the burdens and uncertainties of a fragile accommodation between the two bodies and to focus energy on the building of the spiritual kingdom of Jesus Christ. The next generations will have enough of their own particular challenges.

It has been a privilege for us to have been a part of this process, to see these things with our own eyes and to be able to record 'hitherto the LORD has helped us

Chris Fry

Why I wanted be a member of Calvary Church

Quotes from Recent Church Members...

David and Wendy Wriglesworth

Having moved down from Richmond at the end of August 2014 we faced the challenge of finding a new church – so why Calvary? We were here for a few months in early 1984 just after we were married at Park Hill (Brighton has always been Wendy's home, David was here more briefly as a student) so it was not unfamiliar territory. We also knew Chris and Katy from Park Hill.

We visited a couple of other churches in the Brighton area which we enjoyed but our hearts longed for something more. We weren't looking for the 'perfect' church but one we could call home. In the first few weeks of visiting we were particularly drawn by the friendliness of the Calvary family as well as the faithful bible teaching – from an early stage we felt at home among you. We are so grateful to God for guiding us.



David and Wendy

Corinne Lamb

I wanted to become a member of Calvary because I thought that I could grow more spiritually than I had been doing; also the preaching goes to a depth that I have never had before. The depth it has been at has been very beneficial and helpful to me.

I was also attracted to Calvary because everyone is so welcoming and caring about everyone in the church and it has been good to make and maintain a solid group of friends, who have now become like family.

Ruth Muinde

What it came down to for me was that God brought me to Calvary, and now this is my local church family – through thick and thin. It's not always convenient for me – but I'm learning slowly that Christ's church is not about 'me' but about Him first, His glory, and then, by His grace, about 'us'. It's pretty glorious to see the Lord at work in a mixed and messy bunch; and close knit association with each other seems to me the only way of seeing the Lord's mighty work of growing, maturing, sanctifying his bride: a supernatural process intended to translate into truth and love-filled word and deed. I guess that, for me, membership is a way of saying I want to grow with these people into a greater likeness of Christ, by the power of His Spirit who alone has the ability to unite people who are naturally inclined towards division and selfishness.

Corinne (below) and Ruth (below right)



On the Record

Semper Reformanda

I have a little more space in this issue, so I am taking the opportunity to make my regular slot rather more reflective than usual. The Latin phrase *semper reformanda* (always being reformed) is attributed by Wikipedia to the twentieth century theologian Karl Barth, but the idea behind it goes back to the Reformation of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It captures the idea that the church of God is always being remade—remade by the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit working in harmony.



Pastor Les Hill preaching in the 1970s

Some recent recruits to Calvary Church have described their experiences in this issue. Together with my wife Brenda, I joined the Brighton Railway Mission, as it was then, in 1974. The noticeboard at the time advertised the church as being 'Evangelical' and 'Reformed'. Since then, both those labels have become somewhat devalued. But they are still worth having, I think. Because the Evangel (the good news enshrined in the Scriptures) is for today, we cannot be 'Reformed' in any static sense. The aim of teaching the Scriptures is constant reconstruction of the Temple of the Holy Spirit. We quarry new stones for the Temple (evangelism), we dress the stones by making better disciples, and the architecture is our community together. Sometimes, we need an overview of the big picture: Philip Wells led us into the book of Revelation in the early months of 2015. Sometimes we need to get back to foundations. Philip has led us in Mark's Gospel, and Philip and Chris Fry have reintroduced us to Jesus in November. Sometimes we need an historical perspective: Philip has taken us on a fascinating journey through the early chapters of 1 Kings, and I have looked into the prophecies about the ancient city of Nineveh that we find in Jonah and Nahum. Sometimes we need to give attention to the infrastructure and building codes: with Philip's guidance we have looked together as a church at the roles of elders and deacons with a view to strengthening our leadership. We need to understand the

nature of the spiritual temple and our place in it: I took us through the book of Hebrews which addresses that issue. What we actually do in practice matters of course, so we are currently (again with Philip's guidance) looking at our worship together with a particular focus on music and singing. Chris Fry has directed us to 'Growing Christians', 'Growing Churches' and 'Understanding the Present Time'.

Seeking spiritual refreshment and renewal, it is always good to look into the Psalms. Earlier in the year, visiting preachers from Christ Church Haywards Heath showed us how Psalms 73, 74, 79 and 80 have much to teach us about living as God's people. The driving force behind all this activity is the Holy Spirit himself, so this Autumn, I have been looking at his work in the book of Acts.

Fellowship together

In addition to our Sunday meetings and Wednesday Prayer and Bible Study evenings, we provide a variety of less formal opportunities to meet as a fellowship. Another successful Church Weekend Away was held in April at Dalesdown. The speaker was Marc Lloyd.

The Young Adults Group has continued to provide Bible Study and fellowship for the younger generation. Parents of young children have met for prayer twice in 2015, and for those ladies of a more literary turn of mind, their book club has met monthly.



Breakfast at Wetherspoons

Eating together is an important social activity for humans, and a church family should not neglect this. We do have the formal communion services of course, but it is also good to have normal meals together. We have a church lunch together on the second Sunday of each month, and on other Sundays church members provide hospitality for smaller groups. The men have been meeting together once a month for breakfast for some years now, sometimes just for fellowship and sometimes

with an external speaker. Our womenfolk have now also taken up this practice, although for some reason they start an hour later. Is that breakfast or brunch? In June we tried a joint breakfast at Wetherspoons at the Marina, although it was not too well attended for some reason. It is also worth mentioning that in recent years the Frys have invited us for food and fellowship on New Years Eve: we are grateful for that hospitality.

Community events

Open activities are valuable things in themselves, but also provide bridges into the community. Calvary International Cafe provides a meeting point for international students on Saturday evenings, regularly attracting 40 or more students. The Caterpillars group gathers young children and their carers on Wednesday mornings during term times. In 2015 we have held two music evenings with collections for refugee and asylum seekers related charities. These are always entertaining, and also provide a relaxed environment for conversations with visitors. A charity afternoon providing beauty and related services was also organised in July. Ben Alltimes works faithfully manning a book table in London Road on Tuesday morning. A carol singing event at the Abacus student residence, and 'Carols and Tea' for the elderly are planned for December 2015.

Philip Wells continues to chair the London Road Local Action Team, recently with support from Lindsay Debach, and in April the building was opened as a venue for hustings for the General Election.

Fellowship in the gospel

Fellowship can be something as simple as the Men's inter-church event held at Calvary in July or joining with our friends at Ebenezer church once again on Good Friday. On a more formal level, Calvary continues both to support, and benefit from, its membership of the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches (FIEC) and the Sussex Gospel Partnership (SGP). Several members attend SGP training events. I personally find great encouragement from attending the Sussex Evangelical Ministry Seminars and the Study Group for those who have completed the Sussex Ministry Training. Philip is on the planning committee for the former, and teaches on the Training Course. Philip's own edification is not neglected: this year he has attended both the Evangelical Ministry Assembly and the Proclamation Trust Preaching Conference. Interaction with FIEC is more on the basis of sharing information and encouragement, but the Mid Sussex Group of FIEC churches does have a joint meeting once a year, usually well supported by Calvary people. This year, John Stevens was the speaker. Philip and Chris represented us at the FIEC leaders conference this year.

Philip has preached twice at West Worthing Evangelical Church, and I have preached at Eastney Evangelical Free church in Eastney. Several of us also take meetings at the Brighton Pilgrim Home, a residential facility for elderly Christians. On a wider platform, Philip was again invited to lecture at Baldeus Theological Seminary in Trincomalee. This took place in February. Philip lectured on his now specialist subject of the book of Revelation. While in Sri Lanka, Philip was also able to visit and encourage churches in Mannar and Colombo. In April, we welcomed Pastor Mano (Principal of Baldaeus) to Brighton when he visited the United Kingdom.

Other events have included: a Thanksgiving Meeting with the Railway Mission in April; a presentation from Arab World Ministries in September; a visit by Julian Haddow of Brighton and Hove City Mission in October; renewed fellowship in November with James and Lori Clarke from Albania, and, also in November a presentation on the local work of the Gideons.

Life and New Life

There was a Thanksgiving Service for Rayfield baby Isaac in April, and a new baby Joseph born to the Harpers in November. Jonathan Bickley and Lindsay Debach were married at Holland Road Baptist Church in February: Calvary's building was not big enough! But in May we hosted the wedding of Zane Medina and Harold Akpan.



Baptism of Hamid

Finally, we note that in June, Hamid Fotoohi was baptised. There is joy in heaven over one sinner who repents (Luke 15:10). And it is a joy to welcome our new members who have come from other places. Yet only one baptism this year must be considered a disappointment. We learn from our contacts overseas that in many places God is clearly at work, but in Brighton it remains a day of small things. This should encourage us to continue in prayer, and, like Jacob, not let go of God until we have obtained the blessing.

Steve Ellacott