



January 2012

Vision and prayer for 2012

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Thank you to Graham Stevens for sharing this with us. We pray with him and Abbeyfield Community Church:

'We recently enjoyed at Abbeyfield Community Church a wonderfully creative and powerful half day of prayer. People were encouraged to listen to God and a scroll was placed in the centre of the room for people to write down words from God and scriptures they felt were meaningful to us as we waited on God and prayed for the new community centre on Abbeyfield.

One of the verses that impressed itself on my mind was **Isaiah 62:10**.

“Pass through, pass through the gates! Prepare the way for the people. Build up, build up the highway! Remove the stones. Raise a banner for the nations.”

God is telling us what to do and encouraging us to do it with a promise.

We are to pass through the gates all those barriers and inhibitions, fears and traditions and move to where the people are.

We are to prepare the way for people – to hear the good news of a Saviour’s love and to be persuaded that Jesus is the answer to every need.

We are to do this by building up the highway. By establishing relationships with those around us. Giving the precious gift of time to people around us. Build up the highway through acts of kindness and showing care and compassion.

We are to remove the stones, the things that hinder others from receiv-

ing Jesus. These include an examination of our attitudes, levels of intolerance and that judgmental spirit that can so easily turn people aside and declare they want nothing to do with the church.

We are to raise a banner – speak boldly of the hope we have in Jesus. Offering the same to others and making known as much through our life as our words that Jesus brings peace and joy and direction and meaning to our lives.

And God is bringing to himself a people called **“the holy people, the redeemed of the Lord;”** verse 12.

These are words to us as a church as we move forward in 2012 towards establishing a new community centre and church on Abbeyfield.

So exciting and scary.

But I believe too these are words for us as the church in Colchester. No matter what particular flavour or emphasis we may have, God calls his people to work together with him in building his church and to rejoice at what the Lord said to Paul in **Acts 18:9-10**.

“Do not be afraid, keep on speaking, do not be silent. For I am with you, and no-one is going to attack and harm you, because I have many people in this city.”

Consider: The only limit to what God can do through his church in this town in 2012 is his Church...'

*Graham Stevens,
Abbeyfield Community Church*

At the beginning of 2012 we asked leaders from across the Church to contribute their thoughts, hopes and dreams for the year ahead.

Vision and prayer for 2012

Thank you to Barry Roberts who leads Kesed for this inspirational contribution:

Happy New Year to everyone – it's going to be a fantastic year as the church stands up and grabs hold of the God given opportunities to bring life wherever we go. What a time to be alive!!!

A couple of testimonies to come from the unity of churches standing together in the "Prayer in the Town- Praise in the Priory" event: We prayed together for the prosperity of our town's businesses, a week later in the Monday Gazette, it reported that the National average for shoppers in town centres was down 5.4% but in Colchester (where churches united to pray) it was **UP** 17.2%!! Woohoo – the prayer of united church brings blessing.

We started the prayer at the First-site building praying that, what had caused such dispute and division in the Town, would become a blessing. The church I pastor (Kesed), meets in the Firstsite building and we have found much favour with the people there. The greatest thing is that, in the 9 weeks we have been there, 30 people have given their lives to Jesus. The venue is very definitely becoming a blessing and, once again, the prayer of a united church releases the blessing.

My hope for 2012 is to see the Ezekiel 47 River of Life, blessing and healing flowing from the church into our Town. Father has placed 4 things on my heart as our part to release something special in our Town:

Prayer with expectation – as the church, we have known for a long time that it's time to pray like never before. But the Hebrews 11 definition of faith, "certain of what we do not see", carries a level of expectation that we **WILL** see it. It's time that our prayer gatherings were **full** and full with expectation that the Holy Spirit will bring blessing to our Town.

Worship as a lifestyle – laid-down lives in every sphere of life. The church will have little or no impact if it's full of "church goers". We must stir up passionate people who can genuinely say "send me" and respond in obedience.

Unity – the earlier testimony declares the blessing that church unity brings. Once again we all know the power of unity, but we still get opinionated on another "style" of church and frequently speak negativity over our own brothers and sisters – hard reading I guess but surely worth fighting for! Unity isn't being the same, its understanding our different calling and championing each other to do be successful in what the Holy Spirit has placed on our lives. As we actively speak each other up and celebrate each others victories, a flow of blessing will be opened up – let's fight for it.

Action – we have some amazing people running, and getting involved with, great projects like Foodbank, Street Pastors, Soup-Run etc. The over-riding theme seems to be, a few dedicated saints striving hard to be His hands and feet. 2012 is the time for the church to commit in numbers to get behind these projects,

especially when it unites the church.

Ezekiel 47:12 "Fruit trees of all kinds will grow on both banks of the river. Their leaves will not wither, nor will their fruit fail. Every month they will bear fruit because the water from the sanctuary flows to them. Their fruit will serve for food and their leaves for healing."

Bring it on church – 2012, the year Colchester Church stands up!

God Bless all of you, you are amazing, extremely valuable and highly favoured'.

Barry Roberts, Kesed Church

Prayer for our Neighbours was launched on Tuesday 4th October 2011. Many have joined this opportunity to pray for their communities.

Richard Smith has provided a prayer resource via Colchester Prayernet website:

www.colchesterprayernet.co.uk

Please continue to join the Boiler Room team and CPn to pray for our community. A follow up evening is planned for **Tuesday 24th Jan 2012.**

Everyone welcome!

Colchester Churches **Prayer Breakfasts** continue in 2012.

On: January 7th 2012

Time: 08.30- 10.00hrs

At: Abbeyfields Community church, Abbeygate street.

Vision and prayer for 2012

Neil Loxley at Kingsland writes

'2012? Well? Isn't 12 a number of getting there, complete, sorted? Something strong to build from? You may lose or replace one or two but you can change the world.

2009 was a year of getting there and we gave a year to getting our building above Aldi organised and built

2010 we gave the year to making it work as a venue, a place to meet and a fantastic community resource

2011 we gave a lot of time to getting our training course established and accredited. Its an evening class level three in Christian ministry and an internship in worship ministry. We also got some conferences started and gave more to the community.

Alongside all of that of course we've been doing 'normal church' - growing in passionate praise, stirring up intercession, community initiative & action, working with others, discipling each other, teaching, loving, reaching out, pastoring. More of the love of Father, more passion for Jesus, more Holy Spirit.

2012? Really not sure! It's odd. I think the light will seem brighter.

I think there'll be more people, I think there'll be more Jesus encounters.

I think we'll get a better understanding of what Christ has already done.

I think we'll drink more and I think it'll be more fun.

I think there'll be more resources, more favour, I really think it's going to be another good year - but I feel it could be a great one. Pentecost anyone?'

David and Janie Beales at DNA Networks:

'We observe the start-up of multiple pioneering work in Colchester over the last few years with projects like Source, Abbeyfields, New Braiswick, New Neighbours, Out for Good, Korban, Street pastors, Foodbank etc together with the emergence of ethnic churches like RCCG, Christ's Embassy, Chinese Overseas Christian Mission etc.

Some of these have emerged through creative innovation here in Colchester while other ministries have been innovated elsewhere and adopted here.

What appears unusual is the rate of multiplication; Colchester is supposedly one of the fastest growing boroughs population-wise, is it also one of the fastest-multiplying boroughs in terms of new churches and ministry projects?

Are we merely keeping up with population growth or is there something of God's creative activity discernible here?

If so, what do we do with the emerging pioneering instinct?

What is Colchester's place and role regarding pioneer training within the eastern region and beyond?

Is the "Knowledge Gateway" currently being developed near the university a sign of Colchester's spiritual identity in terms of introducing understanding about God's apostolic and missional purposes in the nation?'

From Katy Smith—Colchester Boiler Room Community:

'There has been a shaking in our world in 2011 – In the Middle East, people giving their lives as they demonstrated their cries for 'justice' and new systems of power. In Japan, the earthquake and Tsunami. In Europe, as we encounter financial hardship, Greece, 'the Euro' etc.

Unto us a son is born unto us a son is given and the government shall be on his shoulders and his name shall be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, the Prince of peace... (Is 9:6)

What is our response in 2012? Are we 'shaken but not stirred', or will we allow the uncertainties of our time to drive us deeper into God?

Will we as church, dare to live out the reality of the Christmas story throughout the year? Let us consider Jesus - The son who was given, who came as a refugee baby into a messed up world, now seated at the right hand of the Father...

Will we pray for a world that reflects 'the government resting on his shoulders'?

Will we introduce Jesus the 'Wonderful Counsellor' through our interactions with family, friends, neighbours?

Will we dare to believe and pray that our 'Mighty God' who is also the 'Prince of Peace', can bring change and transformation in even the most remote and troubled places in the world?

Will we then trust our 'Everlasting Father' for all these things and be brave enough to 'go' if that's what he asks next?'

Vision and prayer for 2012

From Richard Smith— Colchester Boiler Room Community:

Life with Jesus is available now for people in Colchester

Whatever we feel. Whatever present difficulties we face. However much the culture around us seems to be rejecting Jesus. Life, free, eternal and full, is available from Jesus in 2012 for people in Colchester. (Romans 8:31-35)

The living water that Jesus promised the Samaritan woman 2000 years ago is still available now for people in Colchester. (John 4) This is enabled by the Holy Spirit, still available now to all peoples who submit to Jesus as Lord (Acts 2 and Acts 8).

Prayer and Availability brings fruit

Here in south Colchester we are seeing a pattern emerge.

That is; where people pray for, and are available to serve and love a neighbourhood, then new people want to join in. People want to know Jesus, who inspires this love for our neighbours.

One church community has been praying and serving for 6 years, and are now starting to see many opportunities.

A passage from Haggai, and a dream

This prophecy from the book of Haggai in the Bible was given recently, during a night of prayer at a church community in Colchester. This prophecy had been given before in Colchester in about 2009, at the start of this time of financial recession in Europe.

“My people, why should you be living in well-built houses, while

my Temple lies in ruins? Don't you see what is happening to you? You have sown much corn, but harvested very little. You have food to eat but not enough to make you full. You have wine to drink but not enough to get drunk on! You have warm clothing, but not enough to keep you warm. And the working man cannot earn enough to live on. Can't you see why this has happened? Now go into the hills, get timber, and rebuild the Temple; then I will be pleased and worshipped as I should be.” Haggai 1:4-8

This reminded me of a dream that I had, also during 2009.

“We, the church of Colchester, were living together on a boat. It was a beautiful boat, with nice food, lovely cabins, and brass portholes! However, there were thousands of people drowning in the water around us. And we could not fit enough people onto the boat. So God said, “Break up your boat! Make rafts, so that all the drowning people can be saved”.

We, the church of Colchester, were living together in a farmhouse. It was a beautiful farmhouse, with nice food and furniture, and a nice garden producing our food. But there were lots of fields around the farmhouse that were neglected and full of weeds. And there were many starving people outside the farmhouse. So God said; “Tear down your farmhouse and make it into food stores. Go and till, sow and harvest food. Invite the hungry to join in, and feed them.”

My interpretation of this passage from the Bible and the dream together is that we the church in Colchester should be seeking to

use every resource that God gives us to worship him.

That is not only in our church meetings, but also in how we serve people in need, invest in opportunities that God is opening up, equip and send people on mission locally and abroad, give opportunity and encouragement to our young people, and giving our time in personal prayer.

Be encouraged that there is more life and fruit for us as we wholeheartedly follow Jesus than we can hope or imagine! (Ephesians 4:14-21)

Facebook There is now a Community Group called Colchester Prayernet. Visit us, share prayers, good news stories, burdens and events.

To contact Teresa Lasky:
teresa@colchesterprayernet.co.uk
or phone: 01206 242235

The contributors' views are their own and do not necessarily reflect those of the editor.

2011 celebrated the 400th year of the King James Bible. In December David Cameron made a speech at the close of these celebrations.

The speech was quite long and so we have attempted to provide snippets of quotes (see page 5) to help us pray as we enter this new year of 2012. We hope you find it helpful.

If you would like to read the full speech please visit the Number 10 website:

www.number10.gov.uk/

Quotes from the PM's speech

I am proud to celebrate the achievements of the King James Bible, one of this country's greatest achievements.

The Bible has not just shaped our country, but shaped the world. A book that is not just important in understanding our past, but which will continue to have a profound impact in shaping our collective future.

I am a committed, vaguely practising Christian, who will stand up for the values and principles of my faith... The King James Bible is as relevant today as at any point in its 400 year history. And none of us should be frightened of recognising this.

We are a Christian country. And we should not be afraid to say so. I know and fully respect that many people in this country do not have a religion. And I am also incredibly proud that Britain is home to many different faith communities, who do so much to make our country stronger. The Bible has helped to give Britain a set of values and morals which make Britain what it is today. Values and morals we should actively stand up and defend.

The alternative of moral neutrality should not be an option. You can't fight something with nothing. Because if we don't stand for something, we can't stand against anything.

And the knowledge that God created man in his own image was, if you like, a game changer for the cause of human dignity and equality.

But when each and every individual is related to a power above all of us...
...and when every human being is

of equal and infinite importance, created in the very image of God... we get the irrepressible foundation for equality and human rights...

The Bible provides a defining influence on the formation of the first welfare state.

Just as in the past it was the influence of the church that enabled hospitals to be built, charities created, the hungry fed, the sick nursed and the poor given shelter.....so today faith based groups are at the heart of modern social action.

In total, there are almost 30 thousand faith based charities in this country... not to mention the thousands of people who step forward as individuals, as families, as communities, as organisations and yes, as churches....

So it's right to recognise the huge contribution our faith communities make to our politics.
...and to recognise the role of the Bible in inspiring many of their works.

People often say that politicians shouldn't "do God." If by that they mean we shouldn't try to claim a direct line to God for one particular political party...they could not be more right.

But we shouldn't let our caution about that stand in the way of recognising both what our faith communities bring to our country...
...and also just how incredibly important faith is to so many people in Britain.

The Bible has helped to shape the values which define our country. They are Christian values and we

should not be afraid to acknowledge that.

But they are also values that speak to us all – to people of every faith and none. I believe we should all stand up and defend them. And being clear on this is absolutely fundamental to who we are as a people...

...what we stand for... and the kind of society we want to build. Shying away from speaking the truth about behaviour, about morality has actually helped to cause some of the social problems that lie at the heart of the lawlessness we saw with the riots.

Put simply, for too long we have been unwilling to distinguish right from wrong. "Live and let live" has too often become "do what you please". Bad choices have too often been defended as just different lifestyles.

Christianity, faith, religion, the Church and the Bible are all inherently involved in politics because so many political questions are moral questions.

So I don't think we should be shy or frightened of this.

I believe the Church of England has a unique opportunity to help shape the future of our communities. But to do so it must keep on the agenda that speaks to the whole country. The future of our country is at a pivotal moment.

The values we draw from the Bible go to the heart of what it means to belong in this country.....and you, as the Church of England, can help ensure that it stays that way.