



Pastor's Page

“Sabbatical send-off”

Well I don't know how to break this to you gently dear readers (so I won't try!) – This is the last Pastors Page until April 2011!! (Please don't cheer too loudly) The reason for this radical decision is that from 1 January to 31 March 2011 I will be on sabbatical and this is my last Sunday here before it starts. So I thought that this would be a good opportunity before I go to explain a little about my sabbatical.

What is a sabbatical? Based on the biblical principal of 'rest' (the 7th day, the 7th year – Leviticus 25) a ministers sabbatical is a rest from his/her normal pastoral work. The Baptist Union encourage sabbaticals and to help ministers who are considering them they have written the following; “*Formation for ministry does not end when you leave college, or even when you complete your studies as a newly accredited minister - it goes on day by day as you study and serve. Sometimes, however, it helps to stand back from regular duties and take time to study, reflect and pray at greater leisure than the demands of ministry allow. This can enrich your ministry and make it more effective, as you develop deeper understanding and insights and perhaps acquire new pastoral skills. The Baptist Union encourages ministers to take study leave every seven years..a sabbatical is meant to refresh you for the next period of ministry*” So from 1 January until 31 March I will be “standing back from regular duties and taking time to study, reflect and pray at greater leisure than the demands of ministry allow”

What will I specifically be doing? I have chosen two topics that I will be studying during this leave and they are; - *Christianity in a post-Christian era*. And *The place of preaching in the church today*. These are both big topics and to this end I will attempt to read a number of books directly and indirectly related to these topics. At the end of my time I will write a report sharing the insights that I have been given. As well as studying I will also be involved in some ministry including a trip to Thailand in January with Mat Wilson to visit Judy Cook. This trip will include meeting up with Emily Chalk in Bangkok who works with girls trapped in the sex industry. We will also spend time with Pete and Liz Maycock who work with Karen young people in Chiang Mai encouraging local churches. We will also meet up with a BMS Action team and of course spend time with Judy Cook at Hope home. The whole trip runs from 16-27 January. As well as this exciting venture I will also be going to the Heba conference in Swanwick in March where I will be leading the worship and in the same month I have planned to spend a week at the Northumbria community on a guided retreat called “Being Who You Are.” As well as all this I plan to visit a number of different churches and also fulfil one or two speaking commitments. (I'm hoping to go skiing too!)

Please pray that I will use the time wisely to deepen my relationship with God and allow him to refresh and equip me for the next phase of ministry I really want to thank you for allowing me to have this sabbatical break, I will miss you all (I hope you'll miss me too!) but I know you're in good hands as the leadership team continue to serve the church. Have a wonderful Christmas and an exciting new year and I'll see you on Mothering Sunday!!!

19th December 2010