

Grapevine

Newsletter of
Ebenezer Evangelical Church



“When they had seen Him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them.”

Luke 2: 17 & 18

December/January
2011/12

EBENEZER EVANGELICAL CHURCH

Doctrinal Statement.

The church believes the fundamental truths of Christianity, as revealed in Holy Scripture, including the following:

- 1 The unity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in the Godhead.
- 2 The sovereignty of God in creation, providence, revelation, redemption and final judgment.
- 3 The divine inspiration, infallibility and inerrancy of Holy Scripture as originally given, and its supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct.
- 4 The universal sinfulness and guilt of human nature since the fall, rendering man subject to God's wrath and condemnation.
- 5 The full deity of the Lord Jesus Christ the incarnate Son of God, His virgin birth and His real and sinless humanity; His death on the cross; His bodily resurrection; His ascension; His present reign in heaven and on earth; and His intercession on behalf of the church.
- 6 Redemption from the guilt, penalty and power of sin only through the sacrificial and atoning death, once and for all time, of our representative and substitute, Jesus Christ, the only mediator between God and man.
- 7 Justification as God's act of undeserved mercy, in which the sinner is pardoned all his sins and accepted as righteous in God's sight, only because of the righteousness of Christ imputed to him, this justification being received by faith alone.
- 8 The need for the Holy Spirit to make the work of Christ effective to the individual sinner, granting him repentance toward God and faith in Jesus Christ.
- 9 The church as the body of Christ, both locally and worldwide, its members consisting of those only to have been born again through the work of the Holy Spirit.
- 10 The indwelling of the Holy Spirit in all those thus regenerated, producing in them an increasing likeness to Christ in character and behaviour, and empowering them for their witness in the world.
- 11 The future personal return of the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge all men, executing God's final just condemnation on the impenitent and receiving the redeemed to eternal glory.

A further explanation of the things we believe is set out in the 1646 Westminster Confession of Faith

A LETTER FROM THE MINISTER

Dear friends,

For many years now, increasing wealth has been the assumption in the West. We've assumed that as we go through life our standard of living will improve and that the next generation will be even better off than we are. Spoken or unspoken, those have been the assumptions which many within our society have made.

But those assumptions are now being challenged. If economic conditions worsen, there will be the very real possibility that the general trend in our society and in our own personal circumstances may well be from richer to poorer. It's a trend which we perhaps find hard to visualize because we are so used to 'rags to riches' stories that we rarely think of it happening the other way. How many Oscars would a 'riches to rags' film win?

And yet, the events we remember at Christmas are precisely of a 'riches to rags' nature. One Biblical writer describes it like this: "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor" (2 Corinthians 8: 9). The riches which Jesus had known were the splendour and privileges of heaven. The poverty he came to was the cattle trough of Bethlehem, the hatred of fellow men and women and the God-forsakenness of the cross. What a 'riches to rags' story? What a step for someone to take?

And the reason he took it was not to win an Oscar or because economic conditions dictated it. He did so, says Paul, "so that we through his poverty might become rich". Jesus left the riches of heaven and experienced the poverty of Bethlehem's manger and God's anger on the cross so that sinners like us who are presently under God's anger might one day enjoy his heaven. The fascinating significance of Christmas is that Jesus experienced the greatest possible riches to rags so that we might experience the greatest possible rags to riches.

Have a good Christmas,

David.

Amongst Ourselves

As the falling of the leaves marks the autumn season we look back over the past months and find we have much to praise and thank the Lord for.

‘A Fresh Start’, a Café Style evening, was a joint initiative between Ebenezer and the CU held on 10th October. Good quality tea, coffee and an ample supply of cupcakes were enjoyed. Pete Campbell brought us a challenging Gospel message, supplemented by two testimonies and a good number of students attended. On the following Saturday a coach trip was provided for International students to show them some of the beauties of Snowdonia and this was followed by tea in the annex. On 7th November the film ‘End of the Spear’ was shown which graphically portrayed the martyrdom of the five American missionaries who had sought to take the Gospel to a very violent tribe in Ecuador. Popcorn and Cornettos were available during the interval! Also for the first time the church held a ‘Harvest Service’ in ‘Y Gorlan’ where residents shared in singing harvest hymns, eating a buffet lunch and hearing a brief Gospel message.

Meanwhile David has commenced his series on Sunday mornings on Acts and in the evenings on selected portions from Isaiah. Our Fellowship Groups are now studying ‘the Life of Elijah’ and ‘the Sermon on the Mount.’ We are grateful to the Rev. Oliver Gross (Welshpool) for supplying our pulpit one Sunday in October. On 15th November a very stimulating Historical Address was given by Rev Geraint Morgan on ‘The Sovereignty of God and the Authorised Version’. Our regular mid-week activities have started up again including the monthly Men’s Breakfast where a chapter of the book ‘Issues Christians Face’ is discussed.

Some of our members have been unwell recently including our treasurer Enid Vincent who fell and fractured her pelvis in Tewkesbury whilst returning from visiting family. Gareth Thomas has had an operation on his knees but he is still in some pain. Ted and Liz Storkey are in the process of selling their home in order to move nearer to their son in Exeter.

Our Carol service is due to take place on December 11th. Do come and join with us as we rejoice in the coming of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!

John P Gough

Praise and Prayer Points

Sunday: Give thanks for the privilege of being invited to come together into the presence of Almighty God. Pray for the help of His Holy Spirit as we seek to worship Him and to learn from His word.

Monday: Give thanks for the gift of Christian fellowship. Remember any in our congregation who are unable to attend the services for whatever reason. Ask for help that we may be ready to bear one another's burdens, and to help those who are lonely, housebound or in need.

Tuesday: Give thanks for the faithful ministry we enjoy in Ebenezer. Pray for our Minister and the officers, that the Lord will strengthen, guide and protect them in their responsibilities.

Wednesday: Give thanks for the freedoms we enjoy in this country. Pray for the government and those in authority, that the freedom to worship and to share our faith may be maintained.

Thursday: Pray for Christians who are suffering persecution, imprisonment and death for their faith. Remember those who have worshipped with us, and who may even now be living in danger.

Friday: Pray for the ongoing outreach of the Church: for Bible Club, for Goal, and for the open air work. Pray for the missionary committee as they seek to find new ways to make the gospel known.

Saturday: As we approach Christmas, let us again thank God for His wonderful gift of a Saviour. Pray that He will bless the Carol Services and other special events, here and in other places. Pray that His name will be glorified, and that many will come to know Him as their Lord.

Wendy Mimpriss

Missionary Prayer Requests

Sunday: THAILAND - Johnny and Ann McClean and their three children are going through difficult times because of the floods in Bangkok. They had to evacuate to the south of the country for a short time. They are now back in their home and are very involved with helping those who have been severely affected by the floods; they have some Thai folk staying in their home for the foreseeable future. The student work has been disrupted and they are only able to teach a few students who have remained in Bangkok but they are able to minister to many Thai people in various ways

Monday: FRANCE – Richard and Barbara Davies, James and Libby in Marseilles need prayer for their various activities and gospel outreaches during the Christmas period.

Tuesday: UCCF – Pray for Bangor CU’s Carol Service on December 8th. Also pray for Lydia and Mike, the new Relay workers, and Mike Chalmers as he leads the team.

Wednesday: BRITTANY – Give thanks that Emmanuel and Esther Durant’s new baby boy Benjamin was born safely. Pray for their various efforts to make the gospel known including a 6 week course “Bridges towards God” which was due to start in November.

Thursday: BANGOR CHRISTIAN BOOKSHOP – Pray for the volunteers and the opportunities they have of sharing the gospel and ministering to the people who come into the shop; some with pressing problems and occasionally an aggressive and anti-Christian attitude. Pray that much good literature will be sold over the Christmas period.

Friday: CAPEL-Y-FFYNON – Pray for the Rev Dafydd Job and the various ways the church is involved in building up Christians. Pray for Heledd Job in Slovakia that her fluency in the language may progress. Give thanks that she has settled in a church and is making good friends.

Saturday: ALBANIA – Pray for Geni and the church members as they reach out with the gospel, especially at Christmas.

Idwen Morgan

Spotlight on Marseilles

When Richard Davies visited Bangor in September, he took as his Bible reading, Mark 7:1-23. The way the Jews gave precedence to their traditions is echoed by the external regulations of the Muslims. The gospel, however, gives true purity of heart through the atoning blood of Jesus.

In Marseilles, Richard and Barbara are part of a team bringing God's mercy and salvation to people from the Comore Islands. They know the heart language of the Comorians and use various means to make contact with them. Although there are large numbers of Comorians in Marseilles, it was much easier to get to know them on their native islands. Other ideas for making contacts are welcome.

There is a second-hand **clothes store** which enables them to get to know, and be trusted, by the customers. Many of the customers are from the islands while others are from North Africa. Another activity is the after-school **homework club**. This not only helps the children with schoolwork but meets many other needs too. They have had difficulty with discipline, but by involving the parents as helpers, especially at the door, disturbances have been fewer. Pray for them as they seek to encourage Comorian families to make use of these facilities.

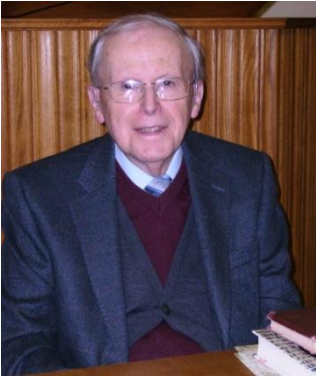
Their church also has a **book shop** in the shopping mall close to the second-hand clothes store on Fridays and Saturdays. Please pray for the witness of this stall. It is hard for those from other religions to stop and talk in such a public place.

Their children, James (14) and Libby (12), are going through many changes and need to respond to temptations at school. They are grateful, therefore, for the monthly children's meeting for activities and Bible study at their church.

We can also remember Richard's mother and Barbara's father in England.

Richard Owens

The Authorised Version and the Sovereignty of God



Many events have been organised this year throughout the world to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the publication of the Authorised Version of the Bible.

And at Ebenezer the occasion was marked on November 15th by a talk given by our former minister, the Rev. Geraint Morgan entitled “*The Authorised Version and the Sovereignty of God*”.

Mr Morgan started off by giving a brief outline of the historical events, particularly during the reigns of Mary Tudor and Elizabeth I in England and of Mary Stuart in Scotland which set the stage for the production of the Bible in 1611. Then he went on to expound five singular examples of God’s Providence in the production of this version of the Bible. The points which he outlined were:

- The placing of James I, a Scottish protestant king, on the throne of England. This was particularly remarkable as both his mother and grandmother were such ardent Roman Catholics.
- The way that the decision to produce the new translation of the Bible was almost an unplanned and accidental outcome of the meeting which King James had called at Westminster to discuss the religious settlement of the country.
- The fact that the Authorised Version was not produced in a vacuum but followed the work of Tyndale and the writers of the Geneva Bible.
- God’s sovereign overruling of King James who opposed and hated the Geneva Bible and instructed the translators to base the new translation on the much poorer Bishop’s Bible. Despite this the overriding influences of the new translation were those of Tyndale and the Geneva Bible. This was because the king left a loophole in his instructions to the translators that they could refer to these other translations where they agreed better with the original text.
- The final triumph of the Authorised Version. It did not come out with a fanfare and there was no proclamation that it should be read in all churches, as was the case when Henry VIII published the Great Bible. In fact it just slipped out quietly, being seen as merely a revision of the Bishop’s Bible. At first it was not even liked by the general public as they complained about the lack of “notes” to help them understand it. Yet despite this, as the years passed God was

able to use this translation to the building up and blessing of his church.

Thanks must go to the Rev. Geraint Morgan for this most interesting and illuminating talk. Moreover, praise must be given to God for the way his overruling providence was manifested in giving the church this outstanding translation of His Holy Word. If you were not fortunate enough to be at the talk you can hear it via the church website or you can order a copy on CD from the recording team.

Michael Walters

The Refiner of silver

(especially for those suffering affliction)

A few ladies, who met together in Dublin (during the late 18th century) to read the Bible and make it the subject of conversation, were once reading the third chapter of the book of Malachi. One of the women believed that the ‘fullers’ soap’ and the ‘Refiner of silver’ were the same image, both intended to convey the same view of the sanctifying influence of the grace of Christ, while another noticed that there was something remarkable in the expression in the third verse:

‘He shall sit as a Refiner and Purifier of silver’

They agreed that it might possibly be so; and one of the ladies promised to call on a local silversmith and report to them what he said on the subject. She went, and without telling the purpose of her visit, asked about the process of making silver, which he described to her in detail.

‘But, Sir’ she said, ‘do you sit while the process of refining is going on?’

‘Of course’, replied the silversmith, ‘I must sit with my eyes fixed on the furnace, for if the time needed for refining is extended, the silver could be damaged.’

She saw at once the beauty and the comfort of the expression - ‘He shall sit as a Refiner and Purifier of silver’.

Christ sees it necessary to put His children into the furnace, but He is seated by the side of it. His eye is set on the work of purifying and His wisdom and love are both engaged in the best manner for them. Their trials do not come at random. The very hairs of their head are all numbered.

As the lady was leaving the shop, the silversmith called her back and said that he had forgotten to mention that he only knew when the process of purifying was complete by seeing his own reflection in the silver. Likewise, when Christ shall see His own image on His people, His work of purifying will be accomplished.

Preachers in Ebenezer

December

4th David Finnie
11th David Finnie a.m. Carol Service 3.30pm
18th David Finnie a.m. Richard Owens p.m.
25th David Finnie a.m.

January

1st Peter Gordon-Roberts a.m. John Gough p.m.
8th David Finnie
15th David Finnie
22nd David Finnie a.m. John Owen
29th David Finnie

February

5th David Finnie a.m. Mike Chalmers p.m.

Diary Dates

8th December Christian Union Carol Service, Bangor Cathedral, 7.30pm

11th December Ebenezer's Carol Service 3.30 pm

25th December Christmas Day Service 10.30 am

21st January EMW Day for Elders and Deacons at Bryn-y Groes

Food for Thought – How the world sees us.

The following quotation is from the *New Musical Express Student Guide* (2000) warning new students about Christians.

“DO NOT SUCCUMB! Remember that it is better to be the most horrible, friendless, despised atheist on the planet than it is to be the world's most popular Christian.”

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REGULAR MEETINGS

SUNDAY	10.10am 10.30am 5.40pm 6.00pm	Prayer Meeting in Library. Morning Service. Junior Church (ages 4-10) during sermon. Prayer Meeting in Library. Evening Service The Lord's Supper 1 st Sun. evening & 3 rd Sun. morning.
TUESDAY	7.30pm	Prayer Meeting/ Bible Study Fellowship Groups*
WEDNESDAY	6. pm	Bible Club for ages 4-11
THURSDAY	9.30am 10am	Ladies International Bible Study Ladies Bible Study*
FRIDAY	7.30pm	G.O.A.L Youth Club for ages 11-18.
SATURDAY	8.30am 11am/2pm	Men's Breakfast (monthly) Open Air opposite Boots (monthly)

* Meetings not held in the church – please ask for details.

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