



## **Pastor's Page**

### ***Time for Friends***

I remember the first time I saw Pete, he was wearing 'Beatle boots' (black leather footwear with pointed toes as worn by the 'Fab Four') black trousers and a black polo-neck jumper. He was 19, played the guitar and wrote songs. I was 12, learning the guitar and trying hard to write songs! Pete was a hero to me. I longed to be like him and loved being with him. When I reached the grand old age of 17 I joined Pete (having failed my audition for the Beatles!) and we formed the legendary Gospel duo, "Pete and Mark" (You'll have to work out which one I was!)

Not only did we have great fun playing our guitars and singing songs to sympathetic audiences (our families!) but we also became life-long friends.

Pete was not only a musical inspiration to me he was also a spiritual mentor. He encouraged, challenged and guided me as I set out on the Christian journey. I can't over-estimate his importance in my Christian life. It was therefore all the more difficult to understand years later, how he could (or so it seems) have turned his back on the Lord. Though I've prayed often for him he still appears to be 'away from the faith'. Yet despite this he remains one of my best friends and I know he would always support me and 'put himself out' for me. I value this greatly.

It's so easy in the busy-ness of life to neglect our friends. Sometimes we may even forget how important friendship itself is. I was reminded of this today as I was putting dates in the diary for church activities. I felt concerned that there was a gap in the middle of one of the months when we (the church) didn't seem to be doing too much. I mentioned this to someone in the fellowship asking for their opinion. I was assured that we were doing enough and that it was good to keep some time free in the calendar particularly at the weekends in order that people may 'catch up' with their friends. This hit me like a bolt from the blue. I have to confess I am often 'event' driven in terms of church life. I can look at the activities that we are doing and measure our commitment to the Lord and his work by this criterion. I realise that this is not good. There is much more to the Christian life than this. Events definitely have their place and scripture is full of them. From Creation to the final revelation we see God's hand at work in History. But the greatest event of all must be the "Incarnation" Jesus becoming a man and visiting planet earth. It is because of the 'incarnation event' which climaxed in the crucifixion and the resurrection that the church exists at all. These are the actions that have changed our lives and are at the heart of the 'Good News' which God has entrusted to us. However, if we are not developing friendships but just organising 'good events' we'll have no-one to share the good news with!

Here's an idea; Why not think hard about three people (friends) who you would love to see become Christians (I'll do the same) Then join with two others from church who have done this too forming a prayer triplet and meet regularly to pray for these people? Then perhaps invite them to some church-based activity or plan an event that would especially appeal to them, or simply show them friendship! Good friendship is the best foundation for sharing the 'Good News'

Anyway I must finish now Pete's just arrived at my front door.....

*1<sup>st</sup> February 2009*