

contact

CHICHESTER BAPTIST CHURCH

AUG/SEPT 2019

Big Decisions

We recently purchased a new kitchen table. We measured our available space and examined the multitude of different options. We compared the table of every friend's house we entered, and spent hours researching options online and reading reviews. Having found an apparently high-quality table at a bargain price we visited personally to examine this new table before committing to buying it. Did the description match the reality? Was it robust, strong and good quality? Was it personally what we were looking for and needed?

The table is now a central part of our family life; the place where we gather to eat, chat, play and welcome guests. This important decision was made following a serious examination. How much more important still is it for us to examine life, the unseen things of our hearts, faith and the big questions of the universe?

If we fail to examine life we can miss out on the life in all its fullness that Jesus offered (John 10:10). So let me encourage you to examine your life afresh and not simply go through the motions of everyday life without personal examination. Even more central to our kitchen table in my life, is Jesus on whom my whole life is based.

CBC is full of individuals from different backgrounds examining the claims of history's central character, Jesus Christ. Some are new to us and beginning to ask insightful questions, some personal and some more intellectual. Some are discovering their own need for forgiveness and a saviour. Others in examining our world are left thinking there must be more to life than merely what we see. Still others in our community have discovered that the Christian faith matches in reality what it appears to offer.

Through Jesus we can know personal forgiveness, a relationship with a God who loves us all and gives us a sense of purpose in life. The evidence for this is strong, robust and extensive, and backed up by many personal recommendations, recommendations that you can hear more about by joining us at one of our services or gatherings.

We would love to invite you to examine your own life, and discover the great purpose and life in all its fullness that Jesus offers. You are welcome to come and explore life and faith here at Chichester Baptist Church any Sunday, 10am with a children and youth programme, or 6:30pm for a lively and welcoming service.



Andy Morgan

LOVE, REALLY?

Jesus spoke a lot about love, but putting his words into practice is no easy matter

I wonder what you'd say if I asked you who you love. Maybe you'd mention your family or your friends. Maybe if we dug deeper, we'd share how sometimes we struggle to love these people and how we've let them down at times. On one occasion, Jesus challenged us to look beyond our friends when he said, "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you."¹ But how can we love our enemies, when sometimes we hardly love those who care about us the most?

The Bible tells us "God is love"². So, if we want to know how to love, we need to know God. This passage says God showed his love for us by sending his son to pay the price for our sins, so that we might live through him. Jesus also showed us the Father's love through the way

he lived. He made time for outcasts like prostitutes, lepers and corrupt tax collectors, who the religious leaders distanced themselves from. Many people were opposed to Jesus' radical love, yet he prayed for and even died for those who were crucifying him. So how can we follow his example?



On another occasion³, Jesus said that he is the vine and we are the branches; we are to remain in him, and he will remain in us. Another translation puts it like this: "Make your home in me just as I do in you." Jesus says this is the only way we will bear fruit; we can't go it alone when it comes to following his teaching. Instead, we need to invite Jesus to make his home in us and let him lead us. We need to rest in God's presence and cultivate a relationship with him. In the Bible, love is listed among the fruits of the Spirit⁴. We will therefore only be able to love our enemies as a result of God's presence at work in us through the Holy Spirit.

Even when we inevitably fail to love, God's love for us won't change and, because of Jesus, we are made right with him and can keep coming back to him when we mess up. Jesus doesn't invite us to live out love alone, but to depend on the three-in-one God, who embodies love, has shown us the way and will live in us as our guide.

Sophie Hawker

¹Luke 6, ²1 John 4, ³John 15, ⁴Galatians 5

A SHORT LIFE

Nature is fascinating in its variety and, on occasions, in its brevity, and one relatively rare species has a shorter life than most – the stag beetle.

This summer, I have been following with interest the various reports of stag beetles on the Parklands Residents Association Facebook page. The beetle's greatest enemy is the unsuspecting boot of a passer-by, and my one encounter with a female stag beetle this year was in the middle of the pavement along St. Paul's Road. I prolonged her life by a few hours at least by moving her to the wall!

The stag beetle begins its life as an egg laid in some rotting wood, and there it will stay for up to

seven years, whereupon it emerges for a brief summer before its untimely death by human or natural causes.

Sometimes it amazes me to think of the extraordinary lengths a creature like a stag beetle or mayfly will go to for the shortest of lives. All that time preparing for life, and then such a short life!

But the value of a life is not measured by its duration.

You are perhaps familiar with the story of the thief on the cross¹. He wasn't in a position to offer Jesus a lifetime of service, only a few hours' worth of trust. But that was



enough for Jesus. Jesus doesn't place a value on us based on our usefulness or expected years. For him, every life is precious – even the shortest life.

¹Luke 23:39-43

I HAD NO IDEA

I wonder if you have ever driven or walked past our church building and wondered to yourself, "What goes on in there on a Sunday?" Even people who have been inside for a community event or Residents Meeting can be surprised at what they find. In no particular order, here are eight things that (depending on your experience) you might not have expected from one of our Sunday services ...



There are lots of people

Typically, 400 people will attend one of our two services on a Sunday, of which 100 would be children. The number of people in Britain who say they have no religion has apparently increased by 46% over the past seven years¹, but many people are still searching for, and finding, God.

There's variety

There's a misconception that church is for 'the older generation', but visitors often comment on the spread of ages of those who come. On Sunday mornings our younger people leave us after the first 10-15 minutes for a range of age-specific sessions led by a fantastic team of volunteers.

It's friendly

It's possible to be anonymous in a crowd, and a few people 'slip in, and slip out'. But those who stay behind for a little while should find us friendly and welcoming. If you don't, let us know!

It's engaging

There's a myth out there that the YouTube generation can't pay attention to any one thing for more than five minutes. Our experience is that they will listen to and engage with a 25-minute talk because it's relevant to their lives and not boring!

It's modern

Perhaps you'd expect this given the relatively young age of our church building, particularly our main worship area. But we try to be culturally relevant and adapt where it's helpful to do so.

It's traditional

We still maintain that Jesus is the Son of God and that the Bible is God's inspired revelation. We don't just take that on trust though – we find compelling arguments for these things (and more), and will share these at appropriate times in our talks or on Alpha courses.

There are no rules

Let me explain, before you get too excited! You know what it's like when you are getting ready to go somewhere new, and you don't know what to wear, what to say, when to sit down or stand up ...? In that sense there are no rules. People come in, wearing what they wear on the other days of the week, take a seat, and the rest is explained as we go along. There's no 'code' to learn beforehand.

We're normal

Well, most of us! We are the teachers, carpenters, doctors, shop assistants, farmers, company executives, football fans, bookworms, gardeners, thrill seekers, introverts and extroverts that you meet most days of your life. And anyway, what does normal mean?!

So next time you are walking or driving past and wondering to yourself, "What goes on in there on a Sunday?" – why not find out for yourself?² You might be surprised!

¹Office of National Statistics

²Our services run for up to 90 minutes and start at 10am and 6.30pm

ONE thing



If there's one thing I've learnt, it's that blessings come in many guises!

About 18 months ago, my husband Steven received a shock diagnosis of a serious heart condition that required urgent and intricate surgery and seven days in hospital. Steven has always been fit, healthy and active and so it came as a bolt out of the blue.



But so many blessings flowed from this situation. He was looked after by highly skilled and caring doctors and nurses and post-operatively there were no complications. On the day of his operation, I spoke to his nurse on the ward who said, "If you wake up in the night and want to phone, whatever time it is, just phone!"

We were so very grateful to be surrounded by many friends who showed us love and practical help in many ways. One loaned us an

amazing 'rise and recline' chair. There were many visitors with flowers, phone calls, and offers to help.

To top it all, our three sons were all able to be there for us. Their normal lives are very busy, but this all occurred over the Christmas period and they were off work!

Through it all we felt an amazing, God-given peace. I wasn't anxious about Steven or about being on my own, and slept peacefully.

It is a wonderful blessing to know that when we do have to face difficult and rather frightening situations, we do not have to face them alone – our faithful God is there with us through them all. And so often these really difficult times turn out to be a blessing from God.

Janet Jones

sunday services

10am Morning service with children's and youth groups and crèche.

Please join us for tea or coffee and a chat after this service.

6.30pm Evening service

Decisions, decisions ...

Of the myriad of 'productivity tools' that I have come across in my personal and working life, the Eisenhower Matrix Diagram (although I only discovered its name recently) is one that has stuck with me.

Its essence is simple. Distinguish between what is important and what is urgent. If something is both important and urgent, then **do it**. If it is neither important nor urgent, then why are you doing it? Drop it, or **eliminate it**.

The mistake we often make is not acting on what is important but not urgent. We say to ourselves, "I'll get around to it sometime ..." – but sometime never comes.

Instead, the smart thing to do is to schedule in when we will do that important but non-urgent task – **plan it**.



Many of the themes in this edition of Contact are, for most of us, in the "important but not urgent" category. Wrestling with the "big questions of the universe" (front article), learning how to love our enemies, or trying a Sunday service – none of these are shouting at us with urgency. But who knows when we or one of our loved ones will receive a shock diagnosis? Who knows how much longer we have to live?

"I'll get around to those things sometime," we say to ourselves. But the smart thing is not to leave it to chance, but to plan what action we will take.

THE DAY THE CRAYONS QUIT

COME AND JOIN US

for a fun, all-age Sunday morning service at 10am on 25th August at CBC, followed by a picnic on Parklands Green



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