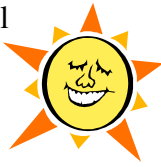


Many of us have enjoyed beautiful hot summer weather over the past few weeks. For those who have been fortunate enough to get away for a holiday, I trust we have returned refreshed and eager to resume our service for the Lord at DRBC.



## **Busy - and fruitful**

Autumn is often one of the busiest times of year in churches, as various organisations re-launch themselves with renewed enthusiasm after their summer break. Statistically, it is also one of the most fruitful. Church attendance is often at its highest during the autumn months, before succumbing to the winter weather, and thereafter only partly recovering during the spring and summer months. Our own figures at DRBC bear this out.

The average monthly attendance for the first eight months of 2002 (January-August) was as follows:

- 27 on Sunday mornings;
- 19 on Sunday evenings;
- 35 for at least one of the Sunday services.

Corresponding figures for the last four months of 2002 (September-December) were:

- 37 on Sunday mornings (+37%);
- 32 on Sunday evenings (+68%);
- 55 for at least one Sunday service (+57%).

The attendance for the first eight months of 2003 (January-August) show a slight drop (9%) on the figures for autumn 2002:

- 33 on Sunday mornings;
- 28 on Sunday evenings;
- 49 for at least one of the Sunday services.

However, these figures are 22%, 47% and 40% higher than those for the corresponding months in 2002, which is a cause for much thanksgiving.

***We should be praying that the Lord will give us an 'autumn increase' once again this year, as he did 12 months ago.*** As the farmers reap a physical harvest in the fields around us at this time of year, may we be privileged to reap a spiritual harvest for the Lord.

*Pray continually ....  
for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.  
[1 Thess 5.17-18]*

*They all joined together constantly in prayer.  
They devoted themselves to ... the prayers.  
[Acts 1.14;2.42]*

## **Week of Prayer**

John Wesley used to say that the busier he was, the more time he needed for prayer. This is why we are deliberately beginning our autumn busyness with a week set aside for prayer. In prayer,



- *we recognise our dependence on God;*
- *we seek his will and ways, his plans and programmes;*
- *we draw on his strength and call for his blessings;*
- *we do battle with spiritual forces that are holding people back from committing their lives to Jesus Christ;*
- *we see God's power released, opening up doors of opportunity and breaking down pockets of resistance.*

### ➤ **Encouragement from Peru**

A Week of Prayer is something new for DRBC - or at least, it is something we haven't engaged in for some time. But I received these words of encouragement from a missionary couple I know working in South America (yes, our News Letter travels right around the globe!):

*Hi! Thanks for the latest of your church newsletters. It is very encouraging to read all that is happening. The news of six baptisms after so many years is a real sign that the Lord is working. We are sure your week of prayer will be a real blessing. SIM always encourages its members to a special ten days of prayer between Ascension Day and Pentecost; someone prepares special notes to guide the prayers. Each of our teams in Peru held prayer meetings each day of the week this year, and it was a very encouraging time. I think each person who participated was encouraged, and we have since seen a few answers to special prayers. Your international ministry is certainly growing...you don't have to go abroad to reach 'all nations' nowadays.*

The Christians in Peru spend the 10 'waiting days' between Ascension Day and Pentecost waiting on God in prayer! And of course, they got that idea from what the first disciples did (see Acts 1.14).

### ➤ **Fast food? - No, just fast!**

Our Week of Prayer is beginning with some teaching on *fasting* at the morning and evening services on **Sunday 31<sup>st</sup> August**. This is a neglected part of most Christians' lives in prosperous 'developed' countries, where the church is generally declining. But it is very much the norm amongst Christians in the poorer developing countries, where the church is expanding. Could there be a connection?! Fasting is a tangible way of demonstrating our seriousness and earnestness. It also gives us more time for prayer. At our *International Fellowship Tea* that Sunday, we will also have an opportunity to hear of some of the different ways in which Christians from around the world organise their prayer lives.

"Only a church that learns to pray on its knees for the community it is set in, has any hope of winning that community for Christ" - Revd Dr Bruce Milne

### ➤ **Drop in to pray**

There will be an immediate opportunity to put Sunday's teaching into practise in the week that follows. The Church will be open, **Monday to Friday, between 12 noon and 2.00pm** for people to call in to pray with anyone else who happens to be there. Some might be able to manage only 10 minutes once during the course of the week; others might be able attend for two hours every day! That doesn't matter. God knows our diaries and how much time we are able to set aside in this way.

Jesus said, "Where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them." [Matthew 18.20]

### ➤ **Breaking the fast**

On **Saturday morning, 6<sup>th</sup> September** we are holding a *Prayer Breakfast*, from 8.30-10.00am. This will give us all an opportunity to seek God's face for our autumn activities.

### ➤ **The ups and downs of prayer**

Opening up opportunities and breaking down barriers will form the themes of our teaching on **Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> September** at our morning and evening services. The evening service will be followed by a *Half Night of Prayer* from 8.00-10.00pm. The time will be divided into four half-hour sessions. We would encourage everyone to attend at least one of them - more if you are able. Two of the sessions will be taken by our friends from overseas: Dr Gabriel Okugbeni (of the Overseas Fellowship of Nigerian Christians) and Dr Gemechu Ayana (of the Open Heaven Christian Centre, who use our premises for their service each Sunday afternoon).

*Prayer is more than just reading 'I need' lists to God, hoping he will answer. Prayer, as the first Christians knew it, encompassed the Godhead, angels, the Church; Satan and his host of demons - all of them engaged in a struggle for the souls of men. When the first Christians asked for boldness, God obliged by granting signs and wonders. Prayer in the Early Church was dynamic, powerful. The difference between prayer as we usually conceive it, and the kind the first Christians practised, is as vast as the difference between swimming in a bath and swimming out in the ocean. Prayer is something that happens this side of heaven. It is an area where man is expected to take the initiative. Man pleads, God gives; man knocks, God opens; man asks, God answers.'*

- Ed Silvano in his book *That None May Perish*

### **126 Not Out!**

A year on from our successful 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary mission, we are planning another time of mission (albeit on a slightly smaller scale) for mid-September.

- **Tues 9<sup>th</sup>** 7.00-8.30pm Games Evening
- **Sat 13<sup>th</sup>** 10.30am - 12 noon Flower Show & Coffee Morning;  
7.30pm Celebration Meal;  
8.30pm Celebration Rally, with guest speaker Barry Dunmire (from the USA), the Heaton Baptist Church Praise Band, James Appiah-Pippim (soloist), and Sarah Xu Ji (testimony)
- **Sun 15<sup>th</sup>** 11.00am Morning Service, Barry Dunmire; 6.30pm Evening Service, Barry Dunmire, and Jane Kitson (soloist)
- **Tues 16<sup>th</sup>** 7.00-8.30pm Anniversary Quiz Night
- **Sat 20<sup>th</sup>** 7.00-9.00pm International Outreach Evening: music and food, news and views, from around the world.
- **Sun 21<sup>st</sup>** 11.00am Morning Service and communion led by our Pastor; 6.30pm Evening Service led by our Pastor, with an evangelistic emphasis and guest soloist, Connie Young



Let me encourage you to

\***Support** these events by coming along to them;

\***Contribute** to them by providing food, supplying flowers, or donating money to help cover the costs;

\***Use** the publicity that will be available to invite others to hear about the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **Date for the Diary**

**International Outing: Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> Sept to Killhope Mine.** See Brian or Helen Sharp for further details.

**David Hunt**