

Welcome to Issue 31 of LEAF's newsletter and diary.

Despite a wet and windy night, Ashley Baptist church was packed for our **ANNUAL LEAF CELEBRATION** in November. Our guest speaker was **Jane Holloway**, National Prayer Director of the World Prayer Centre in Birmingham. Jane gave us an inspiring account of some of the ways in which prayer is being mobilized around the world to bring about transformation in society and encouraged us to get involved. If you would like to be kept in touch with prayer initiatives in the New Forest area do get in touch with **Helen Burch**, the LEAF prayer co-ordinator on 01425 472687 or burchnet@freeuk.com.

Our **ANNUAL VISION MEETING** is coming up on **Thurs 7th February**. See below for further details. It promises to be another great evening – **I hope to see you there!**

Jonathan Wallis, Editor#



A LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Happy New Year to you!

Over the last few months I've been challenged as to what the church should be like. Where in the New Testament do we get the most accurate picture of a church working effectively? Is it in the first few chapters of Acts or is it through the letters of St Paul, Peter or John?

On reflection and having attended a conference run by Mike and Cindy Riches of 'Jesus Ministry' my understanding is that to see what the church should be in all its fullness we need look no further than the ministry of Jesus himself. He is the leader who modelled what the church should be. He took twelve men, instilled in them the values and ministry of the church and then sent them out in pairs to be the church wherever they went. He is the head of the church and we are his disciples or, as Dallas Willard would say, his apprentices - an apprentice being someone who spends time with the master and learns to do exactly what he has seen the master do.

Therefore Jesus' manifesto when he came to earth becomes ours; to preach the good news to the poor, proclaim freedom for those in bondage, heal the sick,

release the oppressed and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.

This is a high calling and one that we are unable to fulfill unless we are empowered by the Holy Spirit who lives within every Christian. The Apostle Paul wrote to the church in Ephesus:

"All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ." (Eph 1:3)

When Jesus walked the earth his ministry was largely confined to where he was physically. But now through the church the Holy Spirit is able to minister continually in many places and in diverse ways – this is what I believe Jesus meant when he said that we would do greater things than he did.

My prayer for 2008 is that the churches across the New Forest would increasingly reflect the character and works of Jesus, be empowered by the Holy Spirit and that lives would be radically transformed into the likeness of Christ; but it's up to us surrender our lives for this purpose.

Phil Cole, Chairman

ANNUAL LEAF VISION MEETING – Thursday 7th February 7.30 pm at Lymington Baptist Church

Last year's vision meeting was a very encouraging evening with leaders from each of the LEAF churches sharing something of their vision as a church. This year's event will take a similar format with participation from each LEAF church.

We will be asking leaders to share (again within a strict 2 minute time limit!) on ***"What discipleship looks like within our church"*** – picking up on the theme of "Whole life discipleship from last year's Forest Fire

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, Lillington House, New Street, Lymington, SO41 9BJ. Charity No 1111910
Tel (Admin): 01590 610316 Email: leaf.info@virgin.net Website: www.leafforest.org Editor: Jonathan Wallis

WHAT IS A TRUE EVANGELICAL?

We call ourselves the Local **Evangelical** Alliance in the Forest, but what do we mean by this term? Perhaps more importantly, how do others see us when we call ourselves evangelical?

Dr David Hilborn (*Head of Theology at EA UK*) has written an article on this topic which can be found on the EA website (www.eauk.org). My purpose is not to replicate his article here, but to focus on what I think is a particularly important, yet misunderstood aspect of evangelicalism.

Dr Hilborn summarises the true distinctives of being evangelical as follows (*my paraphrase/interpretation*):

- A commitment to the Bible as the “Word of God” in written form.
- A commitment to Jesus Christ as the Son of God and the revealed “Word of God” in human form
- The centrality of the cross as the basis whereby our sin is dealt with and we are brought into a personal relationship with God
- The importance of repentance and faith as the means whereby we enter into a personal and real experience of God.
- An obligation to declare the good news of Jesus Christ through evangelism and social action.

Most people, and in particular the media, don't look beyond the first of these distinctives in defining an evangelical - and they see our commitment to the Bible as **fundamentalism**... a “dogmatic and backward looking set of beliefs”. But as Dr Hilborn points out, **evangelicalism and fundamentalism are not the same thing!**

It is salutary to note that, in Jesus' day, the people who were most scripturally prepared for the coming of the

the Messiah – the Jewish religious leaders – totally missed him when he came.

“You search the Scriptures because you think they give you eternal life. But the Scriptures point to me! Yet you refuse to come to me to receive this life.” (John 5:39-40)

The Pharisees were the fundamentalists of Jesus' day. They were champions of those who spent time studying the scriptures, but their study did not lead them to an experiential knowledge of God.

“Your mistake is that you don't know the Scriptures, and you don't know the power of God.” (Matt 22:29)

The word “know” here is a word which speaks of personal experience. They knew the Bible backwards, but their “knowledge” was simply an end in itself.

If our study of the Bible doesn't lead us to a deeper relationship (an encounter) with God, then it is simply adding to our tendency towards spiritual pride. (Bill Johnson)

I can't help wondering whether it will be the “fundamentalists” of our day who miss the second coming of Jesus. **True** evangelicals will be ready!

To me a true evangelical is someone who embraces all of the distinctives listed above – but in particular it is someone who by repentance and faith has had **a personal and life-transforming encounter with God**. Jesus did not say we would know his true followers by their doctrines but by the fruit of their lives. (*Matt 7:20*)

People today are not interested in theory, doctrine or religion, but when they see in our lives the fruit of a life changing encounter with a supernatural God they are **very** interested. That genuinely is **GOOD NEWS!**

Jonathan Wallis

Forest Fire 2008

Forest Fire 2008 will be taking place on **Friday 9th and Saturday 10th May** at Brockenhurst College, and our aim is to build on the success of the event in 2007.

Our guest speaker will be **Rev Steven Brady** – Principal of Moorlands College – and he will be building on the theme of Whole Life Discipleship which Mark Green brought to us last year.



Pause for thought

A self-made man has seriously limited his life. Self can't take you where GOD intends you to go.

New Hope Planning Application turned down

In our last letter we reported on New Hope Community Church's planning application to convert an industrial building into a church centre. Unfortunately this has been refused by NFDC. Please continue to pray for the church as they seek God's will for provision of premises.

Visit of Alan Vincent in March 2008

In our last newsletter we mentioned that Alan Vincent is coming back to the Forest to take a conference (from **12 – 14th March**) on the whole area of spiritual warfare. Further details of this event can be found in the LEAF diary or from www.oknf.org