

THE PARISH CHURCH OF ST JOHN THE EVANGELIST

*News from Whittle & Clayton Brook*

# PARISH GAZETTE

*Speak out, Reach out, Gather in for Christ*



THOMAS KELLY

Please accept this  
FREE copy  
donations welcome

APRIL  
2024

VICAR

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### ***Dear Friends***

A dear friend of mine is very ill in hospital (probably on the mend now, God-willing) and on Saturday his wife wished us well for our Easter services and added, ‘What a wonderful hope we have.’ Easter, resurrection, life out of death, ‘with me in paradise’—it’s all about hope. And that put me in mind of one of my favourite Bible verses about hope:

*We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, where our forerunner, Jesus, has entered on our behalf. (Hebrews 6:19-10)*

Hope as an anchor for the soul. What a wonderful thought. This is all about heaven, and the world to come, where Jesus has gone and to which he will take us; and that wonderful future—the Bible’s meaning of ‘hope’—is fixed, sure, certain and unmoveable. That is our anchor for the soul. (I picture someone throwing a rope with an anchor attached, landing through the curtain, out of sight, but firm and secure for ever. And we hold on to that.)

We so need this. I’m sure that every generation says this, but the world does seem more unstable, unpredictable, insecure and worrying than ever. You don’t need me to list all the examples. And for some of us, illnesses and other debilitations make our personal and home lives more unstable than ever. What can hold us and prevent us from being blown about or even blown over? In a word, hope. Because hope is fixed. It is certain. It cannot be changed and it cannot be taken away. It is future; we don’t yet possess it; it might be a long wait; but it is most surely there.

This is why Christians are realists. We are not pessimists—how could we be if we belong to Jesus? Nor are we optimists who ignore reality and believe that everything will be sorted and ok by next Tuesday. We are realists. We see the world as it is and we keep going, positively, because we have a hope. We know where the story ends and how beautiful that ending will be. In the words of an old evening prayer, ‘we who are wearied by the changes and chances of this fleeting world, rest on your eternal changelessness.’

May this hope be an anchor to our souls.

***Your brother in Christ***

***Philip***



### **Relicensing of Licensed Lay Ministers**

More than 100 Church of England Licensed Lay Ministers (LLMs) with ‘vital roles in the overall ministry of the Diocese’ gathered from across Lancashire in March.

**Kathy Bigio and Gill Lancaster were among those re-licensed.**

They joined with friends and family in Blackburn Cathedral for their three year relicensing service. Bishop Jill praised the contribution of LLMs in the front line of the Church’s ministry saying: “The men and women who were relicensed at this triennial service are inspiring and dedicated leaders. “LLMs have many varied roles in their parishes, as teachers of the faith, leaders in church and society; and enablers of mission. They play a vital role in the overall ministry of the Diocese, in serving their churches and communities.”



**APCM - ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING  
will be held on MONDAY 22 APRIL 2024  
at CLAYTON BROOK CHURCH**  
everyone is welcome to attend  
but to vote you need to be on the Electoral Roll

**CHORLEY DEANERY MISSION  
17-19 MAY 2024 at various locations  
throughout Chorley Deanery  
including our own parish**

**St John’s & Clayton Brook  
CHURCH DAY OUT at CHIPPING  
Saturday 28 September 2024**

## After Easter—the Easter Glow

For three years Jesus had held the tiny band together, through journeyings, storms and opposition. And now – following a public trial and execution – He was gone.

Now, it was Easter Day. Here were two disciples walking to Emmaus. As far as they were concerned, their leader was dead. The ‘scattering’ process had already begun. It had started on that fateful Thursday evening of Christ’s arrest, when Jesus had quoted to His disciples from the prophet Zechariah: “It is written ‘I will strike the shepherd and the sheep of the flock will be scattered’” (Matthew 26:31).



The dream was over. “Let’s go home – back to Emmaus.” Yet Luke 24 is the glowing account of the entire re-building of a worldview. As the apparent Stranger joins the two, it was like the uncorking of a bottle; the story pours out. Surely crucifixion and the future Redeemer of Israel had nothing to do with each other!

Then began a fascinating Bible study on the road. Evidently in their studies, the two had skipped the passages that spoke of a suffering Messiah. The Stranger says, “Let me fill in those bits for you.” Now the figures of a Conquering King and a Suffering Servant begin to coalesce into a single photo fit. Then, at supper with the two, comes the familiar action of the breaking of bread, and – Why.... it’s Jesus. The disciples rush the seven miles back to Jerusalem. They can’t keep the glowing news of the risen Christ to themselves!

**If Jesus had not been bodily raised from the grave, you and I would never have heard of Him!**

**‘Christmas is the promise, and Easter is the proof’!**

## An old farmers prayer.....

A pastor asked an older farmer, decked out in bib overalls, to say grace for the morning breakfast. “Lord I hate buttermilk”, the farmer began. The visiting pastor opened one eye to glance at the farmer and wonder where this was going.

The farmer loudly proclaimed, “Lord I hate lard”. Now the pastor was growing concerned,

Without missing a beat, the farmer continued , “And Lord you know I don’t much care for raw white flour”. The pastor once again opened an eye to glance around the room and saw that he wasn’t the only one to feel uncomfortable.

Then the farmer added But Lord when you mix them all together and bake them, I do love warm fresh biscuits. So Lord, when things come up that we don’t like, when life gets hard, when we don’t understand what you’re saying to us, help us to just relax and wait until you are done mixing. It will probably be even better than biscuits. Amen.”

Within that prayer there is great wisdom for all when it comes to complicated situations like we are experiencing in the world today.

Stay strong my friends, because our Lord is mixing several things that we don’t really care for, but something even better is going to come when HE is done with it. AMEN !

- anon



**“The Word of God is either absolute or obsolete” —Vance Havner**

## General Synod and the Archbishop of Canterbury

In his Presidential Address at the February sessions of the General Synod, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, spoke of the suffering across the world. The following are some short extracts from his address:

*“In September 2023, Antonio Guterres, Secretary General the United Nations declared the world is coming off its hinges. How should we the followers of Jesus Christ respond?*

*“In Europe, the Ukrainian Russian war is frozen. And the suffering of the people in Ukraine has increased, not least because it has been replaced as the principal concern by the havoc and horror of the Levant and all that is going on in that area.*

*“God is our refuge, not our politics and our organisations. They are realities of any structured life, of any institution, they’re not evils, but God is our refuge, they never will be.*

*“God is greater than our fears, than our enemies and in our failures. God is unbreakably faithful to covenant and promise. When that is our comfort and peace, then in this world, at this time off its hinges, we can in all our troubles, be truly the Church we should be, truly God’s Church in God’s world.*

*General Synod has issued a call to reaffirm support for Ukraine, as the Archbishop of Canterbury said he could not be “neutral” in the face of the aggression of Vladimir Putin.*

“the world is coming off its hinges”

*Archbishop Justin Welby, who visited Ukraine ahead of the second anniversary of the Russian full-scale invasion, said the country is “paying for our security with money but also with blood”.*

*He also said the current international situation is possibly more dangerous than at any time, other than the Cuban Missile Crisis, since the run-up to the Second World War.*

*He was speaking as Synod overwhelmingly supported a motion calling on all UK political parties to affirm their continued support for Ukraine and supporting the work of churches and others working for “peace, justice and reconciliation” in Ukraine.*

*Archbishop Justin highlighted recent warnings about the global situation.*

*“We are on the edge of something that none of us have seen in our lifetimes, and it involves powers with nuclear weapons,” he said.*

*“I am not neutral – I will listen to both sides and I hope we all will – but Ukraine is paying for our security with money but also with blood.”*

“God is our refuge”

*“We are paying with money. It is so utterly different.*

*“They are defending the international rules-based order and settling that question, to use a phrase of Bismarck’s, with iron and blood.*

*“As someone said to me three weeks ago in Ukraine – a soldier who had just come back from the front, battle-shattered needing trauma treatment ... ‘we have the 21st Century drones and the First World War bayonet and we are using both equally’.”*

*“We should not forget that behind each statistic there is an individual, made in the image of God, whose life has been shattered or destroyed.”*

*“The reality of war is suffering and loss and its effects will last long after the guns fall silent.*

*“Our response therefore cannot be fleeting – we need to be there for the long term.*

*I recognise that as we pass the war’s second anniversary there is a risk of fatigue with the war’s slow attritional grind.*

*“We can feel overwhelmed by a series of crises around the world – Gaza and Sudan, Myanmar and Nagorno-Karabakh to name but a few. “We can feel disheartened by electoral politics in the US and what it means for the war effort in Ukraine, the future of Nato and our own wider security.*

*But we take comfort and encouragement from Galatians 6:9 – ‘Let us not become weary in doing good; for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up’.”*

*Paul Hardingham considers foolishness and wisdom...*

## Called to be Fools!

April Fool's Day is the traditional way to begin this month. In medieval times the fool (or jester) was not just there for amusement. He had an influential role in the court, because he could speak the truth in ways others couldn't. As Christians we are also called to be fools; Paul described himself as a '*fool for Christ*' (1 Corinthians 4:10). In what ways is this an appropriate description of a Christian? In his letter Paul expands on this theme.



### **A foolish message:**

*'For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.'* (1 Cor 1:18). The heart of the Gospel does not focus on clever ideas, but on the Cross of Jesus Christ. This message of foolishness and weakness is both God's wisdom and power for our lives.

### **A foolish community:**

*'But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong.'* (1:27). The church in Corinth consisted of slaves, rather than the rich and successful. God calls the weak and vulnerable to follow Him, in order to shame those who think they don't need God.

### **A foolish ministry:**

*'My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God's power.'* (2:4,5). Paul's ministry didn't rest on human wisdom, but on the power of the Holy Spirit. For us, this power is often displayed when we are at our weakest.

***'A fool thinks himself to be wise, but a wise man knows himself to be a fool.'*** (William Shakespeare).

**Please remember the LOVE FUND**  
**The Love Fund consists of donations**  
**of money from members of both**  
**our churches. This can be used for**  
**anyone in our church or parish**  
**who is in need of help. If you are**  
**in financial need for whatever**  
**purpose: shopping, bills, essentials**  
**etc then get in touch with Philip**  
**and he will be happy to help you.**  
**tel: 01257 515141 email:**  
**[info@stjohnsandclaytonbrook.uk](mailto:info@stjohnsandclaytonbrook.uk)**

### **Warm Welcome at Clayton Brook**

Every Monday 11 - 2pm  
(sadly we're not open on  
Bank Holiday's)

Our new menu includes:-  
A choice of toasted or plain  
sandwiches with a variety of fillings  
A selection of drinks (free refills)  
Cake and biscuits

Donations welcome

Everyone is welcome,  
children and babies too.

**"Nothing less than a whole Bible can make a whole Christian"** —AW Tozer

## What is a growth group???

Is your faith restricted just to Sunday? Why not join a growth group and make sure your faith is in action during the week also. Jesus' disciples met in each others homes and that's just what growth groups do. We meet together in different groups, in different homes or on zoom. We grow in our faith, we grow in our knowledge of the Bible, and we grow in friendship with each other, and with Jesus. No one walks alone. Growth groups share faith and life together and are the place where the real ministry of the church takes place.

Every member in my growth group has grown in faith and knowledge over the years, and developed good friendships with each other and with Jesus. Jesus is your best friend, come and meet Him in a growth group. Get in touch with one of the leaders and join a group. - Cath Orr

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Leader: David Barlow

davidleesbarlow@outlook.com

Members:

Angie, Carol, Deborah, Frances,  
Gill, Jean, Lyndon, Peter

They meet on Tuesday evening  
on zoom

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Leader: Les Jones

Members:

Gill M, Gill W, Ethel, Sue,  
Christine, Kathy, Julie, Janette,  
Martin, Joy.

They meet on Tuesday afternoon  
at Clayton Brook church

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Leader: Susan Parkinson

Members:

Jane, Anne, Moira, Cath  
They meet on Tuesday evening  
on zoom.

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Leader: Jamie Dixon

Members:

Joy, Martin, Ray, Will, Tony,  
Caroline, Chris, Zak, Hetti  
They meet on Tuesday evening  
in someone's home.

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Leader: Philip Venables

Members: Chris, Alison,  
Marion, Nick, Phil McD.  
They meet on Tuesday evening  
in the Vicarage

**Contact one of the leaders if you would like to join a group**

## Something to Make You Smile (hopefully) and Think?

### Marriage

#### - surely its not like this?

Its not a word, it's a sentence, a life sentence.

I never knew real happiness until I got married, and then it was too late.

A husband is living proof that women can take a joke.

A man is not complete until he's married and then he's finished.

An archaeologist is the best husband a wife can have; the older she gets the more interested he is in her.

Did Adam and Eve have the perfect marriage. Adam didn't have to hear about all the men Eve could have married and Eve didn't have to hear about how well his mother cooked.

#### but perhaps more like this?

You will not take your spouse for granted.

You will not expect perfection of each other

You shall be patient. Loving, understanding, kind, generous and true

You shall not hide your true feelings – marriage depends on honesty.

You shall give your partner and your marriage room to grow.

You shall celebrate all the happiness you experience.....together.

### Memories

God gave us memories so that we might have beautiful flowers in December **J.M.Barrie**

### Men

An English teacher wrote on the whiteboard the words “a woman without her man is nothing” and directed his students to punctuate it correctly. The men wrote “A woman, without her man, is nothing”.

The women wrote “A woman: without her, man is nothing”

Punctuation is everything.

A man is walking along a beach when he picks up an old bottle, pulls out the cork, and out pops a genie.

“Thank you for freeing me from the bottle” the genie says “In return I shall grant you three wishes”.

Great says the man “Firstly I want a billion pounds in a Swiss bank account” Poof! There was a flash of light and the man held a piece of paper with a statement indicating an account with one billion pounds in it.

“Secondly I want a brand new Ferrari immediately”. He continued. Poof! There in another flash of light stood a brand new Ferrari

“Thirdly I want to be irresistible to women” Poof! There in a flash of light he was changed into a box of expensive chocolates!

### Ministers

The results of a comprehensive survey came up with the traits of a “perfect” minister.

Preaches for 15 minutes covering all the Bible has to say on a particular subject in easy and simple language.

Condemns everyone's sin but yours and never says anything anyone might disagree with.

Always happy to clean the church after the service.

Is thirty eight years old and has been in ministry for 21 years...at least.

Has a burning desire to work with teenagers and spends all his time with the more senior members of his congregation and

Smiles all the time with a straight face because he has a sense of humour which keeps him dedicated to his ministry and people.

## Mistakes

A rather snobbish couple wanting to impress were invited to a party. After a few drinks the conversation turned to music and to Mozart. "Absolutely brilliant, a genius" someone offered.

The wife wanting to join in the conversation casually remarked "Ah Mozart, you're so right. Only this morning I saw him get on the number 5 bus to Chelsea. There was a sudden hush as everyone looked at her and her mortified husband pulled her away and went and grabbed their coats whispering "we're leaving right now".

As they drove home, he kept muttering to himself and finally his wife said "You're angry about something?" "Oh, really he sneered, I've never been so embarrassed in all my life! You saw Mozart take the number 5 bus to Chelsea did you, really? You idiot, don't you know that the number 5 bus doesn't go anywhere near Chelsea?"

## Money

Money can buy medicine but it cannot buy health, it can buy a house but not a home.

It can buy companionship but not friendship. It can buy a bed but it cannot buy sleep and it can buy a good life but not an eternal one.

## Mothers

One afternoon, during the school holidays, a husband came home from work to find almost total mayhem in the house. The three children were outside, still in their pyjamas, playing in the mud, with empty food boxes and wrappers strewn over the front lawn. The front door of the house was open, as were all the downstairs windows. Going inside he found an even bigger mess, lamps knocked over, various substances all over the floor, the TV set blaring and the living room strewn with toys and various items of clothing. In the kitchen the sink was filled with various plates, cutlery and dishes with water all over the floor. It appeared that someone had tried to build a sandcastle behind the back door.

He quickly ran upstairs looking for his wife, worried that she might have had an accident or was ill and found her lounging in bed, still in her pyjamas, reading a novel and listening to one of her favourite pieces of music. She looked, smiled and asked him how his day had gone.

He looked at her in bewilderment and asked "Never mind me, what has happened here?"

His wife gave him a broad smile and answered "You know that every day when you come home from work you ask me what in the world I have done all day?"

"Yes" he answered.

"Well today I didn't do it!!"

## Motoring

The Christian Road Safety Association has published the following commandments for motoring:

Begin each journey with a prayer.

If you set off late, arrive late.

Alcohol might be useful in the radiator, never in the driver.

If another driver is courteous or helpful, always wave in appreciation

If you have endangered or caused another driver difficulty, wave in apology

Make it easy for aggressive drivers to get ahead of you...well ahead

Drive so that the sudden appearance of a police car is no surprise

Give plenty of space to cars marked with dents

Give cyclists a wide berth, even if they think they own the road and

End each journey with a prayer of thanks.

From David Barlow

'Street pastors are volunteers from different churches who care about the safety and wellbeing of their community. We come in all shapes and sizes and are known for being a peaceful and practical help on the night time streets and a caring, listening and helpful presence in our communities. We are an approachable and non judgemental team looking after anyone who is in need of support, uniquely identifiable by our uniforms, our caps and our bags.

Working together with local authorities, registered services, the local police, local businesses and often local bars, pubs and clubs, we practically help vulnerable people who are under the influence of drugs or alcohol or homeless or disorientated by mental illness, or young or lost or lonely.

We help people on the streets and other public places by giving guidance and signposting to other available support services'

If you would like to know more about street pastors, joining them, supporting them, praying for them, speak to Hetti or William in church, or contact Bev, Chorley Street Pastors co-ordinator

07399429621

[chorley@streetpastors.org.uk](mailto:chorley@streetpastors.org.uk)



"Prayer is the boiler room of the Street Pastors patrols"  
- Louise Isaac

## Don't be afraid of clouds

Have you ever sat and watched the clouds drift by? Some of them are vast, towering up and up into the sky.

There can be clouds of discouragement and suffering in our lives as well, circumstances that temporarily blot out the sunlight of God's love for us. You may have such a cloud hanging over your life right now. You may be in a hospital bed, or suffering discouragement, fear, despair or bereavement.

Have you ever noticed that sometimes, when you board a plane, the sky is like a thick grey ceiling? It looks impenetrable. But the plane does not hesitate – it climbs steadily onward and upward straight into the cloud. And what happens? Nothing! The cloud cannot block your progress, it must give way before you.

The simple truth is, you may not be able to see through clouds, but you *can go through them*. The plane uses navigational aids for guidance, and we have the Holy Spirit to guide us through the darkest times. And finally, we emerge through the cloudbank, and there before us is a sun-drenched sky of blue and golden glory, far above the dismal and disappointing things far below. Whatever cloud is hanging over you at present, whether suffering, discouragement, fear, there IS something you can do about it NOW. Pray – pour out your heart to the Lord about it. He has promised that His grace will be sufficient for anything that we encounter in this life.

And – look up. Look towards heaven, *think beyond* those clouds, and remember His promise that the sufferings we may be undergoing *here* are nothing compared to the glory that God has prepared for us *there*.

*The Bible assures us: 'The Lord God is a sun and shield: the Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will He withhold from those who walk uprightly. O Lord Almighty, blessed is the man that trusts in you.' Psalm 84: 11-12*

## The Suffering Church

### Persecuted Women

When Christian women are persecuted, it's often different from the ways Christian men are persecuted. The particular vulnerabilities of women are exploited to undermine their faith. For women and girls, it means that their persecution is often hidden, violent and complex. Their stories are a reminder of God's care and compassion for His children, their names engraved on the palm of His hand (Isaiah 49:16).

One of the early Church Fathers, Jerome (347 – 402) wrote “Is it not to women that our Lord first appeared after His Resurrection? Yes, the men could then blush for not having sought what the women had found”.

And there are women who continue to seek Jesus today in some of the hardest places in which to be a Christian.

**Women like Sahar** had tried very hard to be a good Muslim for over 20 years, earnestly seeking something to fill the emptiness she felt, before choosing to leave Islam and follow Jesus, in the process losing the right to see her children, a heartbreak moment for her

Sahar was particularly struck and move by Psalm 45:10 – 11: “Listen daughter and pay careful attention;; Forget your people and your father’s house. Let the King be enthralled by your beauty; honour Him, for He is Your Lord”. She remembers “God really spoke to my heart in this passage, and I felt compelled by God to live my faith and follow God with full devotion. I knew that He had a plan for my husband as well”

Sahar courageously told her husband about her faith, and has she feared he was furious and sent her away, away from her home, away from her children. Worse than any shame was anxiety over her children, as her rights were taken away, breaking her heart. “It was devastating, but Jesus was worth the price. Sahar continued to pray that her husband’s heart would soften and although it took time, God listened and acted. Eventually Sahar’s husband invited her back into the house and they slowly started to rebuild their loving relationship.

Sahar now supports other persecuted Christian women with encouragement and discipleship training and because of her own experience she is particularly able to offer help in helping these women understand their own identity in God, in particular to women who have left Islam to follow Jesus.

**Women like Sara**, who also grew up in a Muslim home in Iraq, who although religion was not discussed a lot, was shocked by her father’s reaction when she chose to find and follow Jesus. Despite a close relationship with her father his reaction was scaring to her, as he condemned her and told her she was worthless. Following days locked in her house her father announced that she was going to marry her stepmother’s nephew, which was even more shocking to Sara, who at that stage had no-one to speak up for her.

Then on the morning of her marriage Sara had a truly miraculous rescue, like Peter in prison, she was led form the locked house, placed in a car and woke up in a hotel in a city in north Iraq, hours away from where she lived. Sara later learned that the security cameras in her home had stopped working at exactly the time she was rescued.

Sara’s father found out where she was and came to get her back but she stood firm in Jesus, and told her father “You mocked me that God would have to come and rescue me, well He did!”. Her father returned home but Sara stayed and living as an unmarried woman in Iraq continued to experience God’s protection from men who wanted to exploit her, and eventually leading her to a Christian restaurant owner who took her under his protection.

Sara is now thriving on a discipleship course and has a ministry to taxi drivers, talking about Jesus and distributing Bibles to them, and whilst the future remains uncertain Sara's faith in Jesus is unwavering.

**Women like Xuan** who lives in a remote village in Vietnam, with no church building but a number of Christians who worship God, in secret, in their homes. They are monitored by the local authorities which make contact with the outside world difficult. Xuan's love for Christ shines out in her words and actions, and her mission is to tell others about Jesus, which comes with a high price. Although begrudgingly tolerated she has been forbidden to talk about Jesus, but that hasn't stopped her.

In addition her husband, who is not a Christian, has been targeted by the authorities, losing his employment and all government subsidies, food and education. Wonderfully he stood by her, although has not yet found Jesus for himself.

And Xuan continues to tell people she meets about Jesus in spite of the dangers and more people are finding Christ for themselves thanks to Xuan's courage and perseverance. Xuan is clear that she will not stop her ministry, trusting in the Living Lord who will never leave her.

**Women like Simin** who, with her husband, led a house church in Iran before they were arrested by the police and charged with "propaganda against the regime eventually being forced to leave Iran. Now in a nearby country, with the help of Open Doors, the couple now have an online ministry, with Simin teaching the Bible to women in Iran and preparing them to lead churches, despite the dangers they all face.

So many Christian women are like Sahar, Sara, Xuan and Simin persecuted because of their faith, and vulnerable because of their gender, persecution which is often hidden and unnoticed. Open Doors' vision is to ensure that these women are seen, heard and empowered to reach their God-given potential. And we can be part of this vision.

***We can pray "Lord God, thank You that You see Your daughters, that none of their suffering is hidden from You. Please give them peace, joy and strength and equip all those who support persecuted Christian women today. Amen"***

Our church supports Tearfund, Barnabas Fund and Open Doors. If you want to support them as well, you can contact them on their websites [www.opendoorsuk.org](http://www.opendoorsuk.org), [www.tearfund.org](http://www.tearfund.org) or [www.barnabasfund.org](http://www.barnabasfund.org). And believers ask for one thing above all else.....our prayers.

- From David Barlow



To Everyone involved.....  
Thank you for the most  
amazing service on  
Easter Sunday in an almost full church!  
Full of the praise Jesus deserves.  
May God bless more like this.

**ALEX and KATE PHILLIPS  
in ASIA**

**Family & Church Updates:**

March is the start of a new academic year. This time around none of our children are moving school, just moving up a year. We're thankful for their continued growth physically (Euan lost his first tooth this week!) and spiritually. Here it is easy to get sucked into the 'education-first' mindset, pursuing all of the schooling and extra-curricular opportunities. We probably need to be more intentional in both our daily structures and conversations to be raising our children first and foremost in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. At the end of January our church's staff elder (aka pastor) and another elder officially announced to the church their plans to leave at the end of the year and this summer respectively. At the same time we nominated a new elder, a committed, godly and sound church member. Alex also announced that he will apply to take on the staff elder position, although the process for this hasn't yet been decided. The church family has taken the news well, with unity and support so far. The second elder is the only original leader from our church's founding 17 years ago, and our Pastor has faithfully served us for close to 6 years, this transition will be a test of our church's commitment to gospel ministry in a new phase. It must be God who keeps us united and faithful to his mission.

**Ministry and Studies:** Over the Lunar New Year Holiday, we were able to host 30+ people over three days at our home! At one point, we had 25 or so people in the house including our family. It was lovely to spend time together as church family as expats here are all away from home. Alex has now begun his final year of seminary studies, this term focusing on the Great Commission. One particularly helpful aspect has been the requirement to log and reflect on at least one evangelistic conversation per week. It has been encouraging to realise he's already having these evangelistic conversations regularly, but it has also been a reminder to continue to be intentional and not lose focus on God's call to be evangelizing, especially when on church staff it's easy to spend all of our time talking to Christians. Kate is finishing up her course on 'Doctrine of God' with her final exam next week. She has been struck by the idea that we cannot comprehend God (understand him in his entirety), but that we can apprehend him in a genuine way through revelation in His Word. She has also been involved with mediating between two ladies at church who business partnership dissolved due to various conflicts, and has helped a Russian missionary couple (with Wycliffe Bible Translators) find a new home and most of the furniture they need.

**Prayer Points:** Please give thanks for another year of growth for our children. Please pray that they will continue to grow in Christ. Please pray for healthy process of appointing a pastor for our church. Please pray for our studies as we are slowly approaching the end that we will be better equipped to serve God and His people.

There is a food collection box in Clayton Brook church and in St John's, if you are in Chorley you can drop off donations at Living Waters Church, in Bolton Street, Tues & Fridays 10am to 12noon. Or give a money donation on their website:

[www.facebook.com/LWStorehouse](http://www.facebook.com/LWStorehouse) and most supermarkets have food bank trolleys.  
.....words the Lord Jesus himself said: "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

**Acts 20v35**



**CROSSLINKS**



## MP invites fellow MPs to “knock on his door” if they want to know more about Christ

Nick Fletcher, the Conservative MP for Don Valley, recently took a stand in Parliament to underscore the importance of the Christian faith to the UK's spiritual life. He used the Easter Parliamentary debate on Thursday to encourage his colleagues to actively promote Christianity within society.

“We celebrate on Easter Sunday the resurrection of Christ, giving us not just a God but a living God to believe in, to worship, to help us and to make us right with him, with the promise of eternal life. What a wonderful gift”, he said.

Mr Fletcher also addressed the erosion of Christian values in society, cautioning against the dangers of forsaking faith, saying: "Sadly, when mankind removes God from the equation, mankind resorts to its base nature..."

He added: "If the teachings of the Christian way of life are slowly eroded, which I believe they have been, I am afraid that each generation will fall further away from our God. Life can and will definitely get worse for us all,"

Mr Fletcher also called on his fellow MPs and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to champion Christianity and its foundational values of "forgiveness, love, and mutual support".

**Reflecting on his personal faith journey, Fletcher shared his testimony: "I know that I am a sinner... but 15 years ago I gave my life to Jesus forever... I want all the world to know that Jesus loves them too.**

**"I want the people of this nation to fix their eyes on heaven, not on themselves or their earthly desires. I want them to believe in a living God, not fashionable ideologies".**

Fletcher concluded his speech with a call to action for both the government and citizens: "This Easter will our Government promote celebrating what Christ did for us on the cross?

"Please, if anyone wants to know more about Christ, come and knock on my door. I would love to tell as many people as possible about him". - Premier Christian News

*And long may we hear of more like this! Amen!*



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