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The events of Easter record the greatest stoop the world has ever seen, but the 'stoop' started with a birth, when God became man. If we thought being born in a stable was humiliating enough, consider the words of the hymn.

*I cannot tell why He, whom
angels' worship,
Should set His love upon the
sons of men...*

Since the fall, God desired to be reunited with mankind and so, He sent His perfect Son into our world as a human. But it's at Easter that we see Jesus' humiliation at its most poignant. As He stoops towards the cross, He calls us to follow and even to taking up our own cross. He calls Zaccheus down from a tree and Zaccheus gives his wealth to the poor. He calls the Rich Young Ruler to do the same, but this man walks away, sad. Men full of anger stood over a woman they'd caught in the act of adultery,

Contact

Newsletter from the WRU Churches

EASTER MESSAGE

Jesus causes the baying mob to look within and see their own sin, to see they were no better than her.

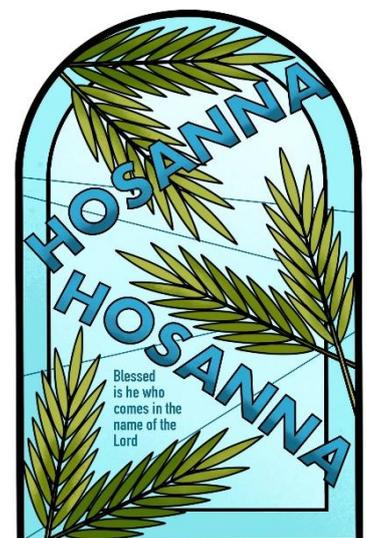
Alternatively, we see Jesus calling others to himself by raising them from the ashes, so as to speak. He called Bartimaeus up from his blindness and begging. Those cheated by Zacchaeus were restored, as were the poor. Lazarus raised up from the tomb. The widow with the smallest offering in the temple court is honoured, while the rich are shamed and the condemned and dying thief on the cross next to Jesus is promised a place in heaven.

On Palm Sunday we watch Jesus' ride into Jerusalem on a donkey. People remove their coats to lay them on the donkey and the road for the donkey to walk over. Their coats set them apart, like a status symbol. Elijah's cloak (mantel) set him apart as a prophet, Joseph's colourful coat spoke of him being the favourite and heir apparent. The material, the cut, style and quality even today grade our position in society. Yet here they are, all cast on the ground, while the One they honour goes by, riding a donkey.

The term the 'Glass Ceiling' describes the injustice women face in our society from being promoted in the workplace. Jesus at Easter, smashes the 'Glass Ceiling' from above and calls the proud and arrogant down from their 'Ivory Towers' and place of privilege, to Himself. We see Him stoop to wash His disciples' feet, calls them to be like children and the least in the kingdom of heaven. It is only by coming to Jesus and accepting His grace, love and forgiveness, that the powerful find humility and the poor are lifted from the dust.

Reflect on the following passages **Luke 1:46-55; Isaiah 42:1-9; Philippians 2:5-11.**

*Andy Wilcock
(Hampden View Church)*



Foot of the Cross

I'm writing this at the beginning of Lent having sat in our church building all morning waiting for a roofer! Not the most spiritual of activities, especially when my patience was being tested by lateness! However, thanks to the way the light was coming through the door, it became a spiritual moment, as the Lord prompted me to think about how we present ourselves to Him.

We have glass panels by our front door with crosses imprinted. At the foot of the cross were lots of little handprints, evidence of little children who have enjoyed biscuits in the church over the past few days. My temptation was to clean these off to make the church presentable for Sunday... and in that I nearly missed the Lord's nudge.

"Do you come to the foot of the cross with dirty hands?" was the question He asked, "or do you try to clean yourself up first?" I believe our loving God is asking if we think we must have it all together before we come to Him. Whether we are able to show any weakness, vulnerability, or messiness in His presence? If we have to present ourselves to Him in our metaphorical Sunday best?

There's a danger that as Christians we feel we have to present ourselves as acceptable to the One who makes us acceptable. Strong to the One who makes us strong. Righteous to the one whose righteousness we are clothed in. But it isn't the case: that is the beautiful nature of our God. We are most welcome when we come with messy hands.

"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."

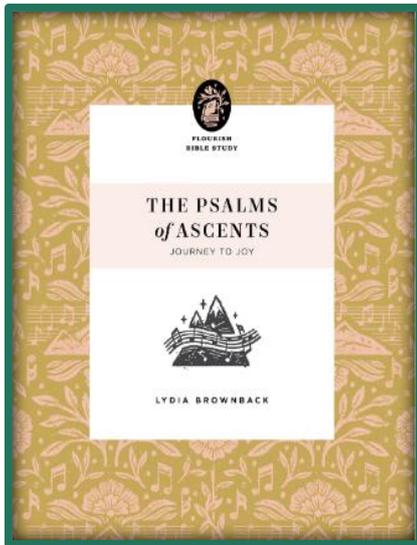


2 Corinthians 12 says "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."

I believe two things happen when we try to clean ourselves up before coming to God; firstly, we'll fail and end up working and striving to be clean enough, good enough, presentable enough. The Lord, through Jesus' work on the cross, is the only way we can become truly clean and truly strong. Secondly, we diminish the nature of God and suggest that His grace is not sufficient. How dare we! God's grace has always been, and will always be, more than enough to cover the messiest of hands that come to Him.

So friends, I encourage you to acknowledge your dirty hands, the sin you're struggling with, the weakness from battling temptation, the wounds from living in an imperfect world, your human limitedness, and bring them to the cross of Jesus where you will always be met with grace, enough grace to cover it all and make the dirtiest of hands clean. And in that you will allow the power and strength of God to be made complete in you, always to the glory of God.

*Lisa Macbeth
(Heath End Church)*



A BIBLE STUDY FOR LADIES

The author is Lydia Brownback and is produced by "Crossway".

The study is divided into ten sessions, and these psalms are set in the context of the whole of Scripture and salvation history.

The study book itself is very attractive and allows space for your own thoughts and ideas and there is lots of background information, maps and diagrams. I especially

appreciated the links between the original context and in the wider context of the coming of Christ.

Also, the study is ideal for a mixed group of ladies at different stages in their walk with the Lord.

There is also a free leaders guide through a QR code, which would be of help to nervous group leaders.

Daphne Hokinson (Griffydram Church)

Ladies, here is a review of a Bible Study written for ladies.

The subject is "*The Psalms of Ascents: Journey to Joy*".

ARTICLES FOR "Contact"

We welcome inspirational stories, devotional and encouraging articles, news and events from the churches all enabling us to be inspired and to keep in touch with each other.

Some rules to remember:

- Articles must arrive on or just before the deadline
- If possible, a picture or a photograph should accompany the article
- Make sure that pictures/articles you send have no copyrights, or you have permission to use them
- Word count per article should not exceed 750. Shorter articles are preferred.

Deadlines:

- 1st Dec – for **Jan-Feb** issue (because of Christmas break)
- 15th Feb – for **Mar-Apr** issue
- 15th Apr – for **May-Jun** issue
- 15th Jun – for **Jul-Aug** issue
- 15th Aug – for **Sep-Oct** issue
- 15th Oct – for **Nov-Dec** issue

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY



"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light" (1 Peter 2:9)

In the last edition of Contact, we began to look at this verse from 1 Peter and began to see just how special we are as Christians as we looked at a Christians Dynasty (a Chosen People). Now we go on to see another aspect of this verse.

2. THE CHRISTIANS DIGNITY (A Royal Priesthood)

There was a distinct difference in the O.T. between a King and a Priest - both roles were clearly defined and kept separate. However, in this verse, Peter unites them together - he speaks of Christians as being a Royal Priesthood. Spiritually speaking; we have the dual dignity of being both kings and priests. But what does that mean in terms of practical, everyday living? I suggest it means two things.

a. As a King, we can exhibit God's power

There are many words that could be used to describe a Christian, however "King" must be one of the most

difficult to accept and demonstrate. Is this a bit of enthusiastic exaggeration - a case of religious license? Not a bit of it - we belong to God's kingdom of glory and grace and by faith, we possess all that Christ our King has. The Christian reigns by overcoming the world, crucifying the flesh and successfully resisting the devil. It is the power of God that enables us to rise above these things. As a king, we can exhibit God's power.

b. As a Priest, we can enter God's presence.

In Old Testament law, only the priest could enter God's presence. It was barred by a large curtain - more like a wall - but that curtain was split in two at the moment Jesus died. Now, the "Holy of Holies" can be entered by all Christians. Hebrews (4:16): "Let us approach the throne of Grace with confidence". So, any Christian can come into God's presence at any time. We talk of the "Priesthood of all believers" - every Christian is a priest. You and I can live in God's presence daily.

In 1972 the Access card was launched in Britain. The

slogan used to launch it was: "Access takes the waiting out of wanting". The message was clear and exciting - whatever you wanted, you could get by producing this little card.

However, the Christian has something even better than an access card. It enables even the weakest Christian to come into the presence of God. To bring all his needs, fears, anxieties, sorrows and all his circumstances to the throne of Grace, confident that there are sufficient resources there to meet all his needs. So, as a priest, we can enter God's presence.

The Christian has the dual dignity of being both a king and a priest. We are a Royal Priesthood.

The Christians Dynasty ...The Christians Dignity... Next time we will see a Christians Duty.

Rev Colin Braithwaite



UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP



Hi! I'm Benny Seeds and I work for UCCF as a Staff worker for Leeds and Huddersfield. I support University Christian Unions. My role seeks to encourage them in their personal walk with Christ and to delight in Him more deeply, enabling them to declare Him more boldly and display Him more fully. Giving students the opportunity to hear the life-changing Gospel.

Universities in both Leeds and Huddersfield attract many international students, who seek to further their knowledge and education to then either take them back to their homes or to stay in the country. Leeds Beckett University is ranked as one of the top five universities for international students in the UK. Huddersfield University note approximately 22% of their student population are international students, coming from over a hundred countries. What an amazing mission field for the Good News of Jesus Christ to be shared in!

Leeds Christian Unions partner with another Christian Charity called Transformation, who

specifically enable local Christians, churches and student groups to reach out to international students with the good news of Jesus in culturally relevant ways. It is great to collaborate with them and unite together around the Gospel that is to be shared across all nations.

These are exciting times! We are seeing international students become Christians over their time at university. Hallelujah! But... there's more to praise God for. As international students hear the gospel and are changed by it, half of them go back to their countries of origin. Please do pray for all of them as they stand firm in their faith and share the love and hope that is only found in Jesus!

I have seen God move in the community of the Christian Union and it is a joy! One of the committee members of the Huddersfield Christian Union sadly couldn't go home to Dubai over the Christmas holidays. But another member of the committee invited him to come and join him and his family in York. The friendships are strong - and it didn't matter about the

potential clash of cultures in this scenario. The closeness of the CU team is tight and that can only strengthen the confidence in sharing Jesus to others.

As the UCCF staff team, we are seeking to grow in confidence to encourage students in understanding other faiths. To help with this, the North East staff team visited both a Sikh temple and an Islamic Mosque for an educational tour. It was challenging to step into their own religions and ways of life for a brief moment, as it caused us to wonder what students may feel when entering a Christian space, especially those students who come from different cultures and religious beliefs.

Please pray for the Events weeks that Christian Unions are hosting to create space for the Gospel to be shared across their diverse campuses and pray for boldness across the CU members to be proactive in their evangelism.

(Benny is married to Mary and they had a baby boy 'Barney' in Nov 25)





SYRESHAM: SMALL CHAPEL, BIG PRAYERS, MASSIVE MIRACLES...

**Olena's* Story: from despair to
delight (By Karen Irvani, January 2026)**

(*Name changed for reasons of confidentiality)

When God first moved me to work informally (and later, formally) with autistic young people like my dear son some 13 years ago, I could hardly have imagined just how diverse that work would become.

Or, how much my Christian faith and sustained corporate prayer would form part of that work and open up the joy of Jesus to some of the young people I support. But God did...

****Trigger warning: suicidal ideation****

Last week I met with a young autistic lady Olena, aged sixteen, whom I've known for approximately six years. I see her quite regularly for art and cat therapy wellbeing sessions and together with my work co-director, recently secured an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) – a legal framework in which to support her Special Educational Needs.

For the past few months, Olena has been particularly struggling at school aligned to mock examinations and her mental health suddenly plummeted. Not being a professional counsellor, I duly recommended one to her mother. After a few sessions she started to feel a bit better until the situation at school overwhelmed her, and her

mother contacted me in great distress.

Crisis... Unfortunately, Olena had taken a whole batch of tablets in one go and was rushed to the A & E Department of her local hospital, where she stayed for 24 hours. On a no-name basis, I immediately contacted my church leadership team to pray for this precious young lady. I was very emotional and needed the reassurance that only prayer in trusted fellowship can give.

The following day, she asked her mother if she could "see Karen to talk and do art". I booked a session for a little later that week and agreed with her mother that I would be led by Olena as to what she wanted to talk about.

Before the session, I prayed and asked God to support me and be in the session with us. He didn't disappoint.

Olena said she had something bad to tell me but also something good. "What shall I tell you first, the good or the bad?" I advised that perhaps telling me the bad first, would allow her to really enjoy telling me the good.

So she did. "Karen, I took lots of tablets and thought I'd just go to sleep and not wake up..." Only God sustained me and kept me stable upon hearing those words.

We talked things through and she was due to see her counsellor in a few days.

Joy: "Can I tell you the good now?", she asked. "Karen, you're a Christian, aren't you?" I am.

"I think God saved me and I want to have a relationship with Him. I want to know Jesus! Can we talk about it?" We did.

I'll quote one of my leadership team here, who said, when I relayed this wonderful happening, "How quickly God takes us from despair to delight. It is just awesome."

Awesome indeed. Interestingly, it has been on my heart in recent months to create a study group for autistic young people wanting to know more about God. I asked Olena if she would be interested in learning more about God and the Bible. "Oh yes please, can it be here?" By 'here', she meant in the basement of my home – my Autism Consultancy Suite – as it is a familiar place, with therapy cats. My church leadership team – more biblically learned than I, will be involved too.

As ever, I give the very last words to Father...

Philippians 4:6-7 "Do not be anxious about anything... and the peace of God... will guard your hearts."

SYRESHAM: SMALL CHAPEL, BIG PRAYERS, MASSIVE MIRACLES...

By Paula Green



I was asked to write a piece for Contact by Beryl from our Chapel in Syresham. I have been going there since I started Sunday School at the age of 3! Over 50 years where Beryl was my Sunday School teacher.

I want to talk about my recent journey, sadly not one with a holiday destination at the end.

I was diagnosed with stage 2/3 Breast Cancer which had spread to the lymph nodes in early 2023. A complete shock as I had no symptoms and was feeling fine. Fortunately for me, I attended a routine mammogram van, I was screened seven months earlier than I should have been! (was this divine intervention?)

I ended up having six big chemotherapy sessions, where I lost my hair and felt pretty rotten for days only to feel a bit more human before the next treatment day arrived. This was followed by three lots of surgery to remove the cancer, as they removed some, then more and then all. Fifteen sessions of radiotherapy next and then finished off with fourteen rounds of adjuvant chemotherapy, apparently the bib and braces! From start to finish it was almost two years.

I know that Cancer can affect people in completely different ways and we all handle things in our own way. However, for me whilst this was a long journey I can honestly say that I felt totally blessed and at peace.

Chemotherapy is not a nice experience but every time I was in the suite, there was always someone there who was worse than me, I was still able to count my blessings and I met some lovely people.

To add to this I had numerous MRI scans, CT scans and Echocardiograms. In total just over a hundred and twenty appointments in twenty two months, we certainly knew the way to Northampton General!

During the scans I would sing hymns and pray and as a result all was calm and went well.

Whilst on this journey I knew that I was not alone, I had numerous friends and family supporting me and my husband David. There were a few people who started the journey with me and some who joined along the way and a handful who were there for the duration along with Jesus, my friend and Saviour, with whom I felt a real closeness to.

Without Him by my side things would have been very different I think. It made me wonder how other people who do not have Him with them ever cope. I felt a real peace throughout the months, one that I hadn't experienced before and a real closeness to the Lord. I was empowered by the spirit to speak out about Him, I seemed to not care what I said to others whereas before I'd probably shied away in some situations, now I just wasn't bothered.

I was reminded numerous times of the poem, Footprints in the sand.

I can say for sure that this is what happened to me and I knew I was being carried throughout this time, whereas the person in the poem asks "why was there only one set of footprints, during the bad days"

On reflection whilst I wouldn't wish it on anyone else, although it certainly wasn't in my experience as awful as it could have been, but that was because I had constant love and support from my friend Jesus. It also tells us in the bible that He will never send us more tribulations than we can cope with!

I am reminded of a chorus we used to sing at Sunday School;

*"When the road is rough and steep,
Fix your eyes upon Jesus
He alone has power to keep
Fix your eyes upon him.
Jesus is a gracious friend,
One on whom you can depend
He is faithful to the end
Fix your eyes upon him."*

In September I had my annual mammogram, and the results were all clear, praise God. I can now focus my time and energy on serving Him again in whatever way He chooses.

Family Fun



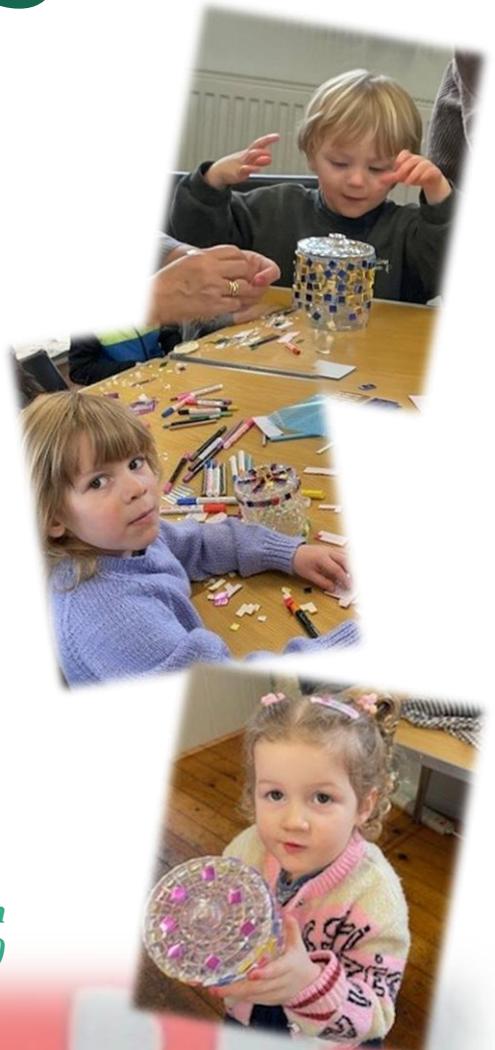
I just wanted to share an update and some photos from our last family breakfast church. We meet twice a month for breakfast, bible story and crafts / games, loosely related to the story. (Incidentally for other people in small churches I would recommend the books series all-in one Sunday school, for children aged 4 to 12, by Lois Keffer. Her suggestions on

how to make the story seem real are very helpful and engaging). Last week we looked at the story of Naaman's servant girl; with orders to be obeyed given in Farsi to show how hard she must faith and did the right thing.

With thanks to the B&M post Christmas sale (other discount stores are available) we created our own Middle Eastern artefacts; children, parents and grandchildren had a great time and were amazingly inventive. Among other things we also had a treasure hunt for Naaman's spots (sick but fun).

Here are a few photos.

*By Catherine Corn
(Syresham Church)*



WHAT'S ON YOUR FRIDGE RIGHT NOW?



Just out of interest... not being nosy, but what do you have on the outer walls of your fridge/freezer. Do you have a calendar to remind you of the date, marked of course with upcoming appointments for the doctor, dentist, school open evening appointments etc etc, or a shopping list pad to scribble down reminders of what you need from the supermarket? Maybe you display art work from your child or grandchild? Perhaps, like me, you have a variety of magnets having pride of place, collected over a great number of years, inherited from a dear relative (mum) or brought back as a holiday present from a friend or relative?

Every single magnet on my fridge freezer holds a memory of special times in one way or another.

I remember our own children enjoying playing with some of these funny animal ones when they visited my mum, giggling as they mixed the animals up. When we inherited them, it became our grandchildren's turn to mix them up and rearrange them when they visited us.

There are the ones we've been given as "a present from our holiday," gift. The Keplies, which prompted us to visit and look

upon their beauty for ourselves, Lapland's northern lights and the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco, both iconic places which we've yet to visit.

The variety of fridge magnets available to buy is staggering and mostly they're an inexpensive gift that is easily carried home without fear of getting broken or lost. All have been gratefully received whatever the reason, or connection, all are proudly added to the collection.

One of our most recent ones however is quite different. Its simplicity and design is truly beautiful and touching. We were given it by two of our grandchildren after their summer holiday where one of the places they visited was Rome. A simple, inexpensive, two inch wooden disc with a logo on it. But what the logo depicts is incredible.

It shows four stylized figures, representing humanity, coming from the four corners of the earth. They embrace each other to indicate the solidarity and fraternity which should unite all peoples.

The figure at the front is holding onto the cross. It is not only the

sign of faith, but also of hope, which can never be abandoned, because we are always in need of hope, especially in our moments of greatest need. There are the rough waves under the figures, symbolising the fact that life's pilgrimage does not always go smoothly in calm waters. The lower part of the cross has been elongated and turned into the shape of an anchor of hope going down into the waves. The pilgrim's journey is not an individual undertaking, but rather as something communal, The cross in the logo bends down towards humanity, not leaving human beings alone, but stretching out to them to offer the certainty of its presence and the security of hope. An inexpensive token representing the greatest, most expensive gift from God to us.

Just as the magnets cling determinedly to metal and to each other, let us all hold onto Jesus who gave His life for humanity by offering us salvation

Hebrews 10 v 23-24 reminds us: *Let us hold unwaveringly to the hope we profess, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.*

Marie Nichols

PICTURE PARABLE

The Tale of the TWO BUILDERS



JESUS OFTEN TOLD STORIES WITH HIDDEN MEANINGS

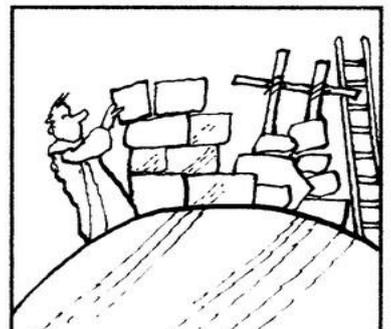


ONE WAS ABOUT TWO MEN WHO BUILT THEIR OWN HOUSES



THE FIRST BUILDER SEARCHED HIGH AND LOW FOR A GOOD SOLID ROCK ON WHICH TO BUILD HIS HIS HOME.

AT LONG, LONG LAST HE FOUND THE IDEAL SPOT.



SO HE BEGAN TO BUILD.

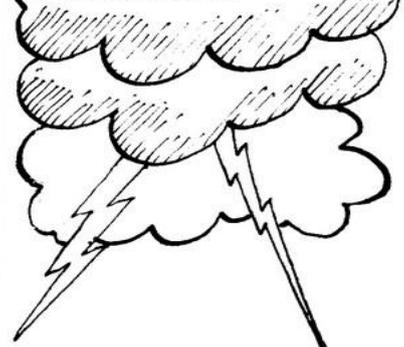


THE OTHER BUILDER DIDN'T CARE WHERE HE BUILT HIS HOUSE

HE THOUGHT SOME NICE FLAT SAND WOULD BE AN EASY PLACE TO BUILD.



BUT ONE DAY THE STORM CAME...



...AND THE WIND BLEW...AND THE RAIN FELL...



...AND THE HOUSE ON THE SAND COLLAPSED!

BUT THE HOUSE ON THE ROCK STOOD FIRM.



JESUS EXPLAINED - IT'S IMPORTANT OUR LIVES HAVE A FIRM FOUNDATION!