

*Dear brothers and sisters, God is at work within individuals and among us as a church!*

#### **Pastoral Issues**

Many will be aware of some ongoing pastoral needs in the TCF Family. It has been a privilege to share the lives of individuals as they face challenging circumstances but it is always a salutary experience to be faced again and again with the fact that we cannot always solve problems by human effort or wisdom. In fact, in Revelation 21:4 we are reminded that it will be our Lord, Jesus who will, on a future day, '...wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.' However, we are also very aware that the overarching command to 'love one another' means to take responsibility for one another now, to watch over one another in love. This is to be done in *general* by us all but also in *particular* by those that have been given a particular gift by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:7) or responsibility (1 Peter 5:2). I have been meeting with Home Group Leaders and other ministry leaders to help get a better picture of the ongoing care that is provided formally through Home Groups and other ministries. This has been enormously encouraging and I will be sharing my thoughts with the ministry leaders in due course. In the meantime, although the devil is always at work with his demonic host to undermine every aspect of the Christian's life, God is also at work, even in the most difficult of circumstances and 'he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world' 1 John 4:4. Can I remind you that you don't need to wait for a visit - please just let me know if you would like a visit anytime or to spend occasional or periodic time in reading or praying.

#### **'Training and Development' in TCF**

Our capacity to respond to our biblical responsibilities to develop others is addressed in a number of ways but principally through our regular preaching and teaching and Home Bible Studies. We also arrange occasional events and we have just held a session on Bereavement Care Awareness with Care for the Family where 10 of the 22 participants were from TCF. We are also looking forward to a Leaders Breakfast on 1 April 2017 when Alistair Hornal of Partnership will deliver a Master's Class on Jesus' model of discipleship. We are looking at a course for delivery in the second half of the year on marriage and relationships but also a Discipleship programme for recent believers. If you would be interested in either of these, please let me know. There will be other topics we would like to address as 'one off' training events over the next year or two but please let me know if there are training topics you would like to see us put on.

Please also pray for Cliff as he comes near to the end of his time with us as intern (early June 2017) and for guidance for his life and also for the elders as we try to evaluate the impact of Cliff's time with us. Again, if you have insights to offer on the TCF intern experience, please share this with any of the elders. Cliff will be getting his second session of feedback on his preaching (from Sunday 26 February 2017) and if you were there and heard him, all encouragement will be gratefully received!

#### **Mission Focus**

We have had a good focus on our various mission interests recently. Alan Hirsch, founding Director of The Forge Mission Training Network says 'As the people of a missionary God, we ought to engage the world the same way he does—by *going* out rather than just *reaching* out.' We depend hugely on the work of Janey and Evans in Africa, Pastor John in India and Attila and Margitka Meleg in Hungary for cross-cultural mission outreach but our partnership with these individuals has to be meaningful including regular prayer, material giving and visiting where possible and participating too! In doing so, our focus is shifted away from being solely an 'attractional church' (someone said that outreach in such churches is actually 'in-grabbing') to being truly missional. The elders are considering how we can be more involved in outreach in global mission and this probably focusses on Hungary as the most accessible location. Watch out for potential involvement in the Annual Holiday Camp (Gordon Crawford) but also Young Adult weekends (Dave Martin and Peter Ferguson) and a Church Bible Study Weekend (yours truly). Also, we have been offered some free subscriptions to Echoes of Service magazine and if you would like to take up this offer, from now to the end of the year please let me know and I will pass names on to Echoes (see <http://www.echoes.org.uk/> ).

#### **Reading**

I have the privilege of reading through a number of books with individuals including: 'Renovation of the Heart' by Dallas Willard; 'You can Change' by Tim Chester; 'The Call' by Oz Guinness and 'The Gift of Prophecy' by Wayne Grudem. Much of the material (with the exception of the last one) is very devotional and geared towards spiritual disciplines and practical holiness. I can also recommend 'Union with Christ' by Rankin Wilbourne and would love to share this with someone if they are brave enough to help me explore 'the way to know and enjoy God'? Reading with someone is a wonderful way of learning for yourself but also being held accountable and I would love to see more people paired up in peer to peer discipleship. If you would be interested in doing this - you can either speak with someone you could share something with or speak with me and we will work together.

#### **Personal**

As I serve God in the role you desire me to fulfil, I have found God enlarges my heart for you all. I have bouts of introspection on my service and, though I am well aware of my limitations, I want to thank you for your continued encouragement and support and willingness to pursue God's ways. I see a lot of evidence of God touching individuals lives - we are growing together!

Thanking God for...

every remembrance of you...

Philippians 1:3