

CHRISTIAN WORKER



Christians discuss
outreach in Mainz,
Germany (p.3)

Five new Christians!
(p.5)

Sari Sunday
in Bristol (p.11)

Tributes to
Josie Eckman,
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Maplewell Summer
Holidays (p.13)

From the editors:

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Let me express my thanks to everyone for their patience with last month's *Christian Worker*. This was the first time we had attempted a 'themed' issue and we felt that it was deserved for someone who had spent his life in the service of Jesus. Many have commented positively on our attempt and we hope it was of some service to Alastair's family.

This meant that many news items were held over until this month, which has also meant that this month is packed with news and notices. Again, we have had to leave out a couple of items that were sent to us, but we will run these in a future issue.

There are more tributes to those who have gone home to their rest than we have ever published in the last few years. Many knew Josie Eckman and Bob's tribute to his mother was well worth devoting the space for. We were saddened to hear of Alex McGuiggan's sudden departure from this life. I have added to David Dunn's comments something that Alex's uncle Jim posted on his blog. Alex will also be missed. When reading about Jean Farrow, although I do not recall ever meeting her, we discover a woman who was devoted to the Lord – she was someone we would have enjoyed knowing. By publishing these tributes we hope these to be an encouragement to us all as we continue our lives for the Lord.

It was sad to receive the notice about Maplewell Summer Holidays (or Camp Maplewell). All of the camps organised by the various congregations for young people do so much good. I was privileged many years ago to work with the camp organised by Loughborough – I spent a week living in a tent and helping out at the campsite they were using at that time. Trevor commented about Maplewell's closing: *"Let me add my own personal sadness about this and add my thanks to everyone who has worked so hard and loved being at Maplewell and a thank you to everyone who ate the thousands of buns I was privileged to make over the years, every one made with a little bit of love."* We pray that another site will be found and that this camp can continue.

Continue to spend time in God's word, pray, and encourage each other!

Jon

Spotlight: Christians gather in Mainz, Germany

Arriving from all over the world a little taste of Heaven appeared in the German city of Mainz near Frankfurt. It was in Mainz that Gutenberg printed Bibles for the first time on movable type and in a city centre museum it was possible to view three copies of those first Bibles.

Over one hundred Christians from across the world gathered to celebrate together the grace and work of God in so many places, the furthest away being Cambodia.

We heard of the work taking place amongst the refugees in Athens, Marseilles, Vienna and Bremen. Here the local Christians are working with those who have no home.

They show tender love for those of different beliefs and backgrounds by feeding and caring for them, endeavouring to be the hands of Jesus to them.

Some are fascinated with the gospel message and have surrendered their lives to the Saviour they previously knew so little about. Khalid from Marseilles told us through interpretation of his story of being a Muslim and promoting that ideology before

he met the love of Jesus – he now serves Christ by teaching those from Muslim lands. Father and son team Alfred and Francis shared their story of how they work for Jesus in Cairo, a city of 30 million people. They have given away thousands of copies of the 'Jesus' DVD and 40,000 copies of the New Testament.

Craig Young from Marseilles brought a group of singers to praise the Lord and thrill us with the sound of their

voices, singing in both French and English. He also brought to our attention those who are of a third culture generation – those who are born in one place and move to be part of a different culture and language and having to experience other cultures as well.

In the evening the Christians were encouraged with the bold preaching of those from the West Indies who taught the brethren to AMEN somewhat more than the conservative European is used to.



Truitt Adair from Sunset International Bible Institute in Lubbock, Texas, one of the sponsors of this event, told us about the

schools of preaching they try to help all over the world. Bill McDonough, another sponsor, works with Partners-in-Progress serving in five continents. The third sponsor was Bill Colwell from World Bible School, who shared that even in Britain there are people who are studying with them. Here we were encouraged to find ways that people may be reached through mass media; this organisation are even willing to help with the costs. The fourth sponsor was Tom Langley, from World English Institute, who shared the desire of so many people to learn English from all over the world including the British Isles. This should make us realise that even here there is the opportunity of sharing with other people.

Many may think that to be involved in foreign mission work we have to go overseas, but the World has come to our shores and we have a wonderful chance to share with all the nations under Heaven. James Sanderson urged us to get to know the religious leaders in our community and graciously encourage a relationship in which the simple gospel might be shared. So many others spoke and perhaps we shall be able to share more in coming months through the *Christian Worker*. There is no doubt that when we meet together in love that the grace of Jesus seems so much stronger.

Trevor Williams

CHRISTIAN WORKER BY POST

Over the past two years we have sent out, where necessary, the *Christian Worker* magazine by first class post. The cost of this is 90p for the magazine plus postage. For single copies we ask £20 for 12 issues which means that we do not quite cover costs but due to generous brethren we can continue to do this. Most people receive the CW by email and it is sent all over the world free of cost this way. We can only post within the United Kingdom and this is really for those who do not have a computer or have problems reading from a screen.

We encourage each congregation to print off as many copies of the CW for internal distribution as it needs; doing this means we do not need to appeal for funds.

For individuals wanting a printed copy of the magazine sent to their homes we ask that you contact Trevor for registration. If you do not register with him first you will not receive the magazine.

Cheques can be sent to our treasurer – Mrs Jenny Sparks, 1 Doris Street, Ilkeston, Derbyshire DE7 5DP

Our web site is www.churchesofChrist.co.uk where there is a useful list of British congregations details.



Congratulations!

Northampton: Lyneth Prentice was immersed into Christ on 31st August in Northampton. From St. Kitts, she had been visiting Dave and Karen Johnson and as a result attended the meetings here. We are overjoyed that as a new Christian she has returned home rejoicing to begin meeting with the brothers and sisters in St. Kitts.



Lyneth Prentice

Mark Hill



Donna Spencer

Liverpool: It's always a great joy to witness the power of God's Word working in people's lives. After much study and prayer we're happy to announce that we have a new sister in Christ. **Donna Spencer** who had former affiliations with the church of England and the Mormons, came to understand the Gospel more fully and decided to hand her life over to Christ on Saturday, 30th September. Please keep our new sister in your prayers as she begins her new walk with Him.



Jamie Astle

Please rejoice with us as the Lord added **Jamie Astle** to His kingdom on Saturday, 21st October. Please keep Jamie in your prayers as he begins his new walk with His new Master.

Mike Glover

Summer Lane (Birmingham): We are rejoice that **Mark Jenkins** was immersed into Christ on Saturday, 8th October. Please keep him in your prayers as he starts his new life in the Lord.



Mark Jenkins

Trevor Ralph

Peterborough: We rejoice in the decision of **Michelle Harrison** to be baptised to have her sins forgiven and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit on Saturday, 30th September. Our prayer is that Michelle will grow in grace and the knowledge of God's Word throughout her life's journey. We would like to thank the Northampton congregation for the use of their facilities.

David Hepburn

Josie Eckman (1927-2017)

Stapleford

As no doubt many in the United Kingdom will know, Josie passed from this physical life on Thursday, 7th September following a brief spell in the Royal Derby Hospital. She leaves behind three children, six grandchildren, and eight great-grandchildren. Born and raised in Liverpool, she completed what could only be an astonishing life, a life that was lived in faith of her Father and in glory to the Lord. On 23rd May of this year she celebrated her 90th birthday, and a big party was arranged for her with Mum loving every minute! She had three of her grandchildren (including one from Uganda and another from Australia) with her and six of her eight great-grand-children and close to ninety of her extended family and friends. At that time, no one would have guessed what lay ahead in just a couple of months.

As mentioned, Mum grew up in Liverpool, facing the *Blitz* during World War Two. She and her family were bombed out of three houses, and in spite of the hardships of that time, Mum would say that much good came to her during those years. She met my dad, Clarence Eckman, who was a young American GI stationed at RAF Burtonwood on the outskirts of Liverpool. Dad would always say that it was “love at first sight.” Towards the end of the war, they were married and a year later she made (with a child of a few months) the arduous trans-Atlantic trip to America,



leaving in cold winter weather and arriving two weeks later in the heat of Houston, Texas thinking that even hell couldn't be hotter than Texas. In her mind, she was leaving her life in the UK behind little knowing that in time God would have other plans! The story doesn't end there.

Mum didn't marry a preacher and she would never have dreamt that most of her life would be spent as a “preacher's wife.” But, when Dad began preaching for the Hispanic congregation in Houston, she was right behind him. It wasn't by any stretch of the imagination a glamorous life; for the most part they lived on the proverbial “bread line”, but it was Dad's choice and Mum supported him all the way. By this time they had three children (Beryl, Bob, and Jim) with a fourth (Cherry) yet to come. Dad became proficient in the Spanish language, and his work took him all over the southwestern parts of the United States, Mexico, Central America, and South America. Everyone thought that his life lay in that area of work.

Mum was a major part of his work, teaching children's Bible classes. In fact, one of my earliest memories as a very young boy was watching my mother sitting at a table cutting out figures for what was then cutting-edge flannel graph lessons for Sunday School. Mum taught classes such as these for many years, as well as ladies'

classes. It was also during this time that Mum learned that she was a proficient artist, starting in the world of ceramics before going on to oil painting. Her pictures now hang in the homes of people all over the world! However, the story doesn't end there.

It surprised all of us – including Mum – when Dad came home one evening in 1964 saying that we were all moving to Northern Ireland the following year. Mum was made of what we would call today the “old-fashioned” stuff, believing that wherever Dad's work took him, she would willingly go, no questions asked and no objections made. If it had been Mexico, the jungles of Central America or into South America, Mum would have happily gone with him. In 1965, the family moved to Belfast with a plan of returning to the States five years later. In the end, they extended their time to six years, returning to Houston in 1971. But the story doesn't end there.

In time, Mum and Dad moved to Lubbock where Dad returned to his Hispanic work, teaching (in Spanish) at the Sunset School of Preaching for almost 20 years. By this time, Bob, Beryl, and Cherry were all living in the UK. Bob had married Jean Reilly, Beryl had married Ken Mullan, and Cherry had married John Diggle. Looking to the future, with Jim living in another part of the United States, and three children living overseas, when Dad retired from Sunset, they decided to cross the Atlantic once again, moving to Heanor in Derbyshire in 1993. They became a major part of the new work in Nottingham with Dad preaching from time to time. This also enabled them to make trips back to Belfast to visit the many good friends they still had

there, and for Dad to preach in other congregations in England and Scotland. They especially enjoyed going to Peterhead to meet their dear friends there. Dad left this life in 2002, but the story didn't by any means end there!

In the fifteen years since Dad's death, everyone has had nothing but the greatest admiration for the way in which Mum has coped without him and with life on her own. She was blessed with excellent health and an even healthier faith in God. Many times she has said how much her faith has kept her going, with the belief that God must have had some reason for keeping her here on this earth. One of those reasons was the tremendous inspiration that she was to the Nottingham congregation and to all who met her. She was proud of her Lord and for all that He had done for her and she shared her faith with everyone, even in death. When she was given the diagnosis by the consultant and nursing staff, her response was, “I'm a Christian; I'm not afraid, and if God has greater plans, then that's fine.” She inspired this congregation with her faith and was a wonderful example of what being a Christian is all about. Her faith inspired everyone of all ages. Her greatest example was to two young girls, Olivia and Miriam, who always sat next to her every Sunday. One Christian described her as the “queen of the church” such was their love for her.

Will we miss her? Of course we will. But her memory – and especially the memory of her faith – will live on for many years to come. Certainly, in Mum's case, the story didn't end on the 7th of September.

Bob Eckman

Alex McGuiggan
Newtownards



It is with deep pain and sadness that I report the passing of a brother in Christ and very dear friend. Alex was called home, suddenly, to be with the Lord on 19th October. Needless to say, this would not have been the choice of any of us here in the small assembly of God's people in Newtownards, never mind the loss for his wife Ann, and his children and wider family. But, we bow our hearts before our Maker and submit to His wisdom and goodness, knowing He alone knows and purposes what is best for each of us.

We ask that you would take time as individuals, and as His gathered people, to petition the Father for comfort and courage for Alex's remaining family. Also, for fortitude, wisdom, and faithfulness to our Lord and His mission, for the congregation Alex leaves behind in Newtownards.

David Dunn

I visited home just recently. While I was there my nephew Alex died. Massive heart attack. Arterial weakness—a McGuiggan heritage. My brother Willie, Alex's father, a beautiful and gentle man died at 50; same underlying cause.

Alex was and is (still) a great man. Steady, accomplished, funny, lover of and beloved by God and his immediate family. He was 68. Never smoked but had voice-box removed due to cancer. Continued to lecture at the university, loved it and was greatly admired. He was linked to too

many other grand enterprises and projects to speak of them here. He headed up and spoke on behalf of many. He carried himself marvellously as a Christian and human through sustained difficulties.

The little assembly he rejoiced to be with for so many years will miss him sorely but they'll know where to find him when they go looking for him. They will remain assured and hope-filled in part because Alex has been a faithful teacher of what is central to our faith.

The last thing I heard him say was his speaking God's name in blessing on me as I left. Then dinner with his family where everyone laughed till they were sore and then his coming home from a lecture, at the train station he collapsed and died.

Well, what to say? Other than that I loved him, was greatly helped by him and admired as well as liking him I can only say I'm sad but in Christ we're friends forever and the best is yet ahead on that Resurrection Day.

His immediate family? A beloved wife 'lost' a loving husband, children a beloved father, brother and sisters a beloved brother; all deeply saddened but also certainly comforted by Alex's Lord and Saviour who is also theirs.

Jim McGuiggan

From his blog: 'Spending Time with Jim McGuiggan'
<https://jimmcguiggan.wordpress.com/2017/10/25/alex-mcguiggan/>

**Jean Farrow
Hindley**

On the 19th September we said our final goodbyes to our dear sister.

She came with her parents, Tom and Madge Hart, as a small child to the congregation at Hindley. She was related through her parents to our one time elder, Stephen Winstanley (father of Albert Winstanley).

She was very well read in the scriptures. Her knowledge had been built up over years of studying and reading the Word. Her love of the King James version will stay with me – I remember her look of disapproval when modern versions were read.

67 years ago she married at a young age ‘the love of her life.’ I recall the way she addressed him, always STEPHEN—not Steve as most know him They had three children: Anne, David, and Stephanie. Jean, Stephen, and the family were hit badly when Stephanie died.

But her life, and Stephen’s life, live on in their grandchildren: Rachael, Mathew, Peter, Emma, Abigail, and Simon, and great-grandchildren: Anay, Blake, Archie, Isaac.

Jean helped Stephen in his role of treasurer for the congregation. Being a wages clerk and working with balancing books, I used to dread having to ask her for money for print cartridges Her reply was “it doesn’t seem many weeks since I gave you money before.”

Our dear sister has gone home, which as the apostle Paul wrote, “is much better.”

All the suffering and weariness has gone. When I arrived at the hospital she had just passed away. I sat on her bed, held her hand, and said, “Jean you are lovely and warm.” She couldn’t hear me, because she had gone home.

I ask you to pray for her husband Stephen. He tried his best to look after the ‘love of his life’, despite having just celebrated his 90th birthday. And remember all their beautiful family before our Father..

May her memory linger with us.

John Morgan

Directory Update

PERTH (Perth and Kinross)

Meeting place: North Inch Community Campus, Gowans Terrace, Perth, PH1 5BF

Sunday meeting: Bible study 10.00 am Worship 11.00 am

Midweek: Tuesday, 7.00 pm in homes (contact us)

Connection Youth Club: 6.30 pm at Goodlyburn Primary School

Contacts:

Scott Tominey. 📞 (07454) 972691 📧 Tomiyemi@hotmail.co.uk

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640672 📧 pollyaclark@hotmail.co.uk

Walking with God

By the time you read this there will be less than a week before our first residential Study Week at Bassenfell Manor in the Lake District. If you're still thinking of joining us, there are spaces available and we would love to hear from you.

We are to be working through our "Walking with God" module, one of our practical modules which explores the concept of walking with God as we consider various aspects of personal faith and discipleship.

The Study Week will be run along similar lines to our Study Weekends, inasmuch as we plan for an intensive study event, but being a residential event allows much more flexibility and opportunities for learning and spending time with one another. The event will begin with an evening meal on Monday and conclude on Friday morning. Classes will be held all day on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. All the details are on our website.

Another Family Retreat

In light of our winter Family Retreat in the Lake District having been over subscribed for the past two years, we have decided to



hold an additional, similar event at a different time of the year in another part of the country. We are delighted to announce that we will be holding an autumn Family

Retreat in the Mid-Norfolk countryside from 14th to 16th September 2018.

If you would like to join us for a peaceful retreat in a beautiful corner of England within a relaxed,

welcoming family atmosphere, then we would love to have you with us. The theme for the weekend will be: *I want to know Jesus ... learning to know Jesus, not just about him.*

The cost is just £70 per adult. Children from 4 to 12 years old are half-price. Under 4s are free.

You can find full details on our website at [http://britishbibleschool.com/upcoming-](http://britishbibleschool.com/upcoming-events/letton-hall-family-retreat-2018)



[events/letton-hall-family-retreat-2018](http://britishbibleschool.com/upcoming-events/letton-hall-family-retreat-2018) where you can also register to secure your place. Spaces are limited...

Thank you for your continued support of the work of the

British Bible School. May God bless us all in his service.

Patrick Boyns

Great Barr (Birmingham): We had yet another uplifting day of fellowship on Saturday, 16th September, as God's people turned out to praise God in songs, praying together and listening to God's words.

The theme for this year was 'This is my Father's world' – a relevant theme in our ever-changing world where people consistently make concerted efforts to deny the existence of our Almighty Father and His creative powers. The first lesson was presented by Graeme Morrison from Corby in which he addressed the question of whether life came about through creation or evolution. He comprehensively researched both the scriptural and scientific standpoints, exposing the inconsistencies and contradictions in various scientific theories of evolution and drawing a conclusion with an overwhelming evidence of the creative explanation to life and the existence of the one true God who made everything.

The second lesson was presented by Mike Glover from Liverpool. He explored what the point of life and death is, taking us through the book of Ecclesiastes, emphasising the vanity of life apart from Christ, and concluding with the hopeful expectation of living eternally with God as being the whole essence of life and death.

In addition, we also had an interesting session of Bible challenge, doing crosswords and resolving puzzles. There was also a session of group discussions on the lessons of the day.

Finally, it is important to thank our sisters for their efforts and time in organising such a good lunch for all who attended.

Sola Adeosun



Ilkeston: 23rd September saw our third Macmillan coffee morning. With around 40-50 people attending the coffee morning our chapel was buzzing with chatter as Christians and a number of friends attended to support this project raising about £200.

Trevor Williams



Bristol: On Sunday, 24th September, we held a 'Sari Sunday'. This was to raise funds for the work that Jayarajan does in Andhra Pradesh, India. Many of the ladies dressed in saris and this made for a very colourful worship service. Some of the men also dressed in traditional Indian clothing. We also enjoyed an Indian-themed fellowship meal.

During the worship service, we heard about the good work that goes in Andhra Pradesh, and the needs they have for us to assist them in spreading the Word.

We raised over £700 and this will help with such items as a new public address system for outside meetings, bicycles for the local preachers and a camera so that events can be recorded and publicised.



We are planning on holding similar days in the future and would love to have others join us. Manchester, as a city and a university, is ever expanding and many people are moving to this area. Please remember us in your prayers and point any movers to the Manchester area our way.

*Sam Appiah-Anane
(Junior)*

We thank God for the work that goes on all around the world and that we are able to help in this small corner.

Robert Daniell

Stretford (Manchester): Saturday, 7th October saw us open up our 'Green Hut' in Stretford for fellowship and a 'Lost & Found' gospel message. Christians from nearby Skelmersdale, Liverpool and Hindley joined us and further afield from congregations in Norwich and Bristol. We were delighted to have the Snethen family with us and have Jason Snethen share about the lengths our God goes to (and has gone) to find us – the lost ones who have wandered away from where we have come from or where we should be.



Northampton: A big 'thank you' to all involved with what was a wonderful Ladies' Day on Saturday, 21st October. 58 were present representing ten congregations. Thank you to our four speakers, Yinka, Donna, Judy and Pat who in turn spoke on serving God in the four seasons of life, Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter. Along with the lessons, a time of discussion and singing was enjoyed.

Much was done in preparation for the day by various ladies to ensure everyone would enjoy it and have something to remember it by. The building looked very welcoming with the



decorations made and provided. These were still up on the Monday and all who came to the Alzheimer's Day Centre that our building is used for, complimented how lovely they looked.

Paulus led the men in preparing and serving the food; their service on the day was very much appreciated. Thank you to everyone who helped – it was a great day.

Suzanne Hill

Ghana Fund: Eileen Wickenden wants to thank everyone who is helping the work in Ghana through the 'Church of Christ Ghana Fund'. Eileen has recently moved house and now lives at 9 Peel Court, Longwick Road, Princes Risborough HP27 9EZ. We

all also say 'thank you' to Eileen for looking after this fund for so many years.

Trevor Williams

European Christian Workshop: Our theme next year will be "Digging Deeper" and the dates are 16th-18th August 2018.

Also please note that my personal e-mail address has changed. It is now swoodcock8433@gmail.com.

Stephen Woodcock

Maplewell Hall Summer Holidays Notice

Sadly we need to let everyone know that our Summer Holidays at Maplewell Hall now have to cease. 2017 was our last year at that venue.

The county council have ruled that their properties, such as Maplewell Hall, can only be hired out for daytime use – no one is to sleep there overnight. This has come as a reaction to the Grenfell fire. It means we cannot operate as we have been doing. The school staff, who have always been so very good to us, are quite upset and argued our case. However the council has ruled they do not want to hire out a property and then have something go wrong.

The past 22 years at that venue have been a wonderful, annual experience. Long-term staff always said it was like coming home whenever we arrived to start setting up. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all who have been involved over the years. So many have helped in so many different ways. May God bless all who have helped.

It has been a joy recently to see past campers bringing their children along to

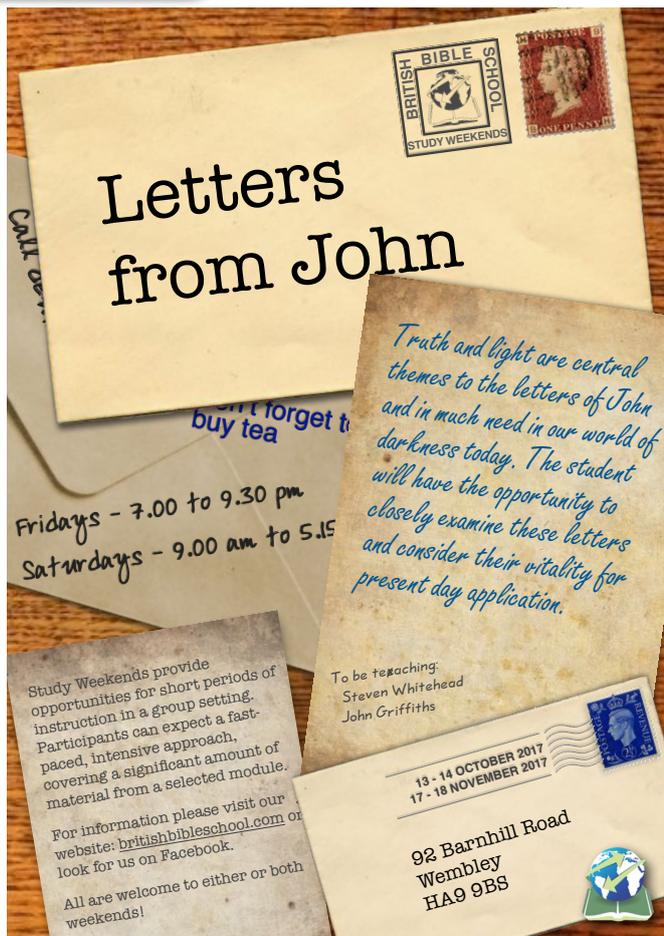
experience what they experienced. The majority of staff are also past campers. God has been glorified, souls have been saved and lives have been enriched, as happens in all of the camps.

We hoped to have found another site prior to making this announcement so we could merely have said we have moved. It may be the case somewhere can yet be found. To date, though, other sites are already booked for 2018 (there was one available but they wanted £35,000 for a week, that's a few pounds more than we are willing to pay!).

For now we needed to let you know so those wanting to go to a camp can book at one of the others and not miss out.

Thank you so much to all who over the years made this such a good experience either as campers or staff. We have had a wonderful time! However, it will be exciting to discover what God is planning for us – that door may have closed but there is another now waiting to be opened.

Mark Hill



Acappella

Announcing our latest Praise & Harmony release:



<https://acappella.org/store/praise-and-harmony/wonderful-god/>

We are planning to hold a **50th Anniversary Celebration in Kirkcaldy on Saturday, 13th January 2018**. We will begin with something to eat at noon and plan to finish by 3.00 pm. This will replace our April social day just for the one year. PLEASE HELP with the catering arrangements by letting us know ASAP how many you anticipate will be with us on that occasion.



For More Information Contact us at
Registration@EuropeanChristianWorkshop.com
or on 01509 768789
Payment Plan Available to Help Spred the Cost



Autumn Family Weekend Retreat
Friday, 14th to Sunday, 16th September 2018
at Letton Hall in Norfolk

I want to know JESUS

... learning to know Jesus, not just about him



www.britishbibleschool.com

November

3rd-4th – **East Kilbride**: British Bible School Study Weekend. Module: “Galatians” (part 2) presented by Jack Paton and Mitch Vick. Friday: 7.30-9.45 pm; Saturday: 9.30 am-5.30 pm.

4th – **Leicester**: Fellowship Day – “Leadership”, 10.00 am-3.00 pm; speakers: Truit Adair, Brandi Kendall, Tim Burrow. Contact Paul Hill (paulh41@hotmail.co.uk).

6th-10th – **British Bible School**: Residential Study Week at Bassenfell Manor, near Keswick. Module: “Walking with God” presented by Patrick Boyns and Ian Starrs. Cost for the week (room and board): £150. To register, go to britishbibleschool.com.

10th-12th – **East Kilbride & Clarkston**: Annual Joint Glasgow-area Gospel Meetings – Friday at East Kilbride, 7.30 pm, Saturday at Clarkston, 7.30 pm, combined Sunday worship at East Kilbride, 10.00 & 11.00 am; speaker: Patrick Boyns. Contact: Jon Galloway (jdgalloway@mac.com) or Jack Paton (jgpaton@glasgowalumni.net).

11th – **Eastwood**: Quarterly Outreach meeting: “Jesus: Prophet, Priest and King”; light refreshments at 6.00 pm and lesson at 7.00 pm; speaker: Bob Eckman. Contact: Adrian Limb (cofceastwood@aol.com).

17th-18th – **Wembley**: British Bible School Study Weekend. Module: “The Letters of John” (part 2) presented by Steve Whitehead, John Griffiths and Patrick Boyns.

December

2nd – **East Kilbride**: An afternoon of song. 1.30-5.00 pm.

January 2018

13th – **Kirkcaldy**: 50th Anniversary Celebration (of meeting in their current location), 12.00-3.00 pm.

19th-21st – **Bassenthwaite Family Retreat** at Bassenfell Manor (Lake District). Organised by the British Bible School. (All spaces are taken.)

February

3rd – **Cumbernauld**: Men’s Day.

9th-12th – **Cumbernauld**: Youth/Young Adult Retreat at Rowerdennan Youth Hostel (G63 0AR); Theme: “Keeping Up With Christ.” Cost: £35 for two nights or £40 for three nights. To book your place contact: Nicole Barr (nicole8barr@gmail.com).

19th-25th – **Gemünden, Germany**: Advanced Bible Study Series. ABSS I Monday-Friday, ABSS II Friday-Sunday. For further information or to book your place, contact: Paul Brazle (brazle.paul@gmail.com or +32 488 481 082). (Follow group on Facebook – <https://www.facebook.com/groups/697781630273815/>)

March

10th – **Great Barr**: Bible Seminar.

July

20th-27th – **Camp Heatherbell**: Auchengillan Outdoor Centre (Allander Chalet); theme: “5G”; Contact: Adam Barr ((07889 631218), Graham McDonald (07748 787744) or email 5G@campheatherbell.org.uk for more details and camp forms.

21st-25th – **Commonwealth of Dominica**: 8th International Women’s Lectureship – “Wise Woman, Hold On, the Best is Yet to Come.” Contact: eighthiwl2018@gmail.com.

September

8th – **Great Barr**: Fellowship Day.

14th-16th – **Letton Hall Family Retreat** in Norfolk: “I Want to Know Jesus”. Cost: £70.00 per person. Bookings at <http://britishbibleschool.com/upcoming-events/letton-hall-family-retreat-2018>. Organised by the British Bible School.

The Final Word: "What are we planning for 2018?"



There are eight things you never hear in church:

1. It's my turn to sit in the front pew.
2. I was so enthralled I did not notice the sermon went on twenty -five minutes longer than usual.
3. Personally I find talking about Jesus more enjoyable than golf.
4. I volunteer to be a permanent teacher for Sunday School.
5. Let's pay our preacher enough so he can save some.
6. I love it when we sing hymns that I have never heard before.
7. Preacher, we want to send you to a conference in the Bahamas.
8. Nothing inspires me and strengthens me like our annual financial planning.

Oh yes, it is that time of the year again. Not Bonfire night nor Christmas parties but planning for action for the next year. Of course, the congregation that does not believe in the guiding of the Holy Spirit will not be interested in praying and planning to gain a greater vision that is larger than themselves. It is not Christians that lead the church but God Himself. The church after all belongs to God though some seem to think it is owned by the members. So what does God want for your congregation next year? You might well say, "Well how should I know?" To which the reply has to be "Did you ask what God wanted?" Ask away and see what the answer may be.

Last year the Ilkeston congregation were given the opportunity to write down on a sheet of paper what they thought would be good for this year, month by month, we then compiled all those thoughts. We took a roll of lining paper and gave space of about two feet (60 cm) for each month. It is nothing fancy: the month name at the top, with a theme for the month (useful for sermon preparation) and events underneath. Some of these events were outreach, some in-reach, some practical, some fun. For the first time we could see a plan that we could work, but next came working the plan. Did we do everything that we planned? Yes and no. Some things were changed or moved to another month, other things came up and some things never happened BUT we had a plan and it was exciting to know that we had things to look forward to, to plan for and to accomplish. We did not have to start saying what are we going to do...or when are we going to...it was on the plan. The plan has been tweaked and developed and it has been worked. We hung the plan along one wall of our chapel so it could be seen by everyone, all the time.

So what ideas do you have? How are your plans for 2018? We believe that God created the world but He must have had some good planning sessions beforehand. There are plenty of passages of scripture that speak of God preparing events – Proverbs 29:18 is worth remembering: "Where there is no vision, the people perish." May God help us to have a vision larger than ourselves.

Grant us vision, grant us wisdom; Grant us grace to know your will; Grant us strength and hope and patience; Grant us ears to hear you calling; Grant us a voice to say "we will". Amen.

Trevor