

**WELCOME** to Issue 34 of the LEAF newsletter and a diary packed with information on what is going on over the next few months. In this issue there is a letter from our Chairman, Phil Cole, encouraging us to see God's plan and purposes at work in and through the difficulties and crises we face in life. It's good to know that our God is bigger and more powerful than any problem or issue we may be facing and that He is working to produce the very best in our lives!

**Our annual LEAF Celebration is coming up in October** – and this year we are delighted to welcome the new Director General of the Evangelical Alliance, Steve Clifford, to the Forest. You will find full details overleaf and in the LEAF diary. ***I look forward to seeing you there!***

*Jonathan Wallis, Editor*



## A LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN

### Challenges are good for us!

All of us are used to challenges in life, and often we would rather they didn't come along because they don't fit with our calendars - I find they always seem to arrive at the most inconvenient time! However, when I look back it is nearly always the challenges that have me led into either new ways of thinking, new ways of doing things, or finding opportunities that I wasn't aware of before. Challenges are good for us.

At present I'm in the middle of overseeing a major building project at our church - something they never taught me at Bible College! This has certainly been challenging – but interesting and fun at the same time. When the going gets tough I try to fix my eyes on the bigger picture – to the time when the building work has finished and the ministry opportunities begin. When Jesus was facing death we read in Hebrews 12:2 – “*For the joy set before him he endured the cross.*” Jesus could see beyond the cross to the time when the whole of humanity would be able to come into a restored relationship with God. Abraham was able to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice because he knew that God had promised him that his offspring would be as numerous as the stars – reasoning that God could raise him from the dead. Whilst I don't pretend for one moment that our building project is in the same league as what Jesus and Abraham had to go through it has reminded me to keep my eyes on the bigger picture.

Christopher Wren, who designed St. Paul's Cathedral, wrote about the reactions of construction workers who were asked what they were doing. Those workers who were bored and tired responded by saying, “I'm laying bricks” or “I'm carrying stones.”

But one worker, who was mixing cement, seemed cheerful and enthusiastic about his work. Asked what he was doing, he replied, “I'm building a magnificent cathedral.”

I encourage all of us not to view our Christian lives and ministry as “laying bricks” but as “building cathedrals”. Look past the trials, the pain and the challenges to the changed lives that will result. And if we never see it, don't worry, the great men of faith in Hebrews 11 didn't see it either (verse 39)!

As a committee one challenge we've had over the last few months is that both Sharon Prior and Helen Birch have felt called to temporarily leave the area – Sharon to undertake an MPhil in the Sheffield area, and Helen to go with husband Peter to the International House of Prayer in Kansas where he has a position working with their media team. We are thrilled for them both and wish them well in their studies and ministry. These two ladies have been inspirational for us in their respective roles of Youth and Children's Coordinator and Prayer Coordinator. They will be greatly missed and will leave a big hole to fill. Hopefully Sharon will be staying on in a consultancy role but as yet we are still to work out the details, whilst Helen's role will now be taken on by Mary Dyer. Mary is an excellent replacement for Helen and we look forward to seeing the prayer side of LEAF grow and develop under her leadership. If you would like the prayer team to come and lead a prayer evening at your church or have some training I'm sure Mary would be more than happy to oblige.

Remember you can't have a miracle without a crisis!

*Phil Cole (Chairman)*

**LEAF is committed to the spiritual transformation of the New Forest**

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## LEAF Annual Celebration Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> October 6.30pm at St Saviour's, Brockenhurst Speaker: Steve Clifford

*(Director General of Evangelical Alliance)*

*Worship led by Laurence Bennett and the  
Salvation Army Worship Group*

Our annual celebration is the one time in the year when we can join with Christians from all across the Forest to worship together and celebrate all that unites us in Christ – and we are delighted to welcome Steve Clifford, the new General Director of the Evangelical Alliance, to the Forest. You can read a bit about Steve in the article opposite.

**This promises to be a great evening – do come and bring others from your church with you.**

## Forest Fire continues to grow and develop

Forest Fire 2009 continued to grow and develop under the auspices of LEAF, with this year's speaker, Neil Hudson of the London Institute of Contemporary Christianity, further developing the theme of "whole-life discipleship".

Neil based his talks on the book of Acts and took as his theme the "Shaped Shapers", showing how the early church were moulded into the likeness of Jesus, in order to make a real difference in the world where God had placed them as salt and light.

Wherever God places us, he calls us each to be:

- A Minister to the people around us
- A Model of how Jesus would live
- A Moulder of the culture of our society
- A Mouthpiece of good news.

Next year's Forest Fire takes place on 7<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> May 2010 and the speaker will be Krish Kandiah from the Evangelical Alliance.

*Pause for thought*

**When we submit the things of God to the mind of man, unbelief and religion are the results. When we submit the mind of man to the things of God, we end up with faith and a renewed mind. The mind makes a wonderful servant, but a terrible master.**

*Bill Johnson*

## Steve Clifford appointed new Director General of the Evangelical Alliance

In April of this year, Steve Clifford took up his new appointment as General Director of the Evangelical Alliance, following in the footsteps of Joel Edwards.

Steve is 54 and has served on the board of EA for many years. He is an innovative thinker who has been behind a range of exciting church campaigns over recent years and most recently has served as Chair of Hope 08 and Soul Survivor.

"The church is alive and kicking in the UK and evangelicals are often at the forefront of local initiatives," he said.

"At this time of incredible change and crisis, there are wonderful opportunities for the church to present the good news of Jesus in words and action. The Evangelical Alliance is uniquely positioned to bring evangelicals together to serve our communities and to work together with others to see our nation transformed.

Jesus' own life was a combination of both words and actions. I look forward to bringing an evangelical voice to the British public, whilst at the same time partnering with the local church for active mission in communities around the UK."

Mike Talbot, EA's Chair of Board commented: "Steve has a real passion for the local church and for developing young people, which has given him a strong sense of the issues that matter to Christians and non-Christians alike. He is a leader of leaders, gifted at enabling and mobilising teams and individuals into action with a real ability to build partnerships with people from across the Christian spectrum. He is a visionary, and I am excited to see how his vision has consistently centred around mission and evangelism. These qualities leave us no doubt that he is the right person to take forward the Alliance, which exists to unite evangelicals in transforming society."

Steve worked as a teacher in the 1980s before leaving to work with the church in 1985, church planting and running leadership and discipleship teams. He is married to Ann with a son Jake and a daughter Jordan and currently attends a West London Church which is a member of the Pioneer network.

