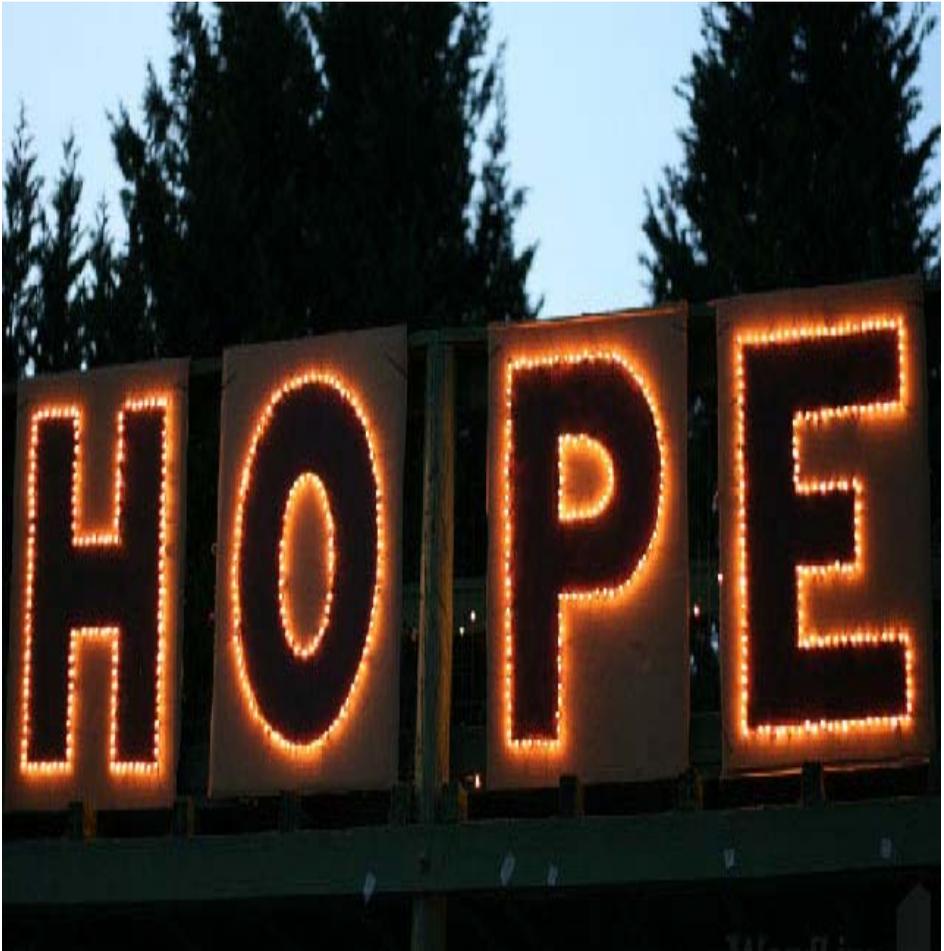




CHRIST CHURCH
CROUCH END HILL
LONDON N8 8AX
CROSSLINKS

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CHRISTIAN HOPE

Vicar's ten - minute reflection CHRISTIAN HOPE



Every pastor has been touched and troubled when there have been those in the congregation who suddenly have faced unemployment. Like an ambush from two sides, unemployment attacks us with the fear of financial insecurity on the one side and the loss of self-esteem on the other. Job searching can deepen both. In just such a moment I encountered Brian (not real name). He is a competent and creative person whose skills and personality cannot be overlooked. "It will work out, Brian," I said. "God does provide." "I **hope** so!" he replied. From the inflection of his voice, I knew he did not "expect" so.

We speak of hope more often than we believe in it as **hope** is not a strong word for us. It has more to do with "wishing" than "expecting." It has the sound of resignation. How then can we understand the New Testament's strong use of the word? Repeatedly Paul writes about **hope**. To the Thessalonians he writes of the armour of God, including the "**hope** of salvation" as a helmet. To the Colossians he writes of the "**hope** laid up in heaven," and of the "**hope** of glory." Peter writes in his first letter that "we have been born anew to a living **hope** through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and to an inheritance which is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, held in heaven for you." Given our understanding of the word, shivers run up our spines as we think about it. "Is that all we have?" we want to shout. "Is '**hope**' all we have after all? Just **hope**?"

A hope That Does Not Disappoint Us. How differently the Bible uses our word. Rather than resignation, the word bristles with excitement and expectation. It is for the writers of both the Old and New Testaments a strong word filled with encouragement. Consider Paul's words to the Christians at Rome: We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance and endurance produces character, and character produces **hope**, and **hope** does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given us. (Romans 5:2-5). "**hope** does not disappoint us!" Perhaps so, but our experience of the word often has been otherwise. How can this be so?

The test is: "Upon what or whom is our **hope** based?" If our **hope** rests in "good luck", then **hope** is likely to disappoint us. On the other hand, if our **hope** is based upon the integrity of God

(continued next page)



and his promises, built upon the gifts of the Holy Spirit, then the meaning and experience of **hope** is a different matter altogether. It's more than a word game. A lively and excited **hope** is a necessary ingredient in the Christian life. Similarly, an understanding of the role **hope** plays is pivotal if we are to comprehend what Jesus would have us learn from his parable about the widow and the uncaring judge. (Luke 18:1-8)

Hope has always been crucial to the church's faithful discipleship and the stewardship of the gospel, just as it has always been with God's chosen people of Old Testament times. Instantly we understand why when we read the words of 1 Samuel 3: "The word of the Lord was rare in those days: there was no frequent vision." This speaks neither of the eyesight nor of the spiritual sincerity of the people, but of their inability to experience the presence of God, the source of **hope** in their lives. In Proverbs 29:18 it is written: "Where there is no vision, the people perish." And we do! Our being able to hang in there in the difficult times is determined by the nature of our **hope**. For Christians, it has to do with our holding to the promises of God, a holding that is determined by our confidence in the integrity of God. Here alone our **hope** rests, as do all of life's possibilities and probabilities. Only in this way can we talk of a **hope** that does not disappoint us, even if that **hope's** fulfillment is delayed.

The Bible tells us – in both the Old and New Testaments – that we can learn something about hope from the life of Abraham. It suggests that we can find something in the story of Abraham's life which will help us live better lives of our own.

Abraham and Sarah began a pilgrimage of **hope** when they left Haran. About all that Abraham had was a promise (Genesis 12:1-4a), a promise that the God who called him would make of him a great nation, that God would bless him, that God would make his name great, and Abraham himself would be a blessing. But you can't be made into a great nation without descendants and you can't have descendants without having children; and Sarah was barren, and all this childless couple have is a promise that looks impossible. Abraham is already 75 years old and Sarah is 65. And they have a promise that God will make of them a great nation. If they had told us about it we would have thought: "They must have misunderstood. God must not have been speaking literally. Surely this is a Scripture that must be de-mythologized; (continued on page 6)

QUESTIONS FROM BIBLE READERS



Personal Concerns

The Bible makes it clear that God cares not only about people in general, but about you personally—what makes you laugh and cry, what you fear, and what you dream about. And he provides answers to those secret inner questions you'd never voice to anybody else. So treat the Bible as your personal counsellor—it's wisdom will assure you of God's love for you, and help you become a better person.

How can I forgive someone who's broken my trust?

- Forgive, but be careful where you place your trust the next time. (Numbers 14:11-25)
- Trust God to look out for you. (1 Samuel 24)
- Use compassionate standards. (Matthew 7:1-5)
- Pass on God's love. (Matthew 18:21-35)
- Model yourself on your heavenly Father. (Luke 6:27-36)

How can I learn to be more content with my life?

- Blend the real with the ideal. (Psalm 107)
- Enjoy what you have. (Ecclesiastes 6:1-9)
- Realize God is in control of it. (Daniel 2:20, 21)
- Fill up on more of the right things. (2 Peter 1:3-15)

I'm struggling with depression, and I feel so alone. Does God really care?

- You're not the only one who's struggled with depression. (Job 30:16-31)
- God is with you even in the darkest night. (Psalm 16:7-9)
- He can help and counsel you in your time of trouble. (Psalm 46)
- God can be trusted. (Lamentations 3:17-26)

What does a healthy, successful marriage look like?

- It's a partnership. (Genesis 2:18-23)
- It forgives. (Exodus 32:11-14)
- It loves—forever. (Song of Solomon 8:5-7)
- It mirrors the love of God. (Hosea 14:4-8)
- It's a team effort. (Acts 1:8)
- It's focussed and committed. (Hebrews 13:4)

Questions from Bible readers

What does it really mean to "become one" with my spouse?

- You realize it requires both union and separation. (Genesis 2: 18-25)
- You accept your spouse's family as your own. (Ruth 1:15-18)
- You feel each other's pain and joy. (1 Corinthians 12:12-31)

Why does the Bible talk about submission in marriage?

What does God mean by it?

- Submission is an issue for both husbands and wives. (Ephesians 5: 21-23)
- What's most important is doing what's best for each other. (Philippians 2:1-11)
- Mutual submission leads to a peaceful home life. (Proverbs 17: 1)

How can my spouse and I grow spiritually as a couple?

- Learn to grow deeper. (Hebrews 5: 11-6: 3)
- Enjoy and use your God-given differences. (1 Peter 4:8-11)
- Support each other as you grow together. (Galatians 6:1-3)

How can I lead my unbelieving spouse to Christ without offending him/her?

- Keep doing what's right and leave the rest to God. (Genesis 39; 41: 39)
- Keep reaching for your spouse. (Song of Solomon 2:16-3: 4)
- Show your spouse grace, humility, and unconditional love. (John 13: 1-17)
- Win your spouse over by what you do. (1 Peter 3:1-6)
- Show your spouse your hope of eternity. (Revelation 21:9-22: 21)

My spouse doesn't share my passion for spiritual things.

How can I deal with my frustration and sadness?

- Ask believing friends for help. (Job 6:14-21)
- Practice patience. (James 5:7-11)
- Remember God himself will wipe away your tears. (Revelation 21:1-4)

Christian Hope

(Continued from page 3)

it must have a 'spiritual application.' After all, 65-year-old women do not bear children, so either Abraham must get himself another, younger woman to bear him a child (Abraham thought of that and tried it), or they must adopt. But one thing is sure; this particular promise must not be taken literally. After all, God expects you to use good, common sense!"

But God did promise an heir to Abraham and he meant it. But how can you trust in a promise when the evidence against its being kept is all around you? That's Abraham's dilemma - and the same problem is often ours.

Now Abraham must decide if God is God, if his Word is good, if - after all this time - in spite of the evidence to the contrary, if he can count on this promise. And Abraham believed! No wonder he is called the "father of faith!" Abraham decides that God, not the circumstances, make the promise believable. He decided that the same God who makes stars can also make a son for an old, barren, childless couple. Abraham didn't decide to believe because he felt new life in his loins, nor because Sarah came and told him she was experiencing morning sickness, nor because a new fertility drug for older women had just been approved by the National Health Service, He simply believed he could rely on the promise of the Promise-Maker. I keep finding, or hearing, or reading a promise, and he keeps making it true. I have never known one of God's promises to fail.

Abraham's **hope** did not rest in himself; his **hope** rested completely and utterly in God. That is why he could **hope** against **hope** that he would become the father of many nations. How do you live with **hope** even when all the evidence says otherwise? You do it by holding on to your faith in God and letting go of your faith in yourself. With a perfect trust in God, there is no such thing as **hopelessness** any more. There is only the love of God in Jesus Christ, in whom we may have **hope** against **hope**. Even in the bleak mid-winters of life, when springtime seems far away, what is there to defeat us when we place our faith in Christ, who lives even now in heaven and whose Spirit draws near us today, filling our hearts and minds with an unquenchable **hope** which truly does overcome the world. Amen.

Dele Agbelusi

NOTICE BOARD



Mr Bhatti, the sole Christian government minister, was shot dead on Wednesday 2nd March in Pakistan, after being threatened for opposing laws that impose the death penalty for insulting Islam. He was the second Pakistani politician killed in two months over the matter

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams, and the Archbishop of York, Dr John Sentamu, expressed the "greatest shock and sorrow" over the assassination and said the murder of Shahbaz Bhatti increased anxiety about the safety of Christians and other religious minorities in Pakistan. This further instance of sectarian bigotry and violence will increase anxiety worldwide about the security of Christians and other religious minorities in Pakistan, and we urge that the government of Pakistan will do all in its power to bring to justice those guilty of such crimes and to give adequate protection to minorities," they said.

EARTHQUAKE IN JAPAN

We join millions of Christians worldwide in praying with and for the people of Japan as that nation seeks the lost and begins to bury the dead after the devastating earthquake that rocked the nation. May we all be reminded that we live on a fragile earth, in continual process of creation and destruction, and that the only thing that can survive all earthquakes and disasters is a sure faith in God.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2011

Christ Church Annual General Meeting will take place on April 10 after a brief Morning Prayer. Articles and reports for the meeting should be sent to the church Office on or before 17th March 2011.

At the meeting we shall consider reports of the church activities (January—December) and appoint church officers and Sidespersons. We shall also consider the examined church's Financial Statement from January—December 2010. Please pray along and be there. If you have any item you want discussed, please get this across to the church Secretary, Sheila Wheeler before 17th March.

NEWS AROUND THE UK.

FURY OVER SAME SEX MARRIAGE IN CHURCH: CHURCH OF ENGLAND SAYS NO

Controversial plans to allow same-sex couples to "marry" in church are facing furious opposition from leading Christian groups.



Government proposals to lift the ban on civil partnership ceremonies being held in places of worship will bring it into conflict with thousands of evangelical churches, the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church, some religious groups have said.

"Christians will need a great deal of reassurance that the Government is not about to do something that will make their situation even worse," they added.

"We reiterate our long-held opposition to allowing civil partnerships to be registered in churches. It is a breach of undertakings made by government ministers during debates on the Civil Partnership Bill.

"Parliament was persuaded to pass that Bill, in part, because it was made clear that civil partnership was a civil rather than a religious institution and would not take place in religious premises." The groups, which include Affinity, The Christian Institute, Christian Concern, Reform and the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches, went on: "In any legislation, churches must be protected against the possibility, now and in the future, of any kind of legal action being brought against churches which conscientiously disagree with civil partnerships." When it comes to equality legislation, permission often turns rapidly into coercion. "In a country where faith-based adoption agencies have been forced to close or cut their religious ties by equality law, where Christian marriage registrars can be dismissed for their religious views on marriage and where Christian B&B owners are forced to pay compensation to same-sex couples, Christians will need a great deal of reassurance that the Government is not about to do something that will make their situation even worse."

The Church of England has already said that it will not allow any of its churches to be used for civil partnership ceremonies.

LAUGHTER LINES

BIBLE QUIZ: Just for fun!



- Q. What kind of man was Boaz before he married?
A. Ruthless
- Q. Who was the great financier in the Bible?
A. Noah. He was floating his stock while everyone else was in liquidation.
- Q. Who was the female financier in the Bible?
A. Pharaoh's daughter. She went down to the bank of Nile and drew out a little prophet.
- Q. What kind of motor vehicles are in the Bible?
A. The Lord drove Adam and Eve out of the Garden in a **Fury**. David's **Triumph** was heard throughout the land. And a **Honda**, because the apostles were all in one **Accord**.
- Q. Who was the greatest comedian in the Bible?
A. *Samson. He brought the house down.*
- Q. What excuse did Adam give to his children about why they no longer lived in Eden?
A. "Your mother ate us out of house and home."
- Q. Which servant of God was the most flagrant lawbreaker in the Bible?
A. Moses. He broke all Ten Commandments at once.
- Q. Which area of Palestine was especially wealthy?
A. The area around Jordan. The banks were always overflowing.
- Q. Who is the greatest babysitter mentioned in the Bible?
A. David. He rocked Goliath to a very deep sleep.
- Q. Which Bible character had no parents?
A. Joshua, son of Nun.

LAUGHTER LINES

Bugs with Flashlights

When my grandson, Billy, and I entered our vacation cabin, we kept the lights off until we were inside to keep from attracting pesky insects. Still, a few fireflies followed us in. Noticing them before I did, Billy whispered, "It's no use, Grandpa. The mosquitoes are coming after us with flashlights." —Thomas LaMance, Prewitt, *New Mexico Christian Reader* "Kids of the Kingdom."

Yummy

Elijah and the false prophets were the subjects of Mr. Walt's Sunday school class. He explained how the true prophet built an altar and placed pieces of a sacrificial steer on it and then poured sixteen barrels of water over the whole thing. "Now," said the teacher, "can anyone tell me why the Lord asked Elijah to pour all that water over the sacrifice?"

Little Emma raised her hand with great enthusiasm and said, "To make the gravy!"

Different Strokes

A stalwart young missionary was chased through the African bush for a week by a ferocious lion. Finally the missionary found himself cornered and, in despair, fell to his knees and prayed for deliverance. To his amazement, the lion also began to pray.

"It's truly a miracle," said the missionary, "you, a killer lion, joining me in prayer just when I thought my life was going to end!"

"Be quiet," said the lion, "I'm saying grace."

The Church Board

"There will be a meeting of the board immediately following this service," announced the pastor. After the benediction the group gathered for the called meeting. All looked askance when a visitor who had never attended their church before joined them.

"My friend," asked the pastor, "did you understand that this is a meeting of the board?" "Yes," said the visitor, "and after that service, I'm just about as bored as you can get!"

Mule

Pastor: "Say, Deacon, a mule died out in front of the church."

Deacon: "Well, its the job of you ministers to look after the dead. Why tell me?"

Pastor: "You're right; it is my job. But we always notify the next of kin."

HISTORY CORNER – JOHN CALVIN

On this day, February 6, 1564, an era came to an end. The man who had done as much as any other to forge the theology of the Reformation, preached his last sermon. Unable to walk, John Calvin was carried to church in a chair. John Calvin's mouth filled with blood as he preached his last sermon. It was a significant moment. For twenty-three years he had led Geneva. In the process he planted the seeds of modern democracy and constructed a logical framework on which to interpret Reformation doctrine.



John Calvin first came to Geneva in July 1536, planning to spend only one night. He had already published the first edition of his famous theology, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Having received some training as a priest and then his BA as a lawyer, Calvin was equipped to write on the subject of moral law. William Farel, Geneva's most prominent preacher and the man most eager to improve the city's morals, saw in Calvin the helper he needed. He tried to persuade young Calvin to stay in Geneva. Calvin made excuses. Farel issued Calvin a stern warning which he said was from the Lord. Calvin gave in. That was the beginning of the partnership between Farel, Calvin and the people of Geneva.

Geneva was a fun-loving city. Like the other Protestants, Calvin taught that salvation is by the merit of Christ alone. At the same time, he insisted that the man who hopes for salvation must show a changed life. Farel and Calvin cracked down on the immorality of the city. Within a year, Geneva expelled them. When told he must leave, Calvin calmly replied, "If we had sought to please men, we should have been badly rewarded, but we serve a higher Master, who will not withhold from us our reward." He became the Professor of Theology at Strasburg.

With the two outspoken pastors gone, Geneva slipped into moral and political deterioration. The citizens changed their minds. They invited Calvin back. He hesitated to return, knowing that he might be in for years of tough opposition. In the end, his conscience made him go back. He proposed a new form of rule. As biographer Richard Taylor Stevenson writes: "Catholicism is a religion of priests, Lutheranism of theologians, Calvinism of the believing congregation."

(continued on page 13)

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Dearly Beloved,

Times might have changed but God's Word remains true forever. For reasons not far fetched God commands us in Matt. 6:1-18 to do three things in **SECRET** - its just between you and God. When you allow a 3rd party in, you lose out on God's reward. The focus is on your personal spiritual life and not when we meet corporately as the Church. Here are the 3 things to think about:

1. Give in Secret (Matt. 6:3-4). The world is 'advancing' and the mode of our giving has been changing from raw Cash to Cheques, Credit Cards, On-line Giving etc that reveal the giver and the amount. Is God's prescription for giving out of date or do we need to rethink how we give? **Some food for thought!**

2. Pray in Secret (Matt. 6:6) Modern homes have 2 or 3 living rooms, walk-in-closets, storage rooms etc but most of us will not set aside a particular room as a Prayer closet to which we report to duty everyday. Some actually do not have a place to call a prayer closet because several members of the family are sharing the only room or two available. Jesus Christ did not have a house of his own and so his practice was to get up very early in the morning and go to the mountain side to have his time alone with the Father. **Some food for thought.**

3. Fast in Secret (Matt. 6:17-18) The problem today is that not many Christians practice fasting regularly even though the Bible encourages that. The issue is not so much that we are showing off when we fast but that we are not doing it at all. Wen last did you have a personal fast for your spiritual health? Is there any wonder that many Christians are suffering from spiritual Kwashiorkor? **Some food for thought.**

Sunday & Grace Bwanhot

History Corner—John Calvin

(Continued from page 12)

Ideas of government created by Calvin found wider expression in Scotland and the United States when Calvinists brought them to those countries. Calvin's model of church government became the model for national governments. Thus millions of individuals, Christian and non-Christian alike, felt the influence of Calvin's theology even where his name was little known.

PICK UP YOUR BASSOON AND START MAKING MUSIC

Arturo Toscanini, the great conductor, was sitting at his podium before a concert one evening. As the orchestra warmed up just minutes before the performance, a bassoon player approached him in a fearful panic. "Maestro, I am very sorry, but my instrument has suffered an accident, and the E-flat will not sound. I am afraid I will not be able to play tonight."

Upon hearing this news, Toscanini went silent and closed his eyes. The bassoon player cowered in fear of his fury. The great conductor put his hands to his head and continued in silence, adding to the poor bassoon player's agony.

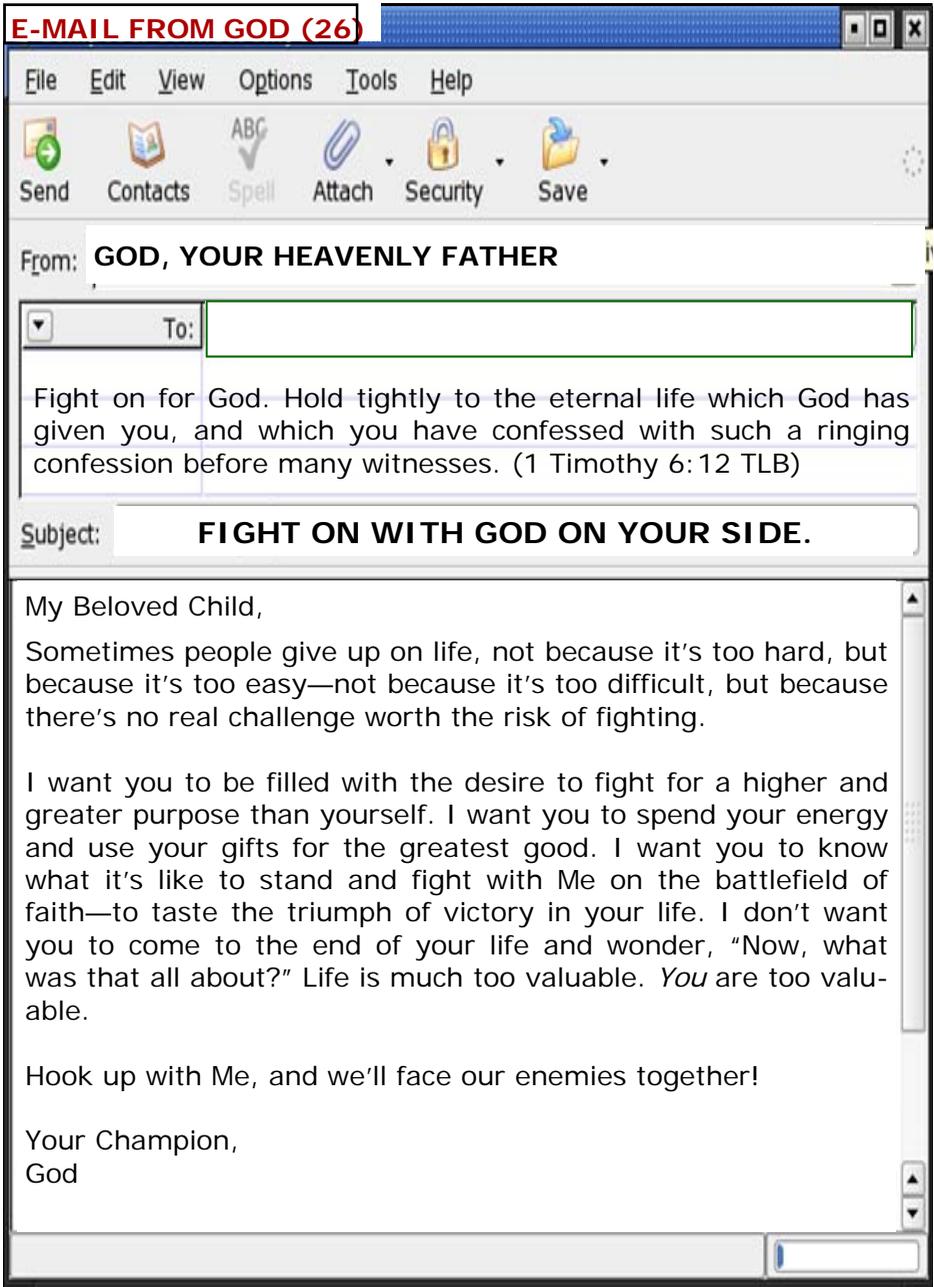


At last Toscanini looked up and said quietly, "Do not worry. E-flat does not appear in your music tonight." Toscanini had played through the entire concert in his mind, reviewing every note the bassoon player would have to play. With his intimate knowledge of the music, the conductor was able to reassure the bassoon player that everything would be all right.

Do you ever wonder about the future and what it might hold for you? Do you ever wonder whether you have what it takes to succeed, to do something important with your life? Do you feel crushed or bowed down?

God knows the future. He has looked ahead at the score of your life and has good news for you. "'For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future'" (Jeremiah 29:11). God has given you everything you need to play your part in his grand symphony. Pick up your bassoon and start making music! Look unto Jesus and place your hope in Him.

HEAVENLY CORRESPONDENCE



Adapted from 'e-mail from God for Teens'-Clonigers

MOTTO/TEXT FOR THE YEAR

“I WANT TO KNOW CHRIST AND THE POWER OF HIS RESURRECTION...” (Philip. 3:10)

FINDING OUT ABOUT ...CHRIST CHURCH?

Tel/Fax: 020 8340 1566

We are a family of men and women, boys and girls who are resolved to live for God in a world that has largely chosen to ignore Him.

We believe that it is God's world and that He has given the answer to all human problems in Jesus Christ. As a body of believers, we offer to all who come, regular opportunities for worship and service that point the way to God as our strongest resources in all aspects of life.

We will be pleased to welcome you to any of our activities. You will find a warm welcome at Christ Church.

Times of worship and fellowship are shown below:

- Sunday**
- **8.00 am.** Holy Communion (Book of Common Prayer)
 - **10.30 am.** Main service with Crèche facilities
- There is family/parade service once every month– usually the third Sunday of the month unless otherwise indicated.
- **5.00 pm.** Evening worship

ACTIVITIES FOR THE WEEK

- Sunday - Choir practice in church (**9.30 am**)
- Monday - Baby n' Toddler Group (**9.30 am to 11.30 am**)
- Brownies meeting in church (**5.30 pm**)
 - Prayer meetings in church - 21st March, 4th and 18th April (**8 pm**)
- Wednesday - Bible Fellowship in church - West Chapel (**6.30 pm for 7.15pm start**)
- Friday - Bible Fellowship in church - West Chapel (**2.00 pm**)
- Scouts meeting in church and hall (**6.30 pm**)
 - Music Team practice in choir vestry (**6.00 pm**)

Enquiry/Counselling/Prayer Lifeline - please phone 020 8340 1566

- Saturday - Prayer Cell in church 7-8pm

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YOUR COMMENTS AND CONTRIBUTIONS ARE WELCOME

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