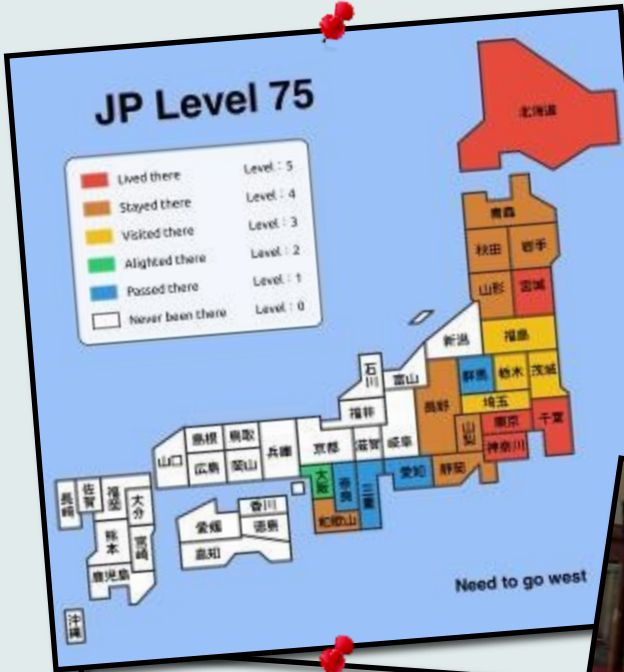


intouch



Back in Japan

Levi Booth,
page 24



Mark Raven writes on page 16 about his experience of writing to missionaries serving Jesus overseas. Not so long ago, writing to missionaries involved thin sheets of airmail paper and long delays between letters. Now, it seems even the remotest of mission placements comes with a wifi connection (though not always, and not always reliable!). Email and Skype enable us to keep in touch with them better than we ever could before, though sometimes security concerns can limit what we're allowed to share. Over the summer we've commissioned two of our members to go back abroad to serve again, and they need our support in prayer and practical encouragement. If you or your small group isn't supporting a mission partner at the moment, ask one of the Ministry Team how you can get involved further!

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Matthew Newman Editor

Informed, Involved, Inspired... Intouch!

Contributions to: magazine@spbc.org.uk or to the church office

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From the Ministry Team

Only By Prayer

As we begin the new term, there are lots of encouragements for us as a church. These include, for the first time in a while, a number of baptismal services (there should be at least five between now and Christmas, maybe more).

We have made progress on our purpose and values and there are a further encouraging signs of life and growth. Some of

these will be shared at South Parade Together on 6 October. Please continue to pray. We are in a spiritual battle. The words of Jesus to his disciples, "only by prayer" (Mark 9.29) should be written over everything we do.

Only By Prayer



South Parade Together focuses on the theme of generosity.

We are called to be a generous people, not just financially, but

with our talents and time as well.

Joshua 1.10-11 reminds us that all of God's people are to be involved in God's work. I'm personally so grateful for everyone who works in some area of church life, whatever that may be. Thank you!

Now is a good time to reflect and perhaps renew an existing



commitment, or recognise that God sometimes calls us to take the plunge and get involved in something new. What part is God calling you to play in the life of his church and its mission, as a new chapter begins to unfold?

This call to generosity can be made because God has first been generous with us. He is generous by giving us his word and by promising us his presence as we move forward with him (Joshua 1.8-9). He gives us a wonderful hope and a future too. God is generous

to us now, but there are wonderful promises still to be fulfilled. For us, “the best is yet to be”.

*What part is God calling you
to play in the life of his
church and its mission?*

May you know God's grace and
peace in your lives day by day,

Peter

*“In the same way I was with Moses, I’ll be with you.
I won’t give up on you; I won’t leave you.
Strength! Courage!...
Don’t be timid; don’t get discouraged.
God, your God, is with you
every step you take”*

Joshua 1.6 & 9 (The Message)

*When I tread the verge of Jordan,
Bid my anxious fears subside;
Death of death and hell’s Destruction,
Land me safe on Canaan’s side.
Songs of praises, songs of praises,
I will ever give to Thee;
I will ever give to Thee!*

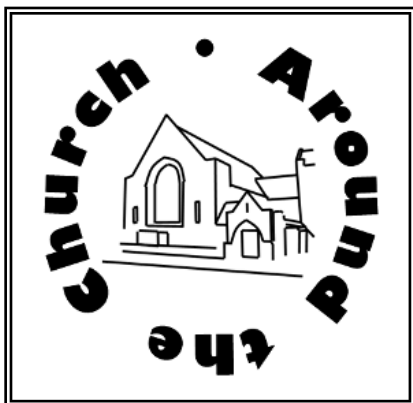
William Williams

Around the Church

Baptisms at Headingley

A week after Magda's baptism at Headingley three girls from Junior Church were baptised by Heather and Gideon in the morning service. Hannah, Amitis and Pippa spoke about their journey to faith and how God had led them to this point in their lives:

- "I decided for sure that I wanted to be part of God's family. God was moving in an undeniable way" (Hannah)
- "I always attempt to live in the Lord's footsteps, even when times are difficult" (Amitis)



- "God does work in miracles as I found out when I experienced him for the first time" (Pippa)

"I decided that I wanted to be part of God's family"

Afterwards Peter encouraged all of us to "live a life in technicolor" and follow Jesus more closely - the sermon is available on the church website. Please pray for all these four people in the coming days and weeks, and for others who have been baptised recently, or will be baptised soon.

MN

TLG Early Intervention Centre

For several years, we have partnered with TLG and run "Early Intervention" sessions which involves one coach, one child, one hour a week. The excellent links which Heather McLeen established

in local primary schools, are providing the opportunity to coach and support children on a one-to-one basis. In the beginning, Hazel Randall was our Co-ordinator, however when Hazel moved to Sheringham we struggled to find someone to take on the role.

Back in June, at the Ministry Fair at Headingley Morning, Scott donned his pink TLG t-shirt and set about recruiting a new Co-ordinator and Coaches. A few weeks ago, our new Co-ordinator and five new Coaches attended a Training Day at TLG HQ in Bradford.

Please continue to pray for this excellent initiative which supports children, families and schools in our local area:

- Please pray for Liz Mitchell as she gets to grips with being our Co-ordinator.
- Please pray for Helen Capocci who is coaching at St Stephen's Primary School, Kirkstall.
- Please pray for our new Coaches (Phil Chalmers, Hannah Childs, Freeman Dumenu, Gideon Fairhall and



Liz and the other TLG volunteers at the training day

Norris Orighoye) as they prepare to start coaching.

- Please pray for the schools we already partner with (Stephens and Little London) and for the possibility of linking with new schools

Nathan Shipley

Associate Pastor

Consequences at Connect@CopperBeech

On Sunday 22 September, Connect@CopperBeech took a look at stories, focussing on Psalm 139.16b, "All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be."

As part of our time together, we



Summer Barbecue

On 8 September, about 70 Connectors of all ages got together for a late-Summer BBQ. The sun shone, the bouncy castle bounced, large quantities of food disappeared and a great time was had by all! We truly felt God's blessings on us throughout the afternoon.

John Pelham

Connect@Copperbeech Elder

played the youth work classic Consequences. Please find below a few of the "stories" we created together:

- Turtley met Donald Trump at Buckingham Palace. Turtley said, "Would you like to go on a walk with me." Donald Trump said, "Let's kill the Ender Dragon." The result was you're grounded boy!!!
- Zac Efron met The Queen in the woods. Zac Efron said, "Let's eat some cake." The Queen said, "I ate all the pies". The result was Brexit was not Brexit.

- Alan Dolben met Peter Morden at The White House. Alan said, "Honoured to meet you, Ma'am." Peter said, "Yes, I'll get my shoes on." The result was they defeated the dragon in the end and had cake!
- Froggy met Mr Ender Dragon in Little London. Froggy said, "Bonjour!" Mr Ender Dragon said, "Life is magic!" The result was they fell in love and moved to Mexico.

Nathan Shipley

Associate Pastor

Church Meeting Notes

Some highlights from the church meeting on 26 September:

- More baptisms and conversions happening across the gatherings - this is really encouraging
- More detailed work on the

A new café manager for the Green House has been appointed

vision of the church is happening within different gatherings

- Kate Burkett's hours have been increased
- Kate Churchill's hours have also increased, she is now South Parade's Operations Manager

- After recent interviews, one person has been appointed as the new café manager for the Green House and should be starting work soon
- A rethink about the future of the CAP Debt Centre is underway after a new centre manager couldn't be found
- An update on the church's finances was given – see page 12
- A room in the church will be used as a base for a 24 hour prayer week in November – more details soon
- The church agreed to purchase a new manse for the use of Matt and Rachel

MN

...informed...

Share news from your corner of the church by emailing magazine@spbc.org.uk



...informed...

For service times, locations, gatherings, children's and student work, the weekly notice sheet, sermon downloads, this magazine and much more, go to the church website!

www.spbc.org.uk



Step of Faith

My Indian Summer

Tom Whitman travelled to southern India for two weeks in the summer to build new toilets and sanitation facilities for a rural community in Marayoor, Kerala. He reports back on what happened.

I travelled with a group of 10 sixth form students from Abbey Grange with a charity called YearOutIndia. The trip was a great success and we were able to complete the construction of two brand new toilets within 10 days. This process was definitely more taxing than I initially expected and

there was a lot of heavy lifting involved. We worked with limited tools, digging 10 foot holes with a small spade and mixing concrete with a shovel.

It was a very hilly area and this meant there was a lot of fetching and carrying of equipment and materials up and down the steep hills. It was amazing seeing the difference between what the family had before we came and after, and it was extremely fulfilling to see the direct impact we were having. The families had gone from having a few tarpaulins around a bucket to having a substantial building with a pour flush toilet and space to have a bucket shower as well.

We helped at a “pop-up” medical camp that was run by the Rotary Club and a number of doctors from the hospital in Kochi. This involved directing people, sorting out medicines, and some simple checks eg height, weight, blood pressure and blood sugar. Approximately 600 people came in one day from





Tom and the team in India



the surrounding villages. The medical camp is usually run twice a year and is the only chance they will get to see a doctor and get free medication. Everyone was very friendly and grateful for this opportunity. We also visited the local school to meet some of the children and donate some general school supplies.

Whilst we were there we also took the opportunity to immerse ourselves in the culture, trying new foods and meeting new people. We had vegetarian curry for almost every meal and I was definitely ready for something different when I got home! We visited a catholic church in the village for the morning service which was very different to churches in the UK.

There was lots of ritual and standing up and sitting down and it was all in the local language which made it hard to understand the sermon, but it was interesting none the less.

This new perspective has made me more thankful to God as I see the amazing things he has given to me

We also had the chance to play a cricket match against the local team. Unfortunately we lost the game but it was great fun to meet some of the locals that were our age and chat to them a bit about what life is like for them.

This trip was an experience I will

never forget and I would definitely go as far to describe it as life changing. The experience I gained of a culture so different to ours is something that I am very grateful for and I feel it has given me a new perspective on things that I sometimes might take for granted or not always be grateful for.

I feel as though this new perspective has ultimately made me more thankful to God as I am able to see the amazing things he has given to me. I am so grateful that he has helped me to use these wonderful gifts for good and to benefit those who are less fortunate

than me. I have come to realise that the issues of poverty that we see on the news are more than just stories and the people we see in the papers are just as much human beings as we are.

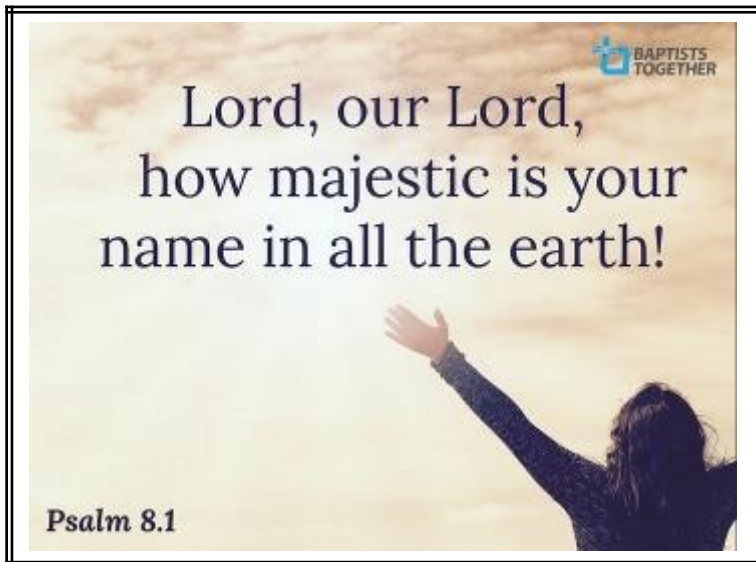
Once again thank you to everyone at South Parade who has helped me not just financially but spiritually through prayer. If anyone wants to know more about my trip feel free to come and speak to me on a Sunday morning.

Tom Whitman

Headingley Gathering

...inspired...

If you have a testimony of faith to share with the whole church, email magazine@spbc.org.uk



From the Treasurer's Computer

Generosity Sunday

Pete Briggs brings this update on the church's financial position on behalf of the Church Treasurer, and encourages us to respond generously.

Church members and regular attenders will know that it is our usual practice, at least once per year, to reflect together upon what God has been doing across the whole Church, to encourage folk to get further involved in various mission opportunities and to encourage

everyone to review and renew their financial commitment to the Church. This year we are using the South Parade Together service on 6 October to reflect together on what it means to be generous.

We've prepared a letter for all Church members and regular attenders, which will be given out on the day and which will include a response form for folk to use. If you would like a copy of the letter please contact our Church Treasurer, Katharine Widdowson, either via the Church Office or by

We are extremely grateful for your ongoing financial support

email at treasurer@spbc.org.uk. We are extremely grateful for the many ways in which you have all been actively involved in our Church life together and particularly for your ongoing



financial support. However, despite the many positive signs that God is at work amongst us, the level of pledged giving from members and regular attenders is a matter for concern for two main reasons. First, giving in the current year is forecast to be £50,504 less than in 2018. Secondly, our projected expenditure in 2020 is £48,267 more than the current year. As a Church, most of our income comes from members and regular attenders; apart from some lettings and bank interest we receive no other funding.

The table below shows our actual and forecast income and expenditure for the years 2018 to 2022. The table shows that our forecast position for the current

year is a deficit of £4,129 and then as expenditure increases in future years the annual deficit is likely to grow larger each year unless there is a compensating increase in giving from members and regular attenders (8% in 2020, a further 3% in 2021 and a further 3% in 2022).

We are taking the opportunity to encourage all Church members and regular attenders to consider the level of financial support that they give to the Church and, if they want us to continue to operate in a sustainable way in the future, commit to increasing this financial support by as much as they can (we're asking for all response forms to be returned by 27 October).

	2018 Actuals	2019 Forecast	2020 Projection	2021 Projection	2022 Projection
	£	£	£	£	£
Offerings pledged	393,959	343,455	365,277	365,278	365,278
Lettings & other income	27,631	34,390	37,223	37,918	38,631
Interest	3,731	2,533	1,100	600	100
Total income	425,321	380,378	403,600	403,796	404,009
Total expenditure	408,292	384,507	432,774	443,593	454,683
Net surplus/ (deficit)	17,029	(4,129)	(29,174)	(39,797)	(50,674)
Reserves BFwd	144,239	161,268	157,139	127,965	88,168
Reserves CFwd	161,268	157,139	127,965	88,168	37,494

If pledged income does not increase, then we will be forced to consider ways in which we can reduce expenditure to balance the budget but such action is likely to mean that we will have to stop some of the activities that we have planned to undertake.

How can I give to the Church?

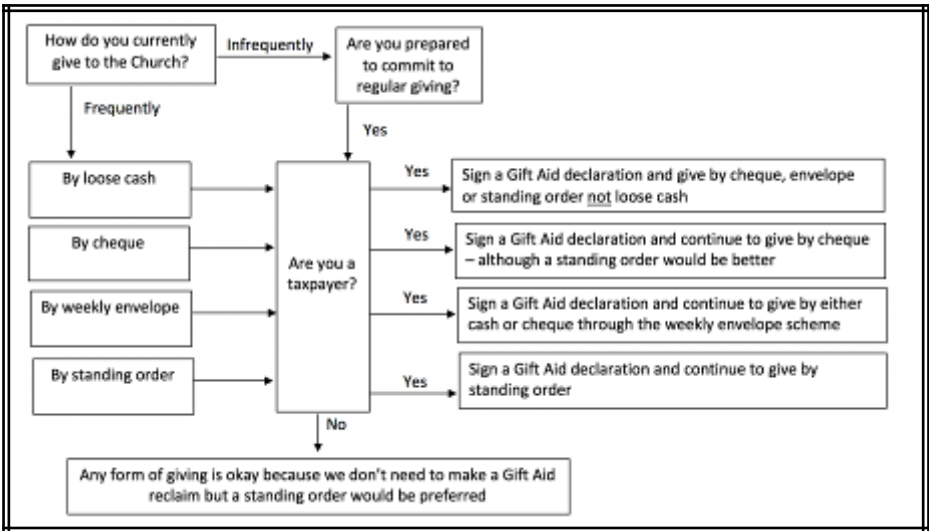
There are four different ways of direct financial giving to the Church: loose cash, cheque, weekly envelope and standing order (bank transfer). The diagram below provides guidance on the practicalities of giving, particularly if you are a UK taxpayer. If you are a UK taxpayer and provide the Church with a Gift Aid declaration, then we can reclaim an extra 25% of your giving from HM Revenue & Customs –

providing you give in an identifiable way. So each £1 donated under Gift Aid is actually worth £1.25 to the Church. If you have yet to sign a Gift Aid form please contact Katharine Widdowson.

If you are a higher rate taxpayer, by using Gift Aid, you might even find that you are able to reduce the overall amount of income tax that you need to pay!

*Giving is a sign of our love
for God, tangible proof of
what is in our hearts*

It is most helpful when members are able to commit to giving by standing order because that provides more certainty about our



income levels. If you need the Church's bank account details to set up a new standing order, please contact Katharine Widdowson for a standing order form.

As a result of inflation, our costs rise each year but experience shows that many members don't regularly increase their standing orders, so the impact of inflation over time reduces the real value of their standing orders, e.g. 3% inflation per annum over 5 years = 16%. There are examples of some members who have kept their standing orders unchanged for over 10 years. If members were in a position to regularly increase their giving each year, we would be in a much better financial position. Some employers facilitate payroll

giving schemes and, in some instances, the employer is willing to supplement the level of giving from the employee. If you work for an employer who operates such a scheme, please do keep Katharine Widdowson informed.

In one of his sermons for our 2018 Giving Sunday, Peter Morden said, "giving is a sign of our love for God, our love for his work, our love for his people, it's tangible proof of what is in our hearts." As we seek to serve God together in the years ahead may we not hold back in our financial support for the work of His Church.

Pete Briggs

Deacon for the Cragg Hill Gathering



Writing to Missionaries

I have started corresponding with Levi in Japan. In my 40 years or so at Moortown Baptist I have written to a number of missionaries:

- An optical doctor who spent many years in North Africa and cured many people of river blindness.
- A doctor who served in the Church of Christ in Nigeria. Whilst there he contracted Lassa Fever which can be fatal. We held a prayer meeting back home and he was healed.
- A couple and their family who went to Central Asia and later to Nepal.
- A doctor and his wife who went to Nepal. They adopted a daughter and son there. Now they live in France and he works for the World Health Organisation.
- Another doctor and his wife went to the Gilbert Islands. The place where they lived, Kiribati, had its claim to fame as the first place to see the new Millennium.
- A senior physiotherapist who worked in Bangladesh.
- And finally my brother Peter and his wife Naaz who served in Sierra Leone in West Africa with the Church Missionary Society.

Mark Raven

Headingley Gathering



...involved...

South Parade supports a number of workers around the world. Find out more about them through Sunday services, your small group or in back issues of Intouch, and look for ways to support them financially, practically or in prayer.

Prayer Diary



October - November 2019

AUGUST		
Sun	6	South Parade Together this morning
Mon	7	Matt and Rachel Wright
Tue	8	The Arabic Christian Fellowship
Wed	9	Your Gathering's Leadership Team
Thu	10	The Church office
Fri	11	Levi Booth
Sat	12	Your homegroup, small group or cell group leader
Sun	13	Jennie Hall being welcomed as a member of Connect@CopperBeech
Mon	14	Irene
Tue	15	Rooted
Wed	16	Teddy Praise
Thu	17	Your friends and family who don't know Jesus
Fri	18	Your neighbours
Sat	19	Pray for Leeds
Sun	20	Those leading worship today

Pull out and use!

Mon	21	The Deacons
Tue	22	Colin & Jill Jones and their work with the church in Normandy
Wed	23	Geoff King
Thu	24	All those who look after our church buildings
Fri	25	Jane Waites
Sat	26	Nathan Shipley
Sun	27	Connect@Copperbeech Gathering
Mon	28	Gideon Fairhall
Tue	29	Sam and Katie
Wed	30	Barnabas Bunch
Thu	31	The UK Government & national leaders
NOVEMBER		
Fri	1	Paul Rockley at Blenheim Baptist Church
Sat	2	People recently baptised or thinking about baptism
Sun	3	Chris Gnanakan
Mon	4	Young People meeting in Cell Groups
Tue	5	Kate Churchill
Wed	6	Greg McLeen, Church Secretary
Thu	7	Peter Morden
Fri	8	Ina and Malte von Blumroder in Germany
Sat	9	The Elders
Sun	10	Hannah Childs
Mon	11	Steve Fairhall, Tim Rowe and the work of the CAP centre
Tue	12	Missionaries with BMS World Mission
Wed	13	Connect Bible Club
Thu	14	St George's Crypt
Fri	15	Caring for Life

Sat	16	Katharine Widdowson, Church Treasurer
Sun	17	Headingley Morning Gathering
Mon	18	Retired people in the church
Tue	19	Cragg Gathering
Wed	20	Work with children and young people across the church
Thu	21	Headingley evening Gathering
Fri	22	Drop-in at Cragg
Sat	23	The Ministry Team
Sun	24	You and your place in South Parade
Mon	25	Students in Leeds
Tue	26	Tim Jackson
Wed	27	Kate Burkett
Thu	28	Junior Church leaders and helpers
Fri	29	Transformations Leeds
Sat	30	Joanna Project

Advent Prayer

Advent God, we journey with you to Bethlehem's stable and a new-born King, ears attuned to the song of angels, eyes alert for Bethlehem's star.

Forgive us if on our journey we are distracted by the tempting offers of this world.

Keep our hearts aflame with the hope of Christmas, and the promise of a Saviour. Amen

A Prayer for our nation

Lord Jesus Christ

We pray today as people who do not agree. We are divided on what we think is good for our country, we are divided on what should happen next, and we are divided in who we trust to lead us.

We know we cannot cry peace, peace, where there is no peace.

And yet, we continue to call out to you about the state of our nation, for the politicians who must take critical decisions in the next few days and weeks, and for our parliament.

Through your Spirit, we sigh in groans far deeper than words, yearning for the inexpressible hope beyond our politics, and for the heavenly promise that goes deeper than any platitudes.

Together we pray,

Your Kingdom come

Amen.

Twitter.com/baptistuniongb
24/9/19



Ford's Focus

Israel Demands a King

I Samuel 8

The nation of Israel have got to a place in their history where they desire a King.

These people appear to be unable to self regulate or self govern. They also see that Samuel's two sons are not what their father was, that is they were not spiritually aware like Samuel. They also looked around them and saw other nations ruled by Kings and royalty, so demand a king.

Israel's choice to have a king would change the way they were governed

by God through judges, admittedly not very good ones at times, to governance by royalty.

If we go back in the history of this nation, a nation of people who had been brought out of slavery into freedom, who had been given the opportunity to inhabit a land flowing with "milk and honey" in order to show and declare a righteous God, a living God who cares for people.

They were a people who had been set apart to show that through good and upright living, with the guidance of Spiritual leadership, it was possible to prosper and live in peace, that is to find contentment. Yes I know, I hear you say, "there was lots of killing and bloodshed involved in this so called quest for peace". Yes there was and still is because in order for us to live in a place of inner peace and contentment there will always be conflict, because life is first and foremost spiritual and battles are fundamentally battles of soul and spirit. They are battles for power.



So when Israel demands a King they are saying we can no longer govern ourselves, we need someone who can make life more tangible and have more meaning, in essence someone to rule over us and make choices for us because we can't do it ourselves.

As human beings we understand structures and boundaries, the tragedy is that when it comes to spirituality our structures and boundaries become a hindrance to us knowing God because we apply our human-made rules and laws to a God who is without limits and without time and space. God has no limits: we set the limits.

*This is God's land and we
have been entrusted to be
good stewards of it*

Israel's demand for a king was the beginning of the end for their nation. A nation that ultimately lowered its expectations to that of all the other nations around them and so entered a world of conflict, a world that said "this is my land and this is my country, this is what I am fighting for". The truth is that this is God's land and we have been entrusted to be good stewards of it and not to abuse it or its inhabit-

ants.

When a nation demands a King, that nation defines itself, what it is and what it does. Unless regulated by the spiritual morality that was laid down to God's people all those years ago and unless that moral spiritual code is governed and exercised by Godly people, then life will be difficult and nations will fight nations because they are defending their cause and not God's cause, a Godly cause that said "I have seen, I have heard, I have come down, I will bring up" (Exodus 3.7-8).

God is interested in setting us free from our slavery and the boundaries of human control not so that we can be anarchists or freedom fighters in a religious cause because we think it is what God wants, He sets us free in order that we are free to worship Him in Spirit and in Truth. Jesus said, "The truth will set you free" (John 8.31-36). Life is worship, it is a gift from an awesome, powerful creator, a creator whose very nature is to create in order for the created to enter into a place of worship. Everything brings praise, worship and glory to this wonderful creator.

God allowed the people of Israel to have their own way despite Samuel's warnings of what this kingship would demand of them I Samuel

8.10-22). In that day Israel turned from the guidance and care of the sovereignty of God to the rule and power of humanity, a power that is ultimately corrupt and is flawed. It is recorded in 1 Samuel 8.19 that “the people refused to obey”, in other words they rebelled from knowing the creator, their saviour, and abdicated authority to an earthly king who ultimately allowed power to corrupt him and eventually selling himself out to the evil one that is always seeking to destroy the work of God. The people’s rebellion was a decision that changed the nation forever.

*There is only one King,
risen and ascended*

Iwonder where we stand in all this? Do we entrust our lives to a living, sovereign God or do we rebel and demand a king to rule over us, essentially abdicating our

responsibility of engaging with God and allowing a “king” to act on our behalf?

There is only one King, a risen ascended King who will ride out of heaven on a white horse with the words “KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS” written on his robe and thigh. It is this King who will redeem and restore His creation back to Himself and rule forever (Revelation 19.11-16).

In Joshua’s farewell speech to the tribes of Israel he declares “choose you this day whom you will serve ... as for me and my house we will serve the Lord” (Joshua 24.15).

Do we serve the KING OF KINGS or do we allow another king to rule over us?

Steve Ford

Headingley Gathering
blog.stevelford.org

*Crown Him with many crowns,
The Lamb upon His throne;
Hark! how the heavenly anthem drowns
All music but its own!
Awake, my soul, and sing
Of Him who died for thee,
And hail Him as thy matchless King
Through all eternity.*

Matthew Bridges

I'm in Tokyo, Pray with Me

Levi Booth

Levi Booth writes:

I've been back in Japan for just over a week now. It's been great to catch up with some of my friends for an evening BBQ on a rooftop overlooking the city, throw a frisbee around in a park behind Sony HQ and enjoy trips to local sento (public baths): Tokyo life isn't too bad!

I've also got to visit a church that had a special testimony service for four people who had been recently baptised, hang out with some of the young people who take part in LINK ministries, and look at a few apartment options. I've put in an offer on a place that would put me close by to some key train lines as well as a park, river, and public sports centre. The question now is whether the building owner is happy to rent with the guarantor being a religious organisation.

Please pray for a swift and favourable response.

With Max and Reiko getting ready to retire and move back to

Switzerland at the start of November, we've begun the process of handing over responsibilities for LINK ministries. And in a super answer to prayer, we now have another member of the LINK team, a young guy called Norito, who will assist me in running the groups and also dealing with administration (definitely not my strong point). **Praise God for his timely provision and please pray for us as we continue to work out how to best work together.**

*Now that the Rugby
World Cup has kicked off
I will be helping with
various outreach events*

Now that the Rugby World Cup has kicked off (Go Brave Blossoms!) I will be balancing LINK handover with helping the JiSP (Japan international Sports Partnership) team out with various outreach events and teams. In some ways this is a trial run for the Olympics



Top: Wednesday night Bible study group
Bottom: Norito, Reiko, Max & Levi

find churches who want to use them. Most of the teams require translators and/or help with getting about etc. **Please pray for us to have wisdom to best utilise the teams and to help them benefit from their time in Japan.**

Last week I met up with the captain of the Japan Ultimate Frisbee national team to discuss selection for World Championships next September. He wants me to attend monthly training sessions leading up to team selection in April. To make the cut I'll have to show commitment and an ability to fit with the

and Paralympics next year. **Please pray for us to have open eyes and minds to the lessons we need to learn and for the Lord's blessing and guidance.**

There are some outreach teams that still have significant spaces in their schedules but we are struggling to

team's play style and strategy. **Prayers appreciated!**

Above all else please pray for me to daily delight in the goodness and generosity of God.

Levi Booth

With OMF in Japan

...informed...

Follow Levi's latest news at gritgracejapan.com



Parables for Today

Wayne Rooney and the Rabbit's Foot

How a seemingly innocent remark about superstition led to a chat about our pagan ancestors - and the Gospel. By Mark Roques.

I was enjoying a flat white with my good friend Tim who is a Manchester United fan. We were talking about Wayne Rooney and getting rather noisy about his bicycle kick against Manchester City in 2011. Wow. What a screamer! Tim had an insight. "I played the game at quite a decent level but I never broke my leg."



He paused and murmured furtively: "Touch wood". Now I am not one to go suddenly religious but I had a craving to explore this with Tim. "I didn't know you're a pagan who worships tree gods."

Tim was clearly befuddled and replied – "You what?"

I decided to unleash my parable about Druidic blood and gore and see where it would lead.

"Tim, you probably never learnt this in school but the ancient Celts, our ancestors, were superstitious heathens who worshipped and appeased tree gods."

Tim took a deep slug of his flat white and probed me. "Sorry chief, but I didn't know that about our great nation. Obviously I know my history. We won the World Cup in 1966 but did we really worship trees in them olden days?"

I unfolded my theme with some

juicy historical facts.

*Druids were not the kind
of priests you would invite
to your grandma's
birthday party.*

"You might have heard of the Druids? They were not the kind of priests you would invite to your grandma's birthday party. They were experts in propitiating river gods, tree gods and sea gods. They dreaded but placated these pagan deities. They would sacrifice people to the sea god by drowning them. They burned folk in huge wicker baskets to appease the sun god. They would hang men in forest glades to please the tree god. They practised divination by ripping their victims' guts out and then auguring the future by examining the bloody mess on the ground.

"Not nice, so I'm intrigued that you are touching wood."

Tim looked puzzled. "What on earth has touching wood got to do with our pagan ancestors?"

"Back then if you were alone in a forest and strange noises were scaring you, pagans would touch wood in

order to summon a tree spirit to come to their aid."

Tim began fumbling in his pocket and I thought he was going to pay me back the £20 he owed me but I was taken aback when he brandished a lucky rabbit's foot and asked me to hold it for him while he ordered more coffee.

"Sweet as a nut," I thought to myself. "This conversation is getting fruity. I can evangelise Tim without annoying him."

Tim returned with the flat whites and a cheeky bonus, some unexpected cake, Battenburg to be precise. We gobbled it down. Tim had a spiel.

"Mark, the story behind that will fascinate you.

My aunty Ethel left that for me in her will. She told me it had always helped her in difficult times. I carry it in memory of

her. Is that so wrong?"

"Well, it depends on how you look at the rabbit's foot. Do you view it as an amulet that can protect you from both physical and spiritual harm?"

Tim was bamboozled.

"Tim, you lack knowledge, so listen and learn. Juju priest, Nana Tolo-



fasito, comes from Ghana and he trusts in the magical power of amulets. Juju is a pagan faith that deploys magic and witchcraft. In 2017 Nana asked a friend to shoot him with a gun so that he could test his “bullet” amulet.”

Tim choked on his cake: “You are joking, I hope?”

“Sadly not. Nana’s pagan faith didn’t work and he sustained serious injuries. The story can be found on the internet.

“Here’s the link to your gift from aunty Ethel. What do bullets, acorns, alligator teeth and rabbit feet have in common?”

Tim was listening and drinking in my cut-diamond insights.

“All these and many more are used as charms and amulets by the pagan faithful. Amulets are objects, imbued with occult, supernatural power, that can be trusted to protect you from bullets, ghosts and evil spirits. For some, the right amulet can attract money and make you wealthy. Very popular in Thailand.”

Tim was keen to make a point: “So these charms can do almost anything?”

“Spot on my chocolate chicken.

Egyptian pagans trusted in images of the sacred scarab beetle to ward off evil spirits. Today some depend on their Saint Christopher charms as they nervously begin a journey. Napoleon had a lucky coin.

“And your lucky charm? Some gamblers trust in a rabbit’s foot as they feverishly play the slot machines.

There are those who claim that the left hind foot of the rabbit is particularly “lucky” and for maximum effect the rabbit should be killed in a cemetery during a full moon by a silver bullet.”

Tim couldn’t help himself. “So are you saying that my sweet aunty Ethel was an uncouth heathen?”

*Amulets and charms
cannot rescue you from
death, but Jesus can*

“Don’t get me wrong. Many today are superstitious without knowing the sordid pagan background. But believe me if you depend upon the rabbit’s foot, you cannot enter the kingdom of God. We are to fear the true God who loves us and not fear the pagan gods who hate us. Jesus told us to trust Him and Him alone. Trusting in amulets and lucky charms completely contradicts the gospel of Christ.”

Tim was floored. "What on earth do you mean by that?"

“**T**he gospel is the good news that God has defeated death, by raising His Son Jesus from the dead. Amulets and charms, like the rabbit's foot, cannot rescue you from death. but Jesus can. My advice is this - chuck the rabbit's foot in a bin and

put your faith in Jesus.”

Tim looked rattled. “Let's go back to the conversation about Wayne Rooney,” he said. “Do you think he has a rabbit's foot which helps him to score such spectacular goals?”

Mark Roques

Cragg Gathering

News from Hebden Bridge

*Friends at Hope Baptist Church, Hebden Bridge, have said farewell to their part-time minister the Rev **Gaynor Hammond**, who has led the congregation since April 2017, strengthening and training them to share their gifts in worship, preaching and teaching their community.*

Her gift from Hope is a reminder of the legacy of Baptist theologian, pastor and hymn writer the Rev John Fawcett whose mission to millworkers in “Trousers Town” kept him in Hebden Bridge despite calls to more prestigious places.

Gaynor will continue to share her significant expertise on dementia and spirituality with the wider Christian church.

www.yba.org.uk



Levi Booth @levibooth47 Sep 21

Go to #Starbucks, make my order in Japanese but the barista just silently points at an English/Japanese menu. Start to get annoyed at the blatant “foreigners can't speak Japanese” treatment when I notice the sign: “This barista is deaf”... gotta stop assuming I'm the victim!

BMS World News

I Am Innocent

I am Innocent and they wanted me to die.

I have Down Syndrome. My mum tells me I am a God Plan.

My father disowned me. Told my mum to abandon me, in Gulu in Uganda, where we live. I get infections easily, I took a long time to walk, a long time to eat or drink. I am different. I like to dance. I am five.

There are many other children like Innocent, who have been rejected by family and society

I am Innocent and while I could not write these words, I'm important too.

There are many other children like Innocent, who are joyful, kind, and who have been rejected by family and society. Whose parents have suffered depression and financial



The God-given boy of Gulu



Lucy, a passionate mother in

hardship because people have not understood what Down Syndrome is.

“I’ve done a lot of the diagnosis,” says Lois Ovenden, a BMS World Mission speech and language therapist based in Gulu. “People notice something, but don’t know what it is. Sometimes, doctors won’t give the diagnosis.” You can understand why. In Uganda, as in many countries, there is a stigma

attached to disability. There are practical problems too. Care is time-consuming and expensive. The children themselves can be challenging. “These children can learn. But they need support,” Lois says.

That’s why she started the Gulu Down Syndrome group. To connect parents with a local school that integrates children with special needs so they’re not excluded. To let parents know they are not alone. “They love with a fierce and unconditional love that shows their children are a gift,” says Lois. They are her inspiration. They are each other’s lifeline. And they have grown in love.

October is Down Syndrome Awareness Month. Subscribe to BMS’ flagship magazine Engage to read the full story: <https://bit.ly/engage-news>

Action Teams is the BMS gap year programme, open to people aged between 18 and 23. Possible destinations include Nepal, Kosovo, India and Mozambique, topped-off with a two-month tour of UK churches, getting congregations excited about mission locally and globally.



**Apply now before 26 January:
bit.ly/bmsaction_teams**

God came
to his pity party.
Put up a shelter
of shadowing leaves.

A worm came
to his pity party.
Chewed the root
and demolished it.

Anger came
to his pity party.
Made the sunstroke
a whole lot worse.

God left
with a question.
It's still
up for discussion.



"Should I not have concern for the great city of Nineveh in which there are more than 120,000 people who cannot tell their right hand from their left - and also many animals?" Jonah 4.11

*In Nineveh
even the animals repented!
Puzzled donkeys wore sackcloth
Thirsty goats scratched ashes.
And God,
with endless compassion,
gave his beloved creation
a second chance.*

Pat Wray

Church Noticeboard



www.spbc.org.uk

Sermons currently available to download from the resources section of the church website:

- “Jesus, Light of the World” (Peter Morden)
- “The Parable of the Fat-Bellied Father” (Levi Booth)
- Revelation 5 (Geoff King)
- “The Power of the Gospel” - Philemon (Matt Wright)
- “Jesus’ Vision, Compassion and Transformation” (Chris Gnanakan)

Could you be the next editor of *Intouch*? The current editor is stepping down from the position from the end of this year, and we need someone (or maybe a team of people) to continue collecting, editing, proofreading and producing this magazine. If you are interested email magazine@spbc.org.uk or have a chat with Matthew Newman at Headingley or Kate in the church office.

intouch



Church Office
0113 275 4989

CHURCH NOTICE BOARDS

THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS

THAT SHOULD NOT
BE THERE!



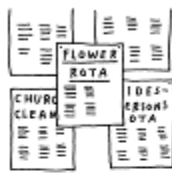
WRATH (DIRECTED AT
INVALID ADDITIONS)



GREED (USING TOO
MANY OF THE PARISH PINS)



SLOTH (NOT REMOVING
OLD NOTICES)



PRIDE (COVERING
UP OTHERS' WORK)



LUST (COVETING THY
NEIGHBOUR'S FONT, LAYOUT, ETC)



ENVY (RIVAL CHURCHES
POACHING OUR CONGREGATION)



GLUTTONY
(OVERINDULGENCE, ETC)

CartoonChurch.com

Psalm 24:1

"The Earth is..."

CHRISTIANITY
EXPLODED

#21



- ... The LORD's *
- ... Not the LORD's

* (And everything in it)

christianityexploded.tumblr.com



Passion for God

Love for People • Heart for Mission

*South Parade meets as different Gatherings across Leeds: in **Cragg** on a Sunday Morning, and at **Headingley** on Sunday mornings and evenings. **Connect@Copperbeech** is a partnership with the Salvation Army meeting in the community in Bramley. We run a CAP Debt Centre and have a link with the Arabic Christian Fellowship. To find out more, visit the website or contact the church office.*

Ministry Team

Senior Pastor / Team Leader
Ministers

Peter Morden
Geoff King
Matt Wright
Nathan Shipley
Kate Churchill
Kate Burkett

Associate Pastor
Operations Manager
Young Families Co-ordinator

Elders

Steve Burras, Barbara Crosse,
Freeman Dumenu,
Greg McLeen (Church Secretary),
John Pelham, Tim Rowe, Joe Walsh

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Kirkstall Lane, Headingley
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“

*If I settle on the far side of the sea,
even there your hand will guide me.*

”

Psalm 139.9-10 (NIV)

intouch

 **SOUTH PARADE
BAPTIST CHURCH**