

The National Memorial Arboretum—by Ceinwen Harris

As a belated birthday present, I was treated to a day out at the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire. What a wonderful experience it was, especially as the weather was perfect. The site itself is vast, consisting of 100 acres with 25,000 planted trees which house nearly 400 memorials dotted among them. The central memorial, which is often shown on TV at special occasions like Remembrance Day, is an impressive elevated structure with the names of 16,000 personnel who have given their lives in service to the country since the end of the Second World War.



It is impossible to do justice to the whole area in one day, so the easiest way is to travel on the land train for a comprehensive overview and inclusive commentary as you travel. But the overall impression for me was the amount of thoughtful detail and visionary planning that had taken place, from the authentic parts of the Burma Railway, the 9/11 exhibition of the American tragedy, the Chapel where a daily service is held, to the horrors of the POW camps.

You need time to absorb and reflect on the magnitude of the displays and give thanks for the sacrifices made for our freedom. Well worth a visit.

A big “thank you” to all contributors this month. Please continue to furnish us with YOUR news, YOUR pictures, YOUR poem, YOUR story, any articles of interest to others. Please give to Susan Bye or Sharon Joddrell at church or post or send by email to susan@msbye.co.uk, to arrive by **15th November** for the December/January edition.

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Website: www.mrbc.org.uk

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CHURCH MAGAZINE—NOVEMBER 2021



Mansfield Road Baptist Church

Message for November from Haroon Azam

"Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the Words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand." Rev 1:3

We have just finished the month of October. Many people must have celebrated Halloween which is not an event for a True Christian to celebrate. Now we are entering November which has its own significant events, eg Guy Fawkes Day (5th Nov), Remembrance Day (11th Nov).

But my focus is something else. This month we are nearer to celebrating Christmas and closer to finishing another year. As the time passes we are closer to the end. What is our duty as ambassadors of Christ, while we are travelling towards the time which is at hand? In this month people are also starting to celebrate Christmas by buying gifts, however there is a vast society that does not know why they are celebrating Christmas. Lets focus on our vision:

"Love Jesus, Love Others, Make Disciples."

Prepare a gift of God's Good News for others. Let us start telling others about the Love of God as time is at hand. Also as winter has started, as a Church we have to show the love of Jesus by looking after the homeless and needy people. We need to tell them too that what we are doing for them is in the Love of Christ Jesus and that Jesus loves them.

We do not know at what time of night Jesus will return. This November let's prepare to celebrate Christmas, not as if Christ is still a baby but prepare as if Jesus is returning as King. Let's be His good disciples. Give the gift of His Good News to others, who still do not know about the Master of the Universe and about His great Love.

Dear Church, remember the time is at hand, be ready, make our children, loved ones and neighbours ready to receive Him with the shout of acclamation.

An extract from the September prayer letter of Pippa and Toby Vokuhl www.bmsworldmission.org/ptvokuhl

BUILDING BLOCKS

Using different materials, my young daughter Ella creates rooms, stables, balconies and connecting bridges on the online platform Minecraft. I am amazed how the building blocks allow her imaginary world to operate and for stories to be generated.

I see similarities between Ella's visualization and what we do here in Nepal. My work aims to ensure that buildings are well designed and fit for purpose, and allow medical services to be grown. I do so hoping that stories of healing and of restoration will emerge. On another level this also reminds us of a Christian's place in God's construction project, as recorded in 1 Peter 2:4-5. What an honour, that we are all called to be priests, and may become building blocks in this wonderful project which is God's temple, a structure which will last into eternity.

Rebuilding blocks. In our last letter we covered some of the devastating monsoon floods. The rains are coming to an end, but not without a trail of damage and destruction to around 6,000 houses. BMS's local partner INF has been able to work with other local Christian partners to bring relief and supplies to those already facing severe economic difficulties as a result of the pandemic. **Please continue to pray** for them as they start to rebuild homes and communities.

New building blocks. I am glad to report that we have a busy development schedule in place for the hospital. The Outpatient's Department has been much improved and soon several other new or improved facilities will be in place. Significant funding promises have already been made, but more are needed. **Do pray** for good relationships with all stakeholders at the hospital. **Do pray** for fruitful discussions and the development of infrastructure master plans which are well coordinated with expected clinical needs, visionary yet rooted in reality.

Be building blocks. We continue to work with partners helping people impacted by the ongoing Covid situation, prioritising the most marginalised people.

We invite you to join us in prayer, thanking God that the children were able to return to on-site school in Kathmandu a couple of weeks ago. **Please pray** that they settle in well and form great relationships. **Please also pray** for Toby's ongoing recovery following a nasty bout of Covid recently as he still gets very tired.



Thank you for your prayers, and for continuing to walk this journey with us. From one building block to the other, *Toby and Pippa, with Jakey, Ella, and Millie*



What God is saying

The Baptist Union Council met recently at Swanwick and this is what they sensed God was saying to encourage us:

As we listened to each other's stories we were also listening for what God was wanting to say to us. The first thing to say is that Council recognises the HUGE challenges that our churches, colleges and leaders have faced. Thank you for your perseverance and diligence in serving one another during these difficult times. We want to honour that and express our heartfelt thanks.

- The pandemic hasn't surprised our **faithful God** and he has been with us – we have been shaken up but we have survived and sometimes even thrived!
- It turns out that **God was already out there** and ahead of us in our communities! Let's build on all the incredible Kingdom connections we have developed, deepened and discovered.
- **Celebrate** the incredible work that has already been done. We **praise and thank God** for the commitment, perseverance, and creativity shown by our Baptist family to serve our respective communities. **Recognise and applaud** our tech teams for their amazing work which sometimes might be taken for granted.
- We are not through this yet! Many are exhausted and emotional and financial resources are low. **Be kind** to yourself and to others. There is a time to 'do things' and a time to '**rest and recover**'. Make sure you take time to **Rest** and have peer support in place.
- It is okay not to have all the answers. **Listen to the Lord** and be attentive to let God show you the way forward.
- Think **beyond rotas** and getting back to how things were. What does it mean to be followers of Jesus now? Are you ready to embrace adventure?
- **Be creative** – to express what we have experienced, to inspire innovation, to embrace the digital revolution.
- Be mindful of how **digital has improved access and connection** for many people, especially disabled people.
- **Take courage** – to live in this new landscape, to use what God has given you and trust that that is enough, to have confidence in the Gospel, and to be open to asking more difficult questions.
- Lean into the gifts of **who we are** as Baptists – Christ-centered, mission hearted, adaptable, diverse, grassroots communities who are beautiful and yet have so much potential!

CHURCH DIARY FOR NOVEMBER

Sunday Service each week at 10.30am.

A recorded version of the service will be available on the website

Prayer Meeting – Wednesdays 3rd and 10th November from 1pm – 2pm

Monday Café will operate each Monday from 10am to 11.45am (in the Welcome Hall)

Toddler Café will operate each Monday from 10am to 11.45am (in the Church Hall)

Deacons Meeting – Wednesday 10th November at 7.30pm

COMMUNION

There will be Communion at the service on Sunday 21st November

CORONAVIRUS

On reviewing our risk assessment as a church, we are asking people to continue to wear masks within the building, including during singing. The majority support this, but a few do not and as such we know that the risk factor remains high. With this being the case, we ask those who are vulnerable to consider whether to attend in person and encourage them to take advantage of the recorded service.



November Prayer Points

- 1) Boulevard United Reformed Church. Pray for their encouragement as they have made the decision to close the Bridge Centre. Also give thanks for all the ministry exercised through the years at the Bridge.
- 2) The young people of the church as they prepare for the Nativity Service in December.
- 3) Asking for strength to be given to those looking to break free from addiction and also for those who are supporting and being alongside these people.

Contemplative Prayer

"Be still and know that I am God"

Psalms 46 vs 10



This passage from the Psalms is very well known, but I don't find it easy to be still and focus on God. My life, like most people's, is full of distractions, worries and attempts to solve problems without reliance on God but relying instead on my own strength and using my own understanding of the world.

Contemplative prayer is about listening rather than speaking. It is about forgetting ourselves and simply being in the presence of God, and as a result our relationship with God becomes deeper. Contemplative prayer transforms our lives because communion with God changes the way we think about and see both our world and ourselves. It is not surprising that a session in the Pete Grieg prayer course is devoted to it.

In his course Pete points out that most people contemplate without realising it. If we go to watch a film at the cinema for example, we are initially aware of everyone around us and our popcorn and fizzy drink but then, if the film is good, we become less aware of our surroundings and get caught up in the film. If the film is really good, we become completely absorbed in it and forget that we are in the cinema at all.

We can get caught up in the presence of God when we are singing or listening to hymns or songs, the words recede, time stands still and we become "lost in wonder love, love and praise". Recently I have found that simply standing in the garden at night and looking up at the stars gives me a deep sense of the majesty of God, a God that brought order from chaos and whose fingerprint we see all around us in the natural world, it is a reminder of Psalm 8.

*LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth
You have set your glory in the heavens*

Psalms 8 vs 1

Pete suggests that there are three stages that we go through in contemplative prayer:

- Initially in beginning our time of prayer, we pause, we breathe slowly, we settle ourselves. We are still aware of ourselves and God, but we are ready for the next stage,
- We repeat a simple phrase, a short passage from the bible or focus on part of the natural world and begin to move away from thinking about ourselves and think more about God. Pete says that he often just uses the phrase "thank you Jesus".
- Finally, we forget about ourselves and are in communion with God. We are in the silent enjoyment of God's presence.

Sometimes I find this a demanding process to go through, but I am trying to make time each day to contemplate God. Contemplative prayer is about an experience that is sometimes difficult to put into words, but I find that it provides comfort, and helps me to find new directions in my life.

Dave Mangan

The Young Disciples have been learning about "Creation" this term.

