

Over the last couple of weeks we have started a new series on a Sunday here at Riverside.
This series? Meeting Jesus.



A series of weeks looking at different encounters with Jesus from the gospels.

An encounter with Jesus leaves us changed. Our loving saviour, risen and alive still wants to encounter us today. He calls out to us and leads us daily in our lives. Right now He is seated at the right hand of God speaking to God on our behalf!

What an incredible saviour we have! And whilst I keep seeing in the Bible that encounters with Jesus change people they still do today.

My biggest prayer at the moment is that people would continue to meet and engage with the risen Christ and know the release that comes from being set free from the things of the world by Him. He loves you and is for you and daily wants to lead you on. Let's keep meeting Jesus!

Pastor Steve

Issue 15

Easter 2023

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MY STORY 2023

I wish to tell you “My Story” of how I became a Christian and how I found Jesus as my Saviour, Lord and my closest friend.

I was born in Birmingham to good parents who gave me, my two sisters and brother a happy childhood. We lived a sheltered life and we were taught moral values. I went with my older sister Jane to Sunday school for at least ten years where I learnt lots of bible stories and have lots of fond memories to look back on.

I left all this behind in my teenage years. I later met and married my husband and we went on to have two boys. When the boys were small life was quiet and at times lonely living in the countryside away from my friends and family. After the birth of my second child I began to feel very anxious. I wanted to be a good wife and mother but found it difficult to cope. My husband was working long hours and me being left with the boys.

After about six years I was diagnosed with Post Natal depression and I was admitted to a psychiatric hospital for a short time. There I had caring nurses who would listen to me and I had time to rest. I was told that I would always have to take medication. At the hospital they were going to give me electric shock treatment. I was taken off all medication and I did not have any treatment.

Meanwhile my Christian sister Jane sent me a book called “Check Mate” by David Hathaway. He had been imprisoned in Eastern Europe for smuggling bibles in a converted coach into the Iron Curtain Countries. I read some of the scriptures that kept him going through the very difficult times he experienced in prison. I thought if this man can get through all he suffered, with God’s help and memorised scriptures then God could help me to recover. I had two weeks of rest in hospital away from family life and I came out of hospital knowing that I was on the beginning of a journey of faith.

I have come that you may have life and have it to the full. John 10:10

I am the way the truth and the life. John 14:6

This journey was not on my own, I was being slowly and gently drawn to God. I became less anxious and began to trust God for my future.

You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you. Isaiah 26:3

MY STORY 2023

Many things have happened to me on my journey of faith, some not always easy. I now understand that I opened the door of my heart to Jesus and he came to dwell in me by the Holy Spirit to empower me and change me to be more like Him.

Jesus says in John 14:6. *I am the way and the truth and the life. No-one comes to the Father except through me.*

Early on in my journey I felt I should leave my job and I believe God opened up the door for me to work in a Children's Home as a House Parent. I spent many years very content in my work knowing that this was part of God's plan for me.

"For I know the plans I have for you", declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." Jeremiah 29:11

But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show his all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. 2 Corinthians 4:7

The treasure is the incredible message of the gospel - the good news of forgiveness and the promise of life forever. Yet God chose to enclose that treasure in people who are like jars of clay. Ordinary and highly breakable. An immortal God chose mere humans as his personnel representatives.

Diane Nevey

Questions & Answers

1. At what time of day was Adam created?
A little before Eve.
2. Why didn't they play cards on the Ark?
Because Noah was standing on the deck
3. Why didn't Noah go fishing?
He only had two worms.
4. Did Eve ever have a date with Adam?
No, just an apple.

Wyre Forest Food Bank Update 2023



I started delivering food boxes for the Franche Community Church Food Bank back in 2019, joining Paul Crook who was already driving for them. Typically I would cover Stourport deliveries and Paul covered Kidderminster.

At that time the food bank was run by Paul and Barbara Guille, both former members of Riverside. They had managed things for over 5 years. Pre-Covid the food bank was distributing about 110 boxes each month to those in need of food support as referred by agencies such as Community Housing, Citizens Advice and Wyre Forest District Council. They would pack boxes once a month with help of volunteers from the community and deliveries would take place twice a week.



However, after Covid hit, demand increased four-fold over the course of 2020 and what had been a small ministry of the church became a major undertaking. I think Paul and Barbara decided that they had done their part and it was time to hand it over to someone else.

I was asked to take over the general management of the food bank in late summer 2020. I immediately saw that the administration that had worked for a small food bank was not suitable for what it had become. I began developing a data management system to make it easier to administer and ultimately provide reports for the trustees and other stakeholders.

Operationally everything was permanently laid out on tables in the main church hall. Crates were constantly being restocked, lifted and moved. Twice a week a couple came in to the building to pack boxes, which were also stored in the main hall.

With lock-downs ending it was clear that the church would want to return to in-person gatherings as well as hiring the hall out again.



Setting up and clearing the hall by hand would be

a huge task. Having to do that twice a week would be a nightmare! Within a short space of time, we had switched to stackable supermarket crates which we put on to 'dollies' (wheeled platforms used to move the stacks of crates around). We had also reduced the maximum quantity of items allowed in each crate (for easier, safer lifting) and purchased 'roll cages' to store the packed boxes. Everything was on wheels and could be moved

Wyre Forest Food Bank Update 2023

Unfortunately, not everything would fit into the back room storage area. Many items remained in the main hall and had to be covered up or moved around depending on who was using the hall at the time. It was agreed that the back room needed to be enlarged. And at the beginning of 2021 the dividing wall between the main hall and the back room at Franche Community Church was moved. Not only did this double the storage capacity of the back room, but it also provided room to pack the boxes, thus reducing the need to move equipment around each week.



The data management system is now fully developed thanks to assistance from Mike Follett.

So, a 'normal' work week for me begins on Monday collecting pre-ordered supplies from Aldi (the food bank buys about 80% of the food distributed!), and collecting any fresh produce/bread from Morrisons. The rest of the day is spent adding new referrals to the system, managing the drivers' schedule and raising the paperwork for the food bank operation the next day.

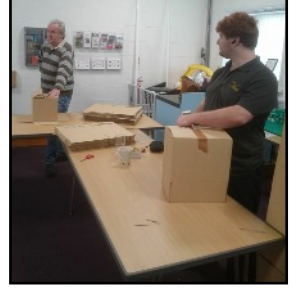
Tuesday and Friday mornings are our distribution days. Generally one third of the week's deliveries happen on Tuesday, together with the main box packing and a full stock check so that I can create the next order for Aldi.

Wednesday is supposed to be a day free of food bank! It doesn't always work out that way. Thursday is similar to Mondays - purchasing supplies, placing a new order with Aldi and picking up donations collected by Morrisons, as well as any fresh items or bread once again. The rest of the day is spent preparing for Friday's deliveries.

We have a good crowd of volunteers on both Tuesday and Friday who love to come and help sort donations, pack boxes, make up empty boxes ready for packing and generally make the operation run smoothly.

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Wyre Forest Food Bank Update 2023



Picture (clock-wise from top left):

Carole is our resident fruit and veg organiser; boxes and bags ready for our drivers;

Rob and Hamish making up boxes ready for packing;

Kathryn and Ethan sorting donations;

Judy, Mel and Chris pretending to pack boxes in the back room!

The food bank is entirely dependent on funding through grants, local businesses and individuals, as well as donated food items.

So a great big thank you to all who donate in whatever way - food, time and money. Thanks to you, we can continue to support many vulnerable people - adults, children and families - in the Wyre Forest area.

Many Thanks

John Balcon

My Name is Lily

My five-year-old son Artem and I came to England from Ukraine 3 months ago.



Before the war, I didn't think about leaving my homeland, but unexpected terrible events that happened a year ago divided our lives into BEFORE and AFTER...

The morning of February 24, 2022 began with a call from my cousin from Odesa around five in the morning. She said her city was being attacked from the air. She advised us to look for a rescue shelter. It was so terrible that it is difficult to describe in words, because there were no shelters near us. We were in a small village, about 40 km from the big city of Vinnytsia, where I used to live. I came to visit my mother, because February 25 was her birthday. That morning, when it was still dark, we went outside, began to listen for sounds when about five loud explosions were heard. Fortunately they were far away from us. We spent almost the whole day at our neighbours' and we all tried to stay together, discussing the situation and reassuring each other.

Many of my friends and acquaintances started leaving Ukraine in the first days of the war. We tried to be useful, attended events in the local community. Men who had not yet been called up for service joined the ranks of the territorial defence and they set up roadblocks whilst women wove camouflage nets and prepared food. It's terrible to think about it now, but after a certain time we all got used to the fact that there was a war going on and just tried to live. I was very afraid of losing my job, because I am a single mother. I worked as a recruiter at a remote employment agency. However, a few weeks after the full-scale invasion began, all my projects were frozen.

Then the worst thing happened: our friends started dying in the war. First we lost our neighbour who was only 37 and a wonderful husband and father.

Turn over to next page

My Name is Lily

Another terrible loss was the death of my friend's only son, who would have turned 25 last October. I had thoughts of leaving Ukraine, but my mother held me back for she did not want to leave her home.

The turning point in the final decision was the attack in Vinnytsia on July 14, hitting a clinic literally 300 meters from the house where I had earlier rented an apartment. It was then that I firmly decided I would take my son and go to another country. I can't explain how desperate I was at that time, I ran out of money that I had saved earlier and I couldn't find a job. Fortunately, my friends supported me. I hesitated where exactly to go as many people I knew stayed in Germany, Poland, Slovakia and Belgium.

One of my friends went to Scotland in August under the "Homes for Ukraine" sponsorship program, and she convinced me to try to find people who would accept my son and me. Already in August I had registered on several resources and started searching on social networks. However, the search was in vain and nothing moved for 2 months. During that time I was offered a job at a local school where I taught only one student (inclusive education). I was happy to have at least some possibility of earning.

I almost gave up on finding sponsors when at the beginning of October, by the grace of God, I met wonderful people Jeff and Esther. It was the light at the end of the tunnel. From this time miracles began to happen one after another. I received my visa literally in a few weeks whilst many people waited for more than a month.

We arrived in England on November 26, where our sponsors warmly welcomed us at the airport. By the way, we did not pay for plane tickets, Jeff arranged with Opora to provide us with free seats. It is difficult to express in words how touching it was to enter their house and see the decorations in the colours of the Ukrainian flag and our photos in a family frame. From the first days of our stay in Kidderminster we felt supported, primarily from our loving hosts and their children, people in the church, neighbours and the council staff. We are very grateful for the money they gave us, things and toys for my son. Thanks to Jeff and answer to our prayers, my son was accepted into a very good local school in December.

My Name is Lily

When people ask me what my plans are for the future, I answer that staying forever in England is a very good decision, but still I have hope that the war will end soon and I will be able to return to Ukraine one day to my family and friends. That's why I want to work remotely so that I don't lose my job again if I move. I have a plan to improve my skills and study IT recruitment and English. My courses at college and online are going well. I pray to God to help me find a good job so that Artem and I can have a decent future.

I really hope that soon the suffering of the people of Ukraine will end and, by the grace of God, a bright and peaceful future awaits them. My son and I are safe now, and that is the most important thing for me as a mother.

In the meantime, I am grateful for everyone's prayers and support, particular Jennifer and Les for inspiring me to share my story with you.

Best regards

Lilia Zmirli

I'm proud to say, so far today
I've got along alright;
I have not gossiped, whined or
bragged,
Or had a single fight.

I haven't lost my temper once,
Or criticized my mate,
I have not lied, I have not cried,
Or loudly cursed my fate.

So far today I've not one time
Been grumpy or morose,
I've not been spiteful, cold or vain,
Self-centered or verbose.

But Lord, I'm going to need Your help
Throughout the hours ahead
So give me strength, Dear Lord, for
now
I'm getting out of bed.

Meeting Jesus Devotion

Why don't you spend a week simply engaging with Jesus?
Below are some scriptures for each day, a prayer to pray and in italics something
you can do off the back of the prayer.

Day 1 – Read Colossians 3:1-2

Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above,
where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above,
not on earthly things.

Jesus, thank you for your presence, your love, your grace, your forgiveness and
your example. Thank you that you're praying for me! Please lead my mind away
from the things of this world and help me to stay focused on you. Amen.

*Is there anything of this world that you just can't shake out of your mind? Call out
to Jesus today and ask Him to reveal more of His love and light to you to help focus
your mind on Him.*

Day 2 – Read Mark 9:7

Then a cloud appeared and covered them, and a voice came from the cloud:
"This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!"

God, thank you that you want to be involved in how we live our daily lives and that
you sent us your Son, Jesus Christ, to show us how to be a people who live out our
faith. Amen.

*How is God calling you to be more like Christ today? What can you do to put this
into practise?*

Day 3 – Read John 14:6

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life.
No one comes to the Father except through me".

Jesus, thank you that you are the way to live. Thank you that you lead me in truth
and thank you that as I walk with you, you bring me life. Lead me in your ways as I
step out and with all whom I meet today. Amen.

*Is there anything Jesus is asking you to do today? Pause and offer your day to Him.
Ask Him if there is anything He'd like you to do.*

Meeting Jesus Devotion

Day 4 – Read John 15:7

“If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you”.

Jesus, thank you that you want a relationship with me daily. Thank you that you want me to not visit but remain. Thank you that you know the depths of my heart and still want to live with me! Please put your desires in my heart! Amen.

What are the desires of your heart? Are they yours or His? Spend some time asking Jesus to plant His desires in your heart today.

Day 5 – Read John 13:34

“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

Lord, thank you that you love me sacrificially. Thank you that you’ve showed me not only how to live but how to love! Please show me how I need to show your love to others more. Amen.

How does Jesus love you?

Why don't you make 3 or 4 spaces today to simply give thanks for His love?

Day 6 – Read Revelation 1:7

“Look, He is coming with the clouds,”
and “every eye will see him,
even those who pierced him”;

Lord, thank you for your promises. Thank you that you are returning as King. We pray for all those who have yet to meet you. Please lead us to share your love and life with them today. Amen

Who doesn't yet believe in Jesus but needs His love today? How can you show it to them?

Day 7 – Read Acts 4:13

When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realised that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.

God, thank you that I don't need to be special to be working with you. All I need is found in Jesus and I trust you God to give me all I need to share your glory here! Amen.

Who are you going to tell about Jesus today? Who? When? How?

Bewdley's History Part 4

The Wyre Forest

The Wyre Forest is an ancient woodland and the people of Bewdley relied on the trees of the forest such as oak, elm, hazel, willow, birch and ash to make a variety of products.

Besom brooms were made from a bundle of birch cuttings and were used for sweeping homes and gardens. Whisks were small brooms made from silver birch twigs and were used for cleaning carpets.



Spale baskets were made from woven oak laths and used to carry items, the close weave meant that even powdery items could be carried

Charcoal was made in a clamp - a circular pile of oak logs, covered in hot ashes, earth and turf, which was left to smoulder for several days. Because there was little air in the clamp the wood became charred. The demand for charcoal from the Wyre Forest was high as the iron industry grew in Birmingham and the Black Country.

It reached a peak during the 18th century when cheaper methods of smelting became available and the use of charcoal died out.



Bewdley's History Part 4



BARKING PEEL

Tannin from oak bark was used to turn skins and hides into leather. Bark peelers were almost always women who would work in groups of up to 40. The bark was usually removed when the sap was rising between April and June. The bark was levered off the trunk with a “barking iron”.

There were many tanneries in Bewdley. The photograph on the right shows bark being delivered to tanneries on Severnside South.

Many of these traditional crafts died out by the 1940s but the forest is still vital to the economy of the area and is a popular place for recreational visitors.



You can watch and listen to the stories of people who have worked in the forest in the Wyre Forest Activities Area

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Bewdley's History Part 4

Photos of the River Severn flooding in Bewdley before barriers were erected.



Load Street
from the bridge
in last century

Load Street towards
the bridge.



Severn Side
North



As I started to receive articles for this edition some of the flood barriers were being erected again. At the same time I had received pictures of the Severn floods in Bewdley of the last century from Bewdley Museum.

The photo on the left I took of a plaque by the river near the bottom of Dog Lane indicating the height reached of the floods waters.

It is 76 years since the 1947 floods which were some of the worst experienced in Bewdley. The cause lay in the preceding months when a weather front, more common to Scandinavia, hit Britain for a couple of months. In February the temperature never rose above 0.7°C, and there were frequent snow falls.

In early March warmer stormy weather hit southern England causing a thaw. This then slowly moved northwards. As the thaw reached the Midlands the snow melted into the rivers, filling them up with the accumulation of the past couple of months. It was exacerbated by a storm, followed by rainfall way above the March average, putting even more pressure on the rivers and sodden land.

Les the Ed

- What do you call a magistrate with no fingers? 'Justice Fingers.'
- My wife just found out I replaced our bed with a trampoline. She hit the ceiling!
- Light travels faster than sound, which is the reason that some people appear bright before you hear them speak.
- Today a man knocked on my door and asked for a small donation toward the local swimming pool. I gave him a glass of water.
- I'm reading a book about anti-gravity. It's impossible to put down.
- 'Doctor, there's a patient on line one that says he's invisible.'
'Well, tell him I can't see him right now.'
- Last night my girlfriend was complaining that I never listen to her... or something like that.
- I just got kicked out of a secret cooking society. I spilled the beans.
- Two wifi engineers got married. The reception was fantastic.
- Just got fired from my job as a set designer. I left without making a scene.

Bringing Hope and Belonging to Families across the UK

I have now worked and volunteered for Safe Families for almost 5 years. If I'm not in church, it is because I'm out speaking at churches across Birmingham and the Black County about Safe Families.



It is a great privilege to witness the ways in which the wider church across the UK, including Riverside Elim, is transforming lives through this ministry. Many of you may know a little about how individuals have supported isolated families and how as a church we have supported practically. However, you may not know about the impact of Safe Families nationally.

Many churches want to meet the needs of people in their community in a meaningful and practical way, but don't always know how to reach them. Safe Families is an organisation that equips churches to plug this gap.

Originally set up in the United States in 2003, Safe Families UK arm was opened in 2012, and works mainly with local authorities, who refer families and children to them in need of support. Safe Families then contacts churches in a relevant location to establish a partnership and to train and support members who can offer hope and belonging to a family.

We currently support more than 5000 volunteers from more than 1500 churches and community groups across the UK. Over 20,000 children have been supported by the UK church. As a result, the charity has seen a decrease of the flow of children into care of between nine and 16 per cent.

Locally the church supports over 300 families across the West Midlands. It is remarkable that families can go from feeling unloved and unnoticed to having a sense of belonging and often becoming part of the church community.

The most significant issue that families experience is loneliness and isolation which affects both mental and physical health. Many churches are already ideally placed to help families by offering friendship, hospitality, and belonging, so that people feel seen, heard, and understood. It is truly a good news story that is being repeated across our region and the UK.

Bringing Hope and Belonging to Families across the UK



The three main ways of volunteering include being a family friend, which involves befriending and coming alongside parents and children; a host family, which provides accommodation for children for a night or two for short periods; or a resource friend who can provide useful items or skills such as cooking or gardening. Others can become a prayer partner by signing up to the

prayer request email. We believe in a God who can do immeasurably more than we either ask or imagine and through these small acts of love we have seen incredible transformations.

Every week we see lives transformed by Christ's love in action. Lives like that of a mum Natalie with two small children. They had been rehomed having escaped an abusive relationship. We put her in touch with her family friend who supported her on the phone and built her confidence. We found out that she was not able to let her children play outside as she had no fence and the neighbours had aggressive dogs. Safe Families resource friends spent a couple of hours blessing this mum by making her garden safe.

This witness led the mum to ask us to put her in touch with a local church as she wanted to experience the same love she was being shown. This family are now part of this local Elim church, the Mum Natalie has a job & she is supporting others in the church baking cakes for people to cheer them up!

If you would like to find out about being a family friend, a host family, a prayer partner or a financial support then please get in touch with me!

Helen Hoarle

helenhoarle@safefamilies.uk

An extract from the daily devotional book

Thanksgiving

The Power to transform your life

By Stella Doggett

In the early days of the charismatic movement, we used to sing a song based on the AV translation of the Magnificat - Mary's song. It started with the words that always puzzled me 'My soul doth magnify the Lord ...'. I understood the sentiment but I didn't think you can make God any bigger than He was. So why magnify Him?

The penny dropped recently when I realised that when we magnify something, we don't make things bigger, but we put a lens in front of our eyes in order to see better all the intricate detail not seen with the naked eye. If we think for example about viewing an insect or flower, magnifying it is actually about enlarging the image of what is there in order to see it more clearly. Magnifying something enables us to see it in all its detail and magnificence.

Magnification can work negatively too. Worry for instance - something at which we are often good - magnifies our problems. As we ruminate on and fret about our difficulties, they can seem larger. By focusing on them, we can see them as overwhelming.

I was encouraged recently by a quote from Mark Buchanan's book 'The Rest of God'. It said '**Thankfulness is a secret passageway into a room you can't find any other way... It allows us to discover the rest of God - those dimensions of God's world, God's presence, God's character that are hidden, always, from the thankless.**'

Yes, I thought, that is what I'm realising. Giving thanks magnifies the goodness and kindness of God. Thanksgiving acts as our magnifying glass to help us see those dimensions of God's character that are hidden to the ungrateful eye.

During these days when one crisis after another seems to hit the world, the news media often place that bad news under the microscope. We must therefore, while not burying our heads in the sand, choose carefully what we are magnifying.

As we continue with our theme of thanksgiving, let us take some time to 'magnify' an aspect of God that we need at this time, and let us give Him our heartfelt thanks that His 'goodness and mercy will follow us all the days of our lives.' (Psalm 23:6)

It is worth noting that the word 'follow' in this last verse of Psalm 23 is not 'sneaking after you in the shadows' kind of following, nor is it the kind of following that arrives too late!!

It is rather the very active 'pursuing after you' kind of following. Goodness and mercy are pursuing you and you won't be able to shake them off, because it is the declared activity of the Spirit of the Lord Himself.

Activation...

Let us thank God for this amazing truth about His love and intention towards us. If we can look back, recognise and thank Him for all the ways in which this has been true in our lives in the past, we will be putting a magnifying lens on Him, and so be building our faith for the future. We'll know that however uncertain life looks, He will be there in it with us, with is goodness and mercy in pursuit.

© From Stella Doggett's book Thanksgiving

Josies Picture **Don't Underestimate Your Influence**

While walking along the river, something falls from one of the trees into the water. It instantly makes a perfect circle spreading out into circular ripples that seem to go on and on. It is fascinating to watch such a far reaching result of a seemingly insignificant action.

God is showing me that absolutely everything I do or say has repercussions, both here on earth and in eternity. It is essential that I am very careful, therefore, how I live my life.

"Be very careful, then, how you live - not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil." (Ephesians 5:15)

Part 4. How Well do you know your Bible?

Question 7

What is the name of the silversmith who manufactured shrines for a goddess?

Question 8

Who was the grandson of Mahseiah?

The answers will be in issue 16.

Answers to February 2023 Issue on How Well do you know your Bible

Question 5. What was the name of PHANUEL'S daughter?

Answer

Luke 2:36. **Anna**, a prophet, was in the Temple. She was the daughter of Phanuel from the tribe of Asher and she was very old.

Question 6. What is the name of the individual Paul stated "For he risked his life for the work of Christ and was at the point of death while doing for me what you couldn't do from far away"?

Answer

Philippians 2:27. **Epaphroditus**. Paul wrote 'And he was certainly ill; in fact, he almost died. But God had mercy on him-and also on me, so I would not have one sorrow after another.

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