

GATEWAY CHURCH NORTHUMBERLAND

30.3.14

The First Year – Joss Bray

Introduction:

Today marks the end of the first year of Gateway church. It has gone really quickly – I am sure you will agree.

This week we will look back at the last year – next week we will look forward to the next one – I feel the urge to rush on to that now – but I think it is important to look back and recognise and celebrate all that God has done.

It is a real privilege to be part of his plan for this area and he has blessed us in many ways.

For one thing he has blessed us with each other - we started with 4 people and by God's grace the church has grown to 18 when we are all here. That's 350% growth!

Overview:

We have tried to focus on Jesus because he is the rock on which the church stands.

Jesus asks Peter a question:

MT 16:15 "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"

MT 16:16 Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

And then Jesus goes on to say:

MT 16:17-18on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.

We have experienced the truth of this since we started – God has built and is building the church – not just in numbers but in depth of relationship with each other and with him.

Note that Jesus quite clearly implies that hell itself will be set against the church – the very gates will try and open and swallow us up. We know we are in a battle but we also know that God is far greater than the enemy who was totally defeated at the cross. Death could not hold Jesus and God demonstrated that Jesus was the real deal by raising him up from the dead.

In fact – that is the question Jesus asks all of us – “who do you say I am?” – our answer has eternal consequences.

Think about what God has done in your life and in this church over the last year – this is a good opportunity to share together and encourage each other.

A quick summary of the year:

Teaching

We talked about the reasons that Jesus said why he had come to the earth – the “I have come” statements. Also the things that Jesus said he was – the “I am” statements

We have looked at many topics over the year on a Sunday – including, fixing our eyes on Jesus, baptism, remembering the poor, being filled with the spirit, spiritual warfare, leadership, the Lord’s supper, prayer, being a disciple, being a witness, grace, prophecy, faith, the armour of God, the body of Christ, being like a child, the peace of God and several others most are on the website.

If there are any you would like us to do again – or for the first time since most people won't have been here for all of them – please say. If there are topics that you would like us to talk about – again please say – that would be very helpful.

Bible study and prayer

In our weekday evening meetings we have managed to get through the whole of Acts and James together and now we are into Romans. We've spent time praying as well which is well worth doing of course. We've found that looking at the bible together means we can help each other with insights and thoughts that we would not necessarily have had on our own.

Doing it one book at a time in order, gives a broader sense of the bible and how events and teaching etc fit together. One of the key things to note is that even though the bible was written around 2000 years ago, people are just the same as we are and God is just the same as well – so it is entirely relevant to us now and entirely applicable and useful for our everyday lives.

Events

We have had a baptism, several BBQs, parties, a Christmas lunch, walks, a day trip to Holy Island, painting days, clay pigeon shooting, a hot tub day, garden work parties and plenty of Sunday lunches and puddings.

Other churches

Relationships with other churches have grown – so with St James in Shilbottle – we did a joint carol service, a group from Emmanuel Church Durham came and spent a day praying with us and prophesying – and eating of course.

We also went to North 2013 - which turned out to be the last one of its kind and very enjoyable.

We went to a day conference only yesterday for the North East Christ Central churches in Darlington which was great – we are one of 4 CC churches in this region – the others being Teesside, Darlington and Hartlepool. Christ Central is part of the Newfrontiers family of churches and has around 90 churches across England, Scotland, Northern Ireland, Wales, Canada, Scandinavia, Tanzania and Zambia. It's great to be part of something bigger – there's great support and encouragement there.

We also went to a Jubilee Plus conference in Durham a few weeks ago about social action, social justice and social enterprise which was very interesting. Churches have a great opportunity to help squeezed local authorities to provide services and help for people. We are developing links with the Alnwick churches in particular about food banks and a holiday sports event in the summer.

Our communities

A lot of us are very involved with our communities already and we have in particular helped out at events at Shilbottle community hall. We are looking forward to having a regular weekly drop in during the day on Thursdays at the hall – watch this space!

People

Most of all, we have been joined together as the body of Christ – his church. It is no mistake that he has brought together this strange group of people in this far-flung outpost from 6 different localities around the area.

We have different backgrounds, are different ages, different characters, different gifts and different problems.

That is the beauty of the church – it has strength in diversity. That is the way God designed us to be – together yet different. That is also the challenge of course!

Highlights and Lowlights

This is where we can share together how things have been over the last year.

For me, I am thrilled to have people joining us and being built in to the church. It is great to see people working together and helping each other – being the family of God together – and growing in love for each other.

I really enjoy the discussions and debates we have and the laughing and relaxing together.

The food is clearly the most important part of church life and many thanks are due to Gill and others who help out – not to forget the washers uppers – such a blessing!

There have been stresses and continue to be problems for all of us – but together we can face them and encourage each other, help and pray for each other.

Next week

We will look at what God has in store for us – this is the promise -

EPH 2:19 Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, ²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. ²¹ In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. ²² And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.