



Welcome to the September 2023 edition of NVP (News Views & Prayer)

With beginning of the Autumn season, we are happy to welcome back our user groups.

The work on the ceiling is finished and the outside now looks more presentable. A notice board would be helpful and someone willing to clear the carpark area periodically of the leaves and acorns, Sheila and I are not really capable of this anymore. Whilst a volunteer would be preferable we are happy to negotiate payment for this work.

Prudent use of finances, means we have no need to further increase our hire charges, and the support we provide to charities that use our premises.

The maintenance and finance of the Church over the years has fallen to me, together with the provision of Sunday worship. Liaison with St. Thomas for joint village activities, and other outside demands, takes a toll on health and wealth. But I have always believed that the work here was, and is a calling, if not I would not have stayed. Whilst I am able; and together with my support for Sheila, who now takes much of my time, I am happy to continue with the work for the foreseeable future. I now however find myself with the responsibility of the ministry of the church. This is burden I would long to share with others in our group of Baptist Churches. It is a plea from the heart, and I pray the God will answer this according to grace.

Derrick

Back to the Future!

How many times have we heard! No! How many times have we said “I wish things would just go back to normal? For things to be the same as they used to be?” Well! To all intents and purposes, things are back to normal. Nothing has changed! Or has it?

Things haven't really changed, only the way in which we use them, or perceive them. Whilst we struggle to try and carry on as if nothing has changed, we need to stop, and consider how quickly we have learned how to do things differently. Did you really believe that things would return to how they were Pre Pandemic, then just consider this? When all seems doom and gloom. What is the purpose of life?

Whilst you ponder this; I refer you to the book of Ecclesiastes in the Old Testament of the Bible!

Listen to the words of the Philosopher (King David's Son). *“Whatever you may encounter, however new or revolutionary it may seem to you, you can be sure that it's not new”.*

The philosopher paints a never ending picture of doom. The uselessness of life; he says “It's like chasing the wind” This is his conclusion at the end of the book of Ecclesiastes: *“After everything, there is only one thing to say: Have reverence for God, and obey his commands, because this is all that we were created for. God is going to judge everything we do, whether good or bad, even things done in secret.*

Jesus put it this way: *“Those who accept my commandments and obey them are the ones who love me. My Father will love those who love me; I too will love them and reveal myself to them.”*

Derrick

Faith Matters September 2023

There are many rallying calls wanting to grab our attention, stir our emotions and move us to action or at least to express our support. In recent years this has included movements like Black Lives Matter, Me Too and Pride (LGBTQ). Then there is climate change, human rights, animal rights, human trafficking and immigration concerns. We are assailed by voices encouraging and even commanding us to listen and act. Under such pressure it is hardly surprising that so many of us struggle with mental health issues -stress, anxiety and depression. For many, God is squeezed to the periphery, hardly seeming relevant except in times of utter desperation.

In the Gospel of John we read of three siblings who were close friends of Jesus, Lazarus, Martha and Mary. The friendship probably started when Martha invited Jesus into the family home, offering him hospitality and a temporary base for his work. Of the two sisters, Martha was a doer, being busy-busy around the home and getting frustrated that her sister Mary took a more measured approach by prioritising what she should give her energies to. While Martha was getting hot and bothered in the kitchen, Mary was in the sitting-room listening to Jesus speaking about the one, true God and his purpose for men and women in general and her own life in particular.

Aware of the domestic strain Jesus said, 'Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.'

Like Mary, we should not feel pressured into giving our energies to every claim made upon us. As a Christian, I would say that the one exception is the call of Jesus, the call to give him our heart and soul's allegiance; he has our best interests at heart. That doesn't mean us abandoning the needs of the world but Jesus, knowing our limited capacities, can make us more whole and therefore effective.

How may we listen to the rallying call of Jesus? We can pray directly to him, we can hear his words by reading the Gospels and we can find a church which prioritises biblical teaching about who Jesus is and why he came. When we do perceive him speaking to us, let's listen well and not harden our hearts but welcome him in.

Stephen Richards
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Community Prayers

Week beginning 3rd September
Pray for those who live in
Tutnall Drive

Week beginning 10th Sept
Pray for those who live in:
Rashwood Close

Week beginning 17th Sept
Pray for those who live in:
Arden Meads

Week beginning 24th Sept
Pray for those who live in:
Aylesbury Close

Baptist Union Prayer Diary

At the beginning of Creation Time, we pray for the work of the Baptist Union Environment Network, who seek to enable the Baptists Together family to be a prophetic movement in facing the climate and environmental crisis.

Today is Education Sunday, a national day of prayer and celebration for everyone in the world of education. At the start of this new academic year in schools, colleges, nurseries and universities, we pray that all students, teachers, support staff and those involved in education may be supported and encouraged in and by their faith as they work and learn together.

Please pray for the Core Leadership Team - an expression of covenant and interdependence for us as Baptists. It draws together many of those offering leadership across our Movement and its purpose is to perceive what God is doing, to encourage flourishing across Baptists Together and to model together what it means to be a Kingdom Movement.

This week we pray for the Southern Counties Baptist Association as they welcome new co-Team Leaders Clare Hooper and Hayley Young. Please pray for the Association as they seek to inspire, connect and resource the churches in their area and their leaders by growing and forming healthy churches in relationship for God's mission.

Extract from the World in Prayer

O God who holds each one of us,

We lift our hearts in prayer for the students around the globe who have just started a new school year. Help students, educators, and grown ups who raise children navigate the busier season and the additional stress that may bring. This time of year brings additional tasks for most of us, and the sudden change of pace can cause anxiety. With all the changes and challenges we face, we often think ‘how can I possibly manage this?’ In these times, remind us that you are there holding the burden alongside us.

As the days get darker and colder for some of us, or as the days get lighter and warmer for others, may we find moments to be still and feel your presence in all of creation. May we find moments of joy in the regathering with friends and communities we missed over the time apart, knowing that in the outstretched arms of those we care about, you are there wrapping us in your arms.

We are grateful for the countries around the globe that provide free school lunches for students, especially as the number of undernourished people has grown over the past several years. Help us to address the underlying causes of world hunger. As we recognize that the world has just experienced the hottest summer ever recorded, may we see the ways extreme weather impacts hunger. May we see how climate change impacts the Middle East and Africa at a disproportionately high rate. May we see how conflict, economic disparities, and racial inequalities also impact hunger. We pray that you wrap your loving arms around those who do not have enough nutrition, and around those who govern, that together we might make change through your love.

As we turn our hearts and minds to extreme weather, we pray for southern Brazil, where a cyclone and its aftermath has left at least 27 dead, and thousands forced from their homes; and to Bulgaria, Turkey, and Greece, as deadly flooding has left at least 10 dead. May you reach out your hands through the helping hands of those who aid all who have been impacted by flooding.

And, as we turn our hearts and minds to conflict, let us pray for Ukraine, where at least 17 have been killed in a missile attack on a market in Kostyantynivka, and many others have been wounded. May your strong arms of justice bring about the kind of change that leads to peace and teaches us to use our arms for your peace rather than injury.

O God who holds each one of us, help us to feel your presence – a presence that brings more moments of hope, more moments of joy, and a life-changing understanding of what love is.

Amen.

From the Hospital Bed 11. Longevity.

On July 2nd 2023 a friend asked “How does it feel now you’re retired?” The answer required no thought on my part: “Exactly the same!” This was for a number of reasons. The office for both St.Thomas and St.Giles is in the vicarage. With my reduced abilities, and reduced energy, I had not managed to complete all the necessary tasks involved in handing over to the PCCs all the things that a retiring vicar should pass on. Over the last twelve years I had kept lots of records and produced loads of materials. Now all these needed to be either kept, destroyed, or passed on to the relevant person in the appropriate church. Even at the time of writing (mid-August) I am nowhere near the end of this process. I have had to have a number of meetings with representatives from the churches and from Birmingham Diocese. So, no, I have had very little time to relax or enjoy retirement as of yet.

Another reason that I do not feel different, despite being officially retired, is because a number of long-running, yet one-off tasks continue, such as the search for a retirement home, and the slow process of sorting through my own possessions and packing ready for the removal.

There was a third reason for most of my productive time being absorbed in non-recreational activity. 2023 marks the thirtieth anniversary of the death of my friend Geoff Mann. Geoff was a musician and a Church of England priest. He died of bowel cancer, aged thirty-six, in February 1993. There was a gathering near Manchester earlier this year to mark the day of his death. I was too ill to go, but Geoff’s anniversary is being marked in two other ways.

A biography has just been published by rock journalist Andrew Wild. He approached me last year for my recollections of Geoff, and so earlier this year I was busy sorting through old press releases, photos and concert set-lists, and writing my memories down. It took me three months to put my thoughts together and edit them ready to send to the author.

The other commemorative event is the re-issue of all of Geoff’s recordings in a Definitive Edition series. In his short life Geoff was incredibly productive, his various bands and collaborations resulted in fifteen albums of songs and music. Won by One by the band The Bond has been re-mixed and re-released with a second disc of rare demos and live recordings. Disc one features eleven of Geoff’s songs including His Love, a slow ballad about God the Father’s faithful and steadfast love for us; it’s been used as the title of the new biography too. The Bond were a trio, the other two members being keyboardist Steve Ridley and guitarist Dave Mortimer. The Bond made one other album, Prints of Peace (the album cover features crude iron nails and a crown of thorns). You will have noted by now that Geoff was a master at coming up with punning album titles. Here are some more; his first two solo releases were Chants Would be a Fine Thing and I May Sing Grace, all three of these will be re-mixed and re-released too in due course.

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Continued.

Geoff made two albums with me. In *Difference*, a nine-song album (five of Geoff's songs and four of mine) was released in 1988. We followed it up three years later with the instrumental *The Off the End of the Pier Show*. These two are being re-issued this month as a double CD. Sadly *In Difference* could not be re-mixed, as the original multi-track recording tape cannot be found, but the disc has been supplemented with four more studio-recorded songs of mine that Geoff produced in 1987. One of these, *Magnify*, is a Christmas song that I have performed several times at St.Giles' children's service and at midnight communion at St.Thomas's. I also used several of Geoff's songs off the *In Difference* album at a special meditation service during Holy Week at St.Thomas.

To assist in this project I had to prepare three documents, one of lyrics (to be printed in the CD booklet), one of liner notes and track listings, and the other of promotional material. All of these took up a great deal of my time as each presented its own problems. Five of the song lyrics appeared on the original album cover, but they had been drawn from written versions of the songs, and it went unnoticed that we had sung them differently in the studio; the other four sets of lyrics I had to piece together by listening to the album. Also a few embarrassing typos got through the proof-reading process and ended up on the original inlay, including a reference to "the Holy Spirt." The liner notes needed to be reset because much information was out of date or irrelevant, and subsequent versions of the album contained other tracks, with other musicians on, who do not appear on this Definitive Edition. Preparation of the promotional document involved me reading through dozens of record reviews (some of them in German, Dutch, Italian or French) and pulling out choice quotes.

I finally pressed 'send' on the last of these three documents on July 29th. I felt great relief, that is until a reply the day after asking for some more reviews for the second round of promotion.

Putting together a Definitive Edition series of Geoff's recordings was first mooted three years ago by the fans of *Twelfth Night*, another of Geoff's old bands. Geoff's albums were released by several different record labels such as Plankton, Food For Thought and Marshall Pickering. It has taken this long for *Twelfth Night* to get all the permissions from the various record companies. More details about the definitive editions can be found on the *Twelfth Night* website. It is also one of the places you can get hold of the biography.

Retired priests keep the Church of England afloat, observe how many retired priests preside at Holy Communion in our two churches. Once I am retired and settled, I hope to be given permission to officiate in my local church. It is good to know that there is not just life after retirement but opportunities to minister and contribute to the life of the church.

In Geoff's case, even death has not prevented him from continuing to share his faith with others. My prayer is that his songs will be heard by people who never got to see him perform live, and especially by people who have been born since his untimely death three decades ago.

Marc.

www.twelfthnight.info

WILD, Andrew. *His Love - Geoff Mann's Art, Music and Faith*. SonicBond, 2023.