

☺ **An Encouraging Start**

A very encouraging start has been made to the new year. During the month of January, 91 different people worshipped with us, including 14 people for the first time. On Sunday mornings our attendance averaged 35, and on Sunday evenings the average attendance was 32. On average, 51 people were with us each Sunday for at least one of our services.

We have also been encouraged by the attendance of three new girls at our Friday Club (for 7-11 year olds). We now have 16 children on our books, with an average weekly attendance this term of 11. We have also seen four newcomers at our Rock Solid Club (for 11-14 year olds). 18 young people have attended so far this term; the weekly attendance has averaged 13.

Let us give all the glory and praise to God for what he is continuing to do amongst us!

👂 **Time Out for listening**

Early last month, the deacons spent a very profitable day away together in the comfortable surroundings of the East Byermoor Guest House. The purpose was to take time out for prayerful reflection on all the Lord has been doing at DRBC, and to seek his way ahead for the future. Three particular areas of church life were laid on our hearts for closer examination with a view to engaging in some strategic thinking and planning:

- *retaining newcomers;*
- *developing our international work;*
- *integrating children and young people.*

Let me outline some of the ideas that emerged during the course of the day in these three vital areas of our church life. We would welcome further ideas and feedback on what follows so we can maximise our effectiveness for the Lord.

∪ **Retaining Newcomers**

Last year we were blessed to welcome around 270 different people to our church services. Whilst many of these were visitors from other fellowships, for just over half of them DRBC was their only church connection. We are grateful that many of these people have stayed with us and made DRBC their spiritual home. But we should always be alert to ways of making newcomers feel as welcome as

possible amongst us and then finding the best ways of integrating them into the life of the fellowship.

"I was a stranger and you welcomed me"
[Mathew 25.35]

Here are some of the suggestions that emerged during the course of the Deacons' Away Day.

(a) What attracts people?

- **publicity** - *improve outside notice-boards;*
- **personal recommendation** - *encourage it!*
- **a warm but wise welcome** - *discernment and sensitivity needed; ensure deacon on duty is always alert to late-comers, finding them seats; encourage greater congregational involvement by identifying and training befrienders;*
- **a spirit of acceptance** - *ensure everyone feels they are wanted, valued, important; help people find hymn numbers and page numbers for Bible readings;*
- **being fed through the teaching** - *especially true for established Christians; monitor quality; regularly review what's most appropriate;*
- **meaningful worship** - *monitor and review regularly; need for additional musicians, especially on Sunday evenings.*

(b) What keeps people?

- **Involvement** - *get to know people better, to identify their gifts and interests; ask people to take Bible readings and prayers; involve newcomers in catering and cleaning duties by forming teams; encourage children by getting them to give out Bibles, hymnbooks, etc.*
- **Friendships** - *beyond our initial welcome, we need to make time to get know people; we need to create opportunities for this to happen, for instance through hospitality (lunches at the church with ethnic dishes, and in homes), outings for those from overseas, coffee mornings with a purpose (quarterly).*

(c) Minimising leakages

- **Different people have differing needs** which we should be sensitive to. For instance, **samplers** need welcoming, **seekers** need explanations, and **settlers** need involvement. *We should take the names and addresses of newcomers sensitively, and follow up with invitations to special events; send out "Missed*

(cont)

You' cards if people are absent; organise personal follow-through wherever possible; develop a 'Key Contact' scheme of trained befrienders; arrange fellowship 'At Home' evenings;

- **Home Groups** - *try to include more people in them through personal invitations; provide transport - "Come with me"; develop leadership and multiply the number of groups; the emphasis should be on group sharing (not a monologue) and on application rather than exposition; they should be a forum for personal needs, insights, and pastoral care to be expressed.*

INTERNATIONAL WORK

Over the course of the past 12 month, we have enjoyed the company of people from over 20 different countries worshipping amongst us. We are eager to develop the international dimension to our work at DRBC. At our Deacons' Away Day, we explored various ideas within our familiar *Sowing, Reaping, Keeping* framework.

(a) Making Contact (Sowing One)

- **publicity** - *target appropriate locations (e.g. Gateshead College, refugee and community centres); develop multi-lingual material;*
- **personal recommendation** - *encourage it!*
- **activities** to be explored - *hospitality in homes, outings to places of interest;*
- **monthly International Teas** - *focus on specific countries; provide ethnic foods; include testimonies; identify countries of origin with post-it stickers on wall map.*

(b) Sowing Two (sharing the Gospel)

- **International Bible Study Group** - *10-week initial course completed; studies next in Ephesians, to parallel Sunday morning series; involve more church people; obtain more foreign-language Bibles, tracts, Jesus videos, etc.*
- **Sunday Services** - *provide sermon outline on handout; translation facilities*

(c) Action

- form a **planning group** - *with overseas representation and a balance of English speakers/non-English speakers, Christians/seekers, males/females, marrieds/singles, students/refugees, DRBC members/ newcomers; ask them how we can be of most help to them (e.g. clothing and household good store)*

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE

We are greatly encouraged by the number of children and young people who are now attending our clubs on a Friday night, but are concerned as to how best we can further integrate them into the life of the church. Again, we explored the issues within a *Sowing, Reaping, Keeping* framework.

(a) Sowing One (Contact making)

- **Friday Club, Rock Solid Club** - recruitment is largely through personal recommendation and schools work: *encourage Alex Kelly to recruit newcomers and follow up old contacts; Pastor is making contact with local schools to speak about India and Believer's Baptism; encourage attendance at 'Sowing One' events to have contact with church members.*

(b) Sowing Two (Sharing the Gospel)

- **Special events** - *encourage attendance at Word of Life 'Jim Jam' events; encourage attendance at Youth for Christ's "Ninth Hour" concerts; encourage attendance at All-age Services; run a Holiday Club during half-term week or school holidays; invite special speaker (e.g. Dave Glover).*

(c) Reaping (Calling for commitment)

- **Camps and Special events** - *encourage attendance at summer camps.*

(d) Keeping

- **Sunday School and Bible Class** - *encourage attendance, after commitment to Christ; pray for more young families to start attending Sunday services.*

As you can see, there is plenty to keep us busy during 2003 as we continue to seek to build God's kingdom for his glory. Let me know the part you feel you could play in bringing these ideas to fruition.

Dates for the Diary

- **Quiz Night**, 7.00-8.30pm Tues 11th Feb;
- **Visit of John Eagle**, our local Councillor for Bede Ward, 7.30pm Wed 19th Feb;
- **International Tea**, 5.30pm Sun 23rd Feb, with a representative from the *Gideons*.

David Hunt