

Our Verse for the Year for 2007

The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

[1 Timothy 1.14]

New Year Resolutions?

The start of a new year is a good opportunity to look forward. But what about all those New Year resolutions we are encouraged to make? Most get broken within a few days, but here are some suggestions to keep up for the rest of the year.

➤ **Read the Bible every day**

Paul tells us that *faith comes from hearing the message ... the Word of Christ* [Rom 10.17]. So if our faith is to grow stronger during 2007, we should set aside some time each day for God to speak to us, personally and individually. Faith is the product of understanding. The better we come to understand something, the more confident we will be to trust ourselves to it. So it is with God. The better we come to understand his nature, character and purposes, the more we will be inclined to trust him – and our understanding will grow the more we expose ourselves to his Word.

Norma Donaldson keeps a supply of **Bible Reading notes**, to help us cultivate the habit of daily Bible Reading. Please see her if you would like a copy for the current quarter, January – March.

➤ **Become a Sunday Evening regular**

It has been encouraging to notice an increase in our Sunday morning attendances over the past year, and good attendances at our midweek meetings, especially when we divide into small groups. But our Sunday evening services have been comparatively poorly attended over the past 12 months, dropping back to their level of five years ago. It hasn't been easy to determine why this should be so, apart from the fact that many who could be 'twice-ers' have only been 'once-ers'! When we draw up our teaching programme for Sundays, we try to maintain a good balance between different parts of the Bible (New and Old Testaments) and different styles of writing (Gospels, letters, psalms, character studies, etc.). But the balanced diet works on the principle that people will take the two meals on offer, and not just one. So if you haven't been in the habit of

coming out on a Sunday evening as well as on a Sunday morning, give it a go in 2007!

➤ **Join a Small Group**

Our programme of Small Groups for our midweek meetings was one of our success stories for 2006. 46 people participated in them during our *40 Days of Purpose* programme, and 36 people took part in them during the autumn. But we still have room for more. So if you haven't yet settled into one, think about joining one this session. They are so much more than Bible Study Groups, although that is a key aspect of them. They are the building blocks for our care and spiritual nurture of those within the congregation, places of true Christians fellowship.

➤ **Review your level of giving**

We never ceased to be amazed at the abundant way in which God supplies our financial needs as a Church.

- My first post of the New Year contained a cheque for £1,000 for our **Building Refurbishment Fund**. What an encouragement at the start of a new financial year!
- During 2006, our **weekly offerings** exceeded our target figure by 12%, at almost £400 per week. We praise God for the generosity he has put in his people's hearts. Our weekly offerings have more than tripled over the past five years, from £122 per week in 2001 to around £396 per week in 2006.
- Our **target for 2007** has been set at **£420**, an increase of 5% over the figure for 2006; and for 2008, the figure has been set at £460, a further 10% increase. We are hoping to be financially self-supporting from 2008 onwards, enabling valuable Home Mission Funds to be released to other needy causes. So wouldn't it be good if we aimed to reach our 2008 target a year early! It would mean achieving a £60 a week increase (15%) over our 2006 figure. I believe it's attainable! I heard about a new church recently that deliberately set a deficit budget each year, anticipating it would be covered by numerical growth – and it has been! Their congregation has risen to 250, from barely 60 four years ago.

➤ **Join the Gift Aid scheme**

If you are fortunate enough to be a taxpayer, did you know that, **at no extra cost to yourself, your offerings could be increased by 28%**,

thanks to the government's **Gift Aid** scheme? For every 78p you give, the Church can reclaim the tax you have already paid on that 78p (i.e. 22p, or even more if you are a higher rate taxpayer). Please see our Treasurer, Lewis Wilson, for details of the scheme.

The Journey of a Lifetime

One of the main events taking place this term is a visit of the **Emmaus Road Show** to Gateshead. It will be stationed at four different Primary Schools throughout the Borough between Monday 26th February and Friday 30th March. So far, 18 primary schools and one secondary school have signed up to visit the Road Show, along with several churches. Housed in two large trailers, the Road Show is advertised as *The Journey of a Lifetime!* Let me quote from the publicity leaflet to whet your appetite for it.

The Emmaus Road Show is a virtual journey exploring the life and time of Jesus.

- *The journey begins on the flight deck of a spacecraft in earth orbit. While they await transfer to the surface, visitors explore an ancient databank (the Bible). Animated charts and film-clips illustrate what it has to say about the world below them.*
- *This introduction has all the excitement of the sort of computer game that holds the attention of children. Can they capture the pod that contains the data they will need to explore next?*
- *Having landed safely, visitors board the aircraft video theatre for their onward flight to Bible lands. In-flight movies are shown, suited to the age and background knowledge of viewers. For adult groups attending after school hours, there is a separate video menu.*
- *Passengers then transfer to the 'coach tour' theatre to view key biblical sites and scenes in brilliant full-colour 3D photography, with surround sound. The 3D tour takes in the regions visited by Jesus including Galilee and the Jordan valley.*
- *Viewers are finally taken on a dramatic moonlit tour of Jerusalem, as pictures of the unfolding Easter story are displayed on a screen.*

The Emmaus Road Show is a fast-moving, high-tech, interactive presentation geared towards Key Stage Two children (ages 7-11). It focuses on the geographical and social background of the Bible, and features an overview of the period from Abraham to Jesus, the Easter story, and the Day of Pentecost.

We will be showing a DVD trailer for the Road Show at our midweek meeting on **Wednesday 17th January**, and paying a visit to it on **Wednesday 21st March** – a great evangelistic opportunity to take friends along with you. Make a note of these dates and plan to be present for them.

Join with me in **praying** that the Road Show will be a memorable, informative and enjoyable experience for the hundreds who will visit it. Pray that it will stimulate many children's appetites to discover more about Jesus!

Coming Up

Here's an outline of our *Fun and Food for all the Family* programme for the next three months.

- **Tues 9th January: Games Night, 7.00-8.30pm.**
- **Tues 13th February: Music Night, 7.00-8.30pm.**
Please see Gareth Williams if you are able to contribute a musical item.
- **Tues 13th March: An Early Easter Special, 7.00-8.30pm.**

Looking Forward

At a recent midweek meeting, we were reminding ourselves of the story of Anna (Luke 2.36-38). She was identified with a group of people who were *all looking forward* to what God was going to do amongst them. I trust that's the spirit in which we enter another new year.

It is sometimes said that people overestimate what can be done in one year, but underestimate what can be done in five years. It's now five years since the first edition of the DRBC Newsletter was issued, in December 2001. How we thank God for all that he has done amongst us during my five years with you, from those tiny beginnings back in January 2002. Let's now look forward to all that he yet has in store for us over the next five years, in his goodness and grace.

David Hunt