

Congratulations!

It is not often that I begin our Church News Letter with a football report! But this month I think it is highly appropriate, because our hard-working under-14's five-a-side team have won two trophies over the course of this season! Last month, they won their division's knockout competition, beating the team who were top of the league in an exciting final. At full time, the scores were level at 2-2, so the match went to a penalty shoot-out. Our team scored all three of their penalties, and our goalkeeper heroically saved one of the opposition's penalties to enable us to lift the Fair Trade Cup. Very appropriately, that particular Saturday (3rd March) our team was down for special mention in our Church's monthly Prayer Diary. So as the team's coach, let me say a very big 'Thank you' to all of you who prayed for the team that day!



Last year, our team won only one match during the entire season, and so was relegated to division two. This year, the team's consistency has already guaranteed them second place in the league and so we will look forward to receiving the Runners' Up cup on the final day of the season, April 9th. Second place means we will be promoted back to the first division for next season.

Civic recognition

The month of March also saw two members of our football team pick up another award on behalf of the Church. We were both surprised and delighted to learn that we had been selected for one of the Tyne and Wear's High Sheriff's awards "*in recognition of great and valuable services to the community*" as our certificate puts it! Only three other groups from the Borough of Gateshead received an award. The awards are given annually to a wide range of groups in the Northeast who work with children and young people. The scheme was started about 15 years ago. It seeks to recognise groups who provide positive activities for children and young people to participate in, thus helping them to avoid being sucked into antisocial behaviour patterns (which often arise out of a sense of boredom) and even criminal activities. Our citation read as follows: *Durham Road Baptist Church in central Gateshead runs a variety of social and recreational activities for the whole community, including a fortnightly 5-a-side football team, children's and young people's clubs, an international drop-in, and quiz nights. They also run monthly 'Fun and Food' nights for all the family. Over 70 young people have attended in the last two years.*"



As always, our desire is to give all the glory to God for what he has accomplished both amongst us and through us over these past few years in the Church, and take no reflected glory to ourselves. But I believe it is good when a local community is pleased to recognise the 'salt and light' contribution we can make as God's people in their midst.

As John Stott used to say, "*For the Gospel to be credible, it needs to be visible as well as audible*" - seen in our good deeds, as well as heard from our lips.

"You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven. [Matthew 5.14-16]

Easter Joy

On Easter Sunday morning, very appropriately, it was our joy to celebrate the arrival of a new life in our fellowship. Jan and Alice Teekens-Veldkamp, together with their children Stijn and Franka, celebrated the safe arrival of Falk Tyne, a new addition to their family. We have been greatly blessed by having this family from Holland worshipping with us since last September, and count it a real privilege to have been asked to hold a service of thanksgiving and dedication for their new arrival. It was also a great joy to have Jan's parents join with us for the occasion.

In 2003, the Church held its first *baptismal service* for many years. Last year, we held our first *wedding* for many years; and now this year, the Lord has blessed us with the first *child dedication and thanksgiving service* for many years.

Also, for the first time for many years, our Sunday morning attendance broke through the 50 barrier on Easter Sunday morning (apart from one Sunday early in February when six Ethiopians joined us by mistake and pushed our numbers over the 50 mark!). Breaking through the 50 barrier was one of the prayer targets we set at the start of the year, together with maintaining an average morning attendance of at least 40 each month. Since last September, our monthly Sunday morning average attendance has only dipped below 40 once (39 in October!). Join with me in praying that these better numbers will be maintained throughout the spring and summer months.

Update from AGM

There was a good turn out at our AGM last month, but for the benefit of those who weren't able to be present, let me update you on one or two items that were shared.

- **Men's group.** We are planning to launch a daytime men's group on Tuesday 19th April. There will be an opportunity over a light lunch to think about the details of such a group, and to appoint a steering group to take the idea forwards, before we

have some fun playing table-tennis, carpet bowls and various other games.

- **RSC plus.** We are concerned to provide a group for the 14-plus age group in the Church. A quarter of those who have attended our Rock Solid Club (for 11-14 year olds) since September have been over-age. We are looking at the possibility of changing the times of our existing Friday activities to accommodate a third group, but the most important aspect to pray for is additional leadership support.
- **Structural and electrical work.** The Church members agreed to authorise a partial rewiring of our premises to bring them up-to-date, in accordance with the requirements of our insurers. The cost will be around £3,000. During recent remedial work on the Church roof, it was noted that the front wall may be leaning outwards. The Church Meeting agreed to a verticality survey being carried out at a cost of just under £100. Depending on the result of this survey, we may need to commission a structural engineer to draw up suitable plans for stabilising the lean. The cost of this design work would be around £1,700. We have applied for grants to cover these costs.

Forthcoming events

Don't forget two special events taking place this month.

- **Songs of Praise from the Sage.** BBC's popular programme *Songs of Praise* is being recorded at The Sage Music Centre on Tuesday 12th April for transmission later in the year. Some of us will have the privilege of taking part in the recording (tickets are like gold dust!), but *all* of us can pray that God will be honoured through the programme, and that many will come to faith as a result of the testimonies shared.
- **Fun and Food for all the Family evening.** Our April event on Tuesday 19th (a week later than usual to avoid clashing with the 'Songs of Praise' recording) is *a Games Night with a difference*. We are looking forward to receiving a speaker from the *Tall Ships Festival* organising group. He will be giving us a taste of what will be happening on the Tyne towards the end of July. 4,000 young people (and not so young!) will be converging on Gateshead from all over the world. It provides us with a great opportunity to spread the Gospel through distributing suitable evangelistic literature down at the quayside and throughout the town centre, as well as laying on a hospitality lunch at the church.

David Hunt