



newsletter

Four-monthly notes and news
of his ministry from John Blanchard

No. 17

September 2008

What praise is due to a pen?

Of all the encouragements I receive in the ministry, few if any are more meaningful than those related to one or other of the books I have written. Hearing from (or of) many hundreds who have come to faith and countless others who have been significantly helped in their Christian life through reading one of them is a heart-warming reward for the lonely discipline of writing.

I was reminded of this during a recent convention in Dudley. One man told me that some fifty years of faithful witnessing to a close relative had apparently been fruitless, yet within two days of reading *Ultimate Questions* the person concerned had professed conversion. On the same day I heard more remarkable news. Another man told me that over the years he had carefully passed on quite a number of copies of *Right with God* to unconverted friends and that every one of them had come to faith in Christ.

These two pieces of news were delightful, though they also carried the obvious danger of opening the door to pride — but two days later came the perfect antidote. During the convention I went to Kidderminster to do some research on Richard Baxter in connection with another writing project and spent some time in Kidderminster Parish Church, St Mary's and All Saints, where he had such an astonishing ministry from 1641-1661 (with a break during the Civil War).

It was in Kidderminster that Baxter wrote some of his best-known works, including *The Reformed Pastor* (1656), and a special display in the church outlined something of his life and work. It included this statement from the man whose writings have had such a profound impact for over 300 years: 'I was but a pen in God's hands, and what praise is due to a pen?'

As I read these words, I was more than happy to agree!



Richard Baxter's
statue in
Kidderminster

'As much as I can, as well as I can, for as long as I can'

Wet weather; warm welcome

Traditionally, April is the time of year when we anticipate Spring at its best, with temperatures rising steadily towards summer levels, but for one of my northern Popular Christian Apologetics tours this year that scenario was turned on its head, and Howard Williams and I spent the entire week under slate-grey skies and plagued by chilling north-east winds.

Happily, the week's events did more than compensate. We began at St Stephen's Church, Low Elswick, **Newcastle**, a small but solid fellowship under the leadership of The Rev. George Curry, who amongst many other things is Chairman of the Church Society. Timing and other factors meant only a small attendance, but there was an excellent spirit and overall agreement that the event had been well worthwhile.

The next morning we were in **Darlington** for a meeting of the Teesside Ministers' Fraternal. This time, school holidays hit the attendance, but the three hours spent there meant much in the lives of the men who came, one of whom pastors five village churches in Romania. After the meeting we made our way to **Leeds** for the evening engagement, a well-attended event at City Evangelical Church. 'City' has been a very fruitful hunting ground for me over many years and a large crowd contributed to a splendid evening, marked by an excellent Q and A session.

Two nights of delightful hospitality in Mirfield meant only a short journey to **Dewsbury**, where five local churches joined in sponsoring a fine event held in The Royal Suite at Dewsbury Rams (rugby league) Stadium. The room was virtually packed and once again the Q and A session was remarkably good.

Our next stop was in **Ripon**, where Bethel Evangelical Church and Zion Baptist Church joined forces in arranging a superb meeting in Ripon Grammar School. The main hall was filled and for the third night in succession relevant and penetrating questions were a feature of the evening. It was also a special joy to meet someone who had served with me in National Association of Youth Clubs circles over fifty years ago and 'accidentally' heard of the meeting.

Our last stop was in **Sheffield** where Spencer Cunnah leads a fine work at Wycliffe Independent Church. The splendid premises were nearly crammed to capacity and the entire evening had the kind of flow one hopes for at every Popular Christian Apologetics event. It was a great ending to the tour and as Howard and I made a late-night dash across the Pennines to have me in place for a flight home the next morning we were grateful that we had known a week of bright lights under such dark skies!

JOIN THE TEAM!

Thank you for reading *Newsline*. If you have not seen it before and would like to receive future copies (by post or e-mail) please let me know at 'Sarnia', 81 Lambert Road, Banstead, Surrey, SM7 2QU. Telephone 01737 357501 E-mail: jbsarnia@gmail.com

JOYCE

Readers who receive *Newsline* by e-mail will have heard about Joyce's ill-health, but it will come as unwelcome news to those who receive it in printed form.

After a number of medical tests in May, Joyce was diagnosed as having a malignant colorectal tumour and was told that there were metastases in both her liver and lungs.

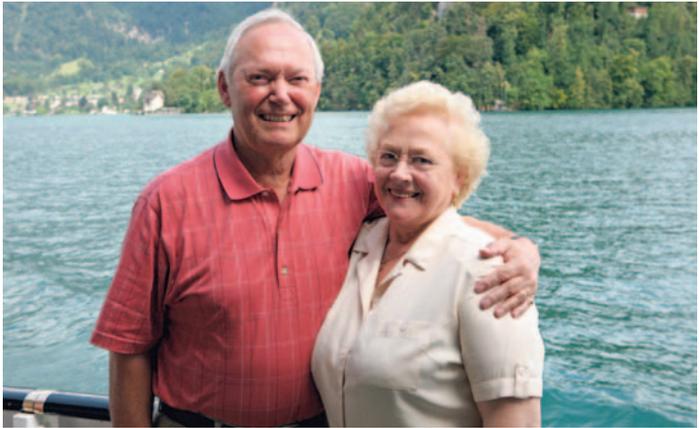
On 16 June the primary tumour was successfully removed at Epsom General Hospital. She made an excellent recovery from this and after several visits to the Royal Marsden Hospital began treatment there for the secondaries with a chemotherapy infusion on 30 July. This was followed by the first three-week cycle of oral medication.

At the time this issue of *Newsline* is being prepared she has avoided almost all of the potential side effects of the chemotherapy and we are very grateful for this, but as yet have no indication of any progress or what treatment the Marsden will determine for the next stage.

The major side effect thus far has been chronic exhaustion throughout the day, leaving her unable to do other than the bare minimum of what she would wish. She is also virtually unable to leave the house alone.

Needless to say, this has come as a shock to both of us and has meant a radical adjustment to our lifestyle. At the time of her operation I had to cancel a major Popular Christian Apologetics tour in Scotland and although their preparations were at an advanced stage the churches were all very understanding and we must hope that the tour will be able to

be re-instated at some future time. I have remained at home ever since to support Joyce. I have not preached since early July and have just one engagement away from home between now and the end of September.



Golden Wedding Day, 22 August 2007, Lake Lucerne, Switzerland

Joyce has maintained a very positive frame of mind throughout all of this time and although neither of us knows what the future holds *we do know who holds the future!* We have been hugely encouraged by the hundreds of letters, e-mails and telephone calls we have received assuring us of friends' prayers. We would be grateful if you would join them, praying that Joyce will be given all needed grace and strength, and that the Lord will be glorified in the outcome.

If you are on the internet, you will be able to access a blog on the Home page of my web site — www.johnblanchard.org — and I will arrange to post updates there from time to time. Please visit this to keep in closer touch than *Newsline* will allow.

COMING ENGAGEMENTS 2008

At the time of going to press these are my engagements for the next four months. For up-to-date news of any additional meetings, visit www.johnblanchard.org. Please pray for God's enabling and blessing at these events — and if possible plan to attend any scheduled to be held near you.

Please be aware that because of Joyce's illness there is a possibility that I may have to withdraw from a scheduled engagement at relatively short notice, though hopefully this will not be the case. If you plan to attend I suggest you contact the organizers of the event a few days before the date concerned.

- Sept** 5 LLANGOLLEN, Denbighshire: Glanrafon Evangelical Church – Anniversary Service. [Info: 01978 860642 or 01978 860630 or jamescornford@btinternet.com]
6-20 *Reserved for research, study and writing*
21 SANDERSTEAD, Surrey: Michley Hill Evangelical Church [Info: 020 8657 1667 or royandjuliet@royjarvis.org]
21-27 *Reserved for research, study and writing*
28 CHIPPENHAM, Wilts: Emmanuel Evangelical Church, Hardenhuish School, (am) Hardenhuish Lane – Harvest Service [Info: 01249 816579 or david@margetts.org]
28 LLANELLI, Carmarthenshire: Llanelli Free Evangelical Church, Queen Victoria Rd (pm) [Info: 01554 746230 or philip.swann@ntlworld.com]
29* LLANELLI, Carmarthenshire: Zion Baptist Church, Park Street (sponsored by Llanelli Free Evangelical Church) [Info: 01554 746230 or 01554 770700 or philip.swann@ntlworld.com]
30* CARDIFF, S. Glamorgan: St Mellons Baptist Church (Caersalem), Old St Mellons, Ty'r Winch Road [Info: 02929 333349 or 02920 779290 or andychristofides@gmail.com]
- Oct** 1* CAERPHILLY, Gwent: Neuadd y Parc Hall, Park Lane [Info: 02920 883000 or cyril.smith@velindre-tr.wales.nhs.uk]
2* BRADFORD ON AVON, Wilts: St Margaret's Hall, St Margaret's Street [Info: 01225 865958 or pilgrimhomesdps@wfcsmail.com]
3* CHELTENHAM, Glos: Cambray Baptist Church, Cambray Place [Info: 01242 571229 or 01242 584672 or f.hughes@homecall.co.uk or office@cambray.org]
4-9 *Reserved for research, study and writing*
10 GUERNSEY: La Grande Mare Hotel, Vazon Bay, Castel – Evangelistic Dinner [Info: 0141 256 709 or focus@cwgsy.net]
11-29 *Reserved for research, study and writing*
30 DUBLIN: Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland [Info: seanengala@yahoo.com]
- Nov** 1-14 *Reserved for research, study and writing*
15-16 BELVEDERE, Kent: Free Grace Baptist Church, Nuxley Road – Anniversary Services [Info: orcha@orcha.plus.com]
22-23 BRISTOL: Whiteshill Evangelical Church, Bristol Road, Hambrook [Info: 01454 617576 or n.mead@btinternet.com]
27 N. Ireland: Moira, Co Down: Evangelical Fellowship of Ireland. Details t.b.a. [Info: patterson.kenneth@talk21.com]
- Dec** 7 LEATHERHEAD, Surrey: Fetcham Evangelical Church [Info: 01732 372983 or cilla@gotads1.co.uk]
14 LEATHERHEAD, Surrey: Fetcham Evangelical Church [Info: 01732 372983 or cilla@gotads1.co.uk]
21 LEATHERHEAD, Surrey: Fetcham Evangelical Church [Info: 01732 372983 or cilla@gotads1.co.uk]
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**Indicates a Popular Christian Apologetics meeting*