

## Congratulations!

We extend warm congratulations to our Under-14s five-a-side football team who won a trophy for finishing third in Division One of their age group in the Northeast Churches League last season. Matches are played between September and March each year at the Concordia Leisure Centre in Cramlington.



Team members Connor and Sean Nicolson, Nathan Parker and Sean Metcalfe are seen in the photo receiving their team's trophy from Phil Glover, formerly the Director of Tyneside Youth for Christ and now the Pastor of Acorn Community Church in Whitley Bay. Other team members, unable to be present for the Presentation Day, were Fibon Nyadu, Ciaran Leyland and Bridie Morris.

## AGM update

Several important matters were discussed at our recent Church Members' Annual General Meeting.

### ➤ Redecoration programme

Following the successful completion of further roof work (well within our budget figure), we agreed that we should undertake some much needed redecoration in several areas of the building – notably, the old Minister's vestry, the ramped corridor, the Small Hall (Parlour) and our main hall and annexe. Some of these areas have suffered from water-ingress staining, which hopefully will now be a thing of the past. Some of the carpet tiles in the Fitness Room (used by the Fit for Life Club) also need to be cut to the correct size, and the door to that room needs to be trimmed and re-hung. So, if you are able to help with any of this work, please let me know. There is plenty to be done!

### ➤ Financial update

- We are grateful that we finished 2008 with a *deficit* of only **£523.76** (against a budgeted deficit of £3,083.00 and a projected deficit of £3,676 given at last November's half-AGM).
- The smaller deficit was due to a lower *level of expenditure* than we had budgeted for: **£44,976**, against a budget figure of £47,687, a saving of £2,711.
- However, *income* was about **£150** less than had been hoped for, at **£44,452** against a budget figure of £44,604. 2008 was first year recently in which our income fell short of our target figure.
- We received £3,870 in *unanticipated donations*, for which we give the Lord all the praise and glory.
- However, our annual *Thank Offering* was £1,500 short of our target figure; and our *Gift Aid* tax refund was £438 less than hoped for.
- Our *weekly offerings* were about **£60 per week** (i.e. 12%) *below target*, resulting in a substantial shortfall of around £3,000 for the year as a whole. However, this figure somewhat disguises the fact that *our weekly offerings fell from £510 per week in January to £404 in December*, a sharp fall of 21% over the course of the year.

As far as the **current year** is concerned ...

- We are grateful to be in receipt of a *Home Mission* grant of £3,000 (equivalent to almost £60 a week extra on our weekly offering figure).
- We are also grateful to have received £2,100 in *unanticipated donations* in the first three months of the year.
- Our *rental income* for use of our church hall, for bookings for the first five months of the year (excluding the OFNC's booking), stands at £774 (plus £168 received in back payments for 2008). This compares very favourable with our budget figure of £480 for the *whole year*. We are very grateful for this extra stream of income.
- However, at an average of **£404 per week** for the first three months of the year, our *weekly offerings* are falling short of our *target figure of £420 per week*.
- Furthermore, we had anticipated a *Gift Aid* tax refund of £5,000 for 2009, but it has come in at only £3,868, around £1,100 less than anticipated.
- We have budgeted £800 in *interest revenue* for the current year; but with the sharp reduction in interest rates, this figure is likely to be very much smaller.
- Our electricity charges are considerably higher than we had anticipated; and unexpectedly, we are now having to pay monthly bank charges.
- The AGM agreed to replace the manse boiler (which is old and frequently breaks down) at a cost of around £2,500 (including provision for a new water feed); this

item of expenditure was not in our budget.

- So, taking all of the above factors into account, it looks as if, even with the provision of a Home Mission grant of £3,000 for the current year, we will incur **a deficit of £11,500 for the current year.**
- Please make this situation a matter of special prayer.

### ➤ **USA Youth Interims**

It was reported that an application by Gateshead International Ministries to the UK Border Agency for sponsorship status had been submitted on line; supporting documents had been posted and received. Prayer was asked for speedy processing of the application, to enable visa certificates to be issued to Hannah and Travis Shelburne. A representative from the UKBA has subsequently checked GIM's data management systems and found them to be in good order. We expect to receive a further response from the UKBA within the next week to ten days.

### ➤ **Children's Advocate**

Thanks were expressed to Jean Hutchinson for serving as our Children's Advocate for the past few years. She had indicated that she wished to stand down for health reasons. We are grateful that Wanda Stockdale has agreed to take on this important role.

### ➤ **Church Members' Meetings**

It was agreed at the AGM that future Church Meetings should be for church members only. However, if any regular worshippers, who are *not* currently in membership at DRBC, wish to attend any future Church Meetings, they should speak to the leadership in good time beforehand. This will give the leadership an opportunity to speak with those wishing to attend to ascertain that they are truly born-again of God's Holy Spirit, are walking in good fellowship with the Lord, and are fully committed to the life of the church. Following the conversation, if the leadership felt it appropriate, a welcome would then be extended to those making the request, to invite them to attend Church Members' Meetings in a non-voting capacity.

The Pastor outlined some background thinking to this subject, at the AGM.

- In churches operating a system of congregational government (as Baptist Churches do), the issue arises, *who is entitled to have a role in the decision-making processes of the church?*
- Clearly, the decision-making process can't be opened up to all and sundry (anyone who happens to turn up for a Sunday service), otherwise Church Meetings could be adversely influenced - or dominated, even - by complete strangers, or those who may not be true believers.
- So, there has to be some criteria by which the Church determines who is entitled to play their part in its decision-making process - and who is not. This is one reason why

Baptist churches have a formal membership roll, to define who is entitled to participate in the decision-making processes of the church (which doesn't simply mean having a vote, but contributing to the discussions leading up to any vote).

- Baptist churches work on the principle that we admit to membership those (and only those) who have been truly born again by God's Holy Spirit and who therefore possess both the capacity and responsibility to play their part in *discerning the mind of Christ* for the local church to which they belong. Prospective members are interviewed to ascertain, so far as is humanly possible, that they really have been born again of God's Spirit and are walking in fellowship with the Lord, and are committed to the life of the Church. Closed membership churches, such as DRBC is currently, further restrict membership to those who have been baptised as believers by immersion in water as a testimony to their faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, in response to his explicit command (Mat 28.18-20).
- However, we recognise that there may be those who attend the Church regularly and who play an active part in the life of the Church, but who (for various reasons) are not currently in membership with the Church. We have never restricted involvement in the life of the Church to members only (though some churches do); but in considering a non-member's possible role, we always seek to discern what is suitable for them - in some cases, this may be a practical role rather than a teaching role, for example. Currently, just over 40% of our regular adult worshippers are not in membership with the Church.
- So the question arises, should any of these people be included in any part of the decision-making processes of the Church - and if so, whom and how?
- The proposal agreed at the AGM enables regular worshippers not currently in membership to attend Church Members' Meetings in a non-voting capacity following a conversation with the leadership to ascertain that they are truly born again of the Spirit, are walking in good fellowship with the Lord, and are fully committed to the life of the Church. The leadership agreed at its April meeting that our current Membership Application form should be used as a basis for the conversation.
- It was also recognised at the AGM that, in exceptional circumstances, it might be appropriate to limit a Church Members' Meeting to members only.
- Our **next Church Members' Meeting** is scheduled for **Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> June**. Any regular worshippers who are not currently in membership but who wish to attend this meeting should speak to the Pastor at least two weeks before this date to allow time for an appropriate conversation to be arranged with the church leadership.

David Hunt