



## Pastor's Page

### Running the Risk

It was altogether different from most other Sunday mornings. Firstly I didn't rise as early as I usually do, going through all my preparations for the day. Secondly I walked rather than drove to church (that was a shock to my system!) Thirdly I went to another church where I spent the morning standing outside the building shouting, applauding, eating cake and getting wet! I speak of course of the wonderful Birmingham half marathon that took place this time last week of which I was one of a number of enthusiastic spectators.

In case you're in any doubt, the reason that I went to another church to support the marathon was because we had closed our building that morning due to the fact that many of the roads around the church were cordoned off for the race. Our neighbouring church cancelled their service too but opened their doors for people to use the facilities as they watched the event from the steps of the church.

On the day as I approached this small group of supporters who were huddled together under the grey autumn skies, I realised that I'd already missed some of the runners. Disappointed I chatted with others as we waited for the action! Then in the distance we saw some athletes – real athletes. As they quickly drew near we could see from their physiques and running prowess that they'd done this before! In fact they were amongst some of the world's best athletes and here they were running down 'our road.' What a privilege! We clapped and cheered with great appreciation. However, soon it went quiet as the elite ran out of sight and we were left to chat, listen to the music and eat more cake! Then just as I was beginning to think that this was not going to turn out to be such a great occasion I spotted more runners appearing in the distance. As they got nearer I realised it was the ordinary folk, people a bit like me. We started to cheer and shout and they smiled and waved back (some of them) as hundreds and hundreds of them kept on coming. Tall, short, slim, not so slim, young, older, some dressed like runners others dressed like 'extras' from a bad movie they were all there! Some of them looked quite fit others looked fit to drop and it was those that I urged on the most. As wave after wave of them passed by I realised that so many of these people were running in order to make a difference in someone else's life. I tried to read some of the messages on their tops – Macmillan's Cancer research, Multiple Sclerosis, Leukaemia 'Helping the homeless' to name a few – and I even saw a blind man running with a guide to help him. And as the race continued people in the crowd (including me) started reaching out to the runners who responded by gently 'high fiving' the hands of us spectators and somehow in this simple fun-type gesture there seemed to be a profound message; "we're in this thing together." Some were running some were sponsoring and some were supporting, but no matter, we were all in it together.

And as I later walked home along the strangely quiet streets, I was glad that I'd played my part, however small, in this great event. There won't be a marathon every week but nonetheless perhaps we should make it our practice to spend more time on the Lord's Day outside the church building, connecting with the community and aiming to make a difference for the Lord's sake.

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