

A Night to Remember

250 people packed the downstairs of our Church building on Friday 18th November for a memorable evening of high quality entertainment and powerful Christian testimony. Our *Evening with Syd Little* exceeded our expectations in so many different ways.

- We were thrilled with the turnout, having originally budgeted for an attendance of 100.
- We were superbly entertained by Andrew's band, brought together only that week, as people gathered for the event.
- We roared with laughter at the genuinely funny jokes Chris Gidney and Syd Little told.
- We were treated to some top-class singing from Syd, Little as we revisited some memorable songs from the sixties.
- We enjoyed superb refreshments after the event, thanks to Elma and her hard-working team.

But most of all, we were deeply touched by the testimony Syd Little shared. Having been brought up to go to church, he gradually drifted away from any Christian interest once his show business commitments began to take over his life in his mid to late teens. He later suffered the trauma of a marriage breakdown, a son heavily involved in drugs, a daughter attacked by a vicious boyfriend, and another son left wheelchair-bound through ME.

Yet over a period of years, Syd began to inch his way back towards God. He started to attend a church in Torquay, and was later confirmed in it.

But the most significant moment in his life occurred in Bobby Ball's dressing room in Blackpool. Chris Gidney was present to lead a Bible Study for Christians in Entertainment. Syd was challenged by Bobby as to whether he had ever asked Christ into his life. Syd confessed that he hadn't – but wanted to do so. And so there and then, his new life with Christ began. He likened his experience to acquiring an aerial for a television set! Previously, his understanding of God had been somewhat jumbled up, like the broken pattern of a fuzzy television picture



without an aerial. But once he had asked Christ into his life, the picture became so much clearer!

At the end of the evening, everyone was asked to fill in a response card, and about 70 were completed.

- 60 people gave a lot of very positive responses to the evening under the 'feedback' question;
- 4 people requested some Christian literature, and so were subsequently sent a copy of the booklet *Knowing God Personally* and a copy of Nick Gumbel's excellent booklet *Why Jesus?*
- 3 people indicated that they would like to attend our *START* course on Wednesday evenings.
- 3 of our *Rock Solid* young people ticked every box on the card (!) and so we have started a special Wednesday evening follow-up group for them. It was thrilling to see them all at church the following Sunday morning and evening.

Let me say a very big 'Thank you' to everyone who prayed for the event, especially those of you who receive this News Letter by e-mail in far-flung parts of the world! We continue to pray that God will bring forth a rich spiritual harvest of good things for his glory in the weeks and months – and even years – ahead through such a memorable night. We are already thinking about how we might follow it up with something similar next year.

And Another one!

We were all deeply moved by the testimony Chris Thompson shared with us in her baptism service on 27th November. Chris had been brought up in a Christian home and had attended church all her life. Difficult personal circumstances brought her to Gateshead, exactly a year ago, and she began to attend our fellowship. She was touched by the warmth of welcome she received. But earlier this year, around February, she was challenged by some words used at a communion service. I had mentioned that participation was for those who had personally received Jesus Christ as their Saviour and were walking with him as their Lord. Chris knew that this wasn't true of her, and so a few months later, she stopped taking communion. But someone had noticed, and challenged her about it. Chris confessed the reason, and was further challenged to get her commitment to

Christ sorted out. This eventually happened in July, and since then Chris hasn't looked back. Her newfound joy and confidence has been evident to all, and we had the joy of preaching at her baptism on the words, *The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message* (Acts 16.14). Like Lydia, Chris had been transformed from being a mere worshipper of God (somewhere out there) to a woman who now knew the reality of Jesus living in her heart by his Holy Spirit. We were pleased to be able to distribute several copies of the booklet *Knowing God Personally* (which had been instrumental in Chris' conversion) to family and friends who had gathered for the service.

Christmas is Coming!

By the time this News Letter reaches you, our Christmas celebrations will have already begun with our annual **Christmas Coffee Shop** on **Sat 3rd Dec**. But here are details of the rest of the activities we have planned for the festive season.



➤ **Carol Singing around the streets, 6.30-8.00pm, Mon 5th, Thurs 8th and Mon 12th December;** also in the town centre on **Sat 17th Dec, 10.30am-12 noon**. See Val Hill for further details.



➤ Two **Christmas Specials** have been arranged for consecutive Tuesday evenings. On **Tues 6th Dec**, David and Joan King are running a special event for their Larkspur Crusaders group and their parents, together with our own Thursday Club members. Then the following week, on **Tuesday 13th December, 7.00-8.30pm**, we will be holding a Christmas Special for our own church contacts and friends. We plan to have some quizzes and games, some carol singing, and show the brilliant Christmas DVD, *Jacob's Gift*.

Our main Christmas services will be as follows:

⇒ an **All-age Service** on **Sunday Morning 18th Dec at 11.00am**;

⇒ a **Christmas Carol Service** on **Sunday Evening 18th Dec at 6.30pm**, preceded by an **International Fellowship Tea** at 5.30pm and followed by coffee and mince pies!



⇒ a **Christmas Day All-age Special at 11.00am** on **Sunday 25th Dec**. There will be no evening service on Christmas Day.

Wedding Bells are ringing

We wish **Philip Reay and Ellen Wang Dan** our very best wishes for their forthcoming marriage at the Church on **Saturday 10th December at 12 noon**.

Financial Update

At our **Church Members' Half Annual General Meeting** last month, we were able to present a very encouraging financial update.

- We anticipate ending the year with **an excess of income over expenditure** amounting to around **£5,000** compared to an anticipated shortfall of around £7,000 (we were expecting to have to draw this amount from reserves).
- Our **weekly offerings** are running at **£340** (against a budget figure of £270). It was noted that in 2001, the figure was £122; so there has been almost a three-fold increase in four years.
- **Income to our General Fund** is likely to be around **£46,000** this year. In 2001, the figure was £13,800; this is more than a three-fold increase over the past four years!
- **Total income**, including money received for our building refurbishment project and other specific needs, will amount to **over £70,000** this year – more than a five-fold increase since 2001.

We give God all the praise and glory for his abundant provision to us as a Church this year!

At Christmas, we rejoice in the one who, for our sakes, became poor, so that in him we might become spiritually rich (2 Cor 8.9).

David Hunt