

Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you

Welcoming

WHAT is it like for a complete newcomer, driving into the entrance of Bay House School, and then having to negotiate their way into the building and to a seat? And what if that person has never been to a church before and so doesn't know what on earth to expect?

With those questions in mind, we are in the process of adjusting the way we signpost, and greet people when they arrive at AEC. We also want to make sure that every newcomer is welcomed as such, and has the opportunity to fill in a card and receive a free book.

Phil Royle and Lionel will be working on this over the next few months with the aim that we'll have improved the process by the time of our Carol Service. But, any adjustments will have a bearing on us all.

We were shown from the Bible prior to the Summer holidays something of what welcoming is about. That our attitude to newcomers should be marked by kind generosity that bears with the changes that having visitors brings. The leaders would encourage us to be full of grace with those who are new, not picking up on issues or lifestyle patterns, but accepting others,

whilst allowing the Spirit of God, through the truth taught to do the challenging and changing.

We hope that we will increasingly make it our priority to know who newcomers are and to make them at home; that we will be aware that we want the church to grow, but that change means incorporating new people; and praying that those who come in would be impacted by the message of Christ, in God's time.

Here are some adjustments you might choose to make to your Sunday routine:

- Aim to arrive by 10am to avoid a rush for seats as the service starts,
- Sit as close to the front as possible so that late comers have spaces – particularly if you are directed to do so by the welcome team,
- Consider when you might catch up with people, or see them about 'business' things other than before or after the service so that you might be free to talk to newcomers.
- Consider whether you could help set up/down before or after services so those who are 'good' at speaking with strangers are free to do that.

So watch for changes, and please be involved with them for the greater good.

Church Houseparty?

FOLLOWING the great success of the last church house party we plan to run another but this time a little different. We are looking at a potential new location – Ovingdean School in Brighton.

Ovingdean has great facilities (including an inside heated swimming pool) and good accommodation and although they usually hire it out as a self-catering venue we have asked them to give us a price for their school caterers. (If anyone has any other ideas, or know someone who could help with this, then please let Steve Pethick know).

We would also like to have more time so we are considering continuing the weekend until midday Monday (we are hoping that overall costs for '3 days' will be less than our last houseparty which was just for '2 days'). It would be good to hear your thoughts on the last house party and our initial ideas for this time.

Students to Malawi

As a result of David and Colin meeting up with students and teachers from Bay House School who are going out to Malawi this October we gave, as a church, £500 towards their support. The group departs on 9 October, returning on the morning of 22 October. After their return some of the students will be coming to us to give a report. The date for this is set for Sunday 8 November, during our morning meeting. It will be good to welcome the students on that day.

Please pray for the team as they travel, and work with the orphans in Malawi – especially that this experience of the Third World will open their eyes and hearts to the privileges we enjoy and the needs of others.

The charity the school is working with is Friends of Mulanje Orphans (FOMO): www.fomo.co.uk

Etters

MA RTIN and Julia continue with their work training pastors in Malawi which is expanding into Zambia. They currently have two full time workers and two part-time volunteers there. They write that in the last year, 850 participants have completed the training course in Malawi and a further 401 in Zambia. For many of these church leaders it is the first time they have had opportunity to receive Bible training.

The family enjoyed a holiday together in Namibia during the summer and Julia is planning to come to the UK at the end of September (and hopefully giving reports on Sunday 27).

They are facing disappointment at the moment as the new worker that they appointed has left to study in the US. On a wider scale, the corruption in the country is a constant source of frustration as the elite get richer while things are getting tougher for most Malawians. In addition they have a £6,000 shortfall in the 2009-10 budget for training an estimated 800 participants in Zambia.

They ask for prayer for the strength and motivation to continue in the work and for the perseverance of the pastors who facilitate the training.

New Home Groups

FOLLOWING Christ involves supporting and encouraging fellow believers. God says to Christians: "let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds" (Hebrews 10 v 24). Home groups are our way of doing this with a small group of fellow believers.

Home groups meet on a Wednesday or Thursday, several times a month and this means we really get to know about a dozen people really well.

Every few years the groups are reshuffled so there is a fresh opportunity to know another group of people (including those who have recently come to believe in Christ). The groups are currently being reshuffled with the aim of new groups starting on the 7/8 October.

The evenings generally consist of interactive Bible studies (Gospel of John from October) and praying together. Occasionally we meet informally, for example having a meal together.

A typical monthly pattern is: Week 1: Home Groups; Week 2: Home Group leaders meet for planning; Week 3: Home Groups; Week 4: Home Group with a prayer emphasis.

Please contact Brian Williams if you want to join a group (023 9252 3554).

Formation

STEVE Pethick will shortly be attending the Living Leadership Formation conference from 22-24 September with Abigail (and Sophia). This is a part of the training Steve receives during his training year and we ask you to pray for them before the conference and while they are away:

- That the training will meet many of his practical needs as he faces the year ahead.
- That he will love and serve the Lord and the church more effectively as a result of Formation.
- That the spiritual benefit of the Bible and skills training will be felt by the church in the year ahead.
- That the 50 trainees and apprentices will interact well with each other, making good friends.
- That leaders will be spiritually sensitive to any pastoral needs.
- For all the practical and safety matters.
- That all delegates will leave knowing they have met with the Lord and excited about serving in the church this year.

This is the first of two conferences run as Formation, with the second in March 2010.

Website

YOU probably won't notice many differences as the website undergoes an overhaul. But it's happening – more news soon.

Members Meeting

THE next Church Members' Meeting is on Thursday, 24 September, at Solent Evangelical Church. It starts at 7.45pm. Please fine the agenda below. Any items of 'Any other business' to Colin please before the meeting.

- Welcoming
- Child Protection
- Training – its significance and the implications within the life of the church.
- Support for Pete & Debbie in our next budget
- Events for 2010
- Women's Convention
- Any other business

Hope to see you if you're a Church Member.

For further details contact: Colin Dyer, 023 9234 6145; email: colin.dyer@ntlworld.com

Our website is www.aechurch.org.uk

AEC meets on Sundays at Bay House School, Gomer Lane, Gosport PO12 2QP at 10.15am and 6.30pm and at other times during the week.