

A Warm Welcome to Matthew

We are looking forward to welcoming **Matthew Johnston** to Durham Road Baptist Church this month as the first of our American Youth Work Interims. Matthew is a student at Wayland Baptist University, Texas, majoring in Religious Studies. He is currently spending a month at Oxford University, through a Study Abroad programme, and will be arriving in Gateshead on 12th July. He will be with us until mid-December.



Matthew has considerable experience working with young people, both in the USA and overseas on mission trips to Mexico and Canada.

We have drawn up a detailed Job Description for him, which includes the following activities.

- teaching in our Sunday morning Bible Class;
- playing a full and active part in our *Rock Solid* and *Fit for Life* clubs on Friday evenings;
- helping organise our two five-a-side football teams for the autumn;
- developing contact with these and other young people outside church times (for example, through home visits and social activities) - **this will be a key task**;
- developing contact with local secondary schools through taking assemblies, RE lessons, and speaking at CU meetings, etc.
- networking with other agencies working with young people on Tyneside, such as *Scripture Union*, *Youth for Christ*, *UCCF* and *Friends International*.
- establishing links with Gateshead College, possibly through enrolling for a short-term, part-time course.
- initiating and participating in Church activities for those in their late teens/early twenties (e.g. monthly social activities), to encourage outreach amongst peers and to promote spiritual nurture;
- playing a full and active part in the life of the Church through attendance at both Sunday services, midweek meetings, outreach events and other activities.

You will see from this list of activities that we expect Matthew to be busy during his time with us!

So, please **pray for him** as he prepares to join us, and during his early settling in period. I will be responsible for Mathew's day-to-day programme and Ray and Val Hill have kindly agreed to offer additional pastoral support for Matthew.

Please feel free to **offer hospitality** to Matthew, particularly in his early days with us. I am sure he would welcome the opportunity to visit people's homes for meals - partly to get to know us and also to save him having to cook for himself! It would be helpful if the invitations could be made via myself (or through the Hills, when I am away) so that they can be spread out and well coordinated.

Summer Camps

Please remember those of our young people who will be going away on Christian holidays this summer. Honorine, Honore and Clemence Katengwa, Magda and Fibon Nyadu, Sean Nicolson, and Zach McBeth will all be attending the Crusader holiday at Whithaugh Park in the Scottish Borders, from 18th - 22nd August; and Christopher Hunt will be attending a CYFA holiday at Lendrick Muir, also in Scotland, from 16th - 22nd August.

Just 10 with J John

The total attendance during the course of the Just 10 mission was an astonishing 88,865 people! - an average of 4,700 in Gateshead and 4,100 in Stockton each night, for the ten weeks. 2,088 responded publicly to J John's invitation to 'do business with God' - 1,290 in Gateshead and 798 in Stockton. About a third of those responding indicated a first-time commitment to Jesus Christ.

- Please pray for local churches in the area as we seek to follow up these respondents and others whose interested has been aroused through the mission.
- Pray for our own *Get a Life* course and for the ten people who have participated in it so far, some of them our own church members who have been accompanying friends.

Helping Others

On behalf of our brother and sister believers in India, let me say a huge thank you to all of you who contributed so generously to the work of IREF through Dennis and Pat Kerridge's Golden Wedding anniversary celebrations and through the Midsummer Barbecue we held at our home in Sunnyside. £843.47 was raised, a magnificent total. It will put towards the cost of a new church building, probably somewhere in the Krishna Delta region of India. By the time of our next IREF(UK) Trustees meeting, scheduled for the autumn, I am confident that the total cost of the building (about £7,000) will have been raised by our UK supporters.

Money Matters

When companies experience and/or anticipate difficult trading times, they will issue *a profits warning* before the end of their financial year to alert shareholders to the serious nature of the problem.

At our most recent Church Members' Meeting, we provided an update of our current year financial situation, which is not as healthy as we would want it to be.

Our weekly offerings for first five months of the year averaged £461.68. This is consistent with our average for the whole of 2007 (£460.79), although the average for the first five months of 2007 was somewhat higher, at £472.09. However, our current year average is *considerably short of our target figure for 2008 of £490 per week*.

It means that our current year shortfall was around £925 for the first five months of the year.

However, these figures disguise the fact that *our weekly offerings for May averaged only £396.85, almost £100 below our target figure*.

So, if for the rest of the year our giving to the Lord's work at DRBC continues at the same level seen in May, we will face *a shortfall of about £3,500* against our target figure of £25,480 for the year.

Clearly, this is a very serious situation, especially when we consider that *our budget already anticipated a shortfall of £3,000* in income against expenditure. At the reduced level of giving seen in May, it means that *our year-end shortfall would be £6,500*. Clearly, this level of deficit is unsustainable. If it persisted, it would call into question the viability of full-time paid pastoral ministry for the Church.

The Challenge to Tithe

When J John was speaking on the 8th Commandment ("You shall not steal") during his recent Just 10 series, he invited his audience to consider the challenge contained in the Old Testament book of Malachi.

Return to me, and I will return to you, says the LORD Almighty.

But you ask, 'How are we to return?'

Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me.

But you ask, 'How do we rob you?'

In tithes and offerings. You are under a curse - the whole nation of you - because you are robbing me.

Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this, says the LORD Almighty, and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.

[Malachi 3.7-10]

Most of us would be deeply offended if we were accused of stealing from God. Yet, that's what God said the Jews were doing when they failed to tithe (give 10% of) their income to him. They were stealing his proportion of their income from him, by keeping it for themselves. So he challenged them to test him in this matter of their giving. *If they tithed, he would pour out more blessings on them than they would be able to contain.*

The New Testament encourages us to be as generous as we can with our giving, with the promise that *God will always enable us to be generous and will always reward our generosity.*

Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. ... You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion.

[2 Corinthians 9.6-7,11]

I know that many in the Church already give sacrificially to the Lord's work at DRBC. But others perhaps need to take up the challenge of tithing their income to the Lord. It is something I have practised personally ever since I got my first paid job - and I have never regretted doing so. I consider it a joy and privilege to tithe - and it's a joy and privilege I wish for all of you too, as we seek to honour God together.

David Hunt