

Battle Baptist Church

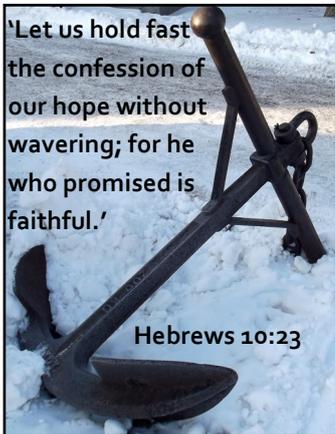
Being Transformed Together



25th April 2021



'Your unfailing love, O Lord, is as vast as the heavens; your faithfulness reaches beyond the clouds.'
Psalm 36:5



'Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering; for he who promised is faithful.'

Hebrews 10:23

'Enlarge the place of your tent, stretch your tent curtains wide, do not hold back; lengthen your cords, strengthen your stakes.'

Isaiah 54:2

'This is what the Lord says, he who made the earth, the Lord who formed it and established it - the Lord is his name: "Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know."'

Jeremiah 33:2,3

A new season?

Over the last two or three years, as a church we have found ourselves reflecting on the message of John 15 at various points and in a number of ways. The passage begins with Jesus declaring:

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful."

In 'An Unhurried Leader' by Alan Fadling, the author recounts a story of a friend he has, a farmer who often consults for other farmers in California's Central Valley. His aim was to help improve the health and increase the productivity of his client farmers' crops. On one occasion, a large almond grower, concerned about his crops, asked the consultant to visit. When he looked at the orchard, the consultant said to the farmer, "You haven't been pruning these trees well enough. They aren't going to last you more than a few more years unless you do. If you prune them really well this season, your productivity is going to go down significantly in the short term, but these trees will live a lot longer and produce a lot more in the long term" (page 97).

Reminded of this truth, I'm conscious that the challenge is not only to prune effectively, but to know when to put the secateurs down.

As a family of followers of Jesus, pruning can be self-implemented; something we invite and in which we play an active and purposeful role. We can sometimes knowingly allow pruning to take place, even though it is likely to be painful. On other occasions though, it may be something we rally against at all costs, whether through fear of

the cost involved or the sheer uncertainty of where it will lead us. Again though, I believe the challenge is not simply in beginning the process, but to know when it is over.

Now the pruning Jesus speaks of is a lifelong process. None of us is the 'finished product', perfect in every way: as within any garden, the pruning is an ongoing, seasonal, and vital activity. Yet there are undoubtedly times when a little more is required perhaps than usual - such as with the almond grower.

On Thursday evening I shared our plans for September, and in particular the relaunching of our Sunday Gatherings. Increasingly I believe this will mark the beginning of a new season for us, one that will see much growth. Not because of anything I will do as such, or any of us for that matter, but because God 'the gardener' is about life and hope and fruitfulness in and through each one of us.

The last year or so has in so many ways been a time of enforced pruning. As Mark reminded us so powerfully last Sunday though, it's what we do next, our response as God leads us on, that is key. Not ignoring all that we've been through, but keeping our eyes fixed on what God has ahead. To this end this coming Thursday we're gathering to pray. Whatever the future holds, it is vital we draw close to and receive from God. He is our guide, resource, resilience and strength in and through all that is to come.

May we be expectant for God to lead us onward, may we have humility to heed His direction, and may we embark on the next phase in the adventure that is the life of discipleship together as his family.

Ed Jones

PRAYER POINTERS

Myanmar

There are 4.4m Christians in Myanmar. Since the military seized power in February, life has become even more risky for minority groups. Pray that those who have left Buddhism to follow Jesus can find fellowship. Pray for peace.

COVID-19

Pray for the situation in India where a huge second wave of new positive cases threatens to overwhelm hospitals. May leaders in politics and health care find effective ways to address shortages of beds, oxygen and medicines.

For our fellowship

Please pray for those in our fellowship who are recovering from surgery or other hospital treatments. For good sleep and a sense of peace. That those with long term health issues may be resilient mentally, emotionally and spiritually.

NEWSLETTER

25th April 2021

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Being Transformed Together

Battle Baptist Church is part of Life with Hope Trust; registered charity 1134288, Mount Street, Battle,

East Sussex TN33 0EG.

- Website: www.battlebaptistchurch.org.uk
- Telephone and answerphone (01424) 774825 • Email: office@battlebaptistchurch.org.uk
- Caterpillar Preschool direct telephone line:

Church maintenance issues:
zionpremisesteam@gmail.com



NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

COVID-19 update: The Baptist Union has confirmed that it is now permissible to meet at the church for prayer and Bible Study in a COVID-secure way. This means wearing a face mask, keeping your distance, washing hands, ventilating rooms etc. Sunday Worship will continue to be broadcast live: please contact the office if you would like to book a seat in the chapel.

Children and Young People: Our regular Zoom meetings resume this Sunday, 25th April. Chosta will restart on 10th May.

Crèche and Sunday Club: Potentially, we may all be able to meet together without any social restrictions from Sunday 27th June. Tim is assessing whether we will be able to offer activities for children during part of the morning gatherings from this date until the summer holidays. If you would be happy to act as a volunteer at either the Crèche or Sunday Club, please contact Tim to discuss further. Thank you!

Crowhurst Christian Healing Centre is reopening its café, Howard's Well, on 4th May, from 8.30am - 3.30pm. There will be an optional public act of worship at 10am each day in the large chapel. Residential bookings are available from 18th May.

South East Baptist Women's Ministry is organising a weekend retreat from 15th - 17th October: 'Sitting at Jesus' feet.' Contact Jo in the office for more details.

WORLD VIEW

Iraq: Praise God for not one but two encouraging developments in Iraq. Christmas Day has been made a national holiday and a committee has been set up to return stolen properties to their rightful Christian owners. Meanwhile, influential Shia cleric and politician, Muqtada-al-Sadr, has created a committee to enable Iraqi believers to return to their homes. (Source: Open Doors)

Prayer meetings

Dates for your diary! We will gather for prayer on 29th April, 8th June and 8th July, from 7.30pm.

Family Service

Our first family service of 2021 will take place in the chapel on 23rd May at 4pm. Contact Tim to book a place.

24 Hours of Prayer

Join us for 24 hours of prayer from 9am on Saturday 22nd May through to Sunday 23rd. More details to follow.

A guide to personal devotions

While we are not meeting collectively, why not use this guide for your personal devotions?

Pause, be still and invite God to meet you afresh, filling you by His Holy Spirit.

Pray giving thanks for all God's goodness

Worship

If you have a Worship CD, DVD or the means to go online and listen to something why not play a worship song, you don't have to sing along if you're not comfortable doing so or can't: simply listen to the words

Read a Psalm

The Psalms are a great source of hope and help, written in good times and bad. Pick one; read it through slowly. Pause. Read it through again.

What is God saying?

Give space allowing time for God to speak. What is he saying? Is he speaking to you personally or is it a message for the wider church?

Prayers for others

1) Continue to pray over the pandemic. The Baptist Union rightly encourages us to play a part in being a Beacon of Hope at the moment. They remind us that our neighbours and communities need love, hope, peace and an eternal perspective and we can offer this in abundance, in the name of Jesus (2 Corinthians 4:18).

2) Pray for different ministries of the church, even though they are not meeting at this time. Think of the different people who usually attend and the reasons and aims of the activities.

3) Using the church members' directory take a page a day, and pray through the names.

Lord's Prayer

The Lord's Prayer is a great resource that Jesus gave us.

Grace

Why not conclude by saying the grace, as we often do when we gather together, only picture those you would usually be looking at, as you say it?