

**“In the beginning you laid
the foundations of the
earth, and the heavens are
the work of your hands.”**

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Family Challenge

So the 10th July had arrived – the day of our family Challenge. This year the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme is celebrating 60 years and to mark the occasion have introduced the 'Diamond Challenge'. This is open to anyone who is, or has been, involved in the Award Scheme in any way, and as well as issuing a personal challenge the aim is to publicise the scheme and to raise funds.

leaving home bound for Headcorn in Kent. We wanted to be the first in the queue for the skydive to allow time for the rest of the 'relay' to happen. Shortly after our arrival the rest of the team arrived and the Trangia [small stove] brought out to cook bacon rolls for breakfast – most welcome, as was the accompanying coffee!



As a family of seven Gold Award holders spanning three generations the Cater/Powell family decided to undertake a family challenge. The aim was to undertake a relay type event starting with Grandma Alma (the oldest member) taking a sky dive from a centre in Kent. Son-in-law Steve Powell and Stuart (his brother) would then take over to cycle 60 miles by tandem to the serpentine in Hyde Park where daughters Sheena Powell and Denny Cater would take over with a six kilometre swim around the lake. Last would come grandchildren Shell and Mitch Powell who would then run six miles to St James's Palace!

So 5.30am saw Denny and me, accompanied by friend Angela for support,

It was then time for me to have my briefing; basically assuring us that the people accompanying us on our jumps were fully qualified, explaining exactly what would happen and, most importantly, making sure we were very sure of how we should act when leaving the aeroplane and when landing. Sadly at the end of this we were advised that the weather had deteriorated and we would not be able to take off for the foreseeable future, which was most disappointing. As Steve and Stuart had to complete their ride and arrive in Hyde Park in time for Sheena and

Denny to complete their swim before the serpentine closed they had to leave. Bravely Mitch had decided to ride with them, despite the fact that he had his own challenge later in the day, so Steve and Stuart set off on their tandem accompanied by Mitch and friends Dean and Av who had arrived to support them by riding with them for the first hour.

Still the weather would not cooperate and eventually Sheena, Denny, Shell and Angela had to also leave in order to arrive in Hyde Park to welcome the cyclists. Fortunately I was not totally abandoned as friends Sue and Dave had kindly offered to be at the airfield to

be my transport should the need arise. We had lunch, and then the rain started, so I was advised that it was very unlikely that I would be able to skydive that day and therefore should rebook. I was very grateful to have Sue and Dave with me as they then took me to Maidstone station where I was able to get a train to London to join the rest of the family.

Meanwhile the cyclists had experienced a gruelling, hilly ride much of it in the rain. Their welcome into London was memorable however as they found themselves confronted by a riot coming towards them, and the police behind them! Needless to say they changed their route rather quickly! However they arrived at Hyde Park safely where they found Sheena, Denny, Angela, Shell and boyfriend Grant plus Pat and Antonia who had also come to support the team.



Sheena and Denny then started their swim, accompanied by various ducks, geese and a nesting moorhen. Angela was appointed official lap counter and had her work cut out ticking off both swimmers to ensure they completed 60 lengths of the lido area.

It was here that I joined the group who were basking in glorious sunshine. My opinion of the weather pattern of the day I leave you to imagine.

After three hours the swim was completed and two very exhausted swimmers emerged to cheers from the lido staff and other interested families who

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wanted to know what it was all about. Once Sheena and Denny had managed to walk straight again, and the obligatory group photo had been taken, Shell and Mitch set off to run around London to arrive at St James Palace, that finishing point having been decided as it is where Gold Award presentations take place. The rest of us walked to the Palace to greet them, where we were accosted by the police who wanted to know what we were doing hanging around outside a palace. Fortunately they believed our outrageous story and moved on before Shell and Mitch arrived. After his 60 mile cycle and now a six mile run Mitch was totally exhausted, but we still had a final photoshoot of the day.

But despite all the activities that had been achieved our Challenge was still not complete as I had yet to skydive. We were disappointed but we always realised that was the weak link in the plans as we could not rely upon the weather co-operating.

So Sheena, Mitch and I set off for Headcorn on Friday 29th July where we were again joined by Dean and Av. As I had already attended the training session I was told to get equipped in the flying suit and harness and I was very excited. However again I was told that the clouds had closed in so the jump would be delayed. Again we sat and waited, but after about an hour or so the sky cleared and we were able to board the plane and would be able to jump. It was a truly exhilarating experience, which I thoroughly enjoyed. The views over Kent, and further afield, were amazing, and I now know how it feels to be a bird.

So our Challenge is finally complete and we would like to thank everyone who supported us, in whatever way, to make it a memorable event, which, although hard work (as a challenge should be) was also very enjoyable.

Alma Cater

If you would like to sponsor the team please visit
www.justgiving.com/Alma-diamond.



Revenge, redemption, and an inspiring backstory

Do you remember the classic MGM movie, Ben-Hur? Charlton Heston, the chariot race, the galley slaves forced to row at “ramming speed”? The film won eleven Oscars as it displayed passion and pageantry, betrayal and bitterness, grace and redemption.

A remake of this film comes out in September.

Ben-Hur’s poignant depiction of revenge, reconciliation and redemption generates a powerful message for today’s world filled with racial and religious violence, cop killings and more.

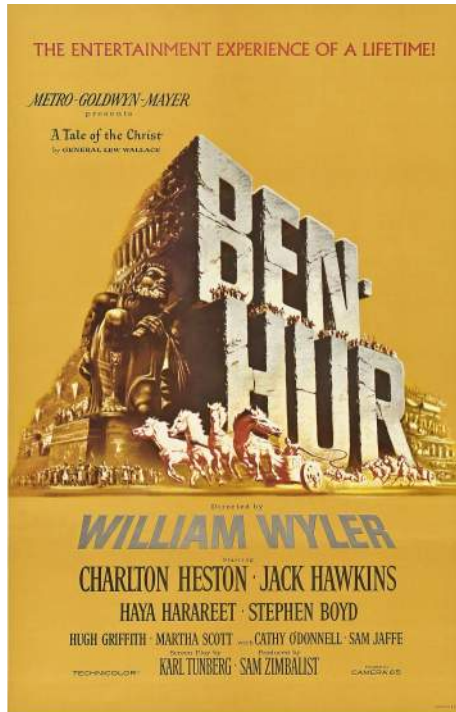
First to finish, last to die

Two brothers in first-century Palestine split over the Roman occupation. Messala sides with Rome, Judah Ben-Hur with his Jewish heritage. Messala’s rage sends Ben-Hur into slavery for years.

When combat turmoil frees him, Ben-Hur returns to Jerusalem seeking revenge against Messala. A chariot race for the ages ensues – filmmakers spared no effort to make the signature event thrilling. “First to finish, last to die” is the watchword as the brothers claw for advantage.

But something happens inside Ben-Hur to break the cycle of hatred. It involves a carpenter who years ago helped him, which kindness he seeks to reciprocate. The carpenter’s words and life transform him.

As filmgoers prepare for the



excitement, romance, and drama, understanding the movie’s backstory can enhance their appreciation for the tale and its nineteenth-century writer.

A chance encounter?

In 1876, Civil War general Lew Wallace took a train to Indianapolis for a convention. En route, he encountered Robert Ingersoll, a noted agnostic, who wanted to converse. Wallace agreed, provided Ingersoll let him choose the subject.

“Is there a God?” began Wallace. “I don’t know: do you?” replied Ingersoll.

“Is there a Devil?” continued Wallace. “I don’t know: do you?” countered Ingersoll.

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Many Happy Returns

What happened 50 years ago in the summer of 1966? Many people will probably remember it as the summer when England won the World Cup. Yet, extraordinary as that was, something much more revolutionary was happening on the High St which would have an immense effect on everyday life.

It was in the summer of 1966 that Barclays launched the first credit card. In the UK, Barclaycard was a little piece of plastic just over 3 inches long and 2 inches wide that would change the way we shop forever. It was an overnight success and within a few years other banks had followed suit. Today 31 million of us have at least one credit card and credit cards account for more than £15 billion pounds of spending every month.

Barclays promoted the credit card as a more convenient way of shopping. You didn't have to carry wads of cash or wait for a cheque to clear before you could take home your purchase. It simply made shopping a little bit easier and, as Barclays pointed out, they provided the card free and there was no direct charge for using it. However, they did charge the retailers for the service who in the long run had to recoup the fees from the price of their goods.

There was of course a further way in which convenience comes at a price. If you don't pay the balance off in full each month, the bank charges interest. This can be a very expensive experience. Although the base rate is at an all-time low, the average credit card rate is over 20% and the Financial Conduct Authority has estimated that 9% of cardholders will take more than a decade to pay off their balances.

Perhaps it isn't just the interest rate which

is the problem. It is so easy to spend on a credit card and has become even easier with the introduction of contactless payments. Perhaps that in itself encourages us to spend more as it doesn't always feel as if we are spending real money.

It is easy to forget that, unless the bill is paid in full when the monthly statement arrives, it becomes just another form of debt. Credit card spending rose by 233% in 2015. In fact, the British owe more money than any other nation in Europe and financial experts have long worried that many families do not have enough savings to survive any unexpected call on their finances.

Debt can have devastating effects on everyday life. There is evidence that financial problems break up more marriages than adultery. Debt can even drive people to suicide. Yet, oddly enough, when we go to school we are taught how to carry out all kinds of mathematical calculations many of which we will never need in everyday life but we are rarely taught how to budget.

Christians Against Poverty (CAP) was founded initially to help people get out of debt but has moved on to help people avoid getting into debt in the first place. CAP runs budgeting courses which are simply a tool for helping ordinary people

evaluate the way they use their money so that they can be sure that they are spending it as they want. The course consists of three weekly sessions lasting an hour and a half each and is completely free and open to all.

There will be a CAP budgeting course at Central Baptist Church starting during November.

email info@centralbaptistchelmsford.org for further information.

David Parker

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Wallace, who considered himself absolutely indifferent to religion, continued with questions about heaven, hell, the hereafter. Ingersoll responded the same, then launched into a discourse.

"I sat spellbound," Wallace later wrote, "listening to a medley of argument, eloquence, wit, satire, audacity, irreverence, poetry, brilliant antitheses, and pungent excoriation of believers in God, Christ, and Heaven, the like of which I had never heard."

Sceptic jolts the General

Ironically, the sceptic's arguments jolted Wallace from his spiritual indifference: "I [was] now moved as never before, and by what? The most outright denials of all human knowledge of God, Christ, Heaven, and the hereafter which figures so in the hope and faith of the believing everywhere." Ashamed of his poor knowledge about faith, he resolved to study and learn.

He decided to write a book about Jesus that would force him to thoroughly research the matter. The impact was significant: "I did as resolved, with results—first, the book 'Ben Hur,' and second, a conviction

amounting to absolute belief in God and the Divinity of Christ."

Convinced a novel with Jesus as protagonist would be poorly received, Wallace fashioned the story of a young Jewish noble – Judah Ben-Hur – who, betrayed by his brother, would suffer years in slavery before returning home to exact revenge. Along the way, a young Nazarene gave him a drink of water that helped sustain his life. Years later, Ben-Hur would seek to return the favour as the Nazarene was heading toward crucifixion.

Bestseller

Harper Brothers published the novel in 1880. It became the best-selling book of the nineteenth century and has never been out of print. A stage play and two earlier film adaptations have kept it before the public.

As you watch this new film maybe this backstory can add context to the movie's theme. And perhaps the film will prompt you to study to see if Jesus really is "the way, the truth, and the life" who can forgive and give us strength to forgive our adversaries.

Rusty Wright www.RustyWright.com

Making a Difference

You probably won't be surprised to learn that drug trafficking is the most profitable criminal activity. But did you realise that the second most profitable criminal activity is people trafficking?

2015 was of course a bumper year for the people smugglers. Well over a million people were smuggled via the Greek islands into Europe generating enormous criminal profits. By and large this route has been closed off because many of the Balkan countries have tightened their border controls. Yet, this has simply displaced the trafficking so that it is now concentrates on the sea route from Libya to Italy.

Of course there is a terrible cost in human suffering and indeed in human life. Around 3,000 men, women and children are reported to have drowned in the Mediterranean so far this year trying to reach Europe and the real death toll is probably much higher. Most of the people smuggled from Libya actually come from sub-Saharan Africa. The first stage of their journey means crossing the desert and there is reason to believe that many die in the vast wastes of the Sahara where their bodies lie undiscovered.

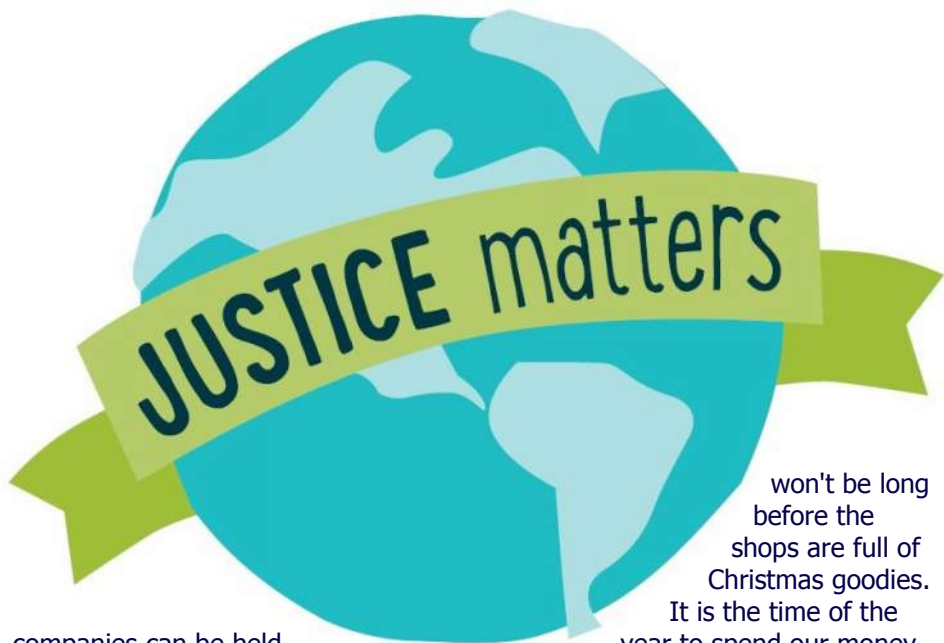
What drives people to such desperate measures? The biggest factor is poverty. The majority of those who successfully make it to Italy do not qualify for political asylum. They simply disappear into the black economy where they are trafficked and exploited. They risk all for the dream of prosperity and end up

exchanging one form of economic exploitation for another.

What can we as individuals do to end this tragedy? How can we make a difference? We can't simply decant the population of Africa into Europe. We need to bridge the gap between rich and poor countries so that these desperate people will no longer fall for the lies of the traffickers who promise them instant prosperity if they set foot in Europe.

This is what the Fairtrade Movement is all about. The Fairtrade Mark is a guarantee that the producer has received a fair day's wage for a fair day's work. When as individuals we buy Fairtrade tea or coffee, for example, we are ensuring that the workers behind the product received enough pay to look after their families and an extra premium to improve their communities.

Yet, this is only one aspect of Fairtrade. Fairtrade is not just about wages but also about the working conditions and the environment. In the past big companies have been able to do as they please in poor communities, stripping out raw materials without bothering about the effects of pollution. Traidcraft, a company set up by Christians to fight poverty through trade, has launched a campaign called Justice Matters which will ensure that British



companies can be held to account in British courts for their actions abroad. By buying Fairtrade products and by supporting these campaigns we can as individuals make a difference to the poverty which the people smugglers exploit.

Of course some may argue that the problem is far too big for our individual efforts to matter. But I often think of the story of the little boy who came to the beach and found thousands of jellyfish stranded by the tide. He realised that they would all die as the sun grew hotter and started picking them up with his bucket and throwing them into the sea. A man passing by told him that he was wasting his time. There were so many that he couldn't possibly make a difference. The boy did not reply. He simply picked up the nearest jellyfish, threw it in the water and said, "Well, I made a difference to that one, didn't I?"

Summer has only just finished but it

won't be long before the shops are full of Christmas goodies.

It is the time of the year to spend our money.

If we spend it on Fairtrade goods we too can make a difference. So please look out for the Fairtrade Mark. If you can't find it on the High St, then come to the church's Fairtrade stall. Pick up a Fairtrade catalogue which features a wide variety of crafts, jewellery and the like. I can get any orders you want without package and postage. Remember behind every product are people just like us and every purchase affects their ability to earn a living.

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

Sophie recently spent six months in Kosovo, as part of a BMS Action Team.



Action Teams are gap year programmes for 18 to 23 years olds which involves sending teams of three or four overseas to many different countries including India, Nepal, Uganda and Kosovo.

Whilst we were there we lived in a small village near the capital. We worked in a centre there, alongside long-term BMS workers, teaching English to ethnic minority children aged between 3 and 11. We did this in addition to their regular school or pre-school. We taught them things like colours, numbers, shapes, animals and days of the week through craft, games and nursery rhymes such as Old McDonald and Incy Wincy Spider.

We also set up a new project in a local high school, an all boys class for 12-18 year olds. This was the first time we had contact with a lot of these young people and now there are talks to further the work that BMS do in the school which is very exciting.

As well as leading classes, we also spent lots of time in the local

community building up relationships, we met up regularly with our landlords and had drinks and meals with them. We also met up with our language teacher regularly, she became one of our close friends in Kosovo.

We also spent a lot of time with local young people. We often went up to a local sports pitch to spend time with them. We played football, basketball and even some rugby! We chatted in a mix of our Serbian and their English. We got to know them quite well and met up with them at cafes and internet cafes. Some of the boys even started coming to the high school class and really working hard to improve their English.

Most of our work was not openly Christian but we were involved in some church projects as well. On a Friday we went to the capital and looked after the children of international women who we working in Kosovo, they met and had a Bible study and we looked at some people from the Old Testament, did craft and played games. This was a really nice part of the week as the ladies really



valued us helping, many of them home schooled their children and they appreciated having time away to talk and pray together.

We also helped lead our church's Sunday School which was challenging as we had a

range of ages, languages and knowledge but it was also fun.

I had a really great time in Kosovo and learnt so much including how to look after a house.

Sophie Hills

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
info@centralbaptistchelmsford.org



Recently some of our friends were baptised. Here are their stories:

Tony

I was brought up as a Catholic to the age of nine which was when my dad left us. I remember my dad taking me to the church door and giving the priest money, leaving me there, and then picking me up later. I used to be an altar boy and sing in the choir.

Because my dad left we moved house and school so I went to a non religious school and my faith and church attendance stopped.

I started to live my life as I chose. I became a young man and got into motorbikes, beer and heavy metal and lived a reckless life with no thought of what I was doing or who I was hurting along the way. This behaviour carried on until my dad died in the year 2000. I had to organise his funeral which wasn't an easy thing to do. I got very depressed and started to soul search.

Around that time I met a Franciscan monk who took me under his wing. I hung around with him for two years and got my faith back in Jesus Christ. I wanted to become a brother but I wasn't allowed as I was married.

As the years went on I became an alcoholic to the point where I came to Chelmsford to attend a rehabilitation programme where I was introduced to Alcoholics Anonymous which is a spiritual programme and this brought me back again to Jesus Christ, which I am very grateful for.

I now know that being a Christian my life is so much better. I hand my will over to God everyday and I want to do this for the rest of my life.

Alex

What do I believe?

- ◆ I believe there is one God, and that he created the world and everything good in it
- ◆ I believe that Jesus is God's only Son and that he was born through the Virgin Mary
- ◆ I believe that Jesus died on the cross and that he rose again three days later, so that we could have eternal life
- ◆ I believe in the Holy Spirit. "The Helper, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in My Name, He will teach you all things ... He will guide you into all the truth" John 14:26 & John 16:13 (GNB)
- ◆ I believe that you should live your life in the right way and follow the Ten Commandments
- ◆ I believe that you should share God's word to all those who want to listen.

Why Baptism now?

About seven years ago I went to a church a few times with a friend, it started an interest and a desire to learn more, however I knew that his church wasn't right for me.

This started me wanting to learn more and understand more, and it

suddenly became important that I attended church and that my daughter Jessica did too.

Over the past few years I have been attending Central Baptist Church and helping in Light Factory [Sunday School].

For a long time I thought I'd be baptised one day, but that that day wasn't now. Then just over a year ago one of my best friends died and since then I have been considering baptism more and more. Her motto and the thing she asked of all her friends was to live for today, only do what makes you happy because you don't know how long you have. This has made me live and think differently and over the past year I have decided that now is the right time for me to be baptised. Acts 22:16 "And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name" has helped confirm that this is right for me now.

I haven't always made the right choices in life, or always lived in the right way in the past, but over the past year this has started to change and will continue to change.

Gavin

When I was a child I went to church and I really enjoyed Junior Covenanters [a church youth group].

But I was the only kid in my year, possibly in my school that went to that church. And when my classmates found out I got ridiculed. So I'm afraid I turned away.

Apart from weddings and christenings I didn't go to church for over 30 years. Then in 2008 I started going to church again. But because of the reaction I got from those close to me at the time, I once again pushed my faith into the corner.

But God was calling me and He kept calling for six or seven years.

So I became a chameleon Christian - someone who camouflages their faith. Someone who you wouldn't know from Monday to Saturday was a Christian.

When I moved to Chelmsford last year I started coming to Central [Baptist Church] and I attended an Alpha course. My faith grew and I started to tell people about my faith. Since then I've been growing in faith, learning about God's unending love and grace.

What can separate you from the love of God? Nothing!

Romans 8:38-39 tells us "For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present or things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

What baptism means to me is the chance to say to my younger self "Don't feel embarrassed about being a Christian. Speak out and by your words and actions let people know that you have been saved by the love of God the Father, through the sacrifice of His son and our saviour Jesus Christ."

The Olympics offer the opportunity for the phrase 'inspirational' to be frequently expressed and indeed the athletes successfully inspire many of us to work harder to realise our potential. Equally, they encourage our hope that dreams are achievable.

In order to make a connection with someone we need more than inspiration though. A prerequisite for our existence is friendship. Inspirational people are often held at a distance, friends are kept close. Friends can and often do inspire us, but it must be much more than this that keeps a friendship alive.

What qualities do we seek in friends? Friendship qualities appear to have some universal element. Kindness, companionship, an interest in one another, shared goals, compassion, understanding, comfortable communication, and dependability are likely to appear on our 'lists'.

Friendships develop when these qualities shine through and when both friends make a commitment to genuinely offer themselves to the friendship, committing love and time to ensure the friendship grows and strengthens.

Friends, however, can come and go over time. Friendships that remain are subject to the consequences of any type of human relationship as flaws can naturally emerge, trust can be tested, and forgiveness is at times needed.

Wouldn't it be extraordinary to meet a person who exhibits every quality on our 'list' consistently and persists

in being a constant part of our lives, present and engaged?

Surprisingly, there is one person who does demonstrate all the qualities we seek. In fact this person offers to all of us many, many more. Only one person - Jesus Christ.

For Christians, sharing our lives with Jesus is a real privilege because He is the only one to share every detail of our day and every thought in our mind. To never ever be alone is a wonderful detail of our human lives because you can always have someone close to you to share your heart with. While all our friendships are valuable, important and life affirming; this one with Jesus will always be the greatest one.

All relationships take time to develop. As you commit time to Jesus, explore the gospels and communicate with Him through prayer you'll discover that He is welcoming, compassionate, forgiving, sociable, genuine, honest, kind, loving, truthful, intelligent, wise, trustworthy, strong and humble.

You'll be able to appreciate even more incredible aspects to Jesus's character as your friendship develops. So, what are you waiting for?

Naomi Rowlands

Creation care

Climate change presents important challenges and opportunities to our world in the decades ahead, while the choices we make have implications for society, the economy and our environment. Why don't you join us in praying for climate justice, responsible creation care, and our own role in ensuring that the UK government meets the commitments needed to bring the Paris Agreement of December 2015 into force.

Prayer suggestions :

In April next year, countries have to provide legal evidence of their willingness to be bound under the draft Paris Agreement. Pray for global co-operation, timely action and real determination to meet responsibilities.

Pray that the global Church will use its presence and influence, as it has on other key issues, to shift humanity's moral compass towards a viable and sustainable future for all.

Flooding in East Africa is causing food shortages and reduced monsoons have created difficult conditions for farmers in India. Please pray for all poor communities working to become climate resilient.

Ask for protection, hope and support for climate refugees. Pray for justice and shared global responsibility for fragile communities across the world.

Renewable sources now provide 20 per cent of the world's energy. Pray that increasing research and funding will be invested into renewables and energy storage.

A prayer based on Psalms 102: 25 (NIV)

"In the beginning you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands."

Loving God,

thank you for the gift of creation. As we experience each day, as we take every step on our life's pilgrimage, may we take time to wonder and give you thanks.

From each sunrise to every sunset, in all the seasons and with every breath, may we celebrate our home in creation, and the gift of life.

As our climate is changing, give us the compassion to care deeply that people are suffering now, from spoiled harvest and violent storms, from drought and flood.

Give us the imagination to see that future generations are in peril and may not know the beauty we see.

May our actions reflect a love for your world our prayers be shaped by a longing for justice for all, and our imaginations inspired to hope for a world free from poverty.

Amen.

(Extracts from BMS prayer diary
bmsworldmission.org)



Church Diary ~ Main Events

Key dates to put in your diary

<i>Sun 28th Sept</i>	Harvest and The Big Welcome Service
<i>Sun 5th Oct</i>	Silver Sunday in connection with International Day of Older Persons
<i>Sun 30th Oct</i>	Thank God for Loved Ones Service 10:00am
<i>Sun 13th Nov</i>	Remembrance Sunday
<i>Sun 27th Nov</i>	Advent Sunday - Early Morning Communion Service 8:00am
<i>Sun 11th Dec</i>	Carols for Young Families 4:00pm
<i>Sun 18th Dec</i>	Carols by Candlelight 7:00pm
<i>Sat 24th Dec</i>	Christmas Eve Midnight Service
<i>Sun 25th Dec</i>	Christmas Day Praise 10:00am
<i>Sat 31st Dec</i>	New Year's Eve Service 10:00am

Check our website for latest details.

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

