

CENTRAL

news

SPRING 2021



www.centralba.org.uk

Welcome to the latest edition of CENTRAL NEWS. I have asked a number of folk from within the Association to write a little *something* for us. The working title of 'I have a dream' was probably a little upbeat given the present context we find ourselves in ... but I made it clear that we would be happy with whatever was offered us, whether a reflection on this theme, something encouraging from the recent past, or simply a prayer need. I hope you enjoy what each has to say.

Colin Pye



CAROL MURRAY: I HAVE A DREAM

"I have a dream....." Those four words have always sent a tingle down my spine and when Colin asked me to write a piece for the top of this issue, I was back in my mind in 1963, August 28th, on the civil rights march on Washington hearing Martin Luther King Jr. bringing us his dream speech. A speech that continues to inspire and convict me, especially at the present time. The 1960's were heady days in all sorts of ways-boundaries were being pushed, freedoms sought and justice fought over. AND Luther King's "I have a dream.....", said eight times within the speech; passionately, heartrendingly and hopefully. There is no room here to quote the speech but it was based on the God given desire for freedom and equality for all of whatever state and status, of integration and unification for all humanity, with judgement being left in God's hands without the rule of mob or power, to go up the mountain and see and gain the promised land. Read it. Listen to it. It's all there on the net. Inspiring! AND Luther King said, "Now is the time". 1963.





Thus I was prompted to read it again at the beginning of 2021 in the light of events of our times. And I was convicted, and not a little saddened, for 2021 is still the time to reiterate the same desires as Luther King brought us. To challenge us to imbibe, live, and practise the freedom and equality, the integration and unification, the justice and love for which he died as had His Saviour before him. On a local and global scale. We, too, are called to dream, and more act, in this harsh landscape, moving forward, not retreating, up the mountain and beyond. As churches and Association, we walk together in ministry and mission, watching over each other with God, into the New Year, in ways known, but mostly perhaps, still to be made known.

This will take us into our communities where we work and witness on a daily basis bringing the stirring light and hope that Luther King did, inspiring, supporting and encouraging on our mountainous terrains. “We can never be satisfied” said Luther King, but we can be spurred on by each other as the following stories show, as well as know that we are held in the presence of the One who is up the mountain and in the valley.

“I have a dream.....”

*attentive to rhythms
of grace*



ASSEMBLY

CENTRAL BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

2021

**KEYNOTE SPEAKER
GEOFF COLMER**

26th of June

put the date in your diary

+ AGM

www.centralba.org.uk



**ROSS DILNOT
SHENLEY
CHRISTIAN
FELLOWSHIP**

Shenley Christian Fellowship is dreaming of a future when the church can regather, and our Community Ministries can restart. We are believing God to build His church in this new season both spiritually, numerically and physically with the second part of our building project. Our new vision statement is, “Leading people to Jesus through word and action and discipling them to be fully devoted followers.” This is our heart – not just being a church in the community but leading those we encounter to know Jesus and understand their identity in Him and the destiny He has for them. Please pray for God’s provision for us, for all He has in store. Ross Dilnot



JANE ROBSON: TILEHOUSE STREET, HITCHIN

“I have a dream, a song to sing ...” begins the Abba song, in contrast to the Psalmist’s, “How could we sing the Lord’s song in a foreign land?” but both of these statements express where we are currently. A significant ministry in the familiar lands of the past, a large well-maintained suite of buildings with diminishing resources of people and finances but with a song still to sing. So, should we continue to sing it in our buildings? Should we sing it in closer partnership with others, of Baptist or of other denominations? Should we find a new land in which to sing? But sing, we will. Where and how? Now, there’s the challenge!

Jane Robson





EQUIP

**EQUIPPING 18-30 YEAR OLDS TO
LEAD WITH CONFIDENCE AND
HUMILITY IN GOD'S CHURCH**

EQUIP is a new 2-year Leadership Course for those aged 18-30 in our churches and represents an exciting partnership between the CBA, Southern Counties Baptist Association and Regent's Park College!

Equip is for all adults under 30 who have a heart for leadership within the life of the church, whether that be in community projects, services, worship, small groups, families' ministry or any other element of mission and ministry.

We would love the opportunity to partner with you as a church, to invest in these leaders and to see them serve God to their full potential.

The course runs from September 2021 to September 2023 and is centred around three weekend residentials at Regent's Park College and then three half days per year in Local Leadership Clusters. The first residential is from 17th-19th September this year.

The residentials will be worship-centred, interactive, thought-provoking and encouraging. We pray that they will become a safe place for leaders to deepen their identity in Christ, develop

new leadership skills and build strong relationships with other leaders who will energise them!

The Local Leadership Clusters will be a space for leaders to come together with their group leader and other participants to unpack the weekend sessions and go deeper in their leadership journey, sharing in the joys and challenges of ministry together. Dates and times to meet can be set by each group leader based on the needs and commitments of their group members.

THE 3 KEY STRANDS:



IDENTITY

Growing in our awareness of who Jesus is and what it means for our leadership to be Christ-centred.



SKILLS

Exploring different leadership styles and working through what reflective leadership looks like in different situations.



COMMUNITY

Growing in relationship with each other, building friendships and developing supportive networks that will sustain us all in ministry.

Throughout the different elements of the course, leaders will be encouraged to reflect on the ministry of Jesus, to consider the distinctive nature of Christian leadership today and to develop a range of leadership skills that can be utilised in their church and that will support them in building healthy teams. We will also be exploring what it means to serve as part of the wider Baptist family in a way that is Spirit-led and creative and seeks to nurture the gifts in those around us.

Cost: The Equip Course costs £800, with £400 payable at the start of each year. It may be appropriate in many settings for the participant and their church to share the cost. The CBA and SCBA, recognising the importance of investing in leaders under 30, have also set aside funds to support participants. Please go to the CBA



**Regent's
Park College**

OXFORD

Regent's Park College
University of Oxford
Pusey St,
Oxford
OX1 2LB

community.learning@regents.ox.ac.uk
equip.course@hotmail.com



web site to download an application form for a training grant towards this, see

[http://centralba.org.uk/grants/Get Involved](http://centralba.org.uk/grants/Get%20Involved)

For more information, please contact Garry Steel & Andrew Ginn at equip.course@hotmail.com. To book onto the course, please contact Regent's Park College at community.learning@regents.ox.ac.uk and a booking form will be sent out to you.

We look forward to welcoming leaders from your church in September!



**Garry
Steel**



**Andrew
Ginn**

CHRISTMAS at LONDON COLNEY BAPTIST

ONE OF OUR HOME MISSION SUPPORTED CHURCHES

We all knew Christmas would be different this year. What hasn't changed is the Churches Together Food Bank we host at LCBC. This has been sustained throughout the year. We also ran the Christmas Parcels Project for the Sixth Year running.

Our desire is to bless individuals and families who struggle during the festive season by offering them a parcel filled with Christmas treats and goodies. It's a way of the local churches saying to those in need that we care.

It has also been incredible the way the local community comes together to support the project. This year the immense kindness and generosity of people donating items to the Food Bank has often been overwhelming.

We thought we had done well in 2019 when we collected 880 items and created 44 parcels to give out to local individuals and families. This year we collected 1400 items and created 60 parcels! These were given out to families in our local schools, known to the local Family Centre and those known to our churches. The picture above captures something of the mountain of donations to the Christmas Parcels Project. It took 4 hours to count it all but it was worth it simply to see the sense of joy and gratitude on people's faces when they were given the parcels.

ADRIAN WOOD



WYCOMBE

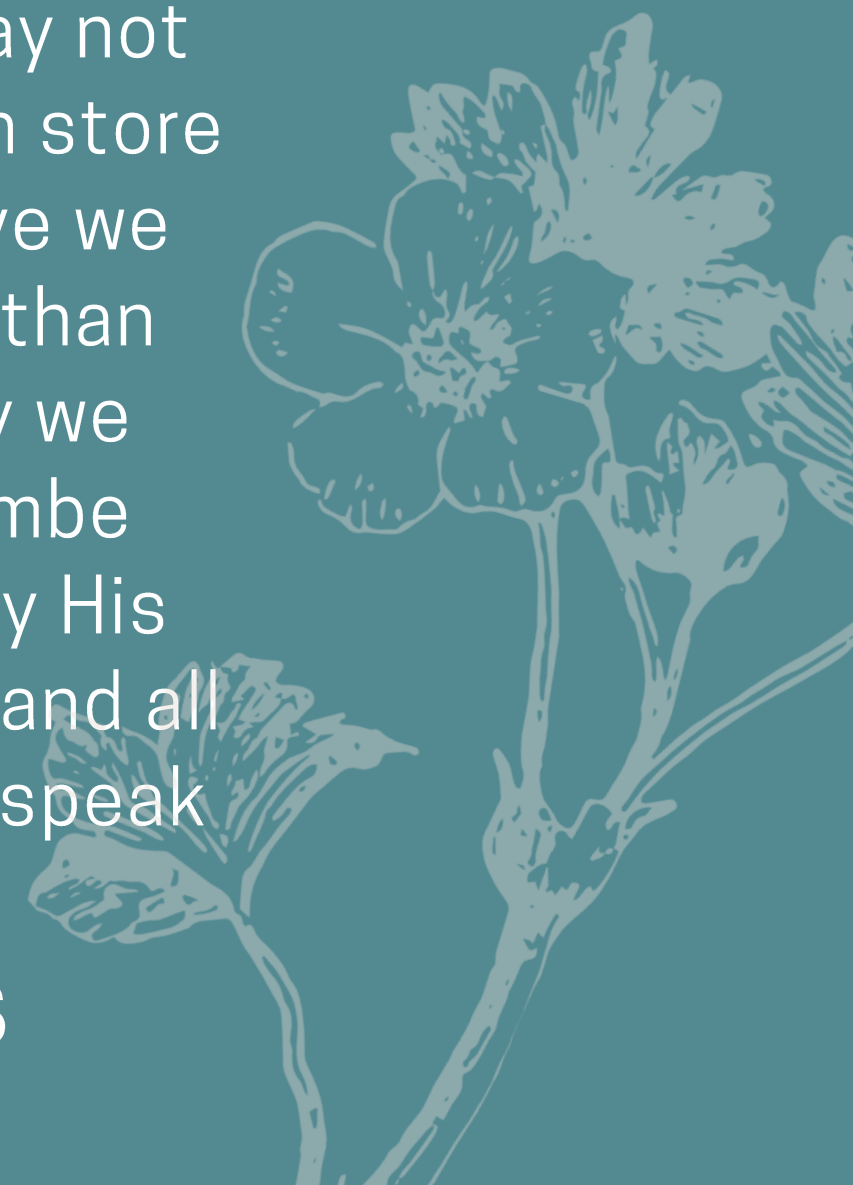


MARSH

As Church Secretary I felt the need to communicate with those known to us so I compiled a booklet to mark the Christian festivals throughout 2020, i.e. Easter, Pentecost and Christmas. I also marked what would have been our 163rd Church Anniversary in July and our Harvest Thanksgiving in October in the same way. These booklets consisted of a prayer, bible reading, Christian message, how people had coped with the Covid 19 situation (the title for which was 19 reasons to be thankful). I also included some Bible activities for children and adults alike.

Thinking about the future and the words “I have a dream”, surely for all of us it must be that not only we will be able to open our doors regularly again, maybe having to learn to do things differently to that of previous years which may not be easy. Whatever our Lord has in store for us for the coming days, I believe we need to let Him take control more than ever before. It may not be the way we think or want but surely, for Wycombe Marsh especially, my dream is “May His will be done” amongst His people and all those we have the opportunity to speak too about our Lord and Saviour.

CHRISTINE STEVENS



ANTHONY SMITH

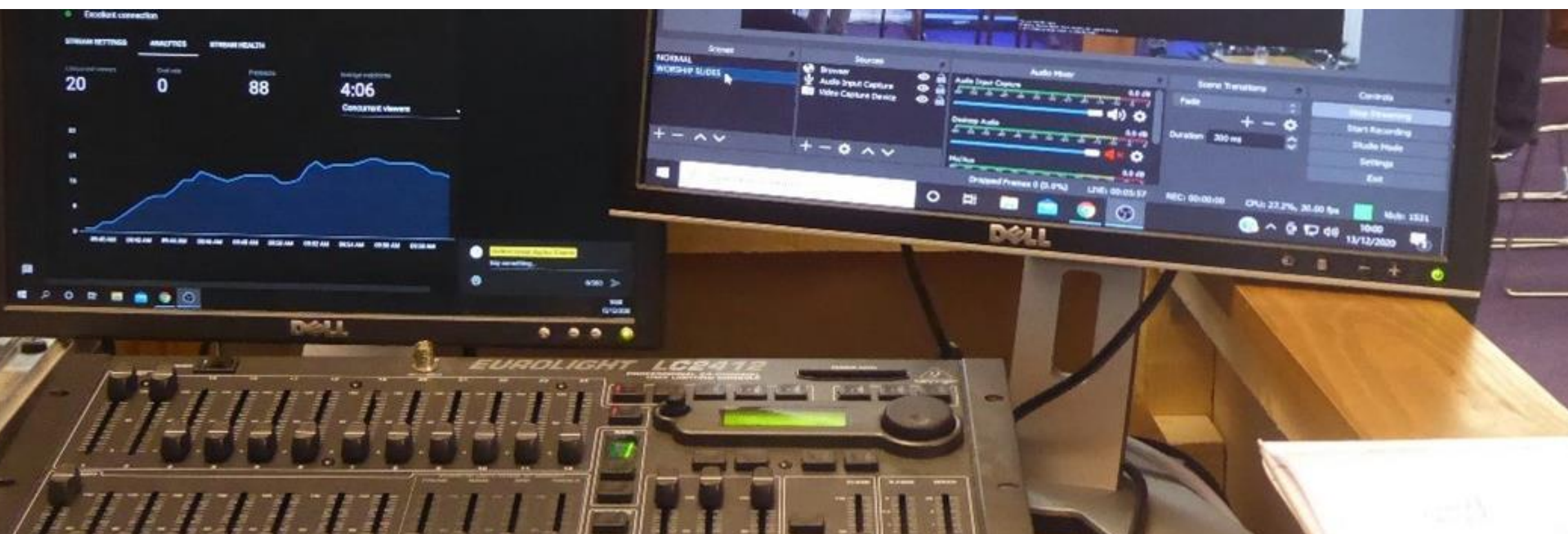
Threat or Opportunity? We might be in the middle of “nightmare times” but we have a “dream” for the older ones or a “vision” for the younger ones! (Joel 2:28). This year brought challenges but the congregation rose to those bringing new skills to the front.

We were online in a week and the congregation has grown beyond our expectations. We will be staying online.

People gave sacrificially to the “minister’s fund” enabling us to support those struggling financially and pastorally both within the fellowship and the wider community.

We have found new ways to worship even though we cannot sing.

“In Nightmare times”... Maybe
“We have a Dream”... Absolutely
“We have a Vision”.... Absolutely



**H O L M E R
G R E E N**

PETER STRONG: CAREY, KETTERING

A Minister prayed in late 2019 for a vision for 2020 to inspire the church into a new decade. He was disappointed to be just given Psalm 1 - to grow spiritual roots and bear fruit in barren times! Like that Minister, at Carey we have been disappointed by a limited mission in 2020, but have heard the call to grow close to the Lord and each other.

We have not failed, in almost a year now, to meet together each Sunday and midweek on Zoom. We begin with chit chat and end with coffee - and no masks! We have welcomed friends from all over the country, France, Spain and India! Our church secretary even gave the notices from Cromer when he was away! We have Zoomed into local schools and provided weekly letters and lectionary based thoughts for all - especially those who cannot use a computer - though some phone in to participate.

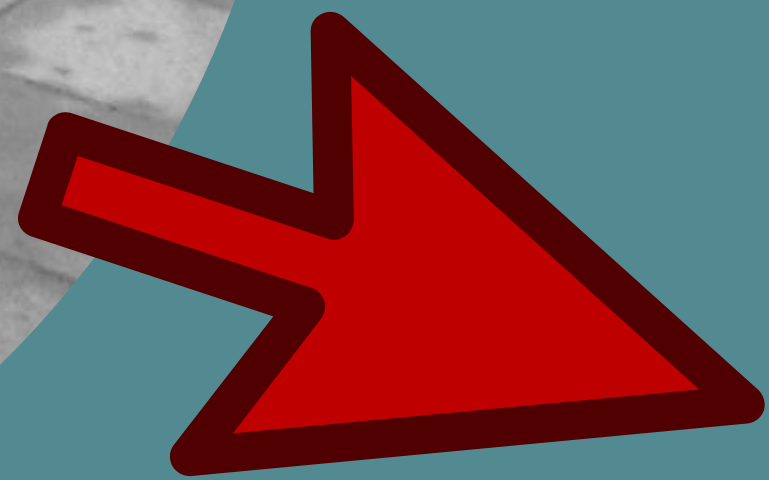
God had been good to us. We have supported local food banks and many other charities.

We seek to move forward, vowing to consider carefully what we do & don't do when we go back! **Peter Strong**



GRAHAM CLARKE: MARSHALSWICK

After much fundraising and a loan from the CBA, a new welcoming, fully accessible entrance has been completed at Marshalswick, along with an accessible toilet and kitchenette enabling the worship area to be used as a flexible space for outreach and community activities while the rest of the building remains secure for the Preschool and Nursery.



For 50 years the Church has presented a forbidding face! It's welcome and vibrancy has been hidden behind heavy doors (often closed against the prevailing wind) and hindered by a stepped entrance requiring the less mobile to enter by the back door. But no more! The new open look has attracted a lot of interest in the community and has enabled Special Displays of encouragement to be mounted, heralding a new era of welcoming and outward looking outreach and community activity.



RUTH MONTACUTE & PAT GINGER

"We have a dream of having a minister and look forward to the person of God's choosing to arrive, hopefully sooner rather than later!

In the meantime the church is in good heart. For a bunch of mainly "oldies" we've become pretty proficient on Zoom and enjoy our weekly services, with different church members and friends leading them. We've had three services in the church building.

Our Weekly News Sheet which includes a meditation as well as prayers and news is welcomed by all. Everyone is cared for and supported. As soon as we are able, we look forward to welcoming people into our buildings and serving our local community once again."



BERKHAMSTED

Birth Of A Dancing Star Online Advent Retreat (for Women)

A retreat on Zoom! How would that work? Well, it did, ably guided by Rev Jane Day, women from across CBA gathered to retreat together as Advent approached.

Individually we spent time reflecting using a variety of resources which enabled us to gaze upon God the creator of the universe contemplating the starry heavens.

Leading to imagining that we were sitting with Jesus enjoying his company, gazing on him, as he also gazed upon us. It was a time to share with Jesus all those many things that were pressing in on us, challenging us, annoying us, saddening us through the present situation.

The Bible story offered was Matthew 2:1-12, The wise men following the star to worship Jesus. We imagined ourselves in the story, using all our senses to immerse ourselves in the text.

An alternative view was posed by the poem *Wise Women Also Came* by Jan Richardson.

There was a richness in the resources offered which we could use as we chose. Time was given to reflect and share in a small group if we desired.

This was a most illuminating time as women shared from their different experiences, it was a privilege to receive their insights and wisdom.

[Vanessa Rye](#)



A wonderful retreat coming when it was so needed, encouraging time out to re-focus. The material we were gifted was balanced and well thought out. Bible readings with study thoughts, music, and poems. Wonderful to be with so many likeminded women.

[Ann Johnson](#)

The retreat felt like a gift, special time set aside listening to God. I found it helpful the way that music was used to gently lead from one session to another.

The small groups gave us an intimacy that was especially beneficial considering we were meeting on zoom, although plenty of time was also set aside for our own personal time with God.

It was an uplifting and encouraging morning, sensitively led, with excellent resources to guide us. [Megan Billington](#)



In the future, we hope to build on what 2020 has started, using talents in innovative ways. Our tech team continue to stretch their digital skills, as we explore how to use social media more effectively. Connecting with our young people continues to be a challenge. Freedom from the time restraints of services has enabled individuals to use their imaginations to teach our young people using a range of practical illustrations including cookery, experiments, and God's creation. But building strong relationships with them is a matter for much prayer. Our dream is that we will make loving, obedient disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ using the gifts and talents we have been given.



ALISTAIR JONES
BROUGHTON
BAPTIST



HOME

MISSION



www.centralba.org.uk



Thank you

Last year the churches of the association raised an
AMAZING £311,535

an incredible £22k more than 2019

STEVE WOOD: NEWPORT PAGNELL

After all that we've been through (and are still going through) in recent months, my prayer is simply that in the midst of the mess, we acknowledge the beauty of the disruption.

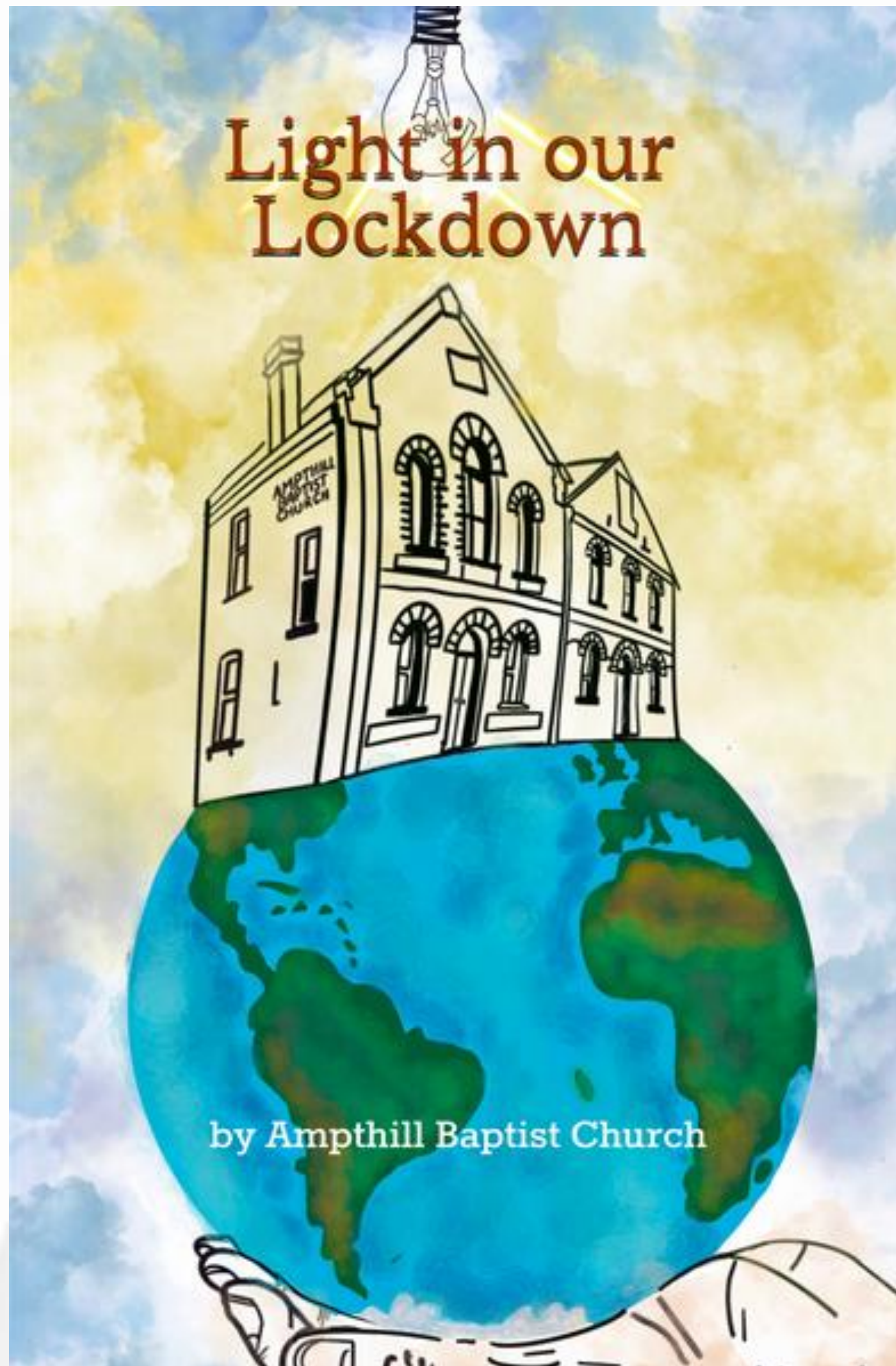
With so many new community relationships fostered as a result of our 'stepping out' during the pandemic, I pray that we can hold onto what feels like an awakening, or heightening of the senses, as to all the places that God is active and working in our community.

We worship a God of new beginnings and this feels like a gift placed into our hands. I pray that we're courageous enough to grab the opportunity and follow God wherever He takes us.

image: Steve with his wife, Natasha



AMPTHILL: A NEW BOOK BIRTHED IN LOCKDOWN



2020 lockdown, coronatime . When the church building was closed, the church was very much alive, scattered not gathered, and sustained and encouraged in so many varied ways. Gods word cannot be locked down. One creative means of encouragement and inspiration came through the "Thought for the Day". The daily bread of the Bible prompted us to share our reflections on his goodness and faithfulness, and our struggles and hopes, which drew us together as a church. God speaks, leads, feeds and keeps us. His word is a light for our path. May these gather thoughts also bring you hope, joy and encouragement.

Minister Andrew Goldsmith commented "it was a great team effort, a real joy to see the items come in to me each week and from many who felt they couldn't possibly write or had nothing to say ... but of course they could and did."

You can find the book here:

<https://www.amazon.co.uk/dp/B08QG4M6GD>



ANDREW GALE
CENTRAL
BAPTIST
LUTON

We don't know what the future holds but we know who holds the future! 2020 has taught us that imagining where we will be in few months maybe unwise, so instead we lament and dream

We lament what has been lost, those who will not be there when we get back, those who have gone glory, others have moved, and, saddest of all, those will have let their faith grow cold. We lament the pain expressed in the words, "Black Lives Matter."

We dream, of an increased love for each other, absence indeed making the heart grow fonder. That we have learnt the lessons of BLM. That we will appreciate the gathering of ourselves together.





RISK ADVICE

Our risk management team are experts in their field. If you have a question regarding risks at your church, all you need to do is give them a call.

You can contact our risk specialists to ask a question on 0345 600 7531.

Alternatively, visit the Baptist Insurance website where you'll find a whole range of helpful guides and templates.

Find out more

<https://www.baptist-insurance.co.uk/risk-management>



RUTH GOOKEY: CHRIST THE KING, KENTS HILL



At Christ the King, Kents Hill we want to build on the fresh sense of community that has developed over the last year. Like many churches, our community is now both online and offline and how we maintain and develop that community is an exciting challenge.

We are also praying about how our building can be used as a hub for our wider community in the coming months when we emerge out of lockdown.

So many have lost so much and we want to be a place where people know they will be welcomed and valued – whether that's for a week day cuppa, a school assembly or as part of a worship service.

Perhaps these sound like simple things but we would value the prayers of our CBA sisters and brothers as we seek to move forward into what God has for us to do in the coming year.

ANDREW GINN: BUNYAN, STEVENAGE

Our dreams of getting together again are, for Bunyan Baptist Church, especially sweet as we hope that by the time we can meet in person again, our building work will be complete! The six-month project to connect and modernise the two buildings on our site in Old Town Stevenage got started just before Christmas, with “progress” so far being a bit of demolition and a big hole! We’d really value prayer for those working on-site amid the CV-19 restrictions, and that the whole project runs to time and budget... but beyond that, that we as a church, along with our building, would play our part well, in seeing the Kingdom come!

Picture is of the big hole at church, and a recent walk on a chilly day!

