

LBC Update

June/July 2021



What's been going on?



The **Alpha** group recommenced on June 8th in the church garden - like other small groups, we are making good use of the new gazebo. Prior to the pandemic we had completed nine out of the ten Alpha sessions and I'm sure we will complete the tenth session at some point. However, in the meantime the group is keen to explore other topics in greater depth. We have begun with "What is faith?" and we are now looking at prayer. We will be exploring why and how we pray. At the group we encourage plenty of opportunity for open discussion and questions. No subject is off limits!!!! *Marie*

We were indeed blessed with a lovely sunny afternoon on Tuesday 15th June for our first **Cream Tea** since the lock-down started! This was held in the garden at the Grange Court cafe which looked particularly lovely with lots of colourful flowers and shrubs. An ideal setting.

It was such a joy to meet each other in person at last and to catch up with each other's news as we tucked into the delicious cream and jam scones and enjoyed the welcome cups of tea. No one seemed to be in a hurry to leave! Thank you Polly and the team for arranging this event. *Sheila*



Postscript - as we start to use the church garden more and more, we have become aware that someone has borrowed one of the benches. Any news on its whereabouts would be welcome!!

In the run up to Easter, LBC folk delivered around 50 gift bags to people throughout Leominster, including many people who we would normally see at Lunch Club, Coffee mornings and Cream Teas. Olive has kept her bag in her porch window in order to share the uplifting message **“He is not here, for He is risen”** with anyone who comes to call.



Activities for the younger members of LBC have been really ramping up in the last few weeks - see further on for an extensive report from Hannah under *“Youth and Family”*

LBC family

We all send our best wishes, love and congratulations to Tom and Joan Evans who will be celebrating their diamond wedding anniversary on 28th June.



Bev and Bob are delighted to announce the arrival of their first grandson - Leo Robert was born on 4th June, weighing in at 8lb 5oz. Congratulations to proud parents, Charlotte and Rob.

And Linda is equally delighted by the arrival of Ethan William Baldwin-Richards, her first grandchild, born on 28th May at 1.34 am weighing 9.5lbs. Mother and son contracted an infection - her daughter in law also developed sepsis so there were a few fraught days. Both of them were on antibiotics so had a week's stay in hospital. They are now home and doing well. She finally met Ethan on 7th June and reliably reports that "He is gorgeous"!



Neale Brinkley

Below is the content of a letter we received from Mary Brinkley. Neale Brinkley and I were at school together for a year before he left; he was I believe one year behind Nigel. We crossed paths again when I moved to Blackheath to work for a national building firm. Neale had just got married and he found temporary lodgings for me with his father in law John Adams. I joined the Hanover Christian Fellowship. Many of the older members and other friends would remember Neale. I would describe him as something of a modern day Barnabas. *Roger Dale*

My dear spiritual soulmate and faithful husband Neale Brinkley passed away into the Lord's presence on Friday morning 23rd April 2021. Neale had excellent health until May 2015 when he had a viral infection which left him with a damaged heart, AF and breathlessness. During the ensuing 6 years his health slowly declined. In March 2020 he had gallstones removed and expected to have his gallbladder removed 3 weeks later. Due to Covid, the 3 weeks became 13 months. The operation went ahead on 13th April at Princess Royal University Hospital, Orpington - part of King's College Hospital. Neale made an initial recovery for a week, then he had an infection from which he did not recover and passed away 10 days later. The hospital staff were brilliant and I was able to be with him for 9-12 hours a day following the operation. All the family and our pastor were able to visit several times as his life slipped away peacefully. We praise God for His timing. The passage of scripture that came to me and which I read to the family as we were gathered around Neale's body was 1 Thess 4: 13-18... we do not grieve as others do who have no hope.... Therefore encourage one another with these words. A friend who lost her husband some years ago pointed me to 1 Cor 15: 55...O death, where is your sting? For us the sting has been taken out of death. I find that such a comforting thought.

Neale's funeral will be on 21st June on what would have been his 85th birthday. Coming out of lockdown means that more than 30 people will be able to attend (the family group is 30). There will be a service at Christ Church, Beckenham, at 2pm followed by cremation at Honor Oak Crematorium at 4pm. Neale conducted several funerals at HO Crem when he was pastor at Honor Oak Christian Fellowship Centre from 1988-2001. I am presuming that the church service will be live-streamed on Christ Church Beckenham YouTube channel. The cremation will be

available on a webcast. I will have the details nearer the time. This will be available for 30 days following.

In 2006 Neale wrote the following for the 350th anniversary of LBC. "On either the first or second Sunday of September 1956 I was cycling to Leominster Baptist Church and turning over in my mind what I had heard at the Young Warrior Camp reunion the previous evening when Bill Pethybridge had spoken on Joshua 1. As I meditated, something remarkable happened. A little way out of Luston village, at a particular spot on the road that I've pointed out to a number of people since, somewhat like Saul on the Damascus Road, I had an encounter with the Risen Christ. As I was still riding my bike, fortunately I didn't fall to the ground, but it was still a life-changing experience and, fifty years later, I still look back to that moment with great thankfulness to God"

Since 1956 realising the truth of the Christian message, Neale spent 60 years undiminished in the Christian ministry 'rightly dividing the word of truth' 2 Tim 2:15 - twenty years as an RE teacher and involved in Hanover Christian Fellowship in the Midlands, eight years with OM as George Verwer's International Production Coordinator and then as Pastor at Honor Oak Christian Fellowship Centre, Forest Hill, London. In his retirement he was an elder at Selhurst Evangelical Church for six years and continued preaching until 2018. Although Neale travelled widely with OM, he called himself a "local church man". He was absolutely dedicated to each of the 3 churches in turn. He wanted to be part of a church where he could serve. His attitude was "if there is a meeting then I will attend" which he faithfully did, often contributing by leading, by praying and/or speaking. This he continued until his health declined and lockdown came.

We were married at Hanover Christian Fellowship (then known as Hanover Hall) on 25th July 1964. I thank God for our 56 years of marriage and for him being a lovely Christian father to our 3 children; Paul, Robert and Alison. *Mary Brinkley 6th May 2021*

Ministry And Mission



CheckPoint is able to visit schools again! Since the start of the Summer Term, I have returned to 6 of the 18 schools I usually go to and have restarted Spotlight Clubs in three of them. It has been fantastic being back and makes a huge difference to be able to interact and fully engage with the children again. After half term, a further three schools that I've not been able to visit for over a year have invited me back. I thank God that, after such a long time, the door for the Gospel remains open. I'm really looking forward to being able to go back into more schools and seeing the children and staff again. For those schools still not open to visitors I will continue to take assemblies via Zoom and post them online on our YouTube channel

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCPjZCajK35Aaq714OU0DuuQ>.

Things are still very different to normal though and I often take an assembly with just one class or year group 'bubble'. A real highlight of the last few weeks was the opportunity to take a whole school assembly at two different schools, made possible by moving the children from the hall to the playground. You can imagine how special this felt!

You can work out the theme of this term's assemblies by answering the following question. What links a stone, a pair of cricket pads, a sheep and a torch? Answer: They are all descriptions of God in the book of Psalms. Not convinced? Well, let me explain. The stone reminds us that God is our rock, the cricket pads that God is like a shield, the sheep that God is our shepherd and the torch that God is described as light and in him is no darkness at all. Please pray that these pictures of God will help the children to begin to appreciate just how awesome God is; how strong and dependable he is, how he protects us, cares for us and guides us. Please pray that these pictures of God will help the children to begin to appreciate just how awesome God is; how strong and dependable he is, how he protects us, cares for us and guides us. Please pray the children will remember these descriptions of God and how much he cares for them.

The Trustees are keen to make the work of CheckPoint more widely known amongst churches and individual Christians and so we are making a promotional video to explain what CheckPoint is and does. Watch this space! As always, I am grateful for your ongoing prayerful support for the work of CheckPoint. *Joe*

New Life Project

Not every woman is a big fan of shoes...but many are!! So why not connect Shoes, Women and Jesus? Our team in Santa Faz put their heads together on how they could bring together the women in their community as a group for the first time since before COVID.

They gathered each woman's shoe size, made detailed notes on what kind of shoes they would wear and then created every detail for a spectacular Mother's Day celebration with their women!!



The team handmade each decoration to bring an atmosphere of beauty with butterflies, ballerinas and lots of colour! They selected shoes for each woman and wrapped them as a gorgeous gift. A traditional lunch of pepian was prepared and served to each lady along with cake for dessert. The program included worship music, a devotional full of encouragement, special loving remarks from Adonia, the director, and then...the BIG MOMENT...SHOES!!! Shoes that were made possible by God's blessings!



The women were astounded by the activity and felt loved by the staff and blessings.

We are so thankful for the Santa Faz team and the love they show in a community where darkness is hiding in every crook and cranny. Please continue to pray for their efforts in the community, their protection and that God's light will be seen in the darkness. *Chris and Richard*

Prayer For Our Leaders

"I urge you then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone - for kings and all those in authority - that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness". 1 Timothy 2 v1-2. The words "all those in authority" include, from May 24th, the new Mayor of Leominster, Councillor John Rumsey, pictured here.



You may ask "How do I pray for our mayor?" Well, Jesus said these words in Matthew 7v12. " So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you." Therefore, pray for others as you would have them pray for you. And remember also our Queen, our national leaders and our local MP Bill Wiggin. They all need our faithful prayers for wisdom. *Keith*

Project Pearl - 40 years on

A million Bibles is hard to imagine. That's how many Bibles a team of **Open Doors** workers delivered to a Chinese beach in one night, 40 years ago.

It started with a request for 30,000 New Testaments. Mama Kwang led a wide house church network in China, after her husband was put in prison for his faith. Bibles were banned in China, but there was an enormous hunger among the underground church to be able to access the Word of God. Mama Kwang requested 30,000 New Testaments to answer an immediate need – and these were smuggled by Open Doors workers over the course of ten days. But Mama Kwang knew that this was only a short-term measure. "Thank you so much for these New Testaments," she said, "but we're still short. If every Christian we know is to have a Bible, we need one million Bibles."

And so Project Pearl was born. The project is named after Matthew 13:45, where Jesus compares the Kingdom of Heaven to a pearl of great value. Taking a million Bibles was a daunting task, but the leaders of Open Doors in 1981 were filled with faith that God would enable them to undertake this mission. Printing them was one matter – getting them to China, from the United States, was another. "It took 20 containers to get all the blocks of books to Hong Kong," says Estabrook. "There, we loaded it onto Gabriela, the barge that we had specially built in the Philippines for this project". Twenty Open Doors workers from around the world came together into a crew to deliver the Bibles. Mama Kwang had asked them to bring them to a beach just south of a city called Shantou, which had a high population of Christians. They would only have two hours to unload all one million Bibles.

For the waiting Chinese believers, this felt like a miracle they had long been waiting for. "Hundreds of Christians were waiting on the beach for us," remembers Estabrook. "The men would come out into the water and they would pull those blocks of bibles up on the beach. "It was a very noisy operation. And yet nobody ever came by or stopped us or intercepted us or anything. It was an amazing protection of God."

The Bibles travelled widely across China for many years. "That one group we gave them to shared them with other groups all over the country," says Estabrook. "They went to all provinces of China. They were able to share them, but it took five years because of security issues and hiding them and having to be careful to distribute all one million of them."

This provision of Bibles had an astonishing impact in China. God's timing was perfect – the million Bibles came just as the house church movement in China was mushrooming. Estabrook now owns one Bible that had been used by a young pastor and evangelist – using that one Bible, he had grown a network of 400,000 believers. "It's just incredible. The Christians said it was what really fuelled the revival and the growth of house churches," says Estabrook. "It was God's timing.

We met the request that came to us, but the side effect was absolutely miraculous. It was just the right time to have all of these Bibles available for believers in China.”

Since Project Pearl in 1981, there have been periods of relative freedom for Christians in China – but today, religious restrictions have again been imposed on Christians to curb the phenomenal growth of the church. It’s still number 17 on the Open Doors World Watch List of countries where Christians face the most extreme persecution. In just three years, China has risen 26 places on the list. Printed Bibles are only available in bookstores of government-sanctioned churches. Bibles can be read online, but the sale of printed Bibles online is prohibited.

“Please pray with us for China. Ask God to prepare people’s hearts and to open doors for Chinese Christians. Pray for an increase in workers and harvesters for the gospel. Pray that God raises up more young believers to spread the gospel.”

Youth and Family

Sunbeams is back to meeting every week, with no booking systems, and plenty of tea and coffee; it is proving to be a popular group once again. Just by opening up the garden space in a very uncomplicated way, we have been able to welcome in new families and catch up with old friends. So far we have been very fortunate with the weather! Not a single week has had to be cancelled; rather we have had the opposite problem and had to put up another shelter for some much needed shade and play with water and ice to keep us all cool. We meet on a Wednesday morning 9.30-11, if you know anyone with preschool children who would benefit from a safe, relaxed space to come and play and chat - please do send them our way.

Spectrum is currently not back to meeting regularly yet in the church building but we are looking forward to July as we are having a garden party! We can’t wait to see you all again and eat some ice-cream too.

N-ergize has been meeting weekly in the garden for an hour to play some games together. Dodgeball is one of the current favourites - although balls over the walls are becoming a bit too much of a regular occurrence. We have been regularly getting 17 youth and have been encouraging them to Trust God by sharing personal testimony and bible verses and ultimately challenging them to give it a try.

On June 12th we had the chance to take the N-ergize youth to Min-Y-Don Christian Adventure Centre for a day trip. We met bright and early at 7.30 in the morning and took two minibuses with 17 youth, 4 leaders and 3 children. Many of those that came have been to Min-Y-Don before when we take them on a weekend residential trip in February, but for five it was a new experience. We did Crate climbing, Archery, Canoeing, Climbing and Abseiling. In addition we managed to fit in time for some football and a fish and chips lunch with testimony from one of the



instructors. Although it was busy, we all had an amazing day and especially enjoyed doing it all in the glorious sunshine. Our usual trip in February isn't quite as warm! Here are a few highlights...



I am so pleased that we have been able to get back to doing youth and children's work in person. These groups can only happen if we have people to run them. Thank you so much to those of you that give your time to help already and those of you that pray regularly for us. We are in need of more helpers though, for all of our groups from creche age all the way until college age. If you think you could help, please do contact me as I would love to chat with you about it. **Hannah**

Coming Up

Monday Afternoon Fellowship

The Fellowship is back up and running - we had our first post-lockdown meeting on June 14th and we are now busy organising future meetings. The next one will be on Monday June 28th when Peter Dennis will be our guest speaker followed by a meeting on Monday July 12th when Dean will be speaking. We would like to extend a warm welcome to anyone who would like to join us for these and future meetings - we meet at the Community Centre at 2.45 p.m. Please contact us if you would like further information. *Eric and Sue*

Update on Services

With the delay in lifting restrictions we are currently awaiting an update on how this impacts our services. Our initial understanding is that we will be continuing as we are at the moment meeting on the church grounds but limited by the number that can fit while being socially distanced. However, whilst we aren't able to move forward as we had hoped, there are a few other steps that we plan to take that we hope will have a positive impact on our services.

First, there is no longer a need to wear a mask when we are outside. You may still wish to bring a mask for yourself or out of consideration for others but this won't be compulsory.

Second, we will be making provision for children during the services. We aren't able to put on specific groups for all the ages but will have activities in the garden with some volunteers to look after and care for the children.

Third, now that restrictions on mingling have been relaxed we will plan to serve tea and coffee after the service. We are asking everyone to bring their own coffee mug or flask to help with clear up and because once we move to meet on the farm we won't have the facilities to wash up.

The next **LBC Update** is planned for the first week in August. Please send contributions - news, forthcoming activities, testimonies, photos etc. - to Chris at riceandco@hotmail.com

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