

The Watford Word

www.watfordchurchofchrist.org

What's on

Sunday 18 January: 10:30 AM. David -- living in hope. Malcolm speaking.

Thursday 22nd Jan: 8PM. Praying for our adult children. Zoom Meeting: <https://zoom.us/j/94697033879?pwd=MfSdnayjHeQjagZzbIxc7ENv2aRTjV.1>. Meeting ID: 946 9703 3879. Passcode: 767635

Sunday 25 January: 10:30 AM. Malcolm speaking. Jesus - living a life of love.

Saturday 31st Jan 8:30 am - Women's breakfast

Sunday 01 February: 10:30 AM. Church service. Stefan speaking.

Friday 6th February, 7:30 pm – next Spiritual Practices group. See below for details.

Sunday 08 February: Church service followed by our annual church meeting

Events further ahead

Saturday, 14th March: UK children's ministry training day: London and South

Friday 03rd to 06th April: European International Campus Ministry Conference, Paris, France

Friday 22nd to Sunday 24th May: UK & Ireland mature singles retreat – "Trust In The Lord" (Kents Hill Park, Milton Keynes. MK7 6BZ)

Friday 24th to Monday 27th July: ICCM Preteen Camp (venue, Kingswood-Staffordshire)

Saturday 25th to Friday 31st July: ICCM Teen Camp (venue, Condoval Hall)

Sept 30th - Oct 04th: Celtic Spirituality Retreat – Glendalough Hotel, Co. Wicklow, Ireland.

Date to be confirmed: UK & Ireland Young Professionals Retreat (De Vere Latimer Estate, Chesham. HP5 1UG)

Friday 30th October to Sunday 01st November: Autumn Student Retreat for the UK & Ireland



An Ebenezer moment: Giving thanks for the first ten years

"Thus far the LORD has helped us" (1 Samuel 7:12)

10 years ago, this congregation was 'sent out'. In January 2016, we gathered with our sister congregations from across London at the Institute for Education, Logan Hall. Our yellow-gold balloons festooned the seats we occupied. We were prayed over and commissioned to bring the gospel to Watford and beyond. That happened a whole decade ago. For those of us who've been here from the start, that's hard to believe!



A service in mid-2017

When we began (at Laurence Haines School), you could fit us all into a few rows. Today, by God's grace, we fill our current venue. Numbers are not the point, but they do remind us that the Lord has been faithful, patient, and generous with us.

Above all, we recognise that "neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth" (1 Corinthians 3:7).

It takes a village...

It is important to recognise that everyone has played a part in these ten years. Many have

faithfully given time, energy, hospitality, prayers, and encouragement that may not have been seen by all. Some have taught, some have led singing. Some have opened their homes, some have taught children. Others have visited the sick, given lifts, swept floors, babysat, prepared and served the Lord's Supper, and liaised with local charities. Some have supported from behind the scenes (like doing the accounts, managing the building and more...), and everyone has served in some form or other. It is impossible to list everything that everyone has done. However, each act of service has mattered.

"...your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you." (Matthew 6:18)

Highs and lows



These years have included moments of joy and challenge, progress and patience. Babies have been born, and loved ones have passed away. Friends have been baptised and restored, and some have sadly not continued in the faith. God has brought old and new friends to us from other



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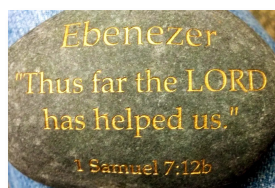
churches, and the Spirit has moved some away to pastures new. We've navigated financial self-sufficiency, COVID, moving venues, and establishing ourselves as a charity. Through it all, God has sustained us.

New friends

Speaking of new friends. It would be remiss of us not to thank our West Watford Free church friends for welcoming us into their building and worshipping with us for the last four years. It's been a deeply enriching experience spiritually and in friendship. Thank you for embracing us and giving us your love.

An Ebenezer moment

In the language of Scripture, this is an Ebenezer moment. When Samuel set up a stone of



remembrance, he named it Ebenezer, saying, "Thus far the LORD has helped us" (1 Samuel 7:12). That phrase metaphorically captures where we are today—not

celebrating ourselves, but remembering who has brought us this far.

However, an Ebenezer is not a finish line. It is a marker on the journey. The same God who has helped us "thus far" is calling us to trust Him for what lies ahead. This anniversary is not only about gratitude for the past, but preparation for the future. It invites each of us—personally and collectively—to ask how we might grow in faith, love, service, and unity in the years to come.

May we continue to walk humbly, devoted to the apostles' teaching, fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayers (Acts 2:42). And may future generations be able to say of us, as we say today: "Thus far the LORD has helped us."

Your brother, Malcolm

Our text today: 1 Samuel 7.1-14

So the men of Kiriath Jearim came and took up the ark of the LORD. They brought it to Abinadab's house on the hill and consecrated Eleazar his son to guard the ark of the LORD. The ark remained at Kiriath Jearim a long time—twenty years in all.

Then all the people of Israel turned back to the LORD.

So Samuel said to all the Israelites, "If you are returning to the LORD with all your hearts, then rid yourselves of the foreign gods and the Ashtoreths and commit yourselves to the LORD and serve him only, and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines."

So the Israelites put away their Baals and Ashtoreths, and served the LORD only.

Then Samuel said, "Assemble all Israel at Mizpah, and I will intercede with the LORD for you."

When they had assembled at Mizpah, they drew water and poured it out before the LORD. On that day they fasted and there they confessed,

"We have sinned against the LORD."

Now Samuel was serving as leader of Israel at Mizpah. When the Philistines heard that Israel had assembled at Mizpah, the rulers of the Philistines came up to attack them. When the Israelites heard of it, they were afraid because of the Philistines. They said to Samuel, "Do not stop crying out to the LORD our God for us, that he may rescue us from the hand of the Philistines."

Then Samuel took a suckling lamb and sacrificed it as a whole burnt offering to the LORD. He cried out to the LORD on Israel's behalf, and the LORD answered him. While Samuel was sacrificing the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to engage Israel in battle. But that day the

LORD thundered with loud thunder against the Philistines and threw them into such a panic that they were routed before the Israelites. The men of Israel rushed out of Mizpah and pursued the Philistines, slaughtering them along the way to a point below Beth Kar.

Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen. He named it Ebenezer, saying, "Thus far the LORD has helped us."

So the Philistines were subdued and they stopped invading Israel's territory. Throughout Samuel's lifetime, the hand of the LORD was against the Philistines. The towns from Ekron to Gath that the Philistines had captured from Israel were restored to Israel, and Israel delivered the neighbouring territory from the hands of the Philistines. And there was peace between Israel and the Amorites.

Masterclass on Menopause 1.0

Recently, Penny & and Tammy Fleming were invited to speak on practical and spiritual issues surrounding menopause. You can access an edited version of the recording using the link below.

<https://youtu.be/oP5YqJAChXg?si=VpLCBpSVoekehoIJ>

This conversation brings together medical insight, emotional wisdom, and lived experience to help women feel informed, supported, and less alone.



Spiritual Practices group

What are 'Spiritual Practices'?

Readers here may remember the excellent lesson about spiritual practices Stefan delivered a couple of years ago. Some of the ladies have been meeting recently online to explore the practices.

The focus of the group is learning new ways to connect with and grow in our personal walk with God. The hour or so that we spent together is more about 'having a go' than theory, though additional resources are made available.

So far, we have looked at using 'Lectio Divina' as a way to study scripture passages prayerfully. In addition, we learned how to do the 'Examen' as a tool for reflection with God in prayer. We will look at other topics over the coming months, including listening to God.

We meet once a month on a Friday evening on Zoom. Please speak to Penny or Maggie if you would like to take part. Our next meeting will be on Friday, 6th February at 7:30 pm.

Your sister, Penny

HOPE Worldwide Afghanistan

How to Donate:

You can give at <https://hopeworldwide.org.uk/give/>.



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Choose "Afghan General" from the Designation dropdown list and tick "I am a UK taxpayer" if appropriate, so HOPE can claim 25% additional funds from the government.

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