

Feltham Evangelical Church *Newsletter: December 2008*

A Bible-based church making known the Christian Faith

Calendar

w/c 30th November

30th 9.30.a.m Lord's Supper
 30th 11.00.a.m. Morning Service (Philip Venables)
 30th 11.20.a.m. Sunday School
 2nd (Dec) 5.45.p.m. Lighthouse
 3rd 7.30.p.m. Prayer / Bible Study (Malcolm Evans)
 5th 9.30.a.m "Open House"
 6th 10.30.a.m. Open Air

w/c 7th December

7th 9.30.a.m Lord's Supper (Micky Mollallegn)
 7th 11.00.a.m. Morning Service (Philip Venables); refreshments afterwards
 7th 11.20.a.m. Sunday School
 9th 5.45.p.m. Lighthouse
 10th 7.30.p.m Prayer / Bible Study
 12th 9.30.a.m "Open House"
 13th 7.00.p.m. Feltham Bible Focus; John Benton (How small churches can make an impact for God).

w/c 14th December

14th 9.30.a.m Lord's Supper

14th 11.00.a.m. Morning Service (Keith Bintley)
 14th 11.20.a.m. Sunday School
 14th 1.p.m. Fellowship Lunch
 14th 2.00.p.m. Afternoon Service (Keith Bintley)
 16th 5.45.p.m. Lighthouse; Christmas Parent's Evening
 17th 7.30.p.m Prayer / Bible Study
 19th 9.30.a.m "Open House"

w/c 21st December

21st 9.30.a.m Lord's Supper
 21st 11.00.a.m. Christmas Carol Service; refreshments afterwards
 24th 7.30.p.m Prayer / Bible Study
 25th 10.00.a.m Christmas Day Service

w/c 28th December

28th 9.30.a.m Prayer and Praise
 28th 11.00.a.m. Morning Service (Norman Wells) with Lord's Supper
 28th 11.20.a.m. Sunday School
 3rd (Jan) 10.30.a.m. Open Air

News

Tom, Diana, Tracy and Lucien Asiedu-Jacobs plan to be away in Ghana for much of December.

Karolina and Aaron Curtis plan to be away in the Far East from November 25th for approximately three weeks.

Michael Loosley continues to suffer much. Presently he is seeking to be rid of the MRSA bug which is afflicting him.

Notes

Feltham Bible Focus This month, on December 13th, we welcome John Benton from Chertsey Street Baptist Church in Guildford to be our preacher. He is also the editor of the Evangelical Now newspaper. He is preaching on a subject relating to how small churches can make an impact for God. This is an important subject for us as a church and it would be good to hear what God has to say to us on this occasion.

Fellowship Lunch. On December 14th we welcome Keith Bintley to be our preacher for the day. Keith, in one of his roles, is Research Assistant with the J.W. Laing Trust. This involves him in researching / investigating the strengths and weaknesses of evangelical causes in the UK. Accordingly, at the afternoon service he will provide us with some benefit of the things he has learned through his research.

Also on that day we plan to have a bring-and-share fellowship lunch together. So please bring some food and / or drink and enjoy an afternoon together.

Open House On December 19th we intend to have a festive flavour to Open House. Besides seasonal refreshments we intend to sing some carols etc. starting at 10.45.a.m. (approximately).

Christmas Day After the service on Christmas Day there is an invitation to share a Christmas lunch together. If you intend to stay you must inform May Lin by December 22nd so that the relevant catering can be set in place.

Christmas Cards In these days of recycling and concerns about diminishing rain forests it is worth considering how we use our resources. Accordingly, this year why not consider reducing your Christmas Card list by **not** sending to others in the church? Instead, put the money you save towards a good cause. Put your saved money in an envelope, mark it Christmas Cards and put it in the collection box. Any monies collected this way will be passed to London City Mission.

Lighthouse draws to the end of a further term this month. We thank God for His mercies upon the two groups. It has been good to see an average of about twenty children coming during this term. The term finishes with a Parent's Evening on December 16th. So we must continue to pray for the Lord's hand on the Lighthouse.

Spiritual Notes

Should we have surprise parties?

This may seem to be a very trivial question. However, it does provoke thought about some deeper issues. Considering this issue also reminds us that all of our actions / decisions in life should be governed by God's Word.

Let us be clear initially what we are referring to. We are thinking about those times when someone we know is due to celebrate some special event in their life. And a plot is hatched whereby a party is arranged without his/her knowledge. Come the day of the party all guests are assembled at the agreed location and the celebrant is suddenly aware that a party has been arranged in his/her honour.

Let us consider one or two of the issues which are pertinent here.

. Truth

Last month we considered the importance of being people of truth. Very often in hiding from our friend / relative the imminent occurrence of the party we deceive them as regards to certain matters. Is it right that we should do this?

. Love

It may be for some that having a surprise party is something that they would very much like to happen to them. However, for others the thought of having such an event suddenly sprung upon them can cause them much pain. They are thrust into a situation which they did not consent to and for whatever reason they very much resent. Moreover, pain may be caused to someone in the run-up to their special day because they feel they have been forgotten. No-one has mentioned about celebrating their birthday or whatever and they feel forgotten and neglected.

The good intentions of a surprise party then can actually be counter-productive and cause upset to the person whom we want to make happy. In such a way we act without showing love. One of the characteristics of love in 1 Cor. 13 is that **it is not self-seeking** (v5b). Surprise parties are often arranged for the pleasure of the arrangers without any thought of how the celebrant will feel.

. Hope

In a sense this gets at the key defect of arranging surprise parties. Such a contrivance denies the person celebrating their special event the experience of looking forward to the party.

When we are fully human we are people of hope; we are people with things to look forward to. When we have nothing to look forward to then we are not functioning properly. This is one of the great pains of depressive illness; any looking forward to achieving things and enjoying things is lost.

In the life of Paul in the New Testament we see the life of one who is in many ways set forth as the pattern Christian. So we consider how he felt that whether he was thinking about continuing in this life or passing on to heaven he had things to look forward to. Accordingly, he can say to the Philippians: **I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body. Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, so that through my being with you again your joy in Christ Jesus will overflow on account of me** (Phil. 1:20-26). Paul had things to look forward to. If he was in this life he wanted to see Christ exalted and he wanted to see other Christians progressing with joy in their faith. If he was in the next life he would be with Christ which is far better.

As we ponder on Paul's longings we begin to see that he could look forward unreservedly to the future not because the football match or the party was going to be "mega" or whatever. Nothing of the sort! He looked forward because of Christ, His future was fixed and it was Christ. Unpopularity or potentially difficult / painful situations did not phase him. His view was occupied with Christ and that gave him hope. Interestingly in this context our Lord Jesus is referred to as the One who is our hope (see 1 Tim. 1:1b). He is the one we always look forward to.

Which leads us to think that to be without Christ is to be without hope. We may have some pleasures to look forward to in this life, but they will soon fade. The Christian has such a radically enhanced situation with eternal joys in heaven and with Christ to look forward to. If you are NOT a Christian you have none of this. So believe in Christ make sure you are saved! And do it NOW!

Moreover, God has not hidden these things for us. God has told us, can we say carefully, there is a party ahead to beat all parties. Read Revelation 4 and 5 and meditate upon the fact that we, as God's people will be there celebrating all the greatness of our God and His Christ. And God has told us that this is ahead. This celebration will not be a surprise. God has set the details of the time and the place and it is etched in his calendar. And wonder of wonders he has sent me an invitation and on the basis of God's Word I know, as a Christian, that I am going to be there. Now isn't that something to look forward to!!!!!!

So if you are ever called to be involved in arranging a surprise party think about truth, love and hope; three key Christian words. And ask yourself: "is this something I should be doing?" And further whatever we are thinking of getting involved in make sure that we examine the situation biblically.

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