

Union Church News

May/June 2008

An Agenda for Change

A global call for spiritual & social transformation

Taken from the Evangelical Alliance website (www.eauk.org)

Joel Edwards has begun his final tour of the United Kingdom as General Director of the Evangelical Alliance in order to connect with Alliance members and explain the renewed vision and mission of the organisation. Travelling to 27 venues around the UK he is using a combination of DVD presentation, preaching and interactive discussion to explain and explore his new book 'An Agenda for Change'.

In the book Joel issues a call for unity amongst evangelicals and argues that Biblical witness is not called to tip-toe through the 21st century, but to transform society by presenting Christ credibly to the culture. He sets out a new vision for evangelicalism reclaiming the idea that evangelicals are a 'good news' people called to a long term vision for spiritual and social change.

'An Agenda for Change' is the beginning of a conversation. While it has a primary audience - the evangelical family across the world - it will also appeal to Christians everywhere who want to be part of the great unfolding Christian story: the church sent out to advance the Kingdom of God as servants of transforming good news.

In the global west or north it is difficult to any longer think of the Christian church as transforming. Christian faith in Europe, and even to some extent in America, has lost most of its political control. Church attendance is plummeting. And yet God is at work in the midst of this western desperation. Denominations are undergoing structural reviews. Visions and missions have been overhauled. Sacred cows have been dragged to the altar of modernisation. Fresh expressions, emerging churches and even painful discussions about the atonement are all part of an active and vibrant Christianity. It's agonisingly bewildering, but a pain that must be embraced.

Contemporary evangelicalism is faced with an array of challenges. What is to be done? Joel Edwards

presents a three point agenda for change.

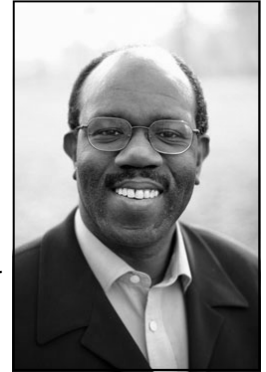
Firstly, the church must present Christ credibly.

For too long evangelicalism has offered a distorted version of Jesus to the world. It is time to rediscover his humanity, his storytelling, his love for the outlaws and his life-giving and generous nature. It is time to recognise that in a pluralist culture (which is nothing new) Christ must be presented with boldness and confidence amongst the gods. He must be allowed to speak for himself and not be shoe-horned into a restricted moral agenda. The church must put more of its energy into lifting him up than denigrating the other gods of our age. In all of this the miraculous and supernatural must be given space to speak to a culture weary of rationalism. And Christ's conversational model of engagement must be the template for interaction with societies moving beyond the argumentative, win/lose spirit of modernity. Questions and dialogue should be the norm. The church has a vital role to play, despite its flaws, and needs to rediscover a passion for the Bible. Intelligence, prayer and moral integrity in all areas will be critical. Social action must become the inevitable outworking of faith.

Secondly, the word 'evangelical' needs to be rehabilitated as good news.

It has become tainted by association with bigotry, fundamentalism and narrow moral agendas and party politics. There

(Continued on page 3)



Rev. Joel Edwards

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A message from Mark

Dear Friends,

It is really to good see how our Sunday Morning congregations are growing. As a church we have much to be thankful for. It is good to reflect that this growth is all flowing from God's gift of grace to us in the Lord Jesus Christ, a free gift of eternal life at work within the church, energizing and inspiring God's people.

But whilst salvation and the power of the resurrection are freely made available to us, sadly the gas board are still billing us for the terrestrial power that we use. In fact, in line with household bills, the cost of heating the church is likely to increase by between 17% and 20% this year.

You may ask, "With the hot air that gets released during the sermons, do we really need the boiler at all?" but it is important to keep the church a comfortable and pleasant place to be for all of its users. The re-roofing that is due in a couple of years will have to be paid for, not to mention the host of minor projects that are all necessary to keep the building up to scratch.

You may be surprised to hear that all the money needed to run and staff the church has to come from within our own congregation. We receive no money from central funds: in fact we pay money out to the Baptist Union and Congregational Federation. All of our overheads are rising but, despite rising congregations, the giving is remaining static.

This can only mean one thing: if you don't put your hands somewhat deeper into your pockets, the senior minister will be busking with his trombone in the High Street! So will you please take pity on the good citizens of Heathfield and review your giving (so that we can continue to carry out our mission effectively without engaging in this gratuitous noise pollution!).

We have so much to be thankful for with increasing numbers across the entire age range, continued Baptisms and a happy and energetic congregation doing so much to make and shape disciples to serve the community in Jesus' name. Let's not spoil it by running out of money.

The Bible has advice to give us about giving and it is very practical.

Giving is a part of living the spiritual life

"⁷But just as you excel in everything — in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us — see that you also excel in this grace of giving."

1 Corinthians 8:7

Giving is not an optional extra for the wealthy or the super spiritual, it is as integral to life as speaking, knowledge and loving.

Give systematically in a planned and carefully considered way.

"²On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made."

1 Corinthians 16:2

A good way to do this in our age of monthly salary electronic cash transfers is by a monthly standing order to the church (see Christine's article on page 4 for details).

If you are a taxpayer you can increase your giving at no extra cost to yourself by using the Inland Revenue's provision for Gift Aid.

Give willingly and joyfully because God has already given you fullness of life in Christ.

"⁷Each [*person*] should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. ⁸And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work."

2 Corinthians 9:7-8

I want to make it clear that I don't know what individual people give: that is between you and God and I will never ask you about this - you give freely and without compulsion.

Give cheerfully, joyfully, hilariously even. Faith is supposed to be fun, even the sacrificial side - giving to a cause you really believe in can make you feel better about yourself.

Give, believing that God can supply all your needs, as an expression of your confidence in him.

Although I hope that I have not offended anyone by broaching this subject, I make no apology for talking about money. I practise the spiritual discipline of giving myself; it should be as much a part of our spiritual life as worship and prayer.

May God bless you in your worship, your prayer - and your giving.

Mark

(Continued from page 1)

is movement to abandon the label but this would be a mistake. The word has to be reclaimed so that it can once again be synonymous with anguish rather than anger, grace rather than opposition, action rather than argument. The left, right and centre parties within evangelicalism need to see the value in the other and recognise that unity is a biblical truth, not an optional extra.

Thirdly, evangelicalism must recognise that the good news is for spiritual and social transformation.

It starts with the individual but never ends there. Social change is part and parcel of the gospel. Christians need to adopt citizenship mindsets which see their churches as agents of positive change in society, starting with the square miles surrounding them. The church will become part of the solution to the numerous ills afflicting western culture. This is a long-term project, a cathedral building exercise. It will require strategic and intentional thinking. Many of the benefits will be seen by future generations. The job of the church now is to lay the foundations.

'An Agenda for Change' is more than just a book. It is the renewed mission and vision of the Evangelical Alliance - a bold call to evangelicals to unite to change society.

To move these ideas from the page to the streets we must all begin by joining the conversation on how evangelicals can unite to present Christ credibly as good news to society.

Only then will we have earned the right to speak in the public square. Only then will we be able to begin the task of re-imagining how we might transform society. Only then can we move forward, in unity, to implement long-term strategic change.



Pentecost Sunday May 11th

alltogether@pentecost

All the Churches Together in Heathfield & District will be joining together for a united celebration at Heathfield Community College.

11.00am - 12.45pm

PARALLEL PROGRAMME FOR
CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE
- see alternative leaflets

**Guest Speaker: Rev. Joel Edwards,
General Director of Evangelical Alliance,
Broadcaster, Author, Member of Equality
& Human Rights Commission**



Includes the commissioning
of the **Heathfield Street
Pastors** initiative

**CHURCHES
TOGETHER IN
HEATHFIELD
& District**

Finance report - April 2008

In my first Report as Treasurer, I am disappointed to report that the first quarter of the year has resulted in £1,610 more having been spent than was received. It is particularly disappointing that direct income from giving is £500 less than at this time last year, but I am confident that the financial situation will improve over the coming months. If you haven't reviewed the amount you give for some time, can I encourage you to do so.

One way to increase your giving at no cost to yourself is by signing a Gift Aid Declaration which allows us to reclaim 25p for each £1 donation. You can do this provided you pay at least the same amount of income tax as is reclaimed - for example if you donate £10, we reclaim £2.50 so you only need to have paid £2.50 in income tax to be eligible. To reclaim Gift Aid we need to be able to show how much you have donated, so giving has to be made by envelope or direct to our bank.

In addition to placing cash into the collection bag each Sunday, you can use an Offerings Envelope (available from Mike Wells) or you can set up a standing order direct from your bank to ours. This last option is becoming more popular. If you would like to discuss any of these options or any other matter concerning church finances, please speak to me.

In the meantime, thank you everyone for all your contributions to the church.

The Lord bless.

Christine

Flower Rota



May 4th	Mrs R Dimsdale
May 11th	Mrs L Miller
May 18th	Mrs G Goldsmith
May 25th	Mrs A Miller
June 1st	Mrs H Dusart
June 8th	Mrs A Preece
June 15th	Mrs E Banks
June 22nd	Mrs T Rutherford
June 29th	Mrs F Anderson
July 6th	Miss B Brightman

News in brief

Church members' meeting

The next meeting of church members is on 27th May at 7.30pm in the Coffee Lounge. Please do make an effort to attend if you can.

Donations for Penge

The Penge Mission box will be in the Coffee Lounge entrance lobby for two weeks during May. Davida Price is happy to supply the list of required and acceptable items - please call 862126.



Christian Resources Exhibition



No doubt you will have seen publicity in the church regarding this event, which is being held at Sandown Park, Esher during the week 13th - 16th May. There are a number of people going from Union Church; if you would like to join with them, please make contact with Norah Saunders.

Union Church News on the internet

Don't forget, all editions of Union Church News are available to read on the Activities and Events page of the church website: www.unionchurch.co.uk



Union Book Group

As you may have seen, Union Book Group is always mentioned in News in Brief. The group consists of people with very eclectic literary tastes, but began because we either never read books and needed an excuse to (like me), or read lots but wanted to try other genres.



We meet every two months at each other's homes and, over that time, have a choice of two books to read; we choose our books from recommendations by our host and in this way have ended up reading many types of literature that we might not otherwise have chosen.

I have to admit (and I know I'm not the only one) that sometimes I don't have time to read the books, or just can't get into them enough to make the time, but sometimes we have one that I just can't put down!

Since the group began in 2006, we have read and discussed the following books:

- My Sister's Keeper - Jodi Picoult
- The Time Traveller's Wife - Audrey Niffenegger
- The Jane Austin Book Club - Karen Joy Fowler
- We Need to Talk About Kevin - Lionel Shriver
- How to Kill your Husband - Kathy Lette
- A Short History of Tractors in Ukranian - Marina Lewycka
- Purple Hibiscus - Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie
- Enigma - Robert Harris
- 24 Hours - Greg Iles
- May Contain Nuts - John O'Farrell
- Like Water Like Chocolate - Laura Esquivel
- The Island - Victoria Hislop
- Glittering Images - Susan Howatch
- The Abortionist's Daughter - Elisabeth Hyde
- The Memory Keeper's Daughter - Kim Edwards
- Digging to America - Anne Tyler
- The House at Riverton - Kate Morton
- Restless - William Boyd
- The Secret Life of Bees - Sue Monk Kidd
- Atonement - Ian McEwan
- The Thirteenth Tale - Diane Setterfield
- The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night Time - Mark Haddon

If you would like to join us, please contact Julie Baxter on 868799 who can tell you where and when the next meeting is. We're not at all high-brow - on some occasions we just chat and the book hardly gets a mention - but it is a great way to encounter new literature and does force those of us with not much spare time to try to find some for ourselves and our book!

Debi

News in brief

All roads lead to Heathfield



In SatNav terms, all roads in East

Sussex seem to lead to or through Heathfield whether travelling north, south, east or west. And Union Church is strategically placed right in the centre of the town. So it is not surprising that the new South East Baptist Association have chosen Heathfield Union Church for their Summer Celebration on 8th June.

We are also privileged to have the newly elected President of the Baptist Union (see article below) coming to be the guest speaker. Do please make this a priority booking in your diary and ensure that Union Church members and friends are well represented. Members of our Music Group will be leading the worship and Mark will be taking a key role, so this looks to be a great occasion for the church.

Baptist Assembly

Over the May Day bank holiday weekend the Baptist Union hold the Annual Baptist Assembly, this year in Blackpool. Every church which is in membership with the Baptist Union is invited to send a delegate and Rev. John and Doreen Glover have gone as Union Church representatives.

It is at this Assembly that the Union President is elected. This year the Rev. John Weaver will be inducted. Interestingly, John will be at Union Church in June as the main speaker for the South East Baptist Association area celebration.

Sunday Club and Sunday Special

For the first time this year, Mothering Sunday fell on a Sunday Special day and we were pleased that a good number of the children's mothers joined us in church. They were all presented with a card designed by the children and a pretty primula. As usual, the children presented these to all the ladies in church and delivered them later in the day to some who could not be with us. At this service we were treated to a puppet sketch about mothers by Lorna and Dan.



We waited until April Sunday Special to make sure we had most of the 'Smarties' money handed in from our Lent project. The grand total was just 19 pence short of £100 - a really excellent effort! So we shall send £100 to the children's chosen charity CRY (Care and Relief for the Young).



During most of April, Sunday Club was in 'holiday mode' as the schools were on holiday and some families were away. Then it was back to normal classes until July.

May 4th will see all the children and young people receiving their annual gift of a book (or voucher for the older ones) from the church. A special presentation to Liam will be his own copy of the Bible he will need when he goes to his new school, Christ's Hospital, in September.



We are also looking forward to the special occasion on Pentecost Sunday, May 11th, when all the Churches Together of Heathfield and District will worship together at the Community College and all the children and young people will have a special programme together. It will be interesting to see how this new experiment works out!

Sue Mumford



On Palm Sunday we had a procession with palm branches; some of the young people joined the crowd of over 100 on Good Friday for our Churches Together Walk of Witness and, for Easter Day, Leyla and Ashley created a very pretty Easter Garden which was displayed at the entrance to the church.



The Sunday after Easter we enjoyed our All Age Service based on the Parable of the Sower. The older teens did a funny sketch based on that story and the puppet group did an excellent puppet version of the story. Seven children of different ages did the intercessions - prayers for people here and all over the world. We even had drinks and doughnuts in the middle of the service!



Sunday Club and Sunday Special attendance prizes

8 April 2007	Sophie	Architect	CD: "Ten Years of Soul Survivor"	150 stars ★
11 November 2007	Charlie	Sparkler	Book: "Journeys through the Bible"	100 stars ★
2 March 2008	Katie	Sunday Special		15 stars
	Ryan	Sunday Special		15 stars
	Jordan	Sunday Special		5 stars
	Keeleigh	Crèche		5 Teddy Bears
9 March	Elliott	Starlet		5 stars
	Amy	Crèche		5 Teddy Bears
16 March	Mollie	Sparklers		15 stars
23 March	Dan	Architect		30 stars
	Steven	Architect		15 stars
30 March	Hannah	Architect		15 stars
	Sarah	Architect	The Lion Bible for Children	100 stars ★
6 April	Claire	Architect	Gift vouchers for Pilgrim Hall Christian Bookshop	300 stars ★
	Louie	Sunday Special		5 stars
13 April	Lorna	Architect		30 stars

Congratulations Dan

Well done to Dan, one of our Architects, who has just heard that he passed his Grade 3 Piano examination with Merit (in fact just two marks short of a Distinction).

Kids' Bits

Sudoku Challenge

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

© Copyright 2004 The Word Puzzles

Aged 5 to 12+ ? Summer Holiday Fun ! Union Church, Heathfield

Come and join us for crafts, games, stories, competitions, snacks, team activities, FUN!

Tuesday 29th July
10.00am - 3.00pm
Wednesday 30th July
10.00am - 1.00pm
Thursday 31st July
10.00am - 3.00pm
Friday 1st August
10.00am - 1.00pm

**New for 2008 -
All Age Service on
Sunday 3rd August at
10.30am where all
children will be involved**

£8.00 per child (£1.50 per half day session)
Maximum £20.00 per family

Prior booking essential - for further information
and registration forms please contact

Sue Mumford 01580 819415 or
Gill Barker 01435 864003

This activity will be led by Monica Cook of "Rural Sunrise Ministries" and experienced children's workers from Union Church. Child Protection Policy is in operation.

What are the following a fear of?

1. Nomophobia
2. Nephophobia
3. Ochophobia
4. Apiphobia
5. Achluophobia
6. Brontophobia
7. Hodophobia
8. Linonophobia
9. Pluviophobia
10. Spectrophobia

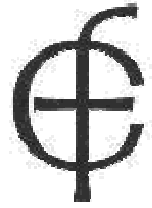


And what do the following people collect?

11. Arctophile
12. Copoclephilist
13. Notaphilist
14. Deltiologist
15. Plangonologist

- Answers:
1. Being out of mobile phone contact
 2. Clouds
 3. Vehicles
 4. Bees
 5. The darkness, night
 6. Thunderstorms
 7. Road travel
 8. String
 9. Rain, being rained on
 10. Looking in the mirror
 11. Teddy bears
 12. Key rings
 13. Paper money
 14. Post cards
 15. Dolls

What is the Congregational Federation?



Union Church is affiliated to both the Baptist Union and the Congregational Federation - this is the 'Union' its name refers to. This allows us to participate in various meetings of both denominations.

On the Congregational Federation side, Norah Fletcher and myself represent Union Church at Executive Meetings of the South East Area which are held in various churches in London. Business discussed includes reports from the representatives at various committees of the 'Con Fed' such as Youth, Christian Ministries, Mission and Finance. We also discuss administration matters concerning the various churches within the Area which covers a wide geographical spread - from Bedford in the north to the Isle of Wight in the south, from near Brighton in the west to the Isle of Sheppey in the east.

In addition to the Executive Meetings, the Area also organises fellowship days to which everyone from all churches in the Area are welcome - a Spring Assembly, Summer Event and Autumn Assembly.

The Spring Assembly was held on Saturday 12 April at Penge Church. After a time of worship

and a lovely curry lunch, there were presentations on three recent trips:

- India Rev. John Taylor reported on his visit to a number of churches who are part of the worldwide Congregational Federation fellowship;
- Brazil Pastor Sue Wade recounted her 'working holiday' helping to build houses for those living in slums;
- Fiji Nigel Lindsay from Herstmonceux brought some brightly coloured shirts and male 'skirts' from his visit.

The Summer Event will be held in Kentish Town on Saturday 21 June with speakers considering how to attract young people to church.

The Con Fed also publish a bi-monthly magazine (The Congregationalist) which is very interesting and easy to read. I receive a spare copy so if you would like to have a read, please let me know.

If you would like to find out more about the Con Fed or come along to any of the events, please speak to Norah or myself.

Christine Thomas

2008 Week of Prayer for Parliament and Government

The annual Week of Prayer for Parliament and Government will take place from 6-11 May. Supported by the Bible Society and 24-7 Prayer, organisers Christians in Parliament expect this year's event to be bigger and better than ever.

Involving MPs, Peers and staff from each of the major political parties, and civil servants from across the Departments and Ministries of State, all Christians are warmly invited to get involved - regardless of their own personal political viewpoint.

Bringing together Christians to pray for God's blessing on politics and government in the UK, the week has a clear focus on praying for (rather than against) those who have responsibilities relating to governing the UK.

The week represents an opportunity for individuals and churches, denominations, organisations, prayer networks, charities, and home groups to engage in concerted prayer in this important area of our national life.



Houses and church burnt in Bangladesh

More than 130 houses were burned in a hilly region of Bangladesh on Tuesday 20th April and at least nine persons were injured.

The Bangladesh Baptist Church Fellowship (BBCF), a member body of the Baptist World Alliance, reported that six Baptist families were among those who lost their homes. One Baptist church building was also torched.

The arson attacks resulted from tension between Bengali settlers and indigenous communities in Rangamati, a regional district in the Chittagong Hill Tracts of south eastern Bangladesh. Bengalis comprise 98 percent of the population of Bangladesh. The other two percent is mostly Bihari migrants and indigenous tribal groups; thirteen tribal groups are located in the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

Even though Christians are less than one percent of the population in Bangladesh, Christianity, including Baptists, has a significant presence among tribal groups mostly in the hilly, rural regions of the country.

Bengalis are moving into areas normally inhabited by indigenous tribal groups and are allegedly driving some tribes from their lands, creating tension. According to the Daily Star, the largest circulating English language daily newspaper in Bangladesh, "Victims of an arson attack on four hilly villages... alleged that Bangalee (Bengali) settlers there set fire to their 77 houses on the night of April 20." A later report by the same newspaper put the number of homes "burnt to ashes" at 132.

Dennis Dilip Datta, a former president and general secretary for BBCF, and recipient of the 2008 BWA Denton and Janice Lotz Human Rights Award, indicated that BBCF leaders were to meet on May 1st to discuss the incidents.

The Chittagong Hill Tracts, as well as parts of north east India that border Bangladesh, have recently been affected by food shortages due to rat infestation of agricultural fields, a phenomenon caused by bamboo flowering. The flowering occurs in long cycles ranging from every 10 to 60 years,

depending on the bamboo species. During the flowering cycle, the number of rodents increases significantly. Rodents eat the protein contained in the bamboo seeds, and also destroy other standing crops and edible grain, causing famine.



Datta appealed to Baptists for their help and prayer. "Please remember the situation and the believers in your prayers, and if the Lord leads you to take some steps please do that," said Datta, who is to receive the BWA Human Rights Award at the General Council meeting planned for Prague in the Czech Republic in July.

Baptist World Alliance press release, 1st May 2008

An invitation from the Quicken Trust

Quicken Trust is a Hailsham-based charity that has been working in the village of Kabubbu in Uganda since 2000. They are holding a 'Report Back' event on Saturday 10th May at the King's Centre, 27 Edison Road, Eastbourne from 7.00pm - 9.00pm. Entry is free.



There will be a Wine & Cheese Reception from 6.00pm to meet with Enoch Kagoda, Executive Director of the Kabubbu Development Project, and his wife Lilian, who have been instrumental in assisting the developments in Kabubbu. Tickets for the reception are available at £5.00 per person.

The evening will be suitable for the whole family and will feature the amazing eight-year growth of this well known local charity working with AIDS orphans and the community in Kabubbu through video, slides, testimony and interactive presentations.

Please contact Quicken Trust on 01323 832361 for tickets and more details.

Offering a ministry of Christian hope in Baghdad

Next time you feel that belonging to the church is too much bother, have another read of this. It is part of a Christmas message from Rev. Canon Andrew White, Anglican chaplain in Iraq, who ministers to Christians in Baghdad and whose book 'Iraq: Searching for Hope' was reviewed by John Glover in the January/February 2008 edition of Union Church News.

I go to church in a typical 1930s British looking church, only this one is surrounded by bomb barricades and razor wire. I can never really get used to this journey or the arrival but it is here my people are.

I take off my bulletproof clothes and the 150-plus children are all waiting for me and run to me. They kiss me and hug me and I have to ensure that I give every child an individual hug and kiss. "Abouna, Abouna" they cry; in Arabic, "Father, Father". After the children, it is the turn of the adults. A long queue develops and they too come to kiss me and hug me. For them I am not just their priest, I am really their Abouna; they love me and I love them.

Never before have I had a congregation like this, never before have I felt the love of a people like this and never before have I loved a group of people like this. They are indeed my people and I am their Abouna.

So we have well over 1000 members and none of them are traditionally Anglicans. They are from every possible denomination in Iraq; they come because they live near the church and it is too dangerous to travel to their traditional places.

One of the people with me today asks me where all the men are. I respond in quite a matter of fact way, "Oh, most of them have been killed." In the past three years, 11 of my staff and all of my original church leaders have been killed and the pain is still there. The women are still in black and when the fathers are killed we have to take on supporting each family; there is no other way.

Despite all the problems, dangers and difficulties here, things are improving and violence is reducing. Despite all the negatives of this place, we are finally seeing improvements. They may be slight and gradual but we have to hope they are coming. No, we cannot walk down the streets of Baghdad like we used to, but even my Iraqi congregation tell me things are changing. Two of the biggest changes are that they now have more electricity and better security.

As we look back on the past year, it is difficult to describe how tough it has been. I think of the security threats to me and having had to leave Iraq for a while.

The questions of the West are not the questions of most ordinary people here. Most people do not even mention the issue of coalition troop withdrawal. The fact is that the coalition is trusted more by most Iraqis than their own police and forces.



We do have hope again and we are planning for a wonderful Christmas. I talk to the children and I ask them what they are most looking forward to. They tell me that it is soon to be the birthday of Jesus, that he was born not very far away in Bethlehem. They all say that what they are really looking forward to is the singing they will do at church and the play they are going to do. There is no mention of presents or great food. There will not be any of that, but they will worship the Christ Child born in a stable not very far away in Bethlehem. They sing to me some of the carols they have been practising and they are wonderful.

I always have a spot in the service where people can tell me what has been happening. The stories are awful. One woman had just gone to the market and the woman next to her was killed. Another person had witnessed a car blowing up but had survived. The stories of death and destruction, chaos and tragedy continue, but amongst them all is a simple gratitude to God for survival.

In most places there may be frantic preparations for the extravagances of Christmas, but here in Baghdad it is simply the spiritual that remains: the birthday of a saviour. That is what they will hold on to, that is what will give them hope this Christmas time. Though surrounded by death and destruction they will celebrate life in all its fullness, the life brought by Jesus not far away. He is still not far away, and for my people he is their only hope.

So in the midst of all this chaos and tragedy we celebrate Christmas here, but here Christmas is all about our Lord: his mercy and his grace, and a great big party in heaven.

Taken from The Congregationalist; Issue 63, May 2008

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 12)	Senior Citizens' Luncheon Club
	6.00pm (term time only)	Beavers in the Church Hall
	7.00pm	Service at Mary Burfield Court
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

The Innocent Man

Author: John Grisham

Publisher: Arrow Books

ISBN: 978-0099-493570

After eighteen best selling novels John Grisham has now turned to non-fiction. This is the story of a star college baseball player from a small town in Oklahoma. Just when he seems to have the world at his feet his life spins out of control through injury, drink, drugs and women. It is also a story of law enforcement and justice in a community governed by gossip and prejudice; it is a story where the church goes with the tide. This book raises issues we all need to face.

The Living Church

Author: John Stott

Publisher: Inter-Varsity Press

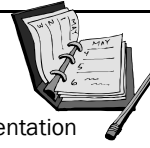
ISBN: 978-1-84474-183-0



If you have ever asked 'what is a living church?' here is a great answer. John Stott takes us through the nuts and bolts of church life: breathing new life into each, he leaves us with a vision of a Christian community alive for God. This is a book that imparts a divine vision that we would do well to catch. Easy to read and direct in its style, we meet something of the stature of this minister of the gospel.

Church diary

May	Friday 2	2.30pm	Women's Fellowship	
	Sunday 4	9.00am	Sunday Special	
		10.30am	Rev. Mark Welch - including annual presentation of books to children and young people	
		6.30pm	Window on the World	
	Tuesday 6	7.30pm	Deacons' Meeting	
	Pentecost Sunday	Sunday 11	11.00am	alltogether@pentecost - united celebration at Heathfield Community College - see page 3 NOTE: No services at Union Church today
		Tuesday 13	12 noon	Senior Citizens' Luncheon Club
	Sunday 18	10.30am	Rev. Mark Welch	
		6.30pm	Holy communion	
	Tuesday 20	7.30pm	Prayer Meeting	
	Sunday 25	10.30am	Rev. Mark Welch	
		6.30pm	"Meeting with God through Matthew" - please request a study guide from Mark a fortnight in advance if you wish to get the most out of this evening	
Tuesday 27	12 noon	Senior Citizens' Luncheon Club		
	7.30pm	Church Members' Meeting		
June	Sunday 1	9.00am	Sunday Special	
		10.30am	Rev. John Glover	
		6.30pm	Window on the World	
	Tuesday 3	7.30pm	Deacons' Meeting	
	Friday 6	2.30pm	Women's Fellowship	
	Sunday 8	10.30am	Rev. Mark Welch	
		5.00pm	South East Baptist Association Celebration - see News in Brief on page 5	
	Tuesday 10	12 noon	Senior Citizens' Luncheon Club	
	Sunday 15	10.30am	Rev. Mark Welch	
		6.30pm	CTH - St. Bartholomew's, Cross-in-Hand	
	Tuesday 17	7.30pm	Prayer Meeting	
	Church Anniversary & Gift Day	Sunday 22	10.30am	Rev. Mark Welch
1.00pm			Church Barbecue at the home of Mike & Rita Dimsdale, Burwash Weald (No evening service)	
Sunday 29	10.30am	To be announced		
	6.30pm	Holy communion		
July	Tuesday 1	7.30pm	Deacons' Meeting	
	Friday 4	2.30pm	Women's Fellowship	
		9.00am	Sunday Special	
	Sunday 6	10.30am	Rev. Mark Welch	
6.30pm		Window on the World		



Union Church, Heathfield

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Items included subject to suitability and space.