



# News & Prayer

*'serving those who serve since 1779'*

**No 97**

**April - May 2010**

Dear Christian Friends,

## **Feedback**

A big thank you to those who replied to the request for feedback on future ways of supplying God's word and in what Bible version - much food for thought. Obviously there isn't room to reflect on all the views received but here are some excerpts from a letter from one of our oldest readers, former TA soldier and Dunkirk veteran, Mr Ted Pilgrim. Many agreed with his views though he wondered whether they might be considered 'old hat'!

Ted writes: Is it inevitable that God's word in book form will decline? I have no idea what an iPod or MP3 or Blackberry are, but what I do know is that over the years, whether traumas or celebrations, I cannot imagine deriving much comfort from a CD or DVD in my pocket instead of a Bible or Prayer Book. I know that God's word must be communicated by whatever route but, as far as the armed forces are concerned, away from home on operations they need comfort from

the written word.

Can you imagine placing a CD on the altar for a Holy Communion service or swearing on an iPod in a court of law? Surely we can all see that the Bible is not just a book. However tattered and torn one of mine might be, I could never think of throwing it out to be recycled. Am I the only one in modern Christendom who thinks like this? I really hope and pray that God's written word will not be eclipsed by technology but will continue to flourish in book form.

Ted gave the New Testament he had in his pocket at Dunkirk to one of his great grandsons before he was sent to Iraq. He gave his other great grandson, a regular soldier also, one of our Bibles prior to his being deployed to Afghanistan.

Though a generation removed from Ted, I also agree with his views. But I have to relate that a grey-haired padre phoned in to say that he was preaching in a church not long ago and many of the young people in the congregation were

looking up the Scriptures from his message on their iPods! (Or were they just playing games on them?)

### **Bibles & NTs for deployed forces**

We are supplying more Bibles and New Testaments than usual to units going to Afghanistan. A brigade about deploy has taken 500 Bibles and over 1000 New Testaments, embossed with the badges of its component regiments, and will be receiving more when our stocks are replenished in April.

### **Mohawk Indians**

Army Padre Roy Burley was in the office recently researching our archives for a doctorate thesis. He drew our attention to an item in the records for 1817:

“Out of a supply of Bibles and Testaments sent the latter end of last year to the troops at Quebec and other parts of North America, we have received a truly gratifying account of the distribution of 24 Bibles to Mohawk Indians who served with the British Army in the late war, and are sufficiently acquainted with the English language to read them, and expressed great anxiety to become possessed of the Holy Scriptures.”

### **Truth, trust and the ballot box**

People say, “Does it matter what I believe as long as I believe in something?” But belief is only as good as the object in which we put our trust.

With a general election due within the next two months, will we, in our debt-ridden society, vote for a party of soft policies and false promises, or put our trust in a manifesto filled with unpalatable truths, if there is one? We might believe in the latter but vote for the former, not willing to give up jam today for the sake of jam tomorrow. We hate politicians who duck the difficult questions and yearn for straight answers, but we have become so inured to spin that we no longer recognise when political leaders tell us the truth. Polls show that we judge our leaders more and more on their character and integrity.

Belief in absolute truth has become unfashionable. If we cheat, tell half-truths or act immorally, these are just mistakes, errors of judgment, but not sins. Right and wrong no longer exist. Religious faiths and lifestyles are matters of choice. The many doors in a Bahai temple reflect religious options and point to supposedly equally valid ways to God. But the Bible tells us there is only one way - through Christ. If everything is just a matter of choice we end up believing in anything.

Easter will quickly come and go, and the truths of the crucifixion and resurrection will have been largely unnoticed by an indifferent world amidst the commercial smoke

screen of chocolate eggs and Easter bunnies. But thank God He has set eternity in the human heart (Ecclesiastes 3:11), even if Satan sows confusion when we seek the truth.

A friend once preached to a guru and his retinue of followers. The guru understood the significance of the Gospel, even though he eventually rejected it. When he heard about the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, who died that we could have life with him for ever, he turned to his own “disciples” and said, “if what you have just heard is not true then it does not matter, but if it is true, then nothing else matters.”

The Bible emphasises that who we believe in is vital. Jesus said,

*“If you don’t have faith in me for who I am, you will die, and your sins will not be forgiven.”*

John 8:24

*“Go in through the narrow gate. The gate to destruction is wide, and the road that leads there is easy to follow. A lot of people go through that gate. But the gate to life is very narrow. The road that leads there is so hard to follow that only a few people find it.”*

Matthew 7:13-14

Scripture stresses the importance of knowing the object of belief rather than the act of believing.

Jesus is the one object who can be trusted. He said, *“I am the way, the truth, and the life. Without me, no one can go to the Father.”* John 14:6

It won’t matter much in the long term which party wins the next election, so, if you want to scrape the last of the jam out of the pot, put the cross on your ballot paper against the party of softer options and let the future take care of itself. But in the ballot of life those who ignore the truth of the Gospel, that can one day set them free, and choose not to cast their vote for Jesus, will do so their peril and regret their choice for all eternity.

*Everyone who has faith in the Son has eternal life. But no one who rejects him will ever share in that life, and God will be angry with them for ever.*

John 3:36

So please continue to pray that God’s word in the Bibles and other literature we supply will divert soft option voters away from the wide road of multiple choices towards the narrow gate of His absolute truth, that leads to eternal life through His Son, Jesus Christ.

In His grace,



Richard Prendergast

(All Scripture is taken from CEV).

**I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.**

John 5:24 (NIV)

**If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.**

John 8:31-32 (NIV)

## **Items for Praise and Prayer**

- **NMAFBS.** We continue to praise God for his provision of prayer and financial support despite the recession and for the growth in requests for Bibles, New Testaments and other literature from units in Afghanistan. Pray for the safe delivery of 6,000 camouflage covered NIV Bibles from printers in USA and 25,500 CEV New Testaments from China.
- **Armed Forces personnel.** Pray for all service personnel facing daily danger on deployments overseas and for comfort for families at home. Pray too for staff at Selly Oak and Headley Court looking after wounded.
- **Easter Camps.** Pray for the work of **ACF, ATC and SCC Chaplains** providing spiritual and welfare input to cadets at annual Easter camps. Pray too for the **AFCU** Easter camp at Woldingham School, 5-11 April, providing Christian teaching to children of serving members of the forces.
- **SASRA** Scripture Reader David Murray reports that there is only one British born soldier who admits to being a Christian in a battalion he visits but about 40 Christians born in Commonwealth countries. Pray that Commonwealth and Fijian troops would stay strong in their faith and be good witnesses for Christ and not succumb to peer pressure and unbelief.
- **Pray** for Port Missioners and Chaplains from all Seafarers' Missions for whom we provide literature at home and overseas, including recent supplies of Bibles and booklets to Lighthouse Ministries in Vancouver, Mission to Seafarers and SCFS in Australia and Lumen Maris in Holland.
- **Naval Christian Fellowship (NCF)** have moved office to Rodney Block, HMS Nelson. Pray that this results in increased membership, a decrease in overheads and closer co-operation with **RN Chaplains** and the **RSR** pastoral support staff who are co-located with them.

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