

Welcome to Issue 26 of LEAF's newsletter and diary.

Another New Year is upon us. Thank you so much for your support of LEAF during 2005. We pray for God's richest blessing on your lives in 2006. After the traumatic events our world has seen in 2005, what should we expect this year? In our lead article we consider the implications of these events and ask if we can really expect "A Happy New Year??"

There are a number of important events coming up, particularly the LEAF AGM in February and the evening with Rob Parsons in March. Further details overleaf.

**GOOD NEWS! LEAF is now registered as a charity** (Reg No 1111910) and it will be a great help to our finances to be able to claim gift aid on our contributions wherever possible. We will be contacting all individual members regarding this during January.



## A Happy New Year?

The last twelve months have been dominated by an unprecedented series of natural disasters.

Just 12 months ago the great Tsunami struck the coastline of nine nations in Asia leaving over 250,000 people dead and millions more grieving and homeless – a disaster that actually caused the planet to wobble on its axis.

9 months later another devastating earthquake struck the Kashmir region of Pakistan, killing 90,000 and again leaving millions without homes or shelter. The Atlantic hurricane season saw a record 26 named storms; 13 became deadly hurricanes and 7 grew to category three or stronger bringing devastation to Southern USA and the city of New Orleans in particular.

As a Christian looking back on these events I cannot help but wonder whether God is up to something. In Heb 12:26 the Lord promises "Once again I will shake not only the earth but the heavens also." Well there's certainly been a good deal of shaking going on, but what does it all mean?

Jesus gave very clear warning that "great earthquakes" would be among various natural calamities which he called the "birth pangs" that would introduce the end times (Matt 24, Mark 13, Luke 21). He told us to expect such events – so perhaps we should not be surprised by these things.

The prophet Isaiah foretold a time of great shaking and destruction (Isa 24) which was clearly linked to the sin of mankind bringing its toll upon the earth.

*The earth suffers for the sins of its people, for they have twisted the instructions of God, violated his laws, and broken his everlasting covenant. (Isa 24:5 NLT)*

There is a dimension to these events that goes way beyond the natural. Hebrew talks of the "heavens" being shaken. This term "heavens" refers, not to the heaven where God dwells, but to the Satanic principalities and powers that are the world rulers of this present darkness (Eph 6:12).

Our fight is not against flesh and blood – it's a spiritual battle. And this battle will continue and will increase in intensity until that great day finally comes when all heaven will shout "The whole world has now become the Kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign forever and ever." (Rev 11:15)

Until that great day we can expect increasing turbulence on the earth. In Romans 8 Paul described this as the whole

creation groaning as in birth pains in anticipation of the day when it will be freed from its bondage to death and decay.

It is my conviction that the unprecedented times in which we live mean unprecedented opportunities for the gospel. The result will be a great harvest of millions of people finding the joy, peace, hope and salvation that only Christ can give.

I believe that God is allowing these traumatic events to take place in our world so that people will turn to him. It is not his will that anyone should perish but he longs for all men and women on to come to a saving knowledge of the truth and to receive eternal life through Jesus. (1 Tim 2:4)

Jesus came to this world to bring good news. Right at the start of his ministry he read these words from Isaiah 61:

*"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has appointed me to preach Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the downtrodden will be freed from their oppressors, and that the time of the Lord's favor has come." (Luke 4:18-19 NLT)*

Jesus declared that this scripture was fulfilled through his ministry. It's what he came to do. And what he began to do (Acts 1:1), the church is to continue. Isaiah 61 is our mandate also. We are called to bring good news to the poor and release to the captives. It is time for God's church to rise as an army – the church militant – and to use the power and the authority that is ours in Christ. If only we will respond to His call we will see many miracles of new life transforming the lives of people in our world who are currently living in the depths of despair.

We won't see Satan's kingdom fall by simply sitting on our backsides and waiting for God to do something. He has chosen to do his work through men and women who know the power of the cross, who testify to the truth and who are not afraid to die (Rev 12:10). I believe he's calling us to

- pray for the lost, and to persevere in prayer as never before,
- share God's love with our neighbours through our acts of kindness and generosity,
- declare the good news with fresh passion and boldness.

If we will only do this then, despite the increasing turbulence in our world, 2006 will be a very happy New Year – not just for us, but for the many who will come to know the peace and joy of Christ for the very first time in their lives.

*Jonathan Wallis*

**LEAF is committed to the transformation of society and culture in the New Forest through evangelical Christians uniting together in prayer, worship, evangelistic activity, social action and speaking with a common voice to local government and media.**

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## LEAF AGM

*Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> February at 7.30 pm  
at Lyndhurst Baptist Church Hall*

Wkuxjknx#kh#Qhz #LruhW\$ #  
dog#r#kh#ogv#ri#kh#duw#

*(Coffee will be served from 7.00pm)*

Those of you who have been to previous LEAF AGM's know that we do not go in for traditional boring AGMs! The formalities take very little of our evening, which is a great opportunity to meet up with people from other churches and to share together about what is happening in the area.

This year, as well as focusing on the work of LEAF and things that are happening here in Forest, we will be looking at a variety of ministries and activities initiated from within the churches in our area and reaching out to the nations. All are welcome, whether LEAF members or not. Further details will follow in mid January.

**We are looking forward to an enjoyable and stimulating evening together. Do be there, and bring your friends.**

## Rob Parsons coming to the Forest in March

Rob Parsons of Care For the Family will be coming to St Andrews, Dibden Purlieu on Tues 14<sup>th</sup> March to present a brand new CFF event called "The Friendship Factor".

At the time of writing we are awaiting the final publicity details for this event which will focus on the whole area of relationships – within the family, the church and society.

Rob is a brilliant communicator and you can be sure that this will be an excellent evening, not just for you and your church, but for your unchurched friends also. However places are limited and tickets for this event will go very fast. If you want to come you will need to book early.

You can book tickets (£6 each) direct from Care for the Family on 029 2081 0800.

## An update from Churches Counselling Together (CCT)

*A Christian Counselling Service for the Churches and Communities of the New Forest Area.*

We have now established some important administrative building blocks and friendships into our service which have all been accomplished this year. These include Charity Status, Business Plan, Affiliation to the Association of Christian Counsellors, Governing Document (Deed) and a continuing good and supportive relationship with churches and LEAF.

Additionally we are well supported by our Trustees together with our Council of Reference (Doctor, Solicitor, Accountant and Theologian). We have a dedicated team of counsellors who have been operating from three church bases, with an equal spread of resources between west of the New Forest and the east (Waterside).

We have helped raise our profile during the year by carrying out two seminars on the subject of depression, one at Ashley Baptist Church and the other at St Andrew's Church. As a direct result of these seminars we have been approached by the Southampton Methodist Circuit of churches to provide some teaching on depression for their pastoral visitors. As we raise our profile in 2006 we hope to put on more seminars on a variety of relevant issues.

The most common client issue has been depression with around 48% suffering along with other associated symptoms of shame, abuse, anger, panic attacks and not coping. Most of these clients are still in therapy with us. Anger has been a common issue amongst men being counselled, associated with low self esteem and a history of neglect and abuse in childhood. Other issues presented include emotional dependency, alcoholism, obsessions, perfectionism, Schizoaffective Disorder and couple conflicts.

We are currently producing a brochure to help re-launch our service during 2006. Some of the details in the brochure have been re-produced below:-

### ONE TO ONE COUNSELLING

Individual counselling offers the most intimate and personally effective method of promoting positive changes in a person, whether they are from the church or unchurched community. Together we look at your present emotions, behaviour and thinking, slowly uncovering your deep longings. Insights are gained from examining your past. We detect patterns of behaviour and gently offer feedback, working together to promote healthy changes at a pace you can manage.

We deal with issues such as low mood, anxiety, guilt, anger, shame, hurt, panic, abuse, addictions, obsessions, phobias, relationships, perfectionism, sexual dysfunction, lifestyle choices, bereavement, grief, self esteem, confidence issues, work problems, stress, and internet pornography.

### NETWORKING

CCT(New Forest) is linked with Central Counselling & Training Service (CCTS) in Southampton and also the Association of Christian Counsellors (ACC) through our affiliation status. Our umbrella organisation is L.E.A.F. Additionally we are connected to churches of many denominations in the New Forest area and have successfully established counselling centres within some of their premises.

It is our heart to extend our network with both counselling agencies and churches in a co-operative endeavour across the area, making Christian counselling more easily accessible. We would welcome your enquires into how we could include your church or agency into this vision.

Counselling fees range from zero to £30 per session and the initial assessment is free. For further information contact Administration on 01425-618108.

*Chris Bray*