



## Pastor's Page

### ***"Faith in the Church"***

We'd already interviewed a number of people for the new team when I walked a fresh faced farmer's boy from Suffolk. I'd never met this 18 year-old before but I was immediately impressed by his pleasant persona. Doug asked him some theological questions before I asked him about his guitar playing!

I can only remember writing one thing down that day as we interviewed him and it was this *"I hope we get him"* We did 'get him' for the Saltmine Trust (a Christian organisation that I worked for at the time) in January 1986. And then 21 years later we 'got him' again for the Church weekend away at Cloverley Hall, and what an inspiration he was to us all. (*Here's his story....*)

Steve grew up in a strong Christian family in a farming community in Suffolk. Not only did he know nearly everyone in his small Suffolk village, he was related to most of them! After finishing school he began work on the family farm alongside his father and two uncles and he also worshiped at the local brethren church where the eldership was made up of his father and two uncles! The rest of the congregation were also family members and they met in a tiny hut in the middle of an enormous field! At age 19 Steve joined the Saltmine Trust. and it was here that he met a young woman called Sara who was a member of the organisation's Theatre company. They started going out together and married in May 1990. Having left Saltmine 18 months earlier Steve was now working back on the farm and part time at the tiny Brethren church. Following their marriage Steve and Sara both had input into the church. In 1991 they approached the elders and shared with them their conviction that God wanted the church to move into Mendelsham (the nearest village of any reasonable size) The elders listened politely but decided that it wasn't a good idea. Steve and Sara were disappointed but they continued praying about it whilst carrying on working with this small fellowship. Then one year later they met the elders again and this time they said "we think you were right about the move to Mendelsham – lets do it" So they sold the little hall in Brockford, hired a school in Mendelsham and began worshipping there. The church was 24 strong at this point.

With Steve and Sara moving into the village contacting neighbours and visiting local schools the church steadily grew until they had a regular congregation of 100 people. Then in February 1998 Sara was diagnosed with inoperable cancer. The church prayed for her healing as did many people around the country yet despite this in November 1999 Sara died leaving Steve to bring up three young children. Steve went through some very dark times, even thinking he was losing his faith, but the Lord held on to him. Not only did Steve continue to lead the church but the church continued to grow. Steve remarried in April 2002 and today the church has a congregation of over 300 with a vision to increase to 500 in the next 5 years.

I'm glad that we 'got Steve' in 1986 because he has become a great friend. I'm also glad that we got him last weekend to speak to us at Cloverley Hall because God used him to both encourage and challenge us. He asked ***"What would we like Selly Park Baptist church to look like in 5 years time?"***

Let's prayerfully try to answer this question and then pray and work to that end.

18<sup>th</sup> November 2007