

# CENTRAL NEWS



GOOD NEWS STORIES from the CENTRAL BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

AUTUMN 2016



**Welcome to our Autumn Edition of Central News, which contains an inspiring selection of stories from around the Association. We begin with an article by our Senior Regional Minister, Geoff Colmer, in which he gives an insight into something of his own recent spiritual journey....**

*'I beg your pardon,' said the Mole, pulling himself together with an effort. 'You must think me very rude; but all this is so new to me. So—this—is—a—River!' 'The River,' corrected the Rat. 'And you really live by the river? What a jolly life!' 'By it and with it and on it and in it,' said the Rat. 'It's brother and sister to me, and aunts, and company, and food and drink, and (naturally) washing. It's my world, and I don't want any other. What it hasn't got is not worth having, and what it doesn't know is not worth knowing. Lord! the times we've had together!'*

For me, this episode from Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows*, is a reminder to ensure that in my relationship with God, I don't, as it were, stand on the banks of the river, but enter its flow. For all of us, we can become so preoccupied with the activity of ministry and mission, and in the process 'grow weary in doing what is right' (Gal. 6.9), that we fail to get wet!

What has helped me recently has been a journey I began in 2013 with Ignatius of Loyola. More accurately, the journey was with God but in the company of this sixteenth-century saint in the form of his Spiritual Exercises.

Initially it lasted about ten months, as I committed to praying each morning and evening for set periods of time and to meeting with a guide each week to reflect.

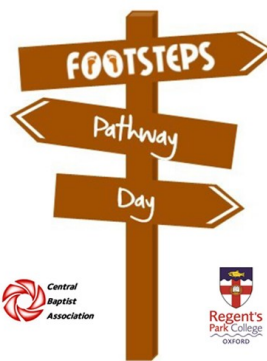
The aim of the Spiritual Exercises is 'to help a person to grow in spiritual freedom in order to respond to the call of Christ'. Put another way, they are to enable an individual to experience personal encounter with God and make a response. In our sort of language, we're talking about Christian discipleship.

They have a structure which, using Scripture, begins with a foundation established on God's unconditional love and upon which the entire Exercises are constructed. They continue with a challenging reflection on the sinfulness of humanity before engaging with Jesus in his mission through gospel contemplations on his life and work. This moves into considering the cost of following Jesus through meditations on Christ's suffering and death, and culminates in an experience of the joy and hope of Christ's resurrection. The Exercises conclude where they began, with a 'Contemplation on the Love of God' which provides the context for 'finding God in all things'.

What I most appreciated was the growing sense of intimacy through spoken and silent prayer, and through reading and meditation on Scripture which was the means of personal encounter. There was a real sense of being with Jesus through all the events of his life but also Jesus being with me, here and now, in all the events of my life. I relished the emphasis upon 'finding God in all things', not denying the fallen-ness of the world but recognising that the world is still God's good creation and that God loves it and is in it. I valued the emphasis upon contemplation, but also on mission, rooted in the phrase 'being contemplative in action'. And I could go on!

At the completion of the ten months I had a sabbatical and this provided the space to train as an Ignatian spiritual director, so this journey remains a part of my life, and through continuing with the practices I think I've been helped to enter the flow of the river and not stand on the bank.

**Geoff Colmer**



**Footsteps Pathway Days are OPEN TO EVERYONE**

**Venue:**  
The church of Christ the King,  
Kents Hill, Milton Keynes,  
MK76HG  
9.30 for 10 am start - 4.15pm

**8TH OCTOBER 2016 - QUALITY TIME, QUALITY SPACE**  
**'GOING DEEPER WITH GOD'**

REV. RUTH BOTTOMS, CHAPLAIN, WEST LONDON MISSION,  
AND PASTORAL PLACEMENT TUTOR, REGENT'S PARK COLLEGE, OXFORD

- explore Christian Spirituality by reflecting on the joys and challenges of our own spiritual journeys
- find different ways to nurture and sustain our relationship with God
- discover resources to support our study of the Bible and our prayer life

*"I felt empowered pastorally in helping people with their discipleship. The day gave me loads of tools and ideas to help people with their spirituality. Used it personally and professionally!"*  
**Clare Hooper: Youth Specialist Wokingham BC**

**Further Details: see [www.centralba.org.uk](http://www.centralba.org.uk) or contact [anne.lane@regents.ox.ac.uk](mailto:anne.lane@regents.ox.ac.uk)**

## WHEN TRAGEDY STRIKES

Ross Dilnot is Pastor of Shenley Christian Fellowship in Milton Keynes. Here he reflects upon beginning the long road of coming to terms with a recent life changing accident.



“On Friday 8<sup>th</sup> April I had a tragic motor-tricycle accident, whilst on my first ride on it. Somehow I lost control and hit a 30mph speed sign. My right knee was shattered, my lower leg ripped open top to bottom and my ankle pretty much destroyed. I came close to dying at the scene of the accident by bleeding to death, but the Air Ambulance airlifted me to the John Radcliffe in Oxford where they tried to

rebuild my leg through some 7 hours of surgery. However that night the leg started to die and I went into multi-organ failure. Early on the Saturday morning I was rushed back to theatre for my second operation where they amputated my right leg through the knee. Thankfully my organs started working again and I narrowly avoided Intensive Care. On the following Tuesday I had my third operation, to remove more of my right leg, now a stump, to prepare it for a prosthesis. I spent two weeks in Oxford and was then transferred to Milton Keynes for a further week to recover.

Since the accident my physical healing has proceeded very well overall. However the psychological trauma is hitting me hard and that will take quite some time to come to terms and deal with.

In all this Jesus has proved faithful and strong – the Rock on whom I stand. My church has been fantastic, as have many other churches in Milton Keynes, offering help in lots of ways – it has pulled us all together. God has also provided for us financially, to make alterations to our home to accommodate my mobility, and to purchase a new wheelchair for me.

Living with this new reality, however, is proving very hard. I was a very active person before this, and now the things I currently cannot do I find deeply frustrating. I find myself asking ‘Why?’ ‘Why God?’ ‘What purpose have You got in this?’ I find myself crying at different times, unable to explain why. I ask myself the question ‘who am I now?’ ‘What am I to do now?’ Yet in all these questions I know that Jesus walks this road with me. I still have a church to lead – which I’m gradually getting back to. But what the enemy sought for destruction, God will work for His purposes. Jesus commands my destiny! And I believe He’ll use me to speak to many about what He has done.

I want to thank you for your thoughts and prayers and to ask you to continue praying, not just for me but also for my wife Joy and my children as we wrestle with what has happened and as life works itself out with my new reality.” God bless you.

### Ross Dilnot.

You can follow Ross’s progress on his blog <https://prostheticpastor.wordpress.com/>

## KINGSTHORPE willingness to dare greatly

I could tell you a story of a church finding it hard to keep going. An increasingly elderly congregation, fewer – maybe too few – people to take on the necessary responsibilities, balancing the books by using reserves and hiring out the church premises – which are good. Many unable to attend regularly now, new members are generally retired and just about balance out those who pass to glory. A story told in the fading light with a weary and sad voice by those who regret there is no longer the energy to be the church they once were in the place they love. A familiar story of an old community – who wonder if there is anything that can be done.

I could tell you a story of a life-giving group, where confidence and trust grow. A youthful, enthusiastic group based on simple games, learning and sharing food. Where different languages, different traditions, different religious beliefs begin to fall into the background as laughter and love and hope take centre stage. A group staffed by largely non-church volunteers, several under 30, some Muslim. A group where a young man is keen to learn about church, asks for a Bible and attends services where he understands little of the language. A group which looks forward to the next meeting as we join hands and the minister prays for everyone as they part. A new story of a young community – who are beginning to feel more confident about the future.

They are the same story.

Kingsthorpe Baptist Church didn’t know Nokuthula 6 months ago, she now comes most Sundays.

One of our members found out Nokuthula was looking for premises to host a fortnightly youth club. Nokuthula shared her vision with the church. Due to Watford Gap services being in the county, Northamptonshire’s Councils are responsible for a huge number of unaccompanied asylum seeking minors. As an employee of the Council, Nokuthula was concerned about those young people. They’re not allowed to work or volunteer and, in their boredom and desperation for any opportunity, are prey to those who would recruit them for drug or other crime. The Council covers basic needs, Nokuthula wanted to offer more signposting, learning opportunities and family-like support. The church hasn’t the capacity to be hands-on but we could offer our building, a couple of volunteers and our prayer. Every other Friday we now host a youth club for 16 – 19 year old unaccompanied asylum seekers and refugees. We are all learning, we are all out of our comfort zone, we all feel vulnerable.



Nokuthula

Moses leading the Hebrew slaves to freedom; members of Kingsthorpe Baptist Church stepping out of the boat; Jesus restoring life to a 12 year old daughter; a timid, traumatised orthodox Christian boy holding hands with a Muslim in a prayer for peace – it is the same story, the story of the Kingdom of God, good news for the world. It is the story of hope and daring greatly and laughing together.

### Nikki Jenkins is the Minister of Kingsthorpe BC

You can watch a very short video about Kingsthorpe Baptist Church daring greatly at <http://tinyurl.com/h9yaypc>

Over the coming year we will be supporting the following through Home Mission giving.

- London Colney
- Christ the Cornerstone, Milton Keynes
- Mission Partnership, Milton Keynes
- Newton Longville
- Rushden Highfield
- Sandy
- Great Ashby
- Stevenage
- Toddington
- New Mill, Tring
- University of Bedfordshire chaplain
- University of Herfordshire chaplain
- Howlands, Welwyn Garden City
- Bovingdon
- Broughton
- Gretton
- Hackleton
- Letchworth
- London Luton Airport chaplain

## CAREY'S GLOBE

When he was a village school teacher, a pastor, a shoemaker, and trying to convince everyone that the whole inhabited earth was our mission field, William Carey made a leather globe as a teaching aid. It's long gone, but in one of the biographies of Carey there is a well-known line suggesting that his pupils might have fancied a bit of a kick-about with it.

When a group from a range of Northampton churches met to discuss the book they had all read, they found their conversation pulled to the question of refugees, migrants, and the distressing attitudes and language seen and heard, they remembered Carey's globe. What if we made a new one? Used it as a discussion starter? Took it to churches and other faith groups? Might it help us and others to see the human home afresh? Kick ideas and attitudes about?

It was made by a local leather expert, funded by small donations, and since January has been travelling wherever invited, and in a few places where it wasn't expected, and it's been doing its stuff.

Everyone agrees that it is beautiful, and good to touch. It's the only globe we've seen without writing, without lines, without the clutter of information. It's good to simply look at the world without all the things we think we know getting in the way. The Globe travels with a set of cards printed with provocative statements: "Northampton is welcoming to refugees." "Britain is full." Do you disagree strongly/disagree/don't know/agree/agree strongly?

It has been getting known, at least in Northampton. It seems to have captured people's imaginations. The conversations it starts are often uncertain, perhaps guarded, but its physical presence is impressive.

People love to stare, to turn it, to see how it looks upside down, familiar but strange.

It's a contribution to the debate of our age: how do we think and act globally, how do we build peace, how do we offer our neighbours a human face?

It could come to your church or meeting. Enquiries to [careyglobe@gmail.com](mailto:careyglobe@gmail.com)

*Stuart Jenkins: hospital chaplain and County Ecumenical Officer*



## Keep yourself safe



By its very nature, being part of the Baptist family and community means being accessible to people – some whom you may know well, some you may not know at all. So your personal safety is something the Baptist Insurance team takes very seriously. Being alone in church, or locking up after or service – particularly if it is late at night – or allowing someone into your home exposes you to an degree of risk.

That's why it's important to have a **personal safety plan** ([www.tinyurl.com/zop2oug](http://www.tinyurl.com/zop2oug)) in place. So, if a problem ever arises, you know what to do.

Watch our **short video** ([www.tinyurl.com/h7tk5q3](http://www.tinyurl.com/h7tk5q3)) for some practical tips to help with your personal safety plan.



## Ampthill Youth Visit to Israel

Leading a group of young people on a trip to Israel was an unforgettable experience and the fruit of a successful twinning between my church and Shefa'amr Baptist Church (SBC). Six young people from Ampthill Baptist Church (ABC) travelled to Shefa'amr, Galilee, for a week in July which proved to be a challenging, enjoyable and transformative experience. The main aims of the visit were to help with SBC's kids camp, to encourage the church there, and to experience something of Israel as a country and the culture. As the Youth Worker at ABC it was delightful to see the group of young people enthusiastic



to get involved, eager to learn and skilled at sharing their faith and gifts wherever they could.

The following outlines some of our experience, drawn from my journal written during our time there.

**Sunday evening.** We had a relatively easy journey on the plane to Tel Aviv and then the train up to the north. We're already enjoying the famed Israeli hospitality receiving a warm welcome and lovely meal with Pastor Nader and his family.

**The camp:** On Monday we began helping at the kids club, which was everything we expected. Action songs, crafts, games, Bible stories and lots and lots of water games that we could all get involved in and encourage the kids. On Tuesday morning we were again involved at the kids club, and all loved helping out - we surprisingly found that the language barrier really isn't much of an issue, as it seems even the very young kids can understand basic English, and we can use a comical mix of English, Arabic and actions to get across what we mean!

**Jerusalem and Bethlehem:** On Wednesday we took a day out from the camp to visit some holy sites around Israel. We visited Jerusalem and were shown round by Rawan's fiancé, Jack. We had a really interesting time learning about the different sites and churches, and Jack took time to explain the conflict and show us some non-touristy parts too. Highlights included the church of the resurrection in Jerusalem, the church of the nativity in Bethlehem, the Western Wall and also a Banksy!

On Thursday the whole camp spent the day, from 9 till 3, at a pool in Tiberias. We had a relaxing afternoon and a fantastic rooftop BBQ in the evening. On Friday at camp we were able to teach the kids the actions to 'God's Love is Big', which they loved so much we ended up doing it 4 times that morning! In the afternoon we visited some churches in Nazareth and Cana before the church service at SBC.



Saturday was the last day of camp. It was another full-on day, with games, fun, songs and teaching. The whole week has been fantastic, we've had lots of fun, made new friends and shared lots with the people here, and learnt a great deal too. SBC send their love and are truly grateful for the visit and support from ABC.

Thanks to everyone who supported the trip, financially, through prayers and other ways. Do continue to pray for the church here and the pressures facing them, as well as the amazing young people I'm with as they embark on the next step in their young adulthood.

Martin Sutch is Youth worker at Ampthill Baptist Church. See [www.baptisttwinningisrael.org.uk](http://www.baptisttwinningisrael.org.uk) for info on Baptist twinning with Israel

## London Colney Baptist Church a Home Mission Story

Seated in-between junctions 21a and 22 of the M25, London Colney is a (rather large) village 2 miles outside of St Albans. The community is proud of its 'village' status even though it has a population of 10 000 people. Many people know the village for one of two things - the huge retail park at one end or that it is the location of the training grounds for two football clubs. (Arsenal and Watford).

The community has a wonderful multi-cultural flavour. One of the reasons for this is there were a number of hospitals situated around London Colney and people from various countries came to work in them. When the hospitals closed down, the people stayed in the village. There are two mosques, four churches, three primary schools, four pubs, a variety of 'Take Aways' and an excellent coffee shop.

As I reflect upon the demographics of the village, it would be fair to say there is a lot to challenge us in the way of mission. It is a wonderful opportunity. We feel, along with the other churches, a sense of frustration that so many of the folk in the community do not know Jesus and are not part of the church (although a number commute out of the village to other local churches).



LCBC isn't a big church at all. We have around 20 faithful people who love Jesus and the

church, who come on Sundays and serve in a variety of different ways during the week. Even though the church is small, we reflect the multi-cultural aspect of the village very well. There are 10 different nationalities represented in the congregation. This was one of the factors that attracted me here during the settlement process.

Before I arrived, the church already ran a monthly free Solicitors Surgery and a Toddlers Group. One thing I realised is that as a small church we may be limited in what we can do, but if we work with the other churches in the village we can do more. One example of this is the Churches Together satellite branch of the FEED Food Bank hosted by LCBC (The Vineyard Church runs a huge Food Bank and supported us in opening our own branch as this would enable local people to access this service more easily).

Other aspects of ministry I am involved in include acting as an 'informal' chaplain for a charity (STEP) that teaches RE in local Secondary Schools. I also serve one morning a week in a Year 6 class in a local Primary school. Being able to support the teachers and children in Maths or English classes is great. An additional bonus is the opportunities to take RE lessons in school for other year groups and do occasional Assemblies.

When I stand to take the Sunday service each week I often say to myself I would love to see the church fuller. To see people come to know Jesus and belong to his church. Only the Holy Spirit can convert hearts and whatever my place is in the grand scheme of things, I hope we as a church continue to know God's will. **What I do know, and what the Church very much appreciates, is that without Home Mission so much of the above would not be possible".**

Adrian Wood: Minister London Colney BC

