
Union Church News

December 2009/January 2010

Make Jesus the centre of Christmas

A message from Mark

During the winter of 1926 Thelma Goldstein, an American Jewess, treated herself to her first real vacation in Florida. Sadly, at this time there were restricted buildings from which particular religious or racial groups were excluded.

Being unfamiliar with the area, she wandered into a restricted hotel in North Miami. "Excuse me," she said to the manager, "My name is Mrs Goldstein, and I'd like a small room for two weeks."

"I'm awfully sorry," he replied, "but all of our rooms are occupied."

Just as he said that a man came downstairs and checked out. "What luck," said Mrs Goldstein. "Now there's a room."

"Not so fast Madam. I'm sorry, but this hotel is restricted: no Jews allowed.

"Jewish? Who's Jewish?" came the reply, "I happen to be Catholic."

"I find that hard to believe with a name like Goldstein," replied the manager. "Let me ask you, madam; who was the Son of God?"

"Jesus, Son of Mary," she replied.

"Where was he born?" said the manager.

"In a stable," she replied.

"And why, madam, was he born in a stable?"

"Because a schmuck like you wouldn't let a Jew rent a room in his hotel!" Mrs Goldstein replied, giving herself away somewhat.

As Christmas comes upon us, it's worth remembering that it will affect different people in

different ways. When I attended the Lights of Love service run by St Wilfred's Hospice this year I talked to a couple of people for whom Christmas was always going to be difficult because of having lost spouses at this time of year.

Particularly moving was the sight of one young mum with two very young boys lighting a candle for the husband she had lost this year. They grieved together, supporting one another, crying for the husband and daddy that won't be with them.

For young families with new babies, Christmas will be a particularly lovely (if exhausting) time.

For us, Christmas will be more of a family event than it has been previously, as we will have Sarah's sister and her daughter with us, as well as her Grandmother - and that means that, although there will be a degree of sadness at the absence of Sarah's mother, there will also be a real strength, warmth and joy from each other's company. In previous years we have not been together in that way until after Christmas has passed.

Whatever stage of life we are at, the important thing is that, unlike the inn at Bethlehem, we have room for Jesus at the very heart of our lives. With Him at the centre of Christmas, it need not be an empty time for anyone, whether young or old.

Mark

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New Year Resolutions?

A lot of us make New Year resolutions and do not stick to them much past 3rd January (in my case, anyway!) Why not read these two items, submitted by John Glover and Pauline Middleton, and see if they inspire you into 2010.



This item was submitted by John Glover. I haven't been able to attribute it to anyone as I'm not sure of its origins.

A Pastor's Dream

I have a dream of a church meeting

- Where everybody comes prayerfully prepared.
- Where members have to struggle to find a seat.
- Where there is an overwhelming sense of family.
- Where the voice of praise is never absent.
- Where Scripture is allowed to speak.
- Where 'prophets' are heard.
- Where experiences of God are shared.
- Where people listen with discernment.
- Where feelings are balanced with reason.
- Where faith is vibrant.
- Where everybody expects God to speak.
- Where business flows out of worship and worship flows out of business.
- Where the needs of the world are uppermost.
- Where Kingdom issues prevail.
- Where details are happily delegated.
- Where there is a genuine seeking after the mind of Christ.
- Where debate has been replaced by discussion.
- Where personal prejudices are set aside.
- Where the leadership is trusted.
- Where the voices of the few no longer dominate.
- Where nobody feels they have to speak on behalf of 'other people'.
- Where angels' advocates constantly look for good things to say.
- Where nobody ever feels uptight.
- Where nobody seeks to win.
- Where differing viewpoints are shared in love.
- Where the old are prepared to learn from the young.
- Where the young are able to share their dreams.
- Where constitutional niceties recede into the background.
- Where God has His way.

Cherie and Pauline recently returned from a 'Time Out' Christian conference in Bournemouth and were both spiritually challenged. The theme for the week was 'Encounters with Jesus', led by Jim Graham from Gold Hill Baptist Church. Jim composed the following poem which was a great blessing to them, and they would like to share it with others.

Come, Holy Ghost, to set me free,
To give my heart Your liberty,
Pour forth Your love; my being fill,
That I may do Your holy will,
That I may do Your holy will.

Forgive my selfish, base desire,
Refine me with Your cleansing fire,
That pure and selfless I may be;
Equipped and strengthened, Lord, by Thee,
Equipped and strengthened, Lord, by Thee.

I own my weakness and my shame,
I have no hope, but in Your Name.
Come Holy Ghost, with heavenly aid
And fill this life which God has made,
And fill this life which God has made.

Release me now; my life employ
To show the Spirit's Fruit with joy,
So gladly now I yield to Thee
That Jesus might be seen in me,
That Jesus might be seen in me.

Fulfil Your will with Gifts of grace
That when, at last, I see Your face
I, unashamed, before You stand
To offer You the life You planned,
To offer You the life You planned.

Penge Mission to the Homeless

A message from Davida and Royston Price

Thank you to everyone who donated articles for Penge Mission to the Homeless during the year. Royston and I, after several abortive attempts, managed to meet up with Kathy Bance at Penge Congregational Church, with an estate car full of much needed items on the morning of 20th November. Much of it will be used for the Christmas run on 12th December. Kathy asked me to express thanks from the Mission.

Sadly, despite previous reports and appeals for help following our trips up to Penge over the last twenty years, I have failed to find anyone willing to help or now to continue with this Mission. I have had to advise Kathy that this was our last run and, typical of Kathy's generous and caring attitude, she expressed the view that we "and Union Church can be very proud of yourselves for all the efforts you have put in over the years."

But "every cloud has a silver lining" and we wanted to share the latest development with you. In Kathy's words, "The good news is that a group with young members came up to help us on the last run - a Catholic Church from Hayes - and they were so moved by the whole experience that they are going to become a satellite team and go up on a different Saturday to us. They have a van, a kitchen and some storage space, and finances to get started. Not taking quite the same range of resources, but they are providing a home-cooked meal for 90 people each time and, of course, blankets etc. So God's work is still going on - there are people who care about the very vulnerable amongst us."

For Royston and myself, the saddest thing of all is that the need is growing, not receding.


Bless you all and thank you for your cheerful and generous giving over the years.

"¹⁴What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such a faith save him? ¹⁵Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. ¹⁶If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? ¹⁷In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead."

James 2:14-17

If anyone feels moved to continue with this mission and would like the "Penge Box", just give us a call!

SEBA News is Coming!

 **O**n Sunday 31st January 2010, every person in a Baptist church in the south east of England will receive, free of charge, a copy of the second SEBA News along with a free Baptist Times for that week with the compliments of the South Eastern Baptist Association.

SEBA News is an eight-page newspaper with reports and information about how God is working through Christians in Baptist churches all over the south east. The first SEBA News was an innovative experiment and the idea is now being investigated by a number of other associations.

Do look out for your copy – if you happen not to be in church on 31st January, the next time you are there don't forget to ask for a copy of SEBA News. 10,000 are being printed, so there should be plenty to go round!

Sunday Club and Sunday Special

Our big project in October was Love-in-a-Box and we were thrilled to be able to send a total of 217 shoe boxes along with a cheque for £542.50 to cover the cost of their transport!



Many thanks to everyone who contributed in any way to make this fantastic effort possible. A lot of people were very generous with either their time or their money or both.

Now that we are approaching Advent we are beginning to prepare our Nativity play and other contributions for the Family Service on Christmas Sunday. We look forward too to the Christingle service on Christmas Eve and the Family Service on Christmas morning.



On Sunday January 3rd, Sunday Special will have a slightly more special mini New Year's party with a cooked breakfast at 10.00am and some party hats and activities to welcome 2010.



Finally, please put Sunday January 31st in your diaries. The Sunday Club plans to host a party that afternoon for the whole church! Everyone is invited - all ages - just to enjoy some fun and food together and to enjoy each other's company. More details nearer the time.

Sue Mumford

YClub730

We've had a good first term to the new academic year. With the older ones going off to University we thought the group would be noticeably smaller - that hasn't proved to be the case! We have had a few new teenagers come along, which is encouraging, and a couple of new Year 6 members. As we move forward, we are hoping for a few more to come along on a regular basis.








So far we have had a few games evenings in the church hall, as well as a concert in Burgess Hill. As usual the music was excellent and the speaker, Mark Ritchie, spoke very well to all the teens present. We have also been to LaserQuest in Eastbourne, which is always enjoyed by all. On Sunday 13th December we are going to watch "A Christmas Carol" at the cinema, and on 20th December we have the messiest YClub event of the year - the Christmas party!

Please continue to pray for the group, especially the older ones as they start to take exams and complete coursework in readiness for the 'real thing' in the summer.

Sean



Sunday Club and Sunday Special attendance prizes

4 October	Anne-Marie	Architect	CD: "Breath of God", Ornament: "Believe"	150 stars 
	Sarah	Architect	Book: "Me, Myself and God", Bracelet: Romans 10:17	150 stars 
18 October	Katie	Architect	Book: "Teenage Girl's Survival Guide", additional book and pencil	350 stars 
8 November	Andrew	Architect	Book: "Teenage Boy's Survival Guide" by Nick Harding, CD: "Re-Commended - The Samples"	150 stars 
	Alastair	Candle	DVD: "Sheerluck Holmes and the Golden Rules", "Jesus loves you" pencil	150 stars 
	Caitlin	Starlet	Book: "Make and Do Christmas Puppets", Teddy holding verse from Psalms, Cross pendant	150 stars 
15 November	Nathan	Candle	Book: "The Day I Fell Down the Toliel" by Steve Turner, Torch: "Walk in the Light", Ichthus wristband	150 stars 
	Charlotte	Sunday Special		5 stars

Kids' Bits

Christmas Word Search

by Philologus

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Sudoku Challenge

8						7	6
2							
					1	5	
6		4			5		8
		2		9	8		5
			2		7		
		3				6	1
1			5			9	3
	4			6			

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P	S	I	V	H	C	H	R	I	S	T	M	A	S	T	R	E	E	P
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- ADVENT
- ANGELS
- BAUBLES
- BELLS
- BIRTH OF JESUS
- BOXING DAY
- CAROL SINGING
- CHIMNEY
- CHRISTMAS CAKE
- CHRISTMAS PUDDING
- CHRISTMAS TREE
- CRACKERS
- ELVES
- FAMILY
- FOOD
- HOLIDAYS
- HOLLY
- IVY
- MINCE PIES
- MISTLETOE
- MULLED WINE
- PARTY
- PRESENTS
- QUEEN'S SPEECH
- REINDEER
- ROBIN
- RUDOLPH
- SANTA CLAUS
- SCROOGE
- SHEPHERDS
- SNOWMAN
- STAR
- TINSEL
- TURKEY
- WISE MEN
- WRAPPING PAPER
- YULE LOG

News in brief

Union Book Group

Our next meeting will be in January when we will be discussing 'Library of the Dead' by Glenn Cooper and 'The Spare Room' by Helen Garner. Telephone Julie Baxter on 868799 for more information or for current and planned book titles.



Inspire magazine

Copies of this free monthly magazine are available for you to take home and read.

Do pick up a copy either on a Sunday or during the week - it's also available at Open Door, Luncheon Club and Do Pop Inn.

Union Church News on the internet

All editions of Union Church News are available to read on the Activities and Events page of the church website: www.unionchurch.co.uk



Flower Rota

December 6th	Mrs C Sheppard
December 13th	Miss J Knight
December 20th	Christmas
December 27th	Christmas
January 3rd	Mrs E Banks
January 10th	Mrs H Stevens
January 17th	Mrs S Cronk
January 24th	Mrs A Miller
January 31st	Mrs N Saunders
February 7th	Mrs M Grout

Finance report - December 2009

We are almost at the end of the church's financial year and it is difficult at the moment to know what the final outcome will be until all receipts and payments have been processed. The budget for 2010 has been agreed. May I thank everyone for giving so generously to the church this year and wish everyone a blessed Christmas and a happy and healthy New Year.

God bless

Christine

Free Bible reading guide launched



A new set of free resources to help Christians read, pray and meditate through the Bible has been launched by Bible Society. Lectio Divina is a dynamic way of reading the Bible which has been around since 300 AD.

A year's worth of reading notes based on Luke's Gospel is available to download free from Bible Society's website. The current set is from November 2009 through to February 2010, and the set for March 2010 through to May 2010 is also available.

The notes can be downloaded free at www.biblesociety.org.uk. (If you wish to see the notes but do not have access to the Internet, please contact the Editor who can forward a copy to you.)

Trans World Radio News from North Korea and China

In 6 months, TWR-Korea staff have distributed 2,300 radios to North Korean house church leaders. When they learned that some of the sets weren't working, they discovered that listeners were burying the radios to hide them for security reasons and this, along with the humidity, caused the radios to become rusty. The problem was solved by providing plastic bags with each radio.

TWR's Chinese team supplies Radio Church Kits (RCK) to listeners in the rural, mountainous areas of China. RCKs contain a Bible, shortwave radio and "Discipleship on the Air" broadcasts. RCK distribution now totals more than 81,000 kits.

Source: Listening Word

Union Church regular events

Monday	10.00am - 2.00pm	Open Door - tea and coffee in the Coffee Lounge
	12.00noon - 1.30pm	Open Door - lunches in the Church Hall
Tuesday	12.00noon (fortnightly - check diary on page 8)	Senior Citizens' Luncheon Club
	6.00pm (term time only)	Beavers in the Church Hall
Wednesday	1.30pm - 3.00pm (term time only)	Parent & Toddler Group in the Church Hall
	4.30pm (term time only)	Rainbows in the Church Hall
	5.45pm (term time only)	Brownies in the Church Hall
	7.00pm (term time only)	Guides in the Church Hall
Thursday	10.00am - 4.00pm	Do Pop Inn - teas, coffees and light lunches in the Coffee Lounge
	6.30pm (term time only)	Cubs in the Church Hall
Friday	2.30pm (first Friday of each month)	Women's Fellowship
	7.30pm (term time only)	Scouts in the Church Hall
Saturday	8.30am	Prayer Meeting in the Coffee Lounge
Sunday	7.30pm (alternate fortnights)	YClub730 - for Year 6 and above
	7.30pm (alternate fortnights)	TM - Youth Fellowship for Sixth Form and above

Book Reviews - John Glover Pray Together

Author: Peter Nodding

Publisher: Deomai Publications

ISBN: 978-0955932502



This slim book, only 53 pages long, should be in the hands of every Christian. It has so much going for it. As far as I know it is the only book that specifically addresses praying together: there are lots of books about prayer but this one stands alone in introducing the reader to the art of praying with others. It is written by a Minister - Peter is the Pastor of Purley Baptist Church - and he peppers the book with illustrations from his own experience. And it only costs £2.00! What more can I say than, "Go for it".

If You Want to Walk on Water You've Got to Get Out of the Boat


Author: John Ortberg

Publisher: Zondervan

ISBN: 978-0310239277

This book will challenge some and be a life-line to others. To those who have settled down in their discipleship it will pose the question, "Isn't there more to following Jesus?" Ortberg answers that question with a resounding "Yes". Those who are eager to know the next steps in discipleship will find this book to be a life-line dealing with the details of our daily walk with Jesus. This is not just a book to read but a manual that will help you discern God's call, transcend fear, manage failure and trust God. What more do you need as you step out into 2010?

Church diary

December	Tuesday 1	12 noon 7.30pm	Senior Citizens' Luncheon Club Deacons' Meeting		
	Friday 4	2.30pm 7.30pm	Women's Fellowship Rotary Carol Service		
	Sunday 6	9.00am 10.30am	Sunday Special Rev. Mark Welch (Holy communion) (Please note: no evening service today)		
	Sunday 13	10.30am 3.00pm	Service highlighting Project Ruth Carols 4 Seniors - Rev. John Glover, followed by tea and mince pies		
	Tuesday 15	12 noon	Senior Citizens' Christmas Lunch		
	Sunday 20	10.30am 6.30pm	Christmas Family Special Christmas communion - Rev. Mark Welch		
	Christmas Eve	Thursday 24	4.15pm		Christingle Service
	Christmas Day	Friday 25	10.30am		Christmas Family Service - Rev. Mark Welch
		Sunday 27	10.30am		Rev. John Glover (Please note: no evening service today)
	January	Sunday 3	10.00am 10.30am		Sunday Special Rev. Mark Welch (Please note: no evening service today)
Friday 8		2.30pm 7.15pm	Women's Fellowship CTH Forum at St. Richard's Church		
Sunday 10		10.30am 6.30pm	Rev. Mark Welch (Holy communion) "The life you've always wanted" - Rev. Mark Welch		
Tuesday 12		12 noon 7.30pm	Senior Citizens' Luncheon Club Deacons' Meeting		
Sunday 17		10.30am 3.00pm 6.30pm	Rev. Mark Welch Holiday Club meeting Holy communion - Alwyn Fletcher		
Sunday 24		10.30am 6.30pm	Rev. Mark Welch "The life you've always wanted" - Rev. Mark Welch		
Tuesday 26		12 noon	Senior Citizens' Luncheon Club		
Sunday 31		10.30am TBC	Rev. Mark Welch Party hosted by Sunday Club - Everyone Welcome (Please note: no evening service today)		
February		Tuesday 2	7.30pm	Deacons' Meeting	
	Friday 5	2.30pm	Women's Fellowship		
	Sunday 7	9.00am 10.30am 6.30pm	Sunday Special Rev. Mark Welch Holy communion		

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Items included subject to suitability and space.