

Looking Back, Looking Up... (June 2018)

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By Rev Paul Graham

This month's magazine covers the halfway point in the year 2018. It seems slightly strange writing that as it doesn't feel that long ago that we were welcoming this fresh year into our lives, full of anticipation and unannounced snow. And what a year it's been so far in the life of Clare Baptist Church!

We've had everything from birth to death and lots more in between. We've had celebrations and sadness. We've even had some time to sit back and take stock (though not too much of that!). We've had Easter eggs to give away, cakes to eat and people to meet. We've welcomed pupils from Stour Valley to learn about worship Baptist-style, baptism and communion and to design their own churches. We've been up to the Primary School leading assemblies, hearing readers and supporting classes in and out of lessons. We've supported parents with newborns on Tuesday mornings, looked after their children on Friday evenings and journeyed together with God on Sunday mornings.

We've spent time in each other's living rooms, drinking gallons of tea and coffee and sharing life together. We've visited people in hospital, we've been in hospital; we've taken people to appointments, picked up prescriptions and sat in many waiting rooms.

We've prayed in church, in homes and on the streets. We've prayed on our own, in groups and together as God's church united in Clare. We've heard the Bible, heard each other and listened out for God's voice throughout. We've met friends old and new in church, around the town and in Dunkirk.

We've sung, prayed, listened, played, baptised and shared in communion together. We've left things behind in the past, tried new things and kept old things going. We've enjoyed bits and endured others. We've given time, money and energy out of our love for God and to show that love to our neighbours.

And the story isn't over yet...

By the time this magazine is consigned to history and the Summer Special hits the shelves, we will nearly be at the end of Ashley O'Bosky's time with us (which feels very peculiar as at the time of writing she isn't here yet!) and there is much to be getting on with.

On Sunday mornings, we will be working our way through the letter of James, a New Testament book that causes concern for some by its direct style and forthright teaching. There's no getting around the fact that the author, whether he was Jesus' brother or some other chap who happened to share the name, pulled few punches in addressing the twelve tribes. Do this, do that; don't do this, don't do that. Not a lot of ambiguity to be found in James and lots of it still applies today, as I'm sure we will find out in the coming weeks.

In fact, it's with a few verses from James that I want to finish. They epitomise all the activity around Clare Baptist Church. I hope and pray that it reminds us why we keep plugging on with the Good News and the many ways that it causes us to respond in loving service.

Dear friends, do you think you'll get anywhere in this if you learn all the right words but never do anything? Does merely talking about faith indicate that a person really has it? For instance, you come upon an old friend dressed in rags and half-starved and say, "Good morning, friend! Be clothed in Christ! Be filled with the Holy Spirit!" and walk off without providing so much as a coat or a cup of soup—where does that get you? Isn't it obvious that God-talk without God-acts is outrageous nonsense? (James 2:14-17

The Message)