



OEFC BULLETIN FOR 27 APRIL – 5 MAY 2024

Saturday, 27 April

08h15 **Prayer Meeting**, via Zoom *link available on request*
Running from 08h15 to 09h00, though you can join or leave us at any point, our meeting this morning will be led by Mike Stringer.

Sunday, 28 April

Gary@oefc.co.uk

10h30 **Morning Service**

Continuing our series on the most joyful of Paul's church epistles, we consider **Philippians 3:10,11** and *The joy of knowing Christ*.

16h30 **Bring and Share Tea**) meeting at the URC premises on Rose-

17h15 **short Evening Service**) mead Drive; *see over* for more details
What do Christians believe about the Bible?

Monday, 29 April

10h15 **table-tennis** session for men

contact John Wilson

19h00 **English Conversation Club**

Steven@oefc.co.uk

An informal time for anyone wanting to improve their spoken English. There is no charge, there are no entry requirements, and each session will explore a different topic; light refreshments will be served!

Tuesday, 30 April

16h30 **Thanksgiving Service** for the life of Alan Buckley

Wednesday, 1 May

*Please note that **Shining Stars**, our 'stay and play' group for pre-school children and their carers, is **not meeting today**.*

19h30 **Prayer and Reflection**

Gary@oefc.co.uk

An unhurried time for all members of our church family. Meeting this evening in the extension, the session will be led by Gary Prickett.

Friday, 3 May

14h00 **Thanksgiving Service** for the life of Malcolm Gray

Saturday, 4 May

08h15 **Prayer Meeting**, via Zoom, with Steven Green *link as before*

Sunday, 5 May

Gary@oefc.co.uk

10h30 **Morning Service**

This week we *Press On!* as we consider **Philippians 3:12-16**.

18h30 **Evening Service**

In the first of a new three-part series on *Life in the Spirit*, we shall consider **Romans 8:1-4**.

OEFC at Rosemead Drive

Once a month for the first half of 2024, we are to hold a buffet tea and short early-evening service at the Rosemead Drive premises of Oadby United Reformed Church (postcode LE2 5SF). The next occasion will be on **Sunday, 28 April**.

For the **tea**, please bring to share – on your own crockery or on disposable plates – something *savoury* and something *sweet*.

Our **services** at Rosemead Drive Drive will be short and simple, with a children's talk and craft activity and, for adults, a short message looking at basic Christian beliefs – on 29 April, ***What do Christians believe about the Bible?***

Easter offering – update

A final contribution means that the total for our our **Easter Offering**, being sent to VOCM for a church-building project, is now **£3,507.50** – a sum that should cover more than 20% of the total cost of the project! Thank you so much!

looking forward ... to heaven

This years' East Midlands Churches' day will be held on **Saturday, 29 June**, with the venue once again being Brockington College on Blaby Road in Enderby (postcode/satnav LE19 4AQ).

There are activities between 10h00 and 16h00 for all age groups, with the main meeting of the day to be held at 11h00. That meeting will be addressed by Paul Mallard, who has forty years of pastoral experience and is a regular conference speaker; he also serves as a Local Director for the FIEC in the West Midlands, and chairs the Fellowship's Theology Team.

Paul will speak on the topic of *heaven*. We look to hearing him, and hope that you will put the date of the Churches' Day in your diary!

what's in a word...

The apostle Paul refers to Christians who have died as “those who have *fallen asleep*” (1 Thessalonians 4:15). The Greek noun *koimētērion*, which has the same root, means literally ‘a place of sleep’ and is the origin of our word *cemetery*.

words of encouragement

The adage that *nothing is certain but death and taxes* dates back at least three centuries, for it was included in a 1726 book by Daniel Defoe.

The words may not convey the whole truth, but we know that death and taxes are the lot, albeit the unwelcome lot, of people everywhere. We can struggle, however, when these things – and death, in particular – come very close to us.

This being so, it is unsurprising that the Bible – which is wholly God-breathed for our benefit (2 Timothy 3:16,17) – teaches us how to react to death. Writing to a church he had founded some months earlier, the apostle Paul said:

But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. ¹⁴ For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep... ¹⁸ Therefore encourage one another with these words.

1 Thessalonians 4:13–18

- **we shed tears**

Note that there is no full stop after “you may not grieve”. Paul did not argue that we ought not to grieve the loss of loved ones, for it is not sinful to sorrow. Godly Joseph wept when his elderly father Jacob died (Genesis 50:1), “all Israel ... mourned for him” when Samuel died (1 Samuel 25:1), and surely for all of us there is “a time to mourn” (Ecclesiastes 3:4). The New Testament records that Martha and Mary did not mourn on their own when their brother Lazarus died. For, “deeply moved in his spirit ... Jesus wept” (John 11:30–35). His tears prompted by heartfelt sympathy for a family that He loved, and sorrow and anger at death and that awful grief that man's original fall into sin had brought into the world (Romans 5:12, 6:23; James 1:15). Here, as at other times, Jesus fulfilled the prophecy that declared He would be “a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief” (Isaiah 53:3). Like Him, we are right to mourn the loss of loved ones, and should indeed “weep with those who weep” (Romans 12:15).

- **we have hope**

The literature of the day, and inscriptions on tombs, reveal that both secular and religious people in first-century society had profound a sense of hopelessness in the face of death. But not so Christians as they mourn the loss of fellow believers. As Paul made very clear, we need not and, indeed, ought not to grieve “as others do who have no hope.”

The familiar graveside prayer which appears in the Book of Common Prayer includes the line “in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life, through our Lord Jesus Christ.” This is almost a tautology for, in its fullest Biblical sense – which is quite distinct from its use in common parlance, where it is often just a synonym for aspiration – hope is never other than sure and certain: it is that grounded conviction that God is ever true to His word and will fulfil His promises.

- **we see Jesus**

“But,” someone may say, “how can you be so sure of this?” Our faith in God, and our hope in Him, are based firmly on historic facts – in particular, Paul indicates, on facts relating to Jesus. Since we know for certain “that Jesus died and rose again”, we can be absolutely sure that “through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep”.

Paul lays out the position even more clearly in a passage of devastating logic found in our Bibles in 1 Corinthians 15:

¹⁶ [I]f the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. ¹⁷ And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. ¹⁸ Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. ¹⁹ If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.

²⁰ But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹ For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead.

Here is wonderful hope at a time of bereavement: those who fall asleep in Christ will not perish but be raised again to life just as certainly as was their Lord and Saviour Jesus!

for ever with the Lord

‘For ever with the Lord!’

Amen, so let it be!

Life from the dead is in that word,
and immortality.

Here in the body pent,
absent from Him I roam,
yet nightly pitch my moving tent
a day’s march nearer home.

My Father’s house on high,
home of my soul, how near
at times to faith’s foreseeing eye
those golden gates appear!

O how my spirit faints
to reach the land I love,
the bright inheritance of saints,
Jerusalem above.

‘For ever with the Lord!’

Father, this is Your will;

the promise of that faithful word
here now to me fulfil.

Be ever at my hand,
then I can never fail;
uphold me, and I firm shall stand;
fight, and I must prevail.

So when my latest breath
shall rend the veil in twain,
by death I shall escape from death,
and life eternal gain.

That resurrection word,
that shout of victory:
once more: ‘For ever with the Lord!’
Amen, so let it be!

This hymn of pilgrimage and the hope of heaven, based on the words “and so shall we ever be with the Lord” (1 Thess 4:17, AV), is part of a set of twenty-two four-line stanzas published in 1834 by James Montgomery (1771–1854). The son of a Moravian minister who died on missionary service in the West Indies, Montgomery became a highly-respected newspaper editor in Sheffield. He published eleven volumes of poetry and about 400 hymns, including *Angels from the realms of glory*, *Hail to the Lord’s anointed* and *Prayer is the soul’s sincere desire*.

prayer points

- There is much in this world for which we can praise God, but it is but a faint shadow of all that will be in the new heaven and new earth described beautifully in **Revelation 21:1-7**. Praise God that Jesus has there prepared a place for all who, by faith, belong to Him.
- We continue to pray for countries in turmoil – Afghanistan, Haiti, the Middle East, Russia and Ukraine, Sudan, etc. Pray that God will restrain the forces of evil and the spread of godless ideologies, and transform societies by the mighty power of the Holy Spirit.
- Pray for our nation: for the Royal Family; for politicians in our national and devolved governments; for those who direct and lead our armed forces, emergency services, education establishments, judiciary, NHS, etc. Most of all, pray that God would revive His church and, as a result, bring many people to faith.
- Pray for Carley Evangelical Baptist Church, its weekly activities and planning for the summer *St Matthews Matters* outreach week. Looking overseas, pray for God's work in Tamil Nadu, especially through the varied work of Valathi Outreach Church Ministries – including the current building project; in Madagascar, focussing on the wide-ranging ministries based at and reaching far beyond the Good News Hospital in Mandritsara; in Nigeria, particularly in Jos, where the Wallis family is now serving; in France, particularly the ministry of L'Église Protestante Baptiste Carcassonne-Berriac; in Costa Rica, where Ian and Brenda Darke are at work; pray also for their health and for all their work stretching across Latin America.
- Pray for OEFC and all of our ministries, one of which is the new English Conversation Club meeting regularly now on Monday evenings; pray for all who have recently been bereaved, and for those struggling with health-related or other problems at home or at work; pray for the visitors who come to our services or other activities, that they may find the Saviour as well as a warm welcome in our midst.

members' ministry

On Sunday, 28 April:

- Madan Kallow will lead the service at 10h45 at Laburnum Road Community Church;
- Stuart Glover will lead the service at 18h00 at Measham Baptist Church;
- Steven Green will lead services at 10h30 and 18h00 at Caergwrle Evangelical Church (not far from Wrexham).

Margaret Chapman will be leading assemblies:

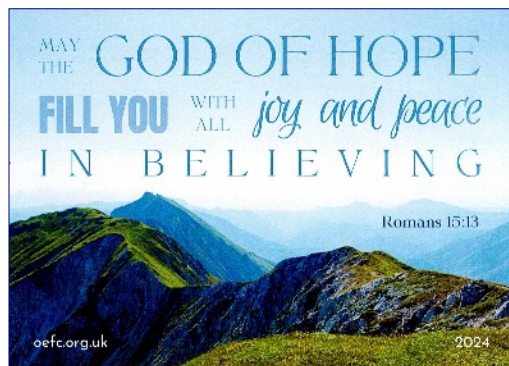
- at Woodland Grange Primary School, Oadby, at 09h00 on Monday, 29 April;
- at Brookside Primary School, Oadby at 10h30 on Tuesday, 30 April.

Leading devotions at Pilgrim Gardens will be:

- Madan Kallow at 09h30 on Wednesday, 1 May;
- Lance Atter at 09h30 on Friday, 3 May.

missed a sermon?

Sermons in our recent series (from the letter to the *Philippians* on Sunday mornings, and on the topic of *hope* on Sunday evenings) have been recorded and are available electronically: go to our website at <https://oefc.org.uk/> and click on 'Resources' to find our video archive.



Gifts towards God's work in and through OEFC can be posted to us, placed in our offertory box or sent by bank transfer to 'OEFC' (use account number 93854876 and sort code 20-49-08).

If you pay income tax, you can boost your gift, at no cost to yourself, by 25p for each £1 you give using the government-backed Gift Aid scheme. For more details, please chat to Stuart Glover.