

Speechless!

All of us who attended this year's Harvest Supper on 26th September were left speechless when the total for our **Annual Thank Offering** was announced – **over £4,900!!** The figure has since risen to over **£5,080!!!** This is more than double the target we had set in this year's budget (£2,300) and well exceeded the £2,876 given last year, which we considered to be exceptional (the Thank Offering total for 2003 had been £2,148).

We give God all the glory for the amazing generosity he has put in the hearts of his people. Paul reminded the Corinthians that ..

... your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God. People will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity. ... Whoever sows generously will also reap generously. God loves a cheerful giver. [2 Corinthians 9.11-12, 6-7]

Delighted!

We were delighted with the turnout for our **All-age Harvest Thankgiving Service** on Sunday morning 25th September. 53 'regular' worshippers were present (a record in itself), plus 17 children and two helpers from the Larkspur Crusaders group, which David and Joan King run in a local primary school. The total of 72 was the highest attendance on a Sunday morning for many, many years, for which we praise God.

Our harvest produce was distributed amongst those in the fellowship from overseas – particularly those in special need.

Memorable!

The testimony Clarence Adoo shared at the Official Opening of our new accessible facilities was, by common consent, one of the most moving and powerful testimonies ever heard in the church. Clarence was born in Ghana, but was raised as a foster child in a home of Salvation Army Christians here in the UK. This instilled in him a great love for music. He went on to study the trumpet at a top London music college before eventually moving to the Northeast to join the Northern Symphonia orchestra. He was much in demand, not only as a classical musician, but also as a jazz trumpeter.

Then tragedy struck. En route to his brother's wedding, his car overturned and Clarence was left paralysed from the neck downwards. For several days, his life hung in the balance. But as he lay paralysed in his hospital bed, God reassured him of the purpose he

still had for his life. In fact, the message that came through loud and clear to Clarence was that his future life would be even more fruitful than his past life.

Clarence now works out of the Sage Music Centre in Gateshead, travelling round schools teaching music. The way he operated his motor-driven wheel chair – with his chin – was remarkable! But what was even more striking was that there wasn't a hint of bitterness or resentment as Clarence told his story – simply a lovely, big beaming smile as he testified to God's faithfulness! He was a shining example to us all of these challenging words:

Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life.
[Philippians 2.14-16]

Enquiries

We have been pleased that the Newcastle Evening Chronicle ran an article on our new accessible facilities, and the Baptist Times also featured them in an article.

Word is gradually spreading about the availability of our premises and, as a result, there has been a steady stream of enquiries about booking them. Recent and future bookings include: **Aquila Way** (for a strawberry tea!); **GVOC** (for a meeting on children's concerns); **Age Concern** (for an all day meeting and possibly a weekly fitness session); the **Ebenezer Emergency Fund** (for a Prayer Day); the **PPI Gateshead Hospitals and Primary Care Forum** (for twice monthly meetings) – and our longstanding friends, the **Overseas Fellowship of Nigerian Christians** (for their thrice monthly meetings). We are delighted to make our premises available to these local community groups and hope for further fruitful enquiries.

A GOOD START

A good start has been made in all our weekly clubs for children and young people.

- The **Thursday Club** for 7-11 year olds has 16 children on its books, 14 of whom are new! The average attendance has been about 10.
- The **Rock Solid Club** for 11-14 year olds has 18 young people on its books, of whom six are new. The average attendance has been 15.
- The new **Fit For Life Club** for those aged 15-20 has 5 young people on its books, with an average attendance of 4.

We give God praise for answering our prayers for this vital and strategic work. We were delighted to hear that one of our young people from a non-church home had dedicated his life to Christ at a Scripture Union camp this summer, and was pleased to tell us!

START has started!

Our new 'Discovering Christianity' course began well with 27 present for the first session. However, if you missed it, it's not too late to join!

SYD LITTLE EVENING, 18th Nov

We are running the START course in preparation for using it as a follow up for our *Evening with Syd Little* event on 18th November. Tickets are now available at £5 for adults and £1 for under-16's. Let me know if you would like some. Pray that we will get a good attendance for the evening, and that hearts will be changed through it. Prayer cards are now available to use in the run up to it.

SOMETHING NEW

On Tuesday 11th October, we will be breaking new ground at our monthly *Food and Fun for all the Family Evening*. Professor John Derry, of the United Reform Church in Gateshead will be giving a talk on *The Little Admiral – Lord Nelson*. This year is the bicentenary of Nelson's death at the Battle of Trafalgar, and so we hope that the talk will prove to be of topical interest to people in our local community. Professor Derry's talk will last about 25 minutes, so we will have plenty of opportunity to enjoy using our games equipment too.

PARA LOS NINOS

Para los Ninos means '*for the children*', and is the title of this year's BMS World Mission appeal, which we have decided to support as a church. We have set a target of £250 to be raised over the next 12 months. The money will go to providing pre-school education for some of the poorest children of South America and Africa. Experience has shown that those who are given pre-school education make much better progress than other children, when they start school for real. Please see **Wanda Stockdale** for further information and details of how you can give to the project.

DON'T COME TO CHURCH

These are words that I never imagined I would have to say to anyone in the UK, for reasons of their own safety. But it sums up the very difficult dilemma in which one family in our fellowship finds itself. On

26th August, in the early hours of the morning, the Yefimenko's home was raided by police and immigration officials with a view to removing the family from the UK. Providentially, they happened to be staying with friends that night, and so escaped the clutches of the authorities. But their home was boarded up, denying them any further access to it and to their vital medication, which is essential to relieve their acute conditions.

The Yefimenko's came to the UK from Azerbaijan where they had attended the Azeri-speaking Baptist Church in Baku, a fellowship composed mostly of former Moslems. For this reason, their church came under particularly severe persecution from the authorities. Both Leo and Maya were taken into custody, where they were subjected to appalling physical abuses. The family fled to the UK to seek asylum on the grounds of the religious persecution they had suffered in their homeland. But, inexplicably, it appears that their very strong case has been rejected by the Home Office.

At present, we don't know how actively immigration officials will pursue them. It has been known for officials to seize children from their school classes, in front of horrified pupils and staff. So we have had to advise Emil and Elvin against attending their school. We also fear that immigration officials might wait outside the church to seize the whole family.

Please continue to support this family through your prayers and in whatever other ways you can. We are actively making direct representation to the Home Office Minister responsible for Immigration to seek to get their verdict reversed. Pray for the letter that Revd David Coffey has written in his capacity as Free Church Moderator. Revd John Claydon, our Baptist Regional Minister, has also written, as has a representative from the Evangelical Alliance. We have made representation to David Clelland, our local MP, and sought the support of Alan Beith (a Christian MP in the Northeast) and Baroness Cox, a tireless campaigner for the rights of persecuted Christians worldwide. Please pray for a speedy and positive outcome to this case for the sake of all concerned.

David Hunt