

2007

## Looking Back to Look Forwards

This month marks the fifth anniversary of me joining DRBC as its Interim Pastor, a post made permanent in June 2002.

It is often said that people overestimate what can be achieved in one year, but underestimate what can be accomplished in five years.

So at our Quarterly Church Members' Meeting last month, I took a moment to look back over some of the good things the Lord has accomplished amongst us over these past five years.

### ➤ Attendance figures

- In January 2002, our morning attendance averaged 22; last month, it averaged 49.
- The number of worshippers at DRBC in January 2002 averaged 34 per week; last month, it was 57.
- 47 different people attended the church during January 2002; last month, the figure was 97.
- In January 2002, a Sunday school operated during the morning service; we now have a crèche and Bible Class as well.
- In January 2002, we had a single central midweek meeting, attracting 10-12 people. We now have a system of small groups, catering for over three dozen people.
- Nine people have been baptised in the church and 26 new members have been welcomed into the fellowship over the last five years.
- Over the last five years, we have become an international congregation, embracing people of many different nationalities.

### ➤ Children and Young People

- In January 2002, we were running a Friday Club for primary school aged children; in addition to that, we now have two clubs for teenagers and two five-a-side football teams.

### ➤ Finances

- In January 2002, the average weekly offering was £133. Our current target, which we aim to exceed, is £420 per week.
- In 2001, income to our General Fund was £13,800. Last year, it was £47,646, not to mention almost £25,000 received for other funds, giving a total of over £72,000.
- In 2001, the annual Thank Offering totalled £2,361; last year, it was £4,362.

### ➤ Building Work

- Over the last five years, the building has been upgraded to include an accessible toilet and internal

and external access ramps; it has been rewired and partially re-roofed. The Church Hall has been carpeted and fitted with curtains. A new cooker and fridge freezer have been purchased for the kitchen. We have also acquired a comprehensive collection of games and fitness equipment.

There are many other advances and improvements I could mention. We have so much to praise God for, and we would be careful to give him all the glory for these achievements over the past five years. It has truly been all his doing!

If five years ago, I had told those of you who were in the church then that this is where we would be today, I think most of you would have settled for it!

## Unfinished Business

But my conviction is that this is *only the beginning* of what God wants to do amongst us. God hasn't yet finished the '*new thing*' he promised to do amongst us when we held those memorable Vision Building evenings in February 2001, when I was still working with the Northern Baptist Association. In fact, I believe he has only just begun!

*"Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland. ... I provide water in the desert and streams in the wasteland, to give drink to my people, my chosen, the people I formed for myself that they may proclaim my praise.*

**Isaiah 43.18-21**

The biggest 'new thing' God wants to do is in our hearts – changing our values and attitudes, re-casting our aspirations and expectations.

We have seen some wonderful answers to prayer in recent weeks. But these should simply spur us on to even greater expectations of what God will do amongst us, as we humble ourselves before him.

We've perceived the beginning of the 'new thing' God has started amongst us; but we certainly haven't seen the end of it!

So *where, in God's goodness, would we hope to be as a church in another five years?* Wouldn't it be wonderful if we were able to look back and praise God for ...

- an average Sunday morning attendance of 100 rather than 50, drawn from a pool of 200 rather than 100;
- eight or more Small Groups, rather than the four we have at present;

- new believers having been baptised *every* year, rather than just three out of the last five years;
- a church budget of £100,000 rather than £50,000;
- refurbished church halls, complete with a new heating system and extra toilet facilities for the ladies – and a refurbished multi-purpose church sanctuary, to accommodate the growing number of worshippers and our expanded programme of weekday activities;
- an additional member of staff, working amongst young people, perhaps. We discussed the possibility of bringing a stream of American students across to DRBC at our Church Meeting last month. Please continue to pray about this, so that we are clear about the Lord's way forward.

My conviction is that we should constantly be thinking bigger, because that's the way our God thinks, so long as there are still people outside his family of believers missing out on the feast of good things he has prepared for them (see Luke 14.23)!

### ***The Journey of a Lifetime***

The arrival of the **Emmaus Road Show** in Gateshead is now less than four weeks away. Full details of it were given in last month's newsletter. A DVD featuring the Road Show is available for borrowing, for any one who missed our midweek presentation last month. Details are also given on the Road Show's website ([www.bibleventures.org](http://www.bibleventures.org))

A Prayer Guide will be issued for it in two weeks time. Meanwhile, please continue to remember these specific points in your prayers for it.

#### ➤ **Give thanks for...**

- the opportunity of bringing the Road Show to Gateshead;
- the four schools who have offered to host the Road Show;
- the fifteen other schools who will be visiting the Road Show;
- the 2,000-2,500 pupils who will be visiting the Road Show;
- Ian Bainbridge's involvement in planning the project and making contact with the schools;
- the six churches who have booked visits to the Road Show;
- the complete financial underwriting of the whole project;
- those who have offered to host the Road Show's staff members during their time Gateshead.

#### ➤ **Pray for ...**

- the **safe arrival** of the Road Show from Middlesbrough (good weather would be a great help!)

- Norman Bygate, who is organising vehicles to move the Road Show from one school to the next.
- **Les Hackelton**, who is running the Road Show, and Barbara his wife who will be assisting for weeks 1,3 and 5:
  - their own walk with the Lord throughout the five weeks;
  - their physical health and energy levels;
  - their engagement with the children and teachers.
- the **pupils** who will be attending the Road Show
  - that they will enjoy the experience and learn from it;
  - that they will be excited by what they discover;
  - that they will be stimulated to discover more about Jesus;
  - that their hearts will be drawn to put their faith in him.
- the **teachers** who will be attending the Road Show
  - that they will enjoy the experience and learn from it;
  - that they will be able to follow it up with good material in their lessons.
- the **church groups** who will be attending the Road Show
  - that they will use it as an evangelistic opportunity;
  - that people will enjoy the experience and learn from it;
  - that people's understanding of the Scriptures will be deepened;
  - that people will be stimulated to discover more about Jesus;
  - that there will be good follow up to the visit.
- good coverage in the local **press and radio**.

*Beginning with Moses and all the Prophets,  
Jesus explained what was said in all the  
Scriptures concerning himself.*

*"Were not our hearts burning within us  
while he talked with us on the road  
and opened the Scriptures to us?"*

[Luke 24.27, 32]

### ***For Your Diary***

Our *Fun and Food for all the Family* event this month will be held on:

- **Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> February: Music and Quizzes on a Valentine's Day theme, 7.00-9.00pm.** Contact Gareth and Mandy Williams for further details.

**David Hunt**