

# insight

the magazine of Easthampstead Baptist Church

January/February 2009



# Encounters

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# Life changing encounters

**Happy New Year! Welcome to the first edition in 2009 of our Easthampstead Baptist Church (EBC) magazine – Insight.**

We produce 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 is 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.

In the past some of you will have heard me talk about a particular hero of mine – a man called Bill Hybels. He leads a church in Chicago called Willow Creek Community Church which started over 20 years ago with a handful of young people. It now has many thousands of members. It was hearing Bill Hybels speak at a large conference in Cardiff some 15 years ago that inspired me that the local church was and is the hope of the world and convinced me that God was calling me to lead a local church someday.

Over the years that followed that first conference I got hold of tapes, CDs and books by Bill Hybels and heard him speak many other times. I learnt so much from him and from his experiences. Imagine then my excitement when I was invited to a drinks party at which Bill and his wife Lynne were the special guests. My wife Ruth was very pregnant at the time and she and I went and started to chatting to other people there and eventually Bill and Lynne arrived and we were introduced. I finally had the chance to encounter my hero in the flesh! I confess I was slightly taken aback. Firstly he was a lot smaller close up than he looked on a big conference stage! Secondly he was humble and even a bit shy which wasn't what I had expected at all. We had a great conversation before they were shepherded off to meet other people in the room.

Two weeks later I had the opportunity to travel to Chicago to a special week long training event hosted by Willow Creek Community Church. As part of the week the 20 of us attending got to go to the Hybel's house for dinner. We were



**Chris Porter**

bowled over by their hospitality and graciousness in answering all of our probing questions about church growth and ministry. As I came to leave Bill and Lynne were standing at the door saying goodbye to everyone and as I walked out they stopped me to ask how Ruth was doing with the pregnancy. Now imagine for a moment the number of people they meet on their various trips and at their various events. How amazing is it that they remembered us, remembered Ruth, remembered that she was pregnant and then thought to ask after her! To say I was impressed was an understatement.

I wonder if you remember extraordinary encounters like that? I wonder if you have heroes who if you meet them turn out to be as good as you imagined?

As we enter the new year at Easthampstead Baptist Church we are embarking on a new series at our Sunday morning growth services called 'Encounters'. We are going to be investigating how we have extraordinary encounters with God in our lives. The Bible is full of stories about people encountering the power of God, it is full of stories about people who hear God speak and respond to his voice and it is full of stories about how God steps into our world to bring hope and healing. It is full of stories of ordinary men, women and children – people just like you and me – who become heroes as the power of God works in and through them.

Our prayer is that this is about much more than a Sunday morning series. Our prayer is that as a church we learn to expect and experience the living God. That we learn to encounter him on a daily basis working in power in our lives.

For full details of our services look at page i. For more information about encountering the power of God look at page 4.

Please come on a Sunday morning full of expectation and excitement about what God can and will do! Then expect that God can move in power not just on a Sunday but every day of our lives! Expect to be heroes as God works in and through you!

# Church News

## Did you know in the last two months at EBC...?

### Christmas has come and gone

We had some excellent Christmas events many of which were very well attended. Over 180 came to the 'Smelly Sprout' Christingle service on Christmas Eve and around 200 came on Christmas Day. Songs of Praise was full to overflowing and our Simply Christmas events on 21st December went very well. Our Thursday Fellowship group held their Christmas Carol service.

### Remix: for 2-11 year olds

Our Remix children enjoyed a fantastic social event with 'Fred in the Shed.' They invited lots of their friends and around 80 children attended the event. Faith Fisher and Margaret Power have both stepped down from leading in Remix and we are very grateful to them for the years of commitment they have given to serving in our children's work across the church. Other people have joined the team but we are still looking for more leaders. If you are keen to be a part of the team please contact Ruth Porter on 01344 482162.

### Unity: for 12-16 year olds

25 people from Club Unity went ten pin bowling and had a great time. Club Unity also held their Christmas special event called 'The Final Countdown.' 63 young people attended and 13 adult helpers. The event included food, music, games, quizzes and a disco.

### Unity Plus: for 16-21 year olds

Unity Plus finished the year with a special Christmas meal cooked by Danny and Kim! 12 people attended.

### Steps of faith

Over the last few months we have felt challenged by God to look at taking some steps of faith as a church. At our Church Meeting in November we took

time to pray and reflect on the sorts of things God might call us to look at. These included a possible expansion of our building at South Hill Road, taking on some more staff to oversee our Children's work, Overseas mission work and work amongst older people. The steps of faith also included looking at how we might experience more of the power of God at work amongst us.

The meeting asked the leaders to investigate further what these might mean and to report back in January for further prayer and reflection.

### Social Events

We held a big social event in November when Cathy Burton and Dan Wheeler were performing with us. We had a great meal and an auction of promises for Toybox. We raised around £1800 for Toybox who work to provide homes for street children in Latin America.

### Shoe Boxes

On Sunday 2nd November at our morning services we made up

shoeboxes full of toys, clothes and sweets. We made up around 220 boxes that go to an organisation called Operation Christmas Child who deliver the boxes to children around the world in desperate need. The boxes bring a little bit of hope and joy at Christmas and remind the children that there are people who care. Thank you to everyone who participated.

### Food Boxes

27 food boxes were distributed just before Christmas to people in our church and community who had had a tough year. We have received many letters and cards of thanks from those who received a box. We also gave a big box of food and toiletries to the Bracknell After Care Team. Many thanks to everyone who contributed to our food boxes.

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.



Unity ten pin bowling night

# Full Immersion

Over the Christmas holidays Ruth (my wife) and I took our two girls swimming at Coral Reef Leisure Pool.

We paid our money to get in and then went through the turnstiles that they have there. As I went through I noticed a sign on top of the turnstile that said "Important information for customers: Due to maintenance problems the pools will be colder than usual today." Not the sort of thing you want to read on a cold day before you get into the water and I noticed that they waited to tell us until after we had paid!

So it was with some trepidation that we approached the pool side having got changed into our swimming gear. Warily I dipped my toe in and then slowly walked down the steps into the pool – it did feel pretty cold and it took a while to get fully into the water. For my girls however, it didn't matter how cold the pool was they just jumped straight in!

It is fascinating to watch how different people get into a swimming pool. Some just jump straight in, some get in but don't like to get their head under the water so they never get fully immersed. Some like to get in slowly – moving step by step, some just sit on the side and dangle their feet in. Others stand at the side and watch, never getting any part of their body wet.

It strikes me that faith is like that. Some stand on the sides and watch others who have faith in God, but never seek it for themselves. Others try it out,



Chris Porter

“Warily I dipped my toe in...”

dangle their feet in, but never really commit. Others check things out, moving slowly, step by step to discover who God is and His love for them. Others jump right in and others are trying to fully immerse themselves – giving their lives completely to God.

## Discovering More of God

At our church one of our values is to invite seekers and believers to join us on a journey to discover more of God and his will for our lives. We are committed to helping everyone - no matter if they are just checking things out or trying to fully immerse themselves - to discover more of God and what He wants for us.

In order to help us do that we have developed a strategy and it looks like the diagram at the bottom of the page:

The best place for someone to start their spiritual journey is with a friendship with someone who is already a Christian so we encourage people to build friendships. We have a number of things that we do as a church to help that, these include: our Refresh Coffee Shop, our school assemblies, the Crown Wood Tuesday Club, Storehouse and our Reverb Youth Café.

Once those friendships have been established the next step is to be invited to a social event. This is a great way for people to be introduced to our church family in an easy and non threatening way. We run all kinds of social events for all kinds of people. These include: our social clusters, lunch

clubs, Remix socials for children, adult socials like the evening with Cathy Burton and Dan Wheeler, Club Unity and Unity plus for young people and our fun days.

The next step is for people to begin to discover more about God and what He says about all kinds of different things. That's where the seeker events come in – providing a relaxed and comfortable environment to explore the Christian faith. Explore: Life at our 11.15am gathering, Alpha courses, Songs of Praise and Remix Sundays for children are all there to help people do just that.

It is at this point that many will make a decision to fully immerse themselves in the Christian faith and will have decided to follow Jesus. The next steps in the strategy are there to help people 'go deeper' in their relationship with God. Small Groups are a great way to get to know people better, to share life together and to discuss the Bible and what it has to say. Commitment to the church family through giving, serving and membership are a way of growing in faith and as we continue to grow we become centred in God's will and in His purpose for our lives.

## Going Deeper

As a church we have put lots of time, energy and resources into the first part of that strategy. We love that we have people at all the different stages of that journey as part of our church. We love that we have lots of people who are in



the early stages of their journey and who are still discovering who God is and what He has to say. Our situation is very similar to that of many of the first New Testament churches who included in their number what the Bible calls 'God-Fearers.' These were what we might call 'seekers.' People who are not sure that they believe in God and in Jesus but who are seeking after something more and exploring faith. We are committed to helping those who haven't discovered the love of God to find out about Him. We intend to keep on with our passionate commitment to that. Another of our values says "Non Christian people matter to God and therefore matter to us and are our top priority."

We also recognise that we need to grow and do better at helping those who have already committed to God and to following Jesus to 'go deeper' in their relationship with Him. We need to be clear about what we mean by 'going deeper.' We don't mean getting more complicated, or becoming more academic. Unfortunately this is what some Christians have meant by phrases like 'going deeper' or 'deep teaching.' However this is to miss the point. Christianity is not about how much we know (although knowledge can help) – it is about what we do. Jesus' teaching was often very simple but it was always hugely profound. For us 'going deeper' means discovering more of God and allowing the profound teaching of Jesus and

the extraordinary opportunity of a relationship with God to transform us. This is why we are launching our Encounters series on our growth Sundays over the next few months. Using Paul's first letter to the people at Corinth as our foundation we are going to seek to encounter more of God. We are going to talk about the power of the cross, worship, healing and spiritual gifts and see how they can affect our lives and transform us. We strongly encourage you to be a part of that series, to be there on Sunday mornings and to come expecting God to move and work in us and in our lives. We want to challenge everyone to prepare for those growth Sundays by praying before they come and asking God to work powerfully in us and through us.

There are other things that we can be doing to 'go deeper' many of which we can help with. Reading the Bible regularly is a must and we have some very helpful resources to equip people for that. Please speak to Chris Porter if you would like more information about Bible reading. Small

**“going deeper means discovering more of God”**

groups are essential for our growth and if you are not yet part of one please speak to Steph Littlejohn. Serving on a team and giving financially to the church is another way to grow in our relationship with God. Please speak to Eileen Charlton if you are not yet part of a serving team in the church and to Maggie Stevenson if you are not yet giving. There are contact details on page two of this edition of Insight for these people. Our evening services also provide an opportunity to pray and to go deeper with God. Finally we can all pray that we would see God move powerfully amongst us. God has given us His Holy Spirit to be His presence in us and through us and we long to see more of the Holy Spirit at work.



An EBC organised community funday.



# reviews

**CROSS RHYTHMS**  
MUSIC & LIFE [www.crossrhythms.co.uk](http://www.crossrhythms.co.uk)



This album is aimed at kids from five years upwards (according to the cover blurb) and this guitar-driven set of worship songs from the likes of Jodie Frye, Becky Drake and Beci & David Wakerley will get primary aged and teenaged kids on their feet and praising. There are songs co-written by Tim Hughes, David Crowder and Chris Tomlin too ("Joy Is In The Place", "No One Like You" and "Awesome Is The Lord Most High" respectively). The anthemic nature of a lot of electric guitar-led music means that it is ideally suited to songs which will draw youngsters in with memorable hooks and soaring melodies. Dan Weeks and Matt Weeks produce and perform on most tracks and the ensemble performance is excellent, with a clearly energetic bunch of kids doing sterling work on the vocals. The performances on tracks such as "Supernatural" and "Thank You Lord" will stand comparison with a great deal of more adult-targeted worship songs. Put this on the CD player at home or at the kids' club, then stand back and watch the action.

*Reviewed by Ian Hayter*



This album features some of today's top praise and worship anthems given an adventurous injection of dance, pop and R&B grooves, in a venture aimed at kids aged eight plus - though I'd say the music here is more suitable for dudes in their early-mid teens. The songs are worship favourites from the likes of Brenton Brown, Vicky Beeching and Hillsong, and they really are

given a fresh and appealing spin that makes them equally suitable to those well beyond their teens. I love the sensitive serving of Tomlin's "Holy Is The Lord". Or how about a reggae take on Darlene Zschech's "Blessed"? The most inventive programming (c/o Mark Edwards) is on Israel Houghton's "Not Forgotten" and the closing track, but it's all good stuff and the vocals are so cool that the four singers deserve a name call - Delroy Hutchinson, Jenny Jarvis, Tracey Riggan, Aaron Sakell. Nice work guys.

*Reviewed by Tom Lennie*

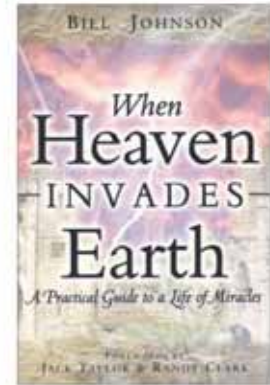


This excellent value box features re-issues of five UK Vineyard live worship CDs: 'Come Now Is The Time To Worship' (1998), 'Hungry' (1999), 'Holy' (2002), 'Winds Of Worship 16: Holy' (2004) and 'Love Divine' (2007). Listening to these albums in this fashion shows the development of the Vineyard UK sound over the years. 'Come Now Is The Time' showed that worship needn't be twee or middle-of-the-road but could push boundaries and explore previous unvisited corners of the pop genre. Later albums demonstrate deeper forays in rock and grunge and latter albums have that harder edge to them. So from the wonderfully Celtic "Be The Centre" to the moshpit frenzy of "So Near" this really is a fantastic representation of the Vineyard UK story thus far. They have also retained the original enhanced CD material too (chord and lyric sheets, etc) so if you haven't explored the British arm of the Vineyard churches before and what to know what all the fuss is about, this is THE place to start.

*Reviewed by Robin Thompson*

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

## Book Review: When Heaven Invades Earth by Bill Johnson



Do not read this book! If you do you will find where I get a lot of the ideas for my talks from. On the back cover it tells you that Bill Johnson is a fifth generation pastor. That means he's the son-of-a-pastor who was the son-of-a-pastor who was the... you get it. Talk about keeping it in the family. When I read something like that I gotta admit, it makes me suspicious. How much can he really know about life if all he's ever known is about being a pastor? So it was with not a small amount of skepticism that I started reading.

Oops!

This book is dynamite.

It gives an exciting and empowering perspective on Jesus life that inspires you to start living the promise that we would do even greater things than Him. Living every day with an expectation of the miraculous and changing the way we pray to start releasing Gods power through the Holy Spirit. Just to make sure that this wasn't just some good literature, I subscribed to his podcast (Bethel Church, California). He is living the life he talks about in the book and they are seeing miracles daily. This is a man who's hungry to see the Kingdom of Heaven manifested on earth. I love it! If you are happy with church as it is and don't want to see the Holy Spirit move in power and turn your world upside down - do not read this book!

*Reviewed by Murray Callander*

“ This book is dynamite ”

# 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 the 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](mailto:chrisp@ebc-bracknell.org). Eileen Charlton is contactable on 01344 487744 or via email at [officestaff@ebc-bracknell.org](mailto: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 of 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](mailto: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.



## Encounters

Sunday 11th January  
**Power**

Sunday 25th January  
**Vision**

Sunday 8th February  
**Revelation**

Sunday 22nd February  
**Gifts 1**

Sunday 8th March  
**Gifts 2**

Sunday 22nd March  
**Worship**

[www.ebc-bracknell.org](http://www.ebc-bracknell.org)

**Missed a Sunday Gathering?**  
Want to hear a talk again?

All talks are available on the EBC website. Visit [www.ebc-bracknell.org](http://www.ebc-bracknell.org) and click the *Resources* link for details.



You can also join the Easthampstead Baptist Church group on Facebook.

# Testimony

**The theme of this edition of Insight is Encounters and how we can encounter God in our lives. We thought it would be good to include a story from someone in our church who has encountered the power of God in a radical and practical way. These is a true story and was written by the person involved...**

A long time ago my dad put his house up as security for a business venture of mine. Unfortunately the business collapsed and my parents lost their home. The business disintegration was so catastrophic that I lost my home too. It all started to happen within just 18 months of becoming a Christian, but fortunately for me I quickly found out that once Jesus has got you He does not let you go. The disaster was an opportunity for Jesus to work in my life. Since those times my relationship with my parents has been better than it has ever been. God also blessed me with the ability to restore all that was lost and my parents now live in their own home that is so much closer to the rest of the family than before. And I was pulled out of an industry rife with disreputable practices.

It was a shock though when recently some 11 years later, my dad got a demand from a solicitor for a staggering £73,433.48. Although all the debts had previously been settled, the building society decided to see if they could get even more money by waiting secretly for many years in the shadows. Quite a despicable operation. I called them about the letter and protested over the fact that such an outrageous claim should be sent out. They said that they could not legally ask me for any more money because I had made settlements with them, but they could seek out my dad for a lot of extra interest charges because of a loophole in the settlement accounts. As my dad was 81 and retired, the solicitors told me,

quite arrogantly, that I would have to find the money myself and pay it for him. When I said it was ridiculous and I didn't have such money anyway, they just said that the building society "would not let it go". But I felt a curious reaction within me as they said this. I felt a Spirit come up behind me and within me. I knew immediately that if Jesus was with me then I had more Power at my disposal than anything the solicitors might have.

I set to work and found out that basically the building society were after trying to reclaim a lot of unfair interest from the failed mortgage. However, even though they legally had 12 years to wait to do this, the rules laid down by their own council said that they had to send notification of their intentions within six years. In other words they were supposed to pre-warn us. They had broken the rules. Their rules. But in any event, I felt the whole situation was wrong and even if I had £73433.48 to spare, which of course I didn't, I would not have paid it because it was, to me, pure greed on the part of the building society.

The solicitors contacted me again and once again I felt a Spirit behind me. I told them their claim was wrong in every department, including being morally wrong too in making an approach to an 81 year old and trying to frighten him. I was told twice more during the conversation that the building society "would not let it go". However, I was undeterred and decided to bypass the solicitors and go straight to the building society. After I made contact with them directly, they wrote back to say that they understood my grievance but they stand by the claim and that I would have to pay them £73433.48. They finished the letter by saying that they realised this was not the news I was hoping to receive but that they had every right to seek this amount.

I prayed.

“I Prayed”

It came to me that being a Christian was extraordinary, not ordinary. And so I should expect extraordinary problems not ordinary ones. I have lovely ordinary people in my life but I also have an Extraordinary Person in my life too. Therefore it made sense to seek out Jesus to help me deal with this extraordinary difficulty. I sat down to write one last letter to the building society, but I sat down with Jesus. And I felt unduly powerful. As I typed the letter, words were being printed which I would not normally use. In fact I had to check some in the dictionary to verify their meaning. After I posted the letter I checked up on other cases of this nature and found that there were many people being pursued for huge amounts of this sort by cold unfeeling financial institutions. So really I needed a miracle.

The building society had, by law, eight weeks in which to reply with a final decision. We heard nothing for seven weeks five days. The time allowed lapsed on a Monday and it was on the Saturday before the Monday that a letter arrived. As I read it I could see immediately that the comments being made were untrue and that they were saying things simply to justify their position. I steeled myself for the Court battles that would lie ahead. Then I came to the last part of the letter. Out of the blue and not really in context with the previous statements, it said 'I can confirm that we have taken the decision not to pursue the outstanding debt of £73,433.48 and therefore we will inform our solicitors to close their files on this matter. I trust that this resolution to be to your satisfaction'

I gasped "Unbelievable"

A Voice Said, "Excuse Me?"

I gasped, "I mean...Believable!"

Three times I had been told that this powerful organisation "would not let it go".

Then suddenly, they did let it go. It is God who has the Final Word.