

A Call to Prayer

This September edition of our monthly Church News Letter is being produced a week earlier than usual so that it can accompany details of our annual **Week of Prayer**, which will run from **Sunday 4th – Sunday 11th September**. Last year's Week of Prayer was highly significant in the life of DRBC (see later under 'A God who answers prayers') and we trust that this year's Week of Prayer will prove to be even more productive! Plan to be a part of it by sharing in our lunchtime drop-in's or in our other opportunities for corporate prayer: our Wednesday Evening Meeting, our Saturday Morning Prayer Breakfast and our Sunday Evening Half Hour of Prayer).

The stirring theme for this year's Week of Prayer is taken from Isaiah 40.3-5; 62.10 and Luke 3.1-18: **Prepare the Way for the Lord!**

Prepare the way for the LORD; make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God. Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain. And the glory of the LORD will be revealed, and all mankind together will see it. For the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

[Isaiah 40.3-5]

We have chosen this theme with our autumn outreach programme in mind (see below and overleaf). We all long to see God working amongst us in mighty ways so that "*the glory of the LORD will be revealed*" both in us and through us. But for this to happen, there needs to be a thoroughgoing reformation of our characters so that we become a fit *highway for our God* – like a really good motorway in tip-top condition.

As we travel around the country by car or coach, we come across numerous road improvement schemes, all designed to aid the free-flow of traffic. Sharp corners are straightened out, steep gradients are levelled off, and rough stretches are resurfaced.

Similarly, for God to work freely in us and to maximum effect through us there are aspects of our lives that need straightening out (unhealthy attitudes, perhaps, or the unhelpful ways in which we use some of our time and talents). There may be some deficiencies in the way we think that need to be filled in, or traces of arrogance that need to be brought low. Perhaps there are rough edges in the way we relate to other people that need to be smoothed out. If, during our Week of Prayer, we are truly open to God, he will pinpoint particular aspects of our character that we

need to work on (with his help), so we become a faster, straighter and more effective *highway* along which he can travel to accomplish his purposes.

*Build up the highway! Remove the stones.
Raise a banner for the nations. The LORD has made proclamation to the ends of the earth: "Say to the Daughter of Zion, 'See, your Saviour comes!'
[Isaiah 62.10-11]*

I am sure we have all experienced the frustration of running into traffic jams on motorways as we have sought to travel quickly to our holiday destination. This year's Week of Prayer will prove to be highly significant if we use it well to remove every obstacle to God working freely amongst us (Isaiah 62.10). Our desire is for "*all mankind to see God's salvation*" (Luke 3.6). We long for people to see the attractiveness of Jesus shining forth from our lives, so that they are drawn to put their trust in him too.

On the Move

There is so much for us to look forward to during the month of September, it's hard to know what to highlight! So let me simply paste up a diary of events.

- ⇒ **National Heritage Open Day Coffee Morning and Flower Show, Saturday 10th September, 10.30-12 noon.**
- ⇒ **Official Opening of our new Accessibility Facilities, Saturday 10th September.**
 - 6.00pm: Buffet meal.**
 - 7.00-8.00pm: Dedication Service** with special Guest of Honour, Clarence Adoo of the Sage Music Centre, Gateshead.
- ⇒ **Fun and Food for all the Family Games Night, Tuesday 13th Sept, 7.00-8.30pm.**
- ⇒ **Harvest Thanksgiving All-age Service, Sunday 25th September, 11.00am-12 noon.**
- ⇒ **Harvest Supper and Annual Thank Offering, Monday 26th September, 7.00pm.**

An Autumn of Opportunity

Our main outreach event this autumn is an *Evening with Syd Little, Friday 18th November*. During the first part of the evening, Syd Little (in conversation with Chris Gidney) will speak about his life in show business as one half of the famous 'Little and Large' variety duo. During the second part of the evening, he will be talking about his conversion and Christian faith. *Please make this event a matter of special prayer.*

It's not too soon to be thinking about those whom you could invite to this event. Start praying for them now.

that God would be working in their hearts and minds already, preparing them to hear the Gospel through this special evening. Invitations will be going out to local churches in Gateshead and further afield during September, so pray that the response will be positive.

We are planning to run the highly acclaimed **START course** as our follow-up to the Syd Little evening. So with that in mind, we will be running a pilot course on Wednesday evenings, commencing 28th September. The course will run for six weeks. Plan to be a part of it, with a view to encouraging your friends and contacts to attend later on! See Ray and Val Hill for details.

I am delighted to report that we have received a request for baptism, so we are planning a new series of **baptism and church membership classes** on Monday evenings, commencing 12th September. Please let me know if you would like further details. A **Baptism Service** has been pencilled in for Sunday evening, 20th November.

A Week to Remember

Let me say a very big 'thank you' to everyone who helped make our Tall Ships Race outreach initiative such a worthwhile venture. 7,500 copies of the *Harbour Lights* leaflets were distributed. It was wonderful to see how warmly they were received by hotels, shops, museums, art galleries, the Sage Music Centre, the two Cathedrals in Newcastle, and the Tourist Information Centres. It was thrilling to discover that the leaflets had successfully found their way into the Crew Reception Centres too, thanks to the co-operation of Gateshead Council.

It was a tremendous privilege to be able to pass out the leaflets personally, down on the quayside, to crewmembers from as far afield as Indonesia, India, Oman, Russia, Bulgaria, Portugal, Poland, Germany and Holland and many other countries. We were also able to distribute tracts in their own language to several of these people. Pray that these precious portions of God's Word will be read over and over again and lead many to a living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Pray that many will be led to a living faith in Jesus Christ as their Saviour and Lord through the leaflets.

"My word that goes out from my mouth will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it."

[Isaiah 55.11]

A God Who Answers Prayers

As we look back over the past 12 months, there is so much for which we can thank God. I mentioned earlier in this Newsletter that last year's Week of Prayer was highly significant for us as a Church. In my letter to the fellowship for last year's Week of Prayer, I expressed a number of concerns that we were acutely aware of as a leadership team. *"In many ways, I believe that DRBC is at something of a crossroads,"* I wrote.

- We were concerned about our **attendance levels**. Our numbers on Sunday mornings had levelled off and on Sunday evenings they had shown a slight dip. But the Lord heard our prayers, and I am happy to report that, *since September 2004, our monthly average morning attendance has always been above 40* (except for one month when it was 39!) and on four Sunday mornings, we have **broken through the 50 mark!** Our Sunday evening attendances since January have shown a slight improvement on the corresponding period for last year too, as have our total Sunday attendance figures. *It would be good for us to pray that over the coming months, we will be exceeding the 50 mark regularly on Sunday mornings, and that our total attendance will consistently be over 60.*

Average attendance at Sunday Services						
	Jan-Aug			Sept – Dec		
	M	E	T	M	E	T
2002	27	18	35	37	32	55
2003	33	28	49	38	31	56
2004	33	23	45	41	27	55
2005	43	26	55	-	-	-

M = morning; E = evening;

T = total number attending at least once on a Sunday

This time last year, we faced a shortfall of £25,800 in our **building refurbishment fund**. But as we prayed, the Lord raised up people to give, so that by the time the work commenced, all the costs were covered!

These very specific answers to last year's prayer requests give us confidence to pray all the more boldly about our current needs.

- Pray for the new club for 14-20 year olds starting up this autumn, and for all our staffing needs.
- Pray for steady sustained growth through new families being added to the fellowship.
- Pray that we will be a superhighway of holiness for the Lord to travel on to accomplish his purposes!

David Hunt