

News from the Front

September, 2021



Monthly Newsletter

Dear friends,

Thanks again for your ongoing prayers for us. We are so grateful for your partnership with us.

We mentioned in previous letters that we had received three applications for baptism from: (1) D, an older British man; (2) J, an unchurched British single parent; and (3) F, an Iranian asylum seeker.

D was interviewed by the elders but won't be going forward at this stage. But this isn't the end of the road as – though gospel understanding isn't there yet - our intent to see people converted so we can affirm them as genuine believers. Pray for D as we seek to help him fully grasp the gospel. J hasn't been able to undertake a first interview yet due to various life circumstances. We are still working on making that happen but can't move forward until we do. F, however, was recommended to the elders following a first interview and, having been interviewed by the eldership, is going to be commended to the church. We don't foresee any issues and look forward to being able to baptise him in due course.

Since then, we have received two further applications for baptism from two Iranian men. One has already received his right to remain while the other is still waiting. Both will begin the usual process of an interview with a church member and, following a recommendation, an interview with the elders. If the eldership are happy to recommend them to the church, time will be given for the wider membership to ask whatever questions they want before a vote at the next members' meeting. We trust that we will be able to welcome these two men into membership in time.

Glad as we are to be talking about welcoming new people in, we are also waving goodbye to one of our elders this month. When I was appointed as pastor, polity was a major concern and I drew a red line that the church needed to appoint qualified elders. I am not sure I have made any better suggestion than putting Ian's name forward as an elder, which was unanimously approved by the church and he took office just as I was arriving in a full-time capacity at the church. I am certain our eldership will be the poorer without him, but he has more than earned his retirement!

Nevertheless, this means the church will need to be thinking about appointing new elders. In the recent past, this might have been a real struggle. But the Lord has really blessed us and it is a delight to have more than one credible name to float. Please pray for us as we seek to appoint new men to office. Pray that we would not make a rash decision, but that we would appoint godly men with the requisite character and skills to serve the church in this capacity.

We have also been encouraged to have started up a discipleship course based on the New City Catechism. This is going to be a year-long, running course that unbelievers and young believers can jump into at any



point. Each week, a new question and answer is explored and discussed. The idea is that, by the end of the year, you will have been through the entire catechism and received some basic doctrinal instruction. We have been really pleased to see people jumping onto this already and pray that it will help to establish new and young believers soundly in the faith.

Since COVID restrictions lifted, we have begun to get back to some semblance of normality. Most things are now running again. We have also been encouraged – since sending out an email to members to return to in-person meeting and make contact with us or have their membership revoked – that we have established contact with all members bar one. This one will be shortly removed from membership. However, everybody else has returned or we are in contact and know there are legitimate reasons, out of their control, as to why they have been unable to come back as yet.

Nevertheless, we have lost people from membership to COVID, who died during the restrictions. We also continue to feel its hand as certain planned events – such as our usual Light Party around Halloween – has not been able to go ahead because of safety concerns from



some of the membership that would leave us short-staffed to run it. Not everybody has reached a point where they are comfortable doing everything as yet. We are nonetheless planning on various Christmas events. Please pray that folk would feel more comfortable with these things and that they might go ahead this year.

You may remember from previous letters that, since the latest situation in Afghanistan unfolded, we have talked about the nature of work with asylum seekers. Since then, we received some brilliant responses. A number of folks have partnered with us financially, with some seeking longer term partnership beyond just financial support. We are in the process of making a promotional

video about our work and how you can partner with us. If you would like to receive that to show at your own church, we would love to send that to you. Please get in touch and we can make it available when it is done. Alternatively, if you would like to talk about how you can partner with us long-term, we would also love to chat about how we can do that together.

PRAYER POINTS

1. Pray for those who have not been accepted for baptism, that they would grasp the gospel and can be affirmed as a genuine believer in Christ.
2. Pray for those who have newly applied for baptism. Pray that there would be clarity on the gospel and credibility in their testimonies.
3. Pray for those who will be baptised, that they would go on in Christ and grow up to maturity.
4. Give thanks for Ian's faithful service to Bethel Church. Pray that suitable new elders will be raised up.
5. Give thanks for the new discipleship course. Pray that those attending will be built up in their faith.
6. Pray for ongoing issues of COVID nervousness amongst the membership. Pray particularly that other events and evangelistic opportunities might go ahead as such nerves subside over time.
7. Give thanks for new partners who have seen the needs in our community and wish to work with us over the long-term. Pray for new partners to help sustain the ministry into the future and with whom we can enjoy a reciprocal relationship.