

Welcome to Issue 27 of LEAF's newsletter and diary. It is a while since our last newsletter, but a lot has been going on behind the scenes.

You will see overleaf that we now have the LEAF website up and running. If you have access to the internet, this will provide a very convenient way to access our diary and find out what is going on in the area. Do have a look – and if you do not have access to the internet, don't worry! We will still be publishing the LEAF diary in paper format as before.

We also have our **Annual LEAF Celebration** coming up at the beginning of October – we have included publicity for this with the newsletter, so do let everyone in your church know about this and encourage them to attend.

In our lead article, Derek Copley reports on his recent visit to China, and encourages us to develop the same passion and hunger for God's word as demonstrated by the believers there.

Jonathan Wallis, Chairman



GROWTH IN SPITE OF THE DISADVANTAGES

I recently returned from Xinjiang Province in North West China, where I have been providing some teaching and training among the Uighur secret believers, who make up just 0.1% of the population, the majority being Muslim. Six of the young women had just been released from jail, after one of them had discretely (and, as she thought wrongly, unobserved) handed someone some Christian literature.

I have been asking myself the question 'how do such people grow spiritually, who receive their teaching from leaders, themselves young believers, with virtually no training and outside input?' I found the same in the early days of the church in Albania, where I met a 22 year old man who became a pastor one year after his conversion, having been converted in the first wave in 1991.

Then I realised how similar this was to the Early Church, where people were thrust into leadership with little or no preparation among the chaos of a rapidly growing Church. All they had was the Old Testament, orally passed down teaching from the Lord Jesus, and some early written material which later was incorporated into the New Testament.

The same is true of Central Asia today. Among the 80 or so ethnic people groups, many have only portions of the Bible, and some have none, and only recently have people like the Turks and Azeris been granted a complete Bible. The Uighurs have only the New Testament and 2 books of the Old Testament.

But however little or much they have, they make good use of it. Lack of a complete Bible or well-trained leaders does not seem to impede their Mission activities. We on the other hand, have a surfeit of translations, many seeking to feed our Post-Modern desire for a tailor-made version, just for us.

Eventually we will have a translation just for me – a version for tall fair haired men, slightly balding, with a passion for growing vegetables and who collect British postage stamps!

The point is not how suitable a translation is, but our own attitudes, motivation and practices. We simply need to establish the discipline of reading it regularly. As soon as I was converted I was told to get a Scofield KJV. Wishing to be a 'good brother' I did as I was told. I did in those days. I also bought a suit for Sundays (sorry Lords-days). I cannot say that it has done me any harm to have had nothing but that more difficult version as a young believer. The point was that I had an appetite for the Word. I have less inclination now, even though I have a huge choice.

In Old testament times it was integral to family and social life, just as the Koran is today to the more devout Muslims. Today we have relegated the Bible to a category of its being merely 'useful' on some occasions, but generally irrelevant to most of today's tough questions, thus not exactly the first place we would turn. I suggest that most of us are informed mostly by sources of guidance which are totally unconnected to the Bible. Much of the shaping of our world views comes almost subliminally through the media, especially Soap Operas.

I am not suggesting go back to the Victorian advice I received in some of my early reading in the 1950s 'let the young man remain in his lodging room with nothing but his Bible' But I am advocating that we learn from those who have so few translations, and make the Bible our daily source of food and guidance, spending less time in front of the box. (Evangelicals, I am told, spend more time watching TV than unbelievers, at some 25-30 hours a week)

Derek Copley

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.

Local Evangelical Alliance in The Forest, Rose Cottage, Back Lane, Sway, Lymington, SO41 6BU. Charity No 1111910
Tel: 01590 682605. Email: leaf.info@virgin.net Website: www.leafforest.org Editor: **Jonathan Wallis**

LEAF ANNUAL CELEBRATION

Sunday 8th October 2006 at 6.30 pm

At St Andrews Church, Beaulieu Road, Dibden Purlieu.

Guest speaker: Rev John Smith

“Empire or Kingdom – which are we trying to build?”

In fulfilling his mission on earth, Jesus talked constantly about the kingdom of God, very rarely about the church, and yet so often our focus is on building the local church with very little thought given to the wider perspective of God’s kingdom. John Smith will be addressing this issue and suggesting how we get the balance right.

John Smith is a powerful and dynamic communicator with a passion for mission. John comes from Liverpool but has spent much of his adult life in Scotland – at Edinburgh University where he studied Ecological Science, as a town planner and a Baptist minister. One of the founding members of Evangelical Alliance Scotland, John spent 7 years as UK Director of Evangelical Alliance encouraging Christians to ‘turn church inside out to turn the world upside down.’ He has recently become senior pastor of Milton Baptist Church, Weston super Mare.

This year’s celebration will also include the official launch of **Churches Counselling Together (CCT) New Forest**.

MORE LEAF NEWS

COMMITTEE NEWS. We are losing two valued members of our committee. **Martyn Travers** has served on the committee since 1999, and feels it is now time for him to stand down and make room for some “new blood”. **Francis Cumberlege** is very shortly retiring to Sussex and is also standing down. **We will greatly miss both Martyn and Francis on the committee and would like to express our deep appreciation of their support of LEAF and input into the committee.** Please pray for us as we actively seek new committee members.

The **NEW FOREST BIBLE WEEKEND** has been brought under the auspices of LEAF and is being relaunched in 2007 under a new name: **FOREST FIRE**. We are delighted that **Mark Greene** from the London Institute of Contemporary Christianity will be the main speaker at next year’s event. There will be a number of changes – the event will just run over Friday night and Saturday, and we have plans to make Saturday an exciting and fun-filled day for the whole family. We will give you more information on this in due course. It’s going to be good, so keep **11-12 May 2007** clear in your diary!

The **LEAF YOUTH PROJECT**. As you know, Carol has moved away from the area following her marriage earlier in the year, and we are now looking to appoint someone to take this project forward and build on all that Carol achieved during her time working for LEAF. **Please pray that we will find the right person to fulfil this very important role.**

www.leaforest.org

We now have our own LEAF website, so if you have access to the internet, do have a browse through the site, and add it to your “favourites” list.

On the site you will find...

- **An up to date LEAF diary** containing details of all regular and special meetings and events in the Forest area. The Internet diary will be kept up to date with events as and when we are told about them, and so this will always be more current than the printed version. **We would encourage you therefore to look at the LEAF diary online from time to time to keep up to date with what is going on in the area.**

If you have events that would be of interest to LEAF members, do email them to us without delay.

- **Details of all LEAF churches**, with links to their own websites where appropriate.

Note to church ministers and reps: Please check that you are happy with the information posted about your church and let us know of anything you would like changed or added.

- Back copies of **LEAF Newsletters**

- There is a page devoted to **Forest Fire** - the new name for the **New Forest Bible Weekend** – which has now been brought under the auspices of LEAF.
- We hope to be shortly adding a **Youth Section** to the site.
- Over the months ahead we will be adding **Articles of interest** and a limited number of **Sermons and Talks** that you can download and listen to.

Although this is not intended as a “free for all” forum, **members are invited to contribute articles to the site.** We do ask that any articles should be in keeping with the broad aims and objectives of LEAF. This is not somewhere to grind your favorite “axe”! But if you have material that will genuinely encourage, challenge or provoke our members to more effective Christian living and mission then we would love to receive it, although we cannot guarantee to publish everything received.

Please e-mail any articles to us in Word format.

- You can **Register your Email address** onto the site – this will help us keep in touch with you even more effectively.