

insight

the magazine of Easthampstead Baptist Church

November/December 2008



Simply Christmas

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The power of an invite?

Welcome to the fourth edition of our Easthampstead Baptist Church (EBC) magazine – **Insight**.

We are producing *Insight* every two months and it includes articles, updates, diaries, prayer pointers and news about our church. If you are part of the EBC community it will be vital to update you on things that are going on across the church and if you are not yet part of our community we hope that it will help you understand a bit more about us.

A while ago an invite came through the post. It was an invite to the wedding of one of my cousins. To be honest I don't particularly enjoy going to weddings of distant relatives. It's unlikely that I will know many people and there is usually lots of standing around. So when this invite came through the post I wondered if I would really have to go. There was an added complication in that the wedding was to be held in the north of Scotland. Then as I was pondering whether or not to go an email came asking me if I would do the talk in the service itself so now there was no choice I had to go!

I flew up to Scotland, hired a car and turned up at the wedding and it was fantastic! The service itself was really special and ended up with the bride and groom being led out of the church by a band of bagpipes. The reception was held right on the coast overlooking the sea and I had a great time meeting up and talking with friends and family I hadn't seen for years. I was really pleased that I had gone and was left feeling rather guilty about my reaction when the invite had arrived.

There is incredible power in an invite. It can lead to great times like I had at the wedding. To be on the receiving end of an invite can leave someone feeling valued and loved. I read an article recently that was based on a survey. People who would normally go to church were asked this question: "If you received an invite from a Christian friend to go to an event



Chris Porter

“ All we have to do is invite people to come ”

organised by a church would you go?” Over 70 percent of people said that they would. That is an extraordinary figure. So often we hear reports in the media telling us that people aren't interested in church any more. This survey clearly points out that this is just not true. So often we also hear that attracting new people to church is really difficult. Again this survey points out that this too is just not true. All we have to do is invite people to come. If you are reading this and you are not a part of our church community, please consider this to be an invitation to join us. Check out our website at www.ebc-bracknell.org for more information about us.

As we approach Christmas it is a great time for us to be thinking about who we might invite to the different events we are running to celebrate the birth of Jesus. Our Christmas theme this year is 'Simply Christmas' and we are inviting people to get away from the busyness, stress and anxiety of the Christmas period and to pause for a moment to reflect on the bigger questions of life. See pages 4&5 for details of our Christmas events and activities.

There is great power in an invite and when we are inviting people to come and hear more about the birth of Jesus and the difference he can make to our lives we can literally change someone's life and eternal destiny with a simple invitation. So, we better get on with it!



Church News

Did you know in the last 2 months at EBC...?

We launched our new structure:

On Sunday 7th September we began the new pattern for our Sunday morning gatherings. The new pattern means that we are now running a 9.15am and 11.15am gathering at South Hill Road and a 10.15am gathering at Crown Wood School.

On the 1st and 3rd Sundays of the month we met for our 'Life' Sundays. The theme for these was 'Soul Cravings' and looked at the topics of 'What do you crave? Intimacy, Destiny and Meaning and how God holds the key to all of these cravings.

On the 2nd and 4th Sundays, we met for our 'Growth' Sundays and we have been doing a series called 'Activate' looking at the book of Acts. We linked this in to our core values of Community, Caring, Communication, Commitment and Celebrating. We all joined together on October 26th to celebrate the baptism of Jo Millett and the dedication of her two children Felicity and Millie.

Since we began our new pattern we have seen new people coming every week. We are really grateful to all those who are working so hard to make this structure happen. From 7.45am onwards at SHR there is a great buzz about the building as people arrive to prepare breakfast, set up refreshments and the musicians and PA person set up and rehearse. Then at 10.30am we have been joining together for coffee and cake! At the 10.15am gathering at Crown Wood schools there has also been a great buzz with new people coming and lots more children around!

Remix: for 2-11 year olds

The number of children attending Remix at each of the gatherings has increased. The children learn about God in ways that are fun, exciting and creative. Puppets, film clips, crafts and stories are all being used to bring

to life the theme of the day. New leaders are stepping up to lead Remix at 9.15am. For a number of years the number of children at Crown Wood has been one or two but this has risen to 7 or 8 in the last two months. A social event held at Birch Hill School was well attended and great fun.

Unity: for 12-16 year olds

On the first 3 Sundays of the month Unity - for 12-16 year old young people has met at our 9.15am gathering. They spend the first 15-20 minutes in the service then go out for their own meeting. A few regulars have been missing from this group but these have been replaced by new young people coming along. Unity Plus and Club Unity are still attracting lots of young people. A car wash arranged by the young people raised over £200 for their funds.

Storehouse

About 40 people helped to set up for Storehouse after the service on October 26th. This was a great time of working together to sort out and set up the vast amounts of household goods, toys books and clothing which had been donated from people in the church and community.

Monday 27th saw people beginning to queue to get in from 8.00am (we don't open until 10.00am) and by the time we opened the doors the queue was down to the road. The event went amazingly well and with lots of people getting the items they needed. At 12.00pm any clothing and linen left over was bagged up for collection to be sent out to Romania.

Refresh

The number of people using the coffee shop is slowly increasing and good contacts are being made. It is planned to run an Alpha course for older people there in the New Year. Reverb, a drop in for young people, continues to meet there on the first and third Friday evening in

the month.

Fun Day at Crown Wood School

After weeks of poor weather the sun shone and the largest number of people ever came along on September 13th to enjoy the BBQ, animals, face painting, bouncy castle and slide and obstacle course. As a result of this one lady and her son have started coming to our 10.15am gathering.

Work with older people

Songs of praise still attracts a good number with around 90 people staying for tea each month. The format of the October one was a panel of people answering questions from those attending which had been submitted prior to the service. Lunch Club, Mid day Munch and Thursday Fellowship are still well attended.

Giving

Weekly offerings have increased over the last two months and people have been generous in their giving with a large quantity of dried and non perishable food given for the food box ministry and £570 given to Tear Fund through the harvest offering. On October we took up an offering for our Pastoral Needs Fund to which £1,800 was given. The Pastoral Needs fund is used to help those in our church family and local community who might be struggling or in need of a bunch of flowers or a meal.

Thank you to everyone who has given so generously over the last 2 months.

We praise God for all the good things which are happening in the life of the church and for all those involved in helping in all the different ministries. Please pray for more people to be involved to spread the load and to reach out to more people in the community.

Step off the wheel

During half term we went as a family to Warwick Castle. I was particularly interested in a trebuchet that they have there.

A trebuchet is a siege machine used in medieval times and is essentially a huge catapult. The one they have at Warwick Castle is the biggest in the world. The trebuchet was used to fire huge projectiles to breach castle walls. Large rocks and stones were the main ammunition but there is evidence of more unusual material. Manure and dead animals were also hurled by the machines into the besieged castle to spread disease - pigs were the animal of choice as they were thought to be more aerodynamic!

The trebuchet at Warwick weighs 22 tonnes and stands 18 metres tall and you can go and watch it being fired. It is a truly impressive sight to see a huge boulder being hurled great distances. The machine works by dropping a 5 tonne weight from a large height which generates the catapult motion, but before it can be fired 4 people have to wind the 5 tonne weight up to the top of the trebuchet. They do this by walking around in two huge



Chris Porter

“step off the wheel into new things”

hamster wheels that wind up the weight. In the picture you can see the people in the hamster wheels walking around. It takes about 10 minutes to wind the weight up to its full height and about 1 second for it to drop! Apparently it is really hard work to be one of the people walking around the wheel raising the weight and of course despite all the walking you never actually go anywhere!

It struck me that from time to time many of us feel like that about our spiritual journey with God. Maybe we feel like we are doing loads of things – serving in the church, attending activities and services but not making much progress. Maybe we feel stuck in a rut like a hamster in a wheel, going round and round, treading the same old paths and nothing new seems to be happening.

Over the last few weeks I have sensed that God has been trying to say something to me. Now sometimes when I get the feeling that God is trying to say something it feels like a gentle whisper. But that hasn't been the case this time. This time I feel more like God is hitting me over the head with a sledgehammer.

First of all I was encouraged to read a book called 'Nevertheless' by John Kirkby (see review on page 6). This is the story of an amazing journey of faith and of someone who has taken outrageous risks with God and seen amazing results. Then a few weeks ago I attended the Willow Creek Leadership Conference with 14 others from our church. As part of that conference we heard a man called Gary Haugen speak. Gary has a similar story to John Kirkby – of stepping out in faith and seeing God do amazing things. He told us the story of how as a boy he was taken up a mountain trail by his father. When they reached the visitors centre Gary stayed in the comfort of the centre whilst the rest of his family went on up the trail. They returned later in the day, exhausted, bruised but elated by what they had achieved as they climbed the mountain. Gary had a safe day in the warmth of the visitors centre but had missed out on the adventure.

As I listened to that talk it was like God was challenging me with this question – “am I happy to remain in the visitors centre of

Simply Christmas



in faith

my faith – comfortable and safe or do I want to step out in faith with God and take part in an amazing adventure?" Do I want to spend my entire Christian life feeling like those people in the wheel winding up the trebuchet – expending lots of effort but never really going

anywhere or do I want to step off the wheel, into new things and see what God might do?

For me it is unquestionably the adventure that I want, but I must realise that this involves risk, that it might not be comfortable and safe and will require sacrifice.

However I must also realise that the adventure promises the greater reward – more impact and significance for God, going deeper in my relationship with God and relying more on Him.

Ruth and I have been asking God what He might want us to do to step out with Him and are beginning to try some new things and we are excited about

what God might do in our lives. However I am not alone in sensing that God is asking us to step out. Many of us in the church are feeling the same thing and I believe that God is preparing us to take a step of faith together, as a church community. Over the next few weeks we are going to be seeking the heart of God together for what He might want us to do. We are praying that He will reveal it to us. I have no doubt it will be an adventure and one that will require sacrifice, commitment, risk taking and courage. I also have no doubt that as we step out it will reinvigorate our faith. We will arrive at our gatherings on Sunday mornings and evenings keen to seek more of God and to thank Him for what He is doing, we will be prompted to invite others to join in the exciting things that He is doing and our prayer lives will become more passionate and alive!

I don't want my Christian life to feel like a hamster in a wheel or a person on a trebuchet – do you?



Sunday 21st December

9.15am at South Hill Road

Simply Christmas Carol Service

Including readings, favourite carols, reflections and Christmas refreshments!

Suitable for adults

10.15am at Crown Wood Primary School

Simply Christmas Carols and Kids

Including carols, kids activities, reflection and Christmas refreshments.

11.15am at South Hill Road

Simply Christmas Party

Including craft activities, music, media, reflections and Christmas refreshments

Suitable for children and all ages

4.00pm Christmas Songs of Praise at South Hill Road

Including interviews and favourite carols

Suitable for adults

Wednesday 24th December

Christmas Eve

4.00pm at South Hill Road

Christingle Service

Including stories, puppets, carols and Christingle

Suitable for children and their families

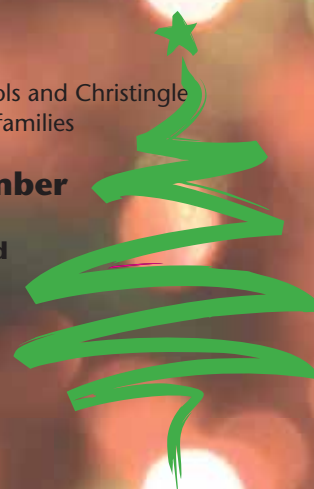
Thursday 25th December

Christmas Day

10.15am at South Hill Road

Christmas Day Service

Suitable for all ages



Events this Christmas at EBC

■ reviews

Nevertheless by John Kirkby

John Kirkby's book sat on a shelf in my office for thirteen months before I began reading it at the beginning of September. However, once I had started to read it I just couldn't put it down!

Based on his personal diaries, John tells the amazing, almost unbelievable story of how he gave up a successful career in the finance industry and started Christians Against Poverty (CAP) in his spare room at home with a donation of just ten pounds in his pocket. He gives an honest 'no-holds-bared' account of the many struggles and set backs that he overcame to make his dream a reality; helping people to recover from overwhelming personal debt. Today, CAP is an international charity which runs a growing network of centres in partnership with local churches.

This is a real life faith adventure story that continues today, and it's an inspiring example of how God can do great things through ordinary people when they step out in faith. If you like a good 'human story', where a person achieves victory over adversity, you'll love this. I highly recommend it, and encourage you not to wait thirteen months before you read it! (I have a spare copy, and there is a copy in the church library)

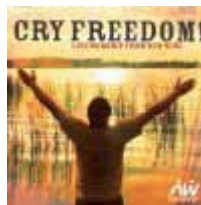
Rob Lea



From my perspective, Chris Tomlin is the worship leader/songwriter who has shown the most consistent creative development over the last five or six albums. Put simply, the best selling songsmith possesses an uncanny knack of finding truly memorable melodies and putting to them lyrics which demonstrate once and for all that not ALL modern worship lyrics are recycled clichés. Take for

example the stark theologically rich poetry of the uplifting ballad "Jesus Messiah" ("His body the bread, his blood the wine/ Broken and poured out for all love/The whole world trembled and the veil was torn/Love so amazing, love so amazing"). Lyrics in themselves of course don't make great worship songs and it was the guitarist in Chris' band, Daniel Carson, who provided the plangent melody. Then there's "I Will Rise" which echoes the theme of the old classic hymn "It Is Well With My Soul" to bring nurture and comfort to the troubled and grief-stricken ("There's a peace I've come to know/Though my heart and flesh may fail/There's an anchor for my soul/I can say, 'It is well'"). As well as Chris' winning way with words, he clearly has the ear of a top line A&R man. Having discovered the Laura Story-penned "Indescribable", on this set he brings to the mass audience Bluetree's "God Of This City". Many Cross Rhythms readers who've bought Bluetree's brilliant debut album 'Greater Things' will already know this is a classic song and here Chris, helped by deft production from Ed Cash, gives it the same faith-producing treatment when he first sang it at the Passion events. There are several other superlative songs on this album while Cash's production, like the African Children's Choir and exotic drumming on "Love", is state of the art. Maybe there will be a better worship album released this year. but I'll be surprised if there is.

Tony Cummings



Cry Freedom was New Wine's 2007 set of conferences held in both the North and the South of England, and this is the CD that captures some of the worship and atmosphere at those events. As it was for last year, this is a double

disc album containing 22 tracks, and nine different worship leaders such is the size and diversity of the events as New Wine continues to grow. Well known worship leaders such as Canada's Brian Doerksen, England's Martin Layzell and Ireland's Eoghan Heaslip, as well as worship teams from Trent Vineyard and Trinity Cheltenham are all present. There is a great mix of songs, from Chris Tomlin's "Awesome Is The Lord Most High", Brian Doerksen's "I Lift My Eyes Up" and "Worthy, You Are Worthy" by Matt Redman, lead on this occasion by Geraldine Latty. And there are also some excellent contemporary choices, such as "Hosanna" by the New Zealand artist Brooke Fraser and "Sweetly Broken" penned by Anaheim Vineyard man Jeremy Riddle. This release is very well recorded and produced by Paul Burton and retains the live atmosphere. For anyone wanting to relive the worship from these seminal conferences this does the job nicely.

Paul Kerlake



The news that the world's most popular Christian band are playing a rare concert in England (and at Stoke-on-Trent, no less!) meant that I approached this live, two disc DVD/CD with even greater expectation than normal. I was not disappointed. This, their third live project, has to be their best yet with the eight songs recorded at St Pete Times Forum in Tampa, Florida in February demonstrating that Mark Hall and compatriots are some of the most powerful go-for-the-heart ministers of the Gospel you are likely to encounter. Their set includes "East To West" and "Every Man", the studio versions of which were number one radio hits Stateside from their gold selling 'The Altar And The Door' CD while of the remaining

tracks "Somewhere In The Middle" with special guest John Waller (hope you've heard his seriously underrated 'The Blessing' album) is a true standout. The DVD also includes 35 minutes of bonus content, with a behind-the-scenes documentary of The Altar And The Door Tour of the US which was seen by a staggering total of nearly 500,000 people, making it the highest grossing Christian music tour of all time. But this album isn't about pop rock megastars swanning around to amphitheatre acclaim, it's a celebration of the grace and mercy of God. So as well as all the powerful music you also get on the DVD four five-minute teaching videos where Pastor Mark Hall teases out the themes of the songs "Slow Fade", "East To West", "Every Man" and "The Altar And The Door". As a final bonus, there's the short form video for "Slow Fade" which should be made compulsory viewing for every believer who finds their spiritual fire slowly extinguishing. To conclude with a Cross Rhythms slogan, this is where music and ministry meet.

Tony Cummings



Cross Rhythms is a Christian music site where you can get reviews of the latest CD releases, listen to excerpts from albums and buy from their online shop. Cross Rhythms have kindly given us permission to reproduce some of their reviews in Insight (our very own Paul Kerslake is one of the Cross Rhythms reviewers!).

All music reviews are reprinted here by kind permission of Cross Rhythms. More such reviews are available at www.crossrhythms.co.uk and all regular albums are available from Cross Rhythms Direct at £9.97 + p&p.

Classifieds

At EBC we believe that everyone who comes regularly to the church should serve in some way in the life of the church. We want to do this for several reasons. We believe that it builds a sense of community as we serve together to achieve a common goal, we also believe that it is a great way to become involved with EBC and to get to know people better. Listed below are a variety of roles that are available to you to serve in at the church. Some of these require more time than others.

Car Parking Attendants
With our new structure on Sunday mornings it is vitally important that people can get into and out of the car park at our church building. We want visitors to be shown to their parking slots so that they feel instantly welcomed and at home. Could you be in the car park helping people on a Sunday morning at South Hill Road? Contact Eileen Charlton for more information.

Drivers
Have space in your car? Happy to give people a lift to church on a Sunday? It would be great if you could help those who can't get to church unless they have a lift. Contact Eileen Charlton for more information.

Welcomers
Wanted people to make visitors feel at home, if you have interpersonal skills and possess a good handshake, come and join our welcoming team. Contact Eileen Charlton for more information.

Coffee Break Helper
On Wednesday mornings during term time we run Coffee Break for parents/carers and their pre-school children. Could you come and be part of this amazing event that serves our local community so well. We need people to welcome, make teas and coffees and help setup and take down the equipment. Contact Karen Bugg on karen@endash.net or via Church Office for more information.

Sound Team
We could have the best musicians, the best preachers but if they can't be heard there would be no point. Our sound team are some of the most important people at our gatherings. We are looking for people to control the sound. You need to have some understanding of technical things but full training is available. Contact Chris Porter for more information.

However much time you feel able to give, we hope that there is something that interests you and we would encourage you to get in touch with us about what you might like to do.
If you want to discuss any of these roles in more detail or would like to chat about what might fit you best, then please contact Chris Porter on 01344 487744 or email him at chrisp@ebc-bracknell.org. Eileen Charlton is contactable on 01344 487744 or via email at officestaff@ebc-bracknell.org.

Musicians and singers wanted to play at our Sunday morning and evening gatherings. Need to be competent on your musical instrument or be able to sing in tune! Contact Chris Porter who can put you in touch with the band leaders.

Multimedia creators wanted to produce great looking medias for our Sunday morning and evening gatherings. You will need to be able to use a computer. We can provide the right editing software and training. Contact Chris Porter for more information.

PC Operators
On a Sunday at each of our gatherings we use PCs to show song words, medias and film clips on our big screens. Would you be able to help operate a PC – its very simple and training is available. Contact Eileen Charlton for more information.

Office Staff Volunteer
On Monday to Friday mornings our church office is staffed by volunteers. They answer the phones, help people using the building find their way around and offer a great welcome to those using the building. If you have some free time during the day and would like to volunteer please contact Eileen Charlton who can provide you with lots more information.

Refreshments
Food is very important in the life of our church! With our new format of Sunday morning services it is very significant. Our refreshments times help people meet up, chat and build community. Would you help with this vitally important area. If you are a bit handy with a kettle and have a passion for doughnuts, come and cater for us. Contact Eileen Charlton for more information.

Lunch Club Cook
Once a month on a Thursday we run a lunch club for older people. We also run MIDDAY MUNCH once a month on a Wednesday. We are looking for people to come and cook for the lunch. You need a Food Hygiene Certificate (or be prepared to work with us to get one). Contact Eileen Charlton for more information.

Remix Children's Helper/Leader (2-11 year olds)
There is never a dull moment in our children's work! Would you like to help out this dynamic area of our church life? You need to like children and have lots of energy and enthusiasm! Contact Ruth Porter on 01344 482162 or email her at rej.porter@googlemail.com for more information.

Unity Youthwork Helper/Leader (12 year olds and older)
Unity is one of the fastest growing ministries in our church. Unity run Sunday morning work at our 9.15am gathering, a monthly club on a Friday evening and various social events and trips. If you would like to be involved with this dynamic work please contact Phil Darby via the church office.

Interview

**Steph
Littlejohn**

Steph Littlejohn is our Assistant Minister at the church. She has been a part of EBC for more years than she cares to remember and started working for the church as a Pastoral Assistant. Steph is one of our Elders and has just taken on responsibility for overseeing small groups at EBC. To find out more about our small groups you contact Steph via the church office.

Tell us a bit about yourself?

I am married to Don. We have 2 grown up sons, one of whom is currently living with us. I became a Christian when I was 19 through a work colleague a couple of weeks before I went to college to train to be a teacher. My speciality is teaching children with special needs. I came to Bracknell in 1974 to teach at Church Hill House Hospital School. I became a member of EBC shortly after moving here. I currently teach under 5's who have special needs, in their homes, 2 days a week and spend the rest of my time working at the church as Assistant Minister and am working toward ministerial recognition. To relax I like to tend my little garden.

What are your roles within the church?

The brilliant thing about my job is that it is so varied. On Sundays I spend much of my time with the 10:15 congregation where I preach and lead services fairly regularly. I am one of the Elders and I am also involved in the other congregations and the evening services. I also help at the lunch clubs and Songs of Praise where I am a regular taxi driver. I am taking on responsibility for small groups and already lead the pastoral team. I am also looking toward taking a small team to a developing country with an

organisation called Tearfund next year which is really exciting.

You have just come back from a trip to Malawi, tell us about it?

I spent August in an orphanage in Bangula in Southern Malawi with a teaching colleague. The orphanage is run by a couple called Will and Pam, who are Canadian and American respectively. They are sponsored by their home church. The orphanage cares for about 30 toddlers, 6 babies and approximately 100 children. Sue and I tried to set up some play sessions for the 3 year olds, but this was interrupted when we had to take care of a 2 week old baby called Patricia and take over the day to day running of the place while Will and Pam took 70 children to the lake for a week or so holiday. Looking after Patricia gave us opportunities to leave the orphanage and meet some of the locals. We also went to a couple of the local churches which was quite an experience.

What did you learn from your trip?

I found the Malawians a friendly people and despite their poverty they have an amazing resilience and spirit. The land where we were was poor and people have to travel to find seasonal work. Although I have seen how people in the developing world live through films it is a different thing to experience it up close and personal. It is unbelievable that people have to live like this in the 21st Century. There are so many things I take for granted like water electricity, sanitation and access to health care. I don't consider myself rich, but it was clear that the locals saw us as millionaires.

While looking after Patricia we experienced first hand how



inadequate health care is. It is also often too expensive for the ordinary people. Patricia died after 4 weeks of life. I am fairly sure that she would have lived if she were in England. There are probably more doctors in Bracknell than in the whole of Malawi!

Education is also an issue. Primary education is funded by the government, but you still have to buy books and uniforms which puts it out of the reach of many. Secondary education is not free and I met some very bright teenagers who had won places at good boarding schools but could not go because of the lack of funding.

What does it mean for you to be heading up our small groups? What are small groups for, who can join?

This is all new to me and I am not sure how the role will develop. I will be liaising with the small group leaders and trying to support in developing our groups so that they are vibrant places where people share life together and support one another as they work out what it means to follow Jesus in their own situation. The primary aim of the groups is to build community and they should be the place where pastoral care happens. There is also a strong teaching element as together we study the bible and put what we learn into practice. Anyone and everyone can be a member of a group. There are both daytime and evening groups with different characteristics so hopefully there should be something for everyone.