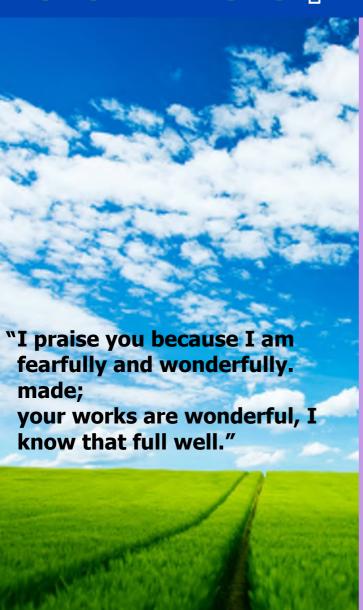
connect



Inside this issue:

All God's Children

Small Choices Can Make Big Differences

The Oasis Café

Essex Savers

Baptismal Stories

Psalm 23

This Summer's Must Have Read

Pray for Europe

Central Baptist Church,

Victoria Road South, Chelmsford, Essex, CM1 1LN 01245 264163

All God's Children



y parents gave up their jobs in the UK during the last five years of their working lives to go to Addis Ababa in Ethiopia to work with a Christian charity called SIM (Serving in Mission). So far, they have been working there for two and a half years as a teacher and a doctor (see philandchris.com for their blog). In March, I went to visit them to see what life was like...

Poverty is something you never get used to. Everywhere you go in Addis there are people; hundreds, thousands of people. There isn't an empty street and when driving around there is so much to absorb. Of course not everyone is poor but there are so many people living hand to mouth that you cannot help but realise how much we have in the West. Due to my experiences of the developing world in both Zimbabwe and Sri Lanka, I wasn't surprised or even shocked by what I saw; just saddened.

As this was my first time visiting the developing world as a mum, I saw it all from a new perspective. I couldn't stop staring at the children - noticing how they were living, thinking of my own children

(aged three and one) and being overwhelmed by the contrast. Here are a few snapshot moments that stuck with me.

At the Schools

Being a teacher by profession, Mum arranged for me to visit three contrasting schools. An Ethiopian school that takes some of the poorest Ethiopian children run by Ethiopians; RICE - a school for Ethiopian children but set up and run by two English missionaries; and an international school – Bingham Academy where mum works.

The children in Lemma's school were in an overcrowded classroom with a blackboard, mostly bare walls and maybe one or two books. They sat up straight, crossed their arms and loudly repeated in unison the words written on the board with great sincerity. Yet when we walked in they acted with a familiar curiosity for an

unexpected visitor and they performed with gusto to earn the praise of their honoured guests.

The children in RICE were playing in the playground on rope swings, climbing frames and running around just as you would see in a British playground (albeit with a bit less "Health and Safety"). They were keen to please, testing the boundaries, exploring and making sense of the world around them.

The children in Mum's class at Bingham were excited by their new role-play area and dressing up clothes, fascinated by the tiny legs growing on the classroom tadpoles, and keen to include me in their role-play in the sand pit. They came from such varied backgrounds and cultures but yet were investigating the world around them with fascination, excitement, experimentation and wide-eyed innocence.

On the Streets

It seems that many Ethiopian children have a level of independence that would fill most mums I know with dread. Babies are carried around by the mother and once they can walk they seem to be looked after or watched by the older children. I saw numerous 5-6 year olds with a 1-2 year old clinging to their backs. Children just wander around or play on the roads with no adults anywhere to be seen.

We stopped on one journey in the middle of the countryside half way up a mountain to see a view and stretch our legs. Within minutes five children of varying ages appeared from different directions to watch us, hoping for some small change. Small children are expected to drive large herds of cattle or goats to pasture down the road with no adults in sight. I don't think I will ever forget the image of a small boy who couldn't have been much older than 3 appearing by the side of the road as we sped past – completely naked, and brandishing a gun that was bigger than he was.

(Continued on page 3)



In the Tribes

As part of my travels around the south of the country with Mum and Dad we visited four different tribal villages and a couple of markets. This was the part of Ethiopia I found most shocking - it was like nothing I had ever experienced before; like going back in time. There were people fashioning tools out of stone by bashing them repeatedly on rocks and people grinding their own grain by rubbing it between two bits of stone. They sleep with calves in their houses for warmth at night and endure gruelling rituals such as bull jumping and stick fighting when they come of age. Each tribe we visited was different but in each, the children made the most impact on me.

- In the Mursi tribe there were three little naked boys, one of who must have only been 1 year old, who had found a metal hoop. They were happily throwing it between them and rolling it along the muddy ground for the duration of our visit.
- In the Karo tribe, who live overlooking the banks of the Omo River, there was a small child who had found a bit of sack. She laid it on the floor, put a stone on top, found a small amount of grain and found another stone and was pretending to grind the grain just like the women around her were doing. Role-play at its best enabling the child to make sense of the world around her.



- In the Hamar tribe a child was encouraged to come into the hut we were exploring to meet us and she acted with the same reticence I would expect from my two. Other children as we walked around the village would come close with curiosity and then run away giggling.
- The children in the Konso village wore western clothes which were very grubby and full of holes. They often had streaming noses and most had no shoes yet they followed us around with great enthusiasm and excitement. One little girl clung tightly to my finger all the way through the village as though she had known me all her life.

Each child I met and encountered strengthened my

belief that all children everywhere are of equal value whatever their circumstances. In the Bible King David wrote some poetry that describes my relationship with my creator before I was even born:

Psalm 139:13-16:

For you created my inmost being;

you knit me together in my mother's womb.

I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.

My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth.

Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

This is true of each and every one of the children I met and observed in Ethiopia. God made every one of them special. He knows them inside and out. He knows their circumstances and loves them exactly the same as he loves me and my children.

I spent most of my trip wondering what my response to all this should be. I wanted to give to all the children I met. I thought about how much my children have and thought that just one of their toys or outfits or books would give these poor children so much joy. However, as a tourist giving money or toys or gifts encourages children to prefer to wait on the streets for more rather than go to school. I felt helpless to give the clean water, electricity, medical care I so often enjoy.

I have concluded that I can sponsor an Ethiopian child though the charity Compassion. I met families whose opportunities and quality of life were richly blessed by sponsorship. I can support the work of SIM which aims to share the good news of Jesus Christ with people – the greatest gift of all. And I can pray – God knows these children. He made them. He loves them.

Hannah Rodger

We're on Facebook!





Why not join our virtual community?

Follow us to receive regular news about what's happening at CBC.

Small Choices Can Make Big Differences



o you remember what you were doing on Monday 29th February? If you had been drinking tea in the restaurant at the Quadrant stores you would have been listening to Patrick Kaberia Malthaura a tea grower from Kenya who had been brought over to the UK as part of Fairtrade Fortnight. It was a feel good experience. Although tea is a big multi-national industry many tea workers work in poor conditions and struggle to survive on meagre wages.

Patrick's story showed that it doesn't have to be that way.

He grows tea in the Great Rift Valley where the tea farmers have formed a co-operative and bought the local tea factory. The co-operative is run democratically and this ensures that the farmers and factory workers receive adequate wages and have safe working conditions. Because of this they are able to sell their tea under the Fairtrade Mark which means that they receive a guaranteed price for it and also an extra amount known as the social premium which must be used for the benefit of the whole community.

Patrick explained what an important difference this has made to his entire

community. Those involved in producing the tea are now able to look after their own families properly while the wider community decides how to spend the social premium in a way that improves life for everyone. Their school was overcrowded and so the social premium has paid for new classrooms. The nearest hospital was 26 kilometres away and so the social premium has paid for local medical facilities.

Success breeds success.

They have managed to obtain matching funding from the Kenyan government because officials were impressed with what they were doing on their own initiative. The community is also benefiting in less obvious ways. The area is starting to suffer from climate change with less reliable rainfall. So the community is also using this extra money to uproot the eucalyptus trees which early European settlers planted for wood because these trees are too thirsty. In their place they are planting native trees which demand less water.

However, at the end of the talk it emerged that only 3% of Patrick's tea is actually marketed under the Fairtrade Mark and actually generates the social premium. The rest of the tea is simply sent to auction.

Here it is bundled up with tea that has not been produced under Fairtrade standards but may in fact reflect poor pay and poor working conditions. Patrick

can't sell more of his tea under the Fairtrade Mark simply because there isn't enough demand for it. Fairtrade tea is still

only a tiny part of the tea market.

The problem is that most of us shop through the supermarkets. The four biggest supermarkets in the UK account for over 70% of grocery sales. Supermarkets did start to stock Fairtrade tea but it is now beginning to disappear from the shelves. It's a vicious circle.

Fairtrade teas don't have the advertising clout of the big multi-national brands and so it is harder for them to get onto the supermarket shelves. It also means that initial sales are

often slow and so Fairtrade teas are the first to be de-listed and taken off the shelves when supermarkets launch a price war to increase their profits. Once the tea disappears from the supermarkets, sales

continue to fall making it impossible for the Fairtrade tea to get back onto the supermarket shelves.

Patrick's tea is marketed under the brand name Cafedirect and it used to be fairly easy to find this in any major supermarket. Now you can only buy it in Sainsbury's or the Oxfam bookshop. In fact I was really taken aback recently to discover on a visit to Asda that there was not a single packet of Fairtrade tea on their shelves or indeed a single packet of Fairtrade coffee. Of course some might say that this is inevitable. Businesses exist only to make money. People want cheap food and supermarkets are there to supply it.

Yet, cheap food comes at a hidden price. There is a human cost. Small-scale farmers produce 75% of the world's food supply and make up 50% of the world's hungriest

(Continued on page 7)



Small-scale farmers produce

and make up 50% of the

world's hungriest people.

75% of the world's food supply

people. We will never solve the problem of hunger in a world full of food till we are prepared to pay people like Patrick a fair day's pay for their produce. What is more, unfair trade fuels crime. Farmers who cannot get a living wage for growing legitimate crops are often tempted to grow drugs for criminal gangs. Or else in despair they abandon their land and fall into the hands of the trafficking gangs who promise them a new life in a rich country where everyone has enough to eat.

We cannot solve the problems of world poverty by putting all the poor farmers into rich countries. There isn't enough room and even if there was who would be left to grow the food that we take for granted in our supermarkets? Yet, as Patrick's story shows, farmers are willing and able to improve their lives. Patrick's community has done a lot with a little by selling just three percent of their tea on Fairtrade terms. How much more can they do if we all seek out Fairtrade tea when we go shopping and buy it! Small choices can make big differences.

Gill Parker

The CBC Fairtrade stall is open on the third Sunday of each month after the morning and evening services and also on Tuesdays in term-time between 10.30am and 2pm.

You can also order Traidcraft products direct from traidcraft.co.uk

The Oasis Cafe

The Oasis cafe has been running in the church for over 20 years in various formats. After a full kitchen refurbishment we are please to say that we have again opened the doors to the café to serve tea/coffee and cakes Tuesday to Friday, 10:30 to 1:30pm for the next two and half months (until the school summer holidays).

The café was originally set up as a community project and that is still the vision we have. It is in a quiet but friendly environment where people can come in with no pressure as to how long they stay. There is no loud music, so conversation is easy. Each day we have a team of volunteers who are there to serve you refreshments and join in your conversation if you wish.

We believe that this makes it a special place where you can meet friends and catch up on news or even make new friends. We welcome people from all walks of life and would like to get to know our neighbours better.

We look forward to seeing you and to enjoy having time to get to know you better and develop friendships.

Essex Savers

ssex Savers is a credit union which we run on ethical rules. Our main aim is to teach people to save for a "rainy day", especially the young people. Joining is easy with no reference to credit history and you can save anything from £1. a week/month, up to a total of £15,000.

One of our main accounts is a budget account where you can have your wages/benefits paid into and we have a credit card which works the same as a debit card - this is similar to a normal bank account. Then we can arrange for money to be set aside for Christmas, school fees, holidays etc. For some people we pay their rent.

We also arrange loans; a short term loan is for three to six months (similar to a pay day loan). Emergency loans can be arranged at very short notice often taking only hours. Our loan term does not exceed five years with the majority under three years. We lend



anything from £50 into thousands according to your savings.

We also help people set up a business or help them with loans to expand their business.

Most of our time is helping out people with social problems, those who have lost their jobs, had a change in their benefit payments, or received unexpected bills. Many of these referrals come from the Citizens Advice Bureau or Job Centre, otherwise it is word of mouth, by people who have been helped and are grateful.

We cover the whole of Essex and are trying to make a difference in our community.

Ann Dixon

This year the theme of **Holiday Club** is 'Castles and Knights' and we will be exploring what the Bible says about the armour of God.

Starting on Monday 25th July at 10:00am the club runs for five mornings. Each session ends at approximately 12:15pm, except on Friday when relatives and friends are invited to join the children at 12pm for an hour for the grand finale. All primary school children (including those finishing year 6 and four year olds who



have already attended a year of reception) are welcome to attend.

Visit *centralbaptistchelmsford.org* for further information.

On Easter Sunday four friends were baptised. Here are their stories:

Damilola

I was born and raised in a Christian home. For as long as I can remember this has been my way of life.

The time to leave home for university came. I was so far away for the first time, all by myself, young and I got carried away, I got lost in all the distractions of life. I was so far from God, and my actions further from his word.

Somewhere along the line I lost my way. The person I once was or was meant to be was so far away. I could not recognise the person looking back in the mirror.

And as time passed this filled me with such horror. A sinner I was; undeserving of love I was sure; worthy of retribution of course; unforgivable, I could not deny.

I felt like I was drowning, and the ceiling kept falling on me.

There came a time when I thought things could not be any worse, and like they say the definition of insanity is doing the same things and expecting a different result.

I sought to find a different way, and I hoped the Lord was not too far away.

I could not apologise and seek his mercy enough that I felt unworthy for all I was seeking. I opted to make a new covenant with God to mark the beginning of a new year in many areas of my life. A promise that I will be better and try my best to do better in every way, to reconnect and rediscover what I had lost with God; and all I asked was that he take the wheel on my life in every aspect and allow me to find myself and my purpose.

Days passed and I started to notice differences. The things I thought I wanted and weren't given I started to see why. I began to see that I got better things than I could have imagined. I found faith and acceptance like never before.

To think that someone like me who I saw as unworthy was given a second chance, was forgiven, accepted and loved despite all my wrong doings and neglect. This discovery opened up my heart in a way I never thought was possible and I am glad to say I have never looked back.

Divine

I was born in a Christian family and I have followed the Christian faith since I was born.

My journey as a Christian is not influenced by my parents, but started two years ago.

Two years ago, my Mum was put in the hospital, this made me draw close to God as an individual. (Continued from page 9)

I saw myself praying and thanking God for all he has done.

When I could have been selfish, the Bible guided me to be self-less.

I tried to understand what God wanted his children (me) to do.

Paula

When I was young, my parents sent me to an evangelical church near where we used to live. I noticed how happy everyone seemed, and enjoyed the Sunday school, and hearing about the Bible stories, colouring pictures in, where you were given prizes.

After time there, I started going to the youth club, and remember a small group of us going back to someone's house after church to have discussions about the Bible. It was then that I knew God loved me, and whilst walking home asked Jesus to be my saviour and come into my life, and to fill me with the Holy Spirit. A few days later our group went for a walk, and the leader asked me about being a Christian, and I told him that I had asked God to come into my life the night before.

After a few years I started going to a C of E church with some friends from school. I was confirmed at 14, married, at 19 and moved away. I completed my nurse training where my love of helping people really began, and had my first child at 25.

When my son was one, my first husband left us, and I was a long way

from my parents, so I had to cope alone. The church was a great strength to me, but I felt that I had to move away, and asked God what to do. Reading the Bible one day, it confirmed that I had to go back to Surrey for a while.

After a few years I remarried, moved a few times then settled down in Chelmsford. I had three more children, but in that time drifted away from God. I started going back to the C of E church again, but did not feel that it was right for me spiritually.

Nearly four years ago my second husband left me for a year and I was totally lost. I asked God what to do, and was walking round Chelmsford one day when I noticed the sign for the Alpha course. It changed my life, as when coming here I felt at last I belonged to the right church. After the Alpha course, I was asked by Paul whether I wanted to be baptised but knew that the time wasn't right, as I wanted to be 100% committed. God has a plan for me, and he will show me when the time is right.

18 months ago my husband left me for the last time after 31 years of marriage; I was without a place to live that I could call my own. I stayed at quite a few different places, but after a few months my dad died suddenly, and then my mother received the news that she had breast cancer. I stayed with my mother in Surrey for eight months sorting out my divorce, dealing with my dad's funeral, and, looking after my mother after her operation. During that time I attended a Baptist church there. God

(Continued from page 10)

gave me strength, and I left everything in God's hands. I learnt to have patience, and to be still at times, so I could listen to God's words, and eventually knew that Chelmsford was to be my home again. In that time the Lord found me a flat, a job and a car so I could get to work, and at last I came home.

My brother died a week before Christmas and I felt that I needed counselling to get over my few last issues, so that I could commit fully to the Lord, and I am excited as to what he has in store for me.

The counselling taught me that if I had not gone through the difficulties that I did then I could not truly understand people who have been in the same situation, and would not be where I am today.

I also asked the Lord for a miracle of his love to soften my heart, to learn the power of forgiveness, which I have achieved. So I thank the Lord that he has been with me on my journey

Mary

I have been brought-up in a Christian family: in fact I've been in this church all my life. I have had my ups and downs in my life, but I have always felt I had someone with me. I have a relationship with Jesus because I feel he is with me in all I do, so I have been able to talk and bring my children and now my grandchildren to church.

I help with a lot of things in this church; I am a church steward, I work with the Victoria Club and Monday Club and I work in the crèche. I have learnt this is my way of serving God and saying thank you for what he has done through Jesus' death on the cross, and I will continue to follow him.

Want to find out more about Christianity? If you would like to find out more why not join our next Alpha course? This is an opportunity for anyone to explore the Christian faith. It's relaxed, low-key, friendly and fun. It's a place where no question is too simple or too difficult. To find out more email alpha@centralbaptistchelmsford.org

PSALM 23 – A MEDITATION

THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD – he goes before me and shows me the way

I SHALL NOT WANT – He provides everything I need. He knows my needs.

HE MAKES ME LIE DOWN – to rest, meditate, reflect, stop, digest.

IN GREEN PASTURES – providing food, pleasant surroundings, comfort, space, relaxation, quiet, solitude and peace.

HE LEADS ME – I need to follow close behind Him.

BESIDE STILL WATERS – to quench thirst, bring a sense of peace and security.

HE RESTORES MY SOUL – heals hurts, puts me right, brings me back to my first love, reactivates my spirit.

HE LEADS ME IN THE RIGHT PATHS – ways that are right for me and according to His will.

FOR HIS NAME'S SAKE – so that I can bring Him glory.

EVEN THOUGH I WALK THROUGH THE DARKEST VALLEY – the way may sometimes be difficult, dangerous, full of sorrow and dark so that I cannot see my way out.

I FEAR NO EVIL – since the Shepherd is leading I must trust Him to see me safely through. It is His way for me therefore Satan is not in control.

FOR YOU ARE WITH ME – the presence of the Lord is sufficient.

YOUR ROD AND STAFF – the rod to guide and the staff to protect.

THEY COMFORT ME – take away fear, give strength and reassure me.

YOU PREPARE A TABLE BEFORE ME – a feast showing close relationship, generosity, abundant meeting of needs, confirming a covenant.

IN THE PRESENCE OF MY ENEMIES - even when surrounded by difficulties or opposition the Lord provides what I need – I must feed from Him.

YOU ANOINT MY HEAD WITH OIL – I am special, set apart for a special purpose, honoured.

MY CUP OVERFLOWS – I have more than enough to share with others, I am full of joy.

SURELY – no doubt, a positive certainty.

GOODNESS AND MERCY – the Lord's goodness to me in provision, security and comfort. His mercy to me as a sinner – a sheep who wanders away.

SHALL FOLLOW ME - wherever I go, whatever situation I am in.

ALL THE DAYS OF MY LIFE – constantly and continually.

AND I SHALL DWELL IN THE HOUSE OF THE LORD – in his presence, to have fellowship, to worship, to offer sacrifices of praise.

FOR EVER – during my lifetime and into eternity.

This Summer's Must Have Read

mazingly, I always open the Bible to discover something new! This is true even when reading well-known passages that have become familiar to many of us over the years, regardless of what school we attended or what faith our parents had. This happened recently when I began to read Acts – a book of the Bible I hadn't read for some time. The opening, containing the account of Jesus being taken up to Heaven and the Holy Spirit coming at Pentecost, were well known to me, which is why it came as a surprise when the Holy Spirit's arrival in Acts 2 so captured my attention. It is reported that:

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. Acts 2: 1-4 (NIV)

The awesome arrival of the Holy Spirit is detailed here – yes! I realised though there was much more happening during this event as the arrival of the Holy Spirit was a fulfilment of a promise; and that which occurred after this miraculous event when the believers began to speak in other languages was an additional miracle.

Obviously, this passage is special and spiritually significant because it details the arrival of the Holy Spirit. It became clear to me that alongside this is the equally powerful message that God keeps His promises. Jesus clearly predicted "...the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you." John 14: 26-27 (NIV)

As if this wasn't astounding enough we then read of an additional miracle - all the believers began to speak in a wide range of languages that were discerned by the crowds, who were made up of people from all over the world. They listened to this astonishing sound, recognising their own languages suddenly being spoken by a group of Galileans! The Holy Spirit is clearly a powerful, life changing force who can impact the life of a Christian in incredible ways!

EXTRAORDINARY is the only real word for these events. The depth of truth that we learn in Acts 2 about God fulfilling His promise, the Holy Spirit, and the miracles God can create is life changing for us all.

Consequently, as you plan and pack your summer reads remember that the Bible is the most truthful, inspiring and gripping book you will ever have the pleasure of reading, filled with captivating and life changing events.

The Bible is the summer must read for everybody!

Naomi Rowlands

Pray for Europe

On 23 June each of us will be asked to answer the question "Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union or leave the European Union?"

Christians may not agree on how to vote in the referendum, but we can each reflect thoughtfully and prayerfully on the issues involved.

The gospel accounts remind us that Jesus said the greatest commandment is to "love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind", while the second is to "love your neighbour as yourself." (Matthew 22:36-40). Jesus reinforces the established Old Testament principle that our relationship with God affects the way we relate to and live with one another. These human relationships are an expression of our relationship with God; the two are intertwined.

The real referendum question

The referendum question might therefore be phrased as: "To what extent does the European Union enhance or hinder our ability to love our neighbour and, in doing so, our ability to love God?"

Prayer

Loving God, In the referendum that lies before us, in the challenge of seeking an answer, in our differences of opinion, in our need to understand,

may you guide us in our decisions, make us gracious in our disagreement, and may we join you to work for the building of your kingdom rather than our own.





Material taken from a church's publication called **Think, Pray, Vote**. The resource includes information, reflections and questions on a wide range of issues related to the referendum. The full publication can be downloaded from:

jointpublicissues.org.uk/issues/eu-referendum/

Church Diary ~ Main Events

Key dates to put in your diary

Fri 24th Jun: AR Group - Guided Walking Tour of Cambridge

Thurs 7th July B.O.B. - Beer Festival & Curry

Sun 10th July Celebration of Children 10:00am followed by

Church Picnic and showing of Wimbledon Final

Sun 17th July

Baptismal Service 10:00am

Mon 25th - Fri 29th July

Holiday Club 10:00am—12:15pm

Fri 29th July

AR Group - River Orwell Boat Trip

Regular Events

Monday Ladies Circuit Training 8:00pm

Badminton Club 8:00pm

Tuesday Baby & Toddler Group 10:00am

JUNCTION: CLUB - youth club for any young

person in school years 7-13 7:00 - 9:00pm

Thursday Girls' & Boys' Brigades

Check our website for latest details - some events only run during term time.

We'd love to hear from you.

To get in touch you can email us at: info@centralbaptistchelmsford.org, call us on 01245 264163 or pop in and see us at: Central Baptist Church, Victoria Road South, Chelmsford, Essex, CM1 1LN

If you'd like to contribute to Connect or have any comments then you can email us at: connect@centralbaptistchelmsford.org

