

# Church Calendar: December 2011 to February 2012

# IN HOUSE



The Magazine of Thornbury Baptist Church December 2011

## Christmas Greetings

Christmas is of course the time of year when we turn our attention to the amazing action of God – the giving of his beloved Son. It has been said that if we could cut God he would bleed 'others' but of course he did bleed - God in Christ bled and died for a world that had rejected his gracious rule of love. The apostle Paul writing to the Christians in Rome put it this way: "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5: 8)." The overflowing love of God was and is, the impulse with which he created all that is created and is also the source of his redemptive movement toward the world.

In the gospel of John Chapter 20 we meet Jesus picking up the pieces again with his disciples following his death and resurrection. Remember most of them had failed him badly none more so than Peter who had denied Jesus three times. Rather than dwelling on their failure Jesus sought to restore them and re-commissioned them for God's work with these words: "as the Father has sent me, I am sending you."

There are direct parallels at work here between the Father sending the Son and the Son sending the church. The Father, in love, sends the Son (John 3: 16). His words and deeds challenged the people of the day and presented the Son not as some wonder-working Rabbi, but as God incarnate (John 1: 18; 14: 9). Likewise the church is sent into the world as the body of Christ (Matthew 28: 18) and as the Son is dependent on, and obedient to the Father (John 4: 35; 5: 19; 10: 37), living a sinless life and ministering in the power of the Holy Spirit (John 1: 32). So the church is cleansed by Jesus (John 17: 19) and empowered (20: 22) to be his sent ones. John's Gospel, which focuses so much attention on the identity of Jesus, also reveals to us something of the core identity of the church. The Church has a Gospel mandate upon it and it is sent by Jesus who himself was sent for the sake of the world.

As the writer Alan Hirsch says, "God is a sending God, with the desire to see humankind and creation reconciled redeemed and healed. The missional church, then, is a sent church. It is a going church, a movement of God through his people, sent to bring healing to a broken world."

As we learn to be followers of Jesus, disciples, our lives speak to the world around us about the love and grace of God. During his earthly life Jesus called people to follow him. This meant learning, by the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit, to live the Jesus life; the same is true for us today.

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The greatest need we have as a church both nationally and locally is not better and smarter programmes or more innovative ways of communicating the gospel, but a radical reengagement with Jesus as his disciples. In fact we could go further and say, as Dietrich Bonhoeffer did, "that Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ." To be a disciple begins with hunger, hunger for more of God and his purposes (Ps 63), anyone who has truly tasted God's grace and

started on their journey will want more. As we reflect on our discipleship it seems to me that it is worth asking ourselves the sort of questions that will unearth how my Christian life really is. These questions could fall into four areas. Firstly, how is my life with God? Is my relationship with God, my love for him, growing and developing? Secondly, am I engaging with practices that help me to grow as a Christian? These spiritual disciplines, which have been part and parcel of Christian living through the ages, are things like regular prayer, reading the bible, fasting and abstinence, sharing communion and serving. Thirdly, am I in fellowship with those I can share my life with? The Christian life is not meant to be ploughing a lonely furrow, but rather a shared life. Learning how to open one's life and let others in is a hugely risky thing to do but ultimately immensely beneficial and key for

<b>December</b>	
Sunday 11	3rd Sunday of Advent
9.15am , 11.00am	David Lawrence, Zechariah's song;
	The Forerunner
6.30pm	SNG
Monday 12	
11.30am	Two by two Christmas special
2.30pm	Inside out Christmas special
Wednesday 14	
8.00pm	Reflective service
Thursday 15	
8.00pm	Prayer evening
Saturday 17	
11.00am	TCT Carols, St Mary Centre
Sunday 18	4th Sunday of Advent
9.15am	Children & Youth Christmas service
11.00am	Paul Ferguson, Angel's song; proclaiming good news
6.30pm	Carols in the community
Monday 19	
	Christmas Fun Factory Set up 10.00am
Saturday 24	Christmas eve
6.00pm	Family Carols evening
Sunday 25	Christmas day
10.00am	Family service
Saturday 31	
11.30pm	Watch night Service

Sunday 8	9.15, 11.00am	Rob Scott Cook Neil Mobbs
Monday 9	2.30pm	Inside Out
Sunday 15	9.15, 11.00am	Paul Ferguson, Birth pains [Mark 13:1-23]
	6.30pm	David Ling
Sunday 22	9.15, 11.00am	Tom Hamblin
	6.30pm	Tom Hamblin
Monday 23	12.30pm	Ladies That Lunch relationships special
	7.30pm	Alpha starts
Sunday 29	9.15, 11.00am	Paul Ferguson, The Son of Man [Mark 13:24-27]
	6.30pm	Gordon Hindmarch

<b>February</b>		
Wednesday 1	8.00pm	Family Forum
Saturday 4	10.00am	Beanies
Sunday 5	11.00am	Community Service, Philip Jinadu
	6.30pm	Sally Heath
Sunday 12	9.15am	All Age Service, Paul Ferguson
	11.00am	Paul Ferguson, Watch [Mark 13:28-37]
	6.30pm	Alan Butler (former pastor)
Monday 13	2.30pm	Inside Out

<b>January</b>		
Sunday 1	10.00am	All Age Celebration Service Mike Levy
Saturday 7	10.00am	Beanies

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learning to be a disciple. We have a number of varied small groups at TBC and I would encourage you to consider joining one. The fourth question, am I engaged in sharing my faith with those who are not yet Christians? This means that through word and deed do others have a glimpse of Jesus?

I recognise that all of this could feel pressurizing, that is not my intention. I simply urge you to reflect on where you are in your Christian discipleship and ask God to reawaken the desire to follow him. Because the degree to which we allow the life of Christ to transform us is the degree to which we will affect the community of Thornbury and beyond.

Happy Christmas

With love

Paul

## Visit to Woodcroft

In October, the Young People aged 15-20 who meet in the Youth block on Sunday Nights (SNG) went to Woodcroft Christian Centre just outside Chepstow. 26 of us went in total, and had a great weekend. It is always a teaching weekend, and this year we looked at the theme of Jesus through the Bible. In our main sessions together,

we considered the awesomeness and majesty of Jesus in creation, the Alpha and Omega, then how the Old Testament points to and predicts the coming of Jesus, how Jesus reveals the character and heartbeat of God through the gospels, and how Jesus is the energy and vision with which we reach out to His world. Throughout the weekend, the young people worked hard and creatively summarised this through one totem pole in each small group. You may have seen these in church afterwards -they were all fantastic!

Of course we also had deep theological discussions into the night, everyone had a one-to-one chat with a youth leader, and we all took part in a highly amusing murder mystery on the Saturday night.

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**Throughout the weekend, the young people worked hard and creatively**



February so it was a lot warmer and lighter in the evenings than we are used to. This meant we could play some games outside and enjoy refreshments around the picnic tables in the autumn sunshine, as seen in the picture. Woodcroft is always a highlight - thanks to all the leaders who worked hard to make it happen, and everyone who helped out, and I look forward to spending more quality time away with these fantastic young adults!



## Visit to Viney Hill

In the October school holiday, there was an activity trip to Viney Hill Christian Adventure Centre, in the Forest of Dean for Basement Cafe and Attic Cafe, who meet each week on Thursday and Friday nights in the Youth block. 19 of us had a great time doing challenges at Symonds Yat on the first day, we played wide games in the forest and built bridges using ropes and trees to get across deep old quarry depressions on the second day, and then tried archery on the last day. One group visited Clearwell Caves, and another went to Puzzlewood when we had too many young people to do the activities. We took four 'Junior Youth Leaders' (aged 17) who worked extremely hard while we were there and have really grown in their leadership skills.

The best times for me were inside in the evenings, sharing food together, sharing stories, discussing goals and dreams for their future, and talking about their views on faith. Although we didn't go with this in mind, at least one person from a completely non-church background significantly grew their understanding of who God is through this trip, and is now hungry to know Him more. On top of enjoying the beautiful Forest of Dean, what more could we ask for!! Thanks to everyone who helped make this trip happen and came and worked hard while we were there.

## Roger and Hazel Staley

We would like to introduce you to Roger and Hazel Staley. Between them they have been very active members at TBC for over 100 years! Both Roger and Hazel are children of local Christian farming families. Roger was brought up at Oldbury-on-Severn Methodist Chapel and became a young local Methodist preacher. In 1951 he was baptised at a church in Gloucester by his Uncle who was a Baptist minister. Hazel was baptised at TBC in April 1958 and became a member there. Two years later they were married at TBC, Roger became a member and then a deacon of the church. They have three children, David, Helen and Jonathan. The couple have worked, over many years, in various areas in the fellowship, including youth work, church leadership and being chairman of the Rockleaze



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management committee, to name a few!

What has been happening in recent years?

In 2008 Roger was diagnosed with a benign pituitary tumour and in the

same week their daughter, Helen, was diagnosed with breast cancer. Helen, since having chemotherapy, is making very good progress but Roger has endured life in the slow lane after successful open-head surgery and radiotherapy in 2009. He has been left unable to lead a normal life, due to extreme fatigue coupled with the fact that he needed 2 total hip replacements. Last July he had the right hip replaced and is eagerly waiting for the left hip to be replaced next year.

While in hospital a doctor suggested that Roger had sleep apnoea, which is a temporary cessation of breathing. In Roger's case this was happening during the night-time, revealing why he is so lethargic, he's been not having a proper deep sleep, which is the sleep that refreshes us all. This has curtailed, for them both, their church and social involvement and Roger has been unable to take preaching appointments, to do any light physical work and to get his driving licence back. Since confirmation of the sleep apnoea, Roger has been using a CPAP device during sleeping hours, which has a nasal mask to keep the airways open. This is the latest challenge as it takes a lot of getting used to!

We asked them how they were coping.

**ROGER:-** Hazel has been and still is an excellent wife, nurse, administrator and chauffeur, but has not found it easy living in the slow lane. I am thankful that she is able, with her boundless energy, to help me in my present condition.

We are both aware of being carried along on the wings of prayer concerning the situation. It is a wonderful experience to be on the receiving end of such love and concern from such supportive family always willing to assist and friends for which we thank and praise the Lord for daily. 'Where would we be but for the grace of God?'

I have had my down sides – mainly frustrations, like being unable to do odd jobs around the farm and garden. We are both disappointed because we have missed out on many meetings and social events but God is fulfilling our every need.

**HAZEL:-** I'm often reminded of our marriage vows, 'In sickness and in health until death us do part,' for which we thank our Heavenly Father. An interesting and challenging few years. It is a privilege and pleasure to look after such an appreciative, patient and loving husband.

Like us all I'm getting older so my body is not as agile as it was 50 years ago so naturally I miss Roger being able to do 'odd jobs' around the house and garden, this could lead to discouragement and frustration especially as by nature I am an impatient person. We are so blessed with our family and friends, in and out of the church fellowship, their visits, prayers and phone calls of encouragement. I am so fortunate that I never get bored or down-hearted because I can always find plenty to do which keeps my mind and body active. I praise the Lord for a positive attitude. How are we able? By taking it to the Lord in prayer. When? Any time of day or night.

Roger and Hazel