

Thank God
for Mums!



OEEFC BULLETIN FOR 9–17 MARCH, 2024

Saturday, 9 March

08h30 **Prayer Meeting**, via Zoom

link available on request

Mothering Sunday, 10 March

Gary@oefc.co.uk

10h30 **Morning Service**

Looking at **Philippians 1:19–26** and *The Joy of Christian Confidence*.

18h30 **Evening Service**

Looking at **Luke 5:12–16** and *Hope for the Unclean*

Monday, 11 March

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

contact John Wilson

19h00 **English Conversation Club**

Steven@oefc.co.uk

We warmly welcome new people to join this informal club, more details of which are given overleaf.

Tuesday, 12 March

09h30 **Art@Oadby**

contact Margaret Chapman

A busy and friendly workshop, suitable even for beginners, meeting for the last time this term. For more details, have a word with Margaret.

14h00 **Prayer Meeting**, at Pilgrim Gardens

contact Judy Wilson

For more details, or to arrange a lift, please chat to the Wilsons.

19h30 **elders' meeting**, chez Atter

Wednesday, 13 March

09h30 **Shining Stars**

contact Jane Green

Our 'stay and play' group for pre-school children and their carers.

14h30 **Life group** for Bible Study and Prayer

Lance@oefc.co.uk

Considering **Revelation 3:14–22** and its lessons for today.

19h30 **Life group** for Bible Study and Prayer

Paul@oefc.co.uk

For details of the focus and venue of this group, see Paul Whalley.

Thursday, 14 March

09h30 **Morning Prayer**, in the extension

see overleaf

19h30 **Life group** for Bible Study and Prayer

Luke@oefc.co.uk

The group will be meeting this time at the home of the Joyas.

Friday, 15 March

19h30 **Easter Craft Evening** for ladies

see overleaf

Saturday, 16 March

08h30 **Prayer Meeting**, via Zoom

link as before

Sunday, 17 March

Gary@oefc.co.uk

10h30 **Morning Service** with Steven Green, Alejandro Joya and guest

18h30 **Evening Service** with Gary Prickett

Mothering Sunday

Many countries observe annually some kind of Mother's Day. Such a day gives children, even adult children, an extra opportunity to remember and thank their mothers, and is a reminder to us all of the great importance and influence of motherhood.

Here in Britain, Mother's Day – often still called Mothering Sunday – is celebrated on the fourth Sunday in Lent, though the reason for this link to the liturgical calendar is somewhat obscure. "The name has been referred (1) to the custom in some parts of England of paying a visit to one's mother on this day; or (2) to the practice of visiting the cathedral or mother church on this day; or (3) to the words occurring in the traditional epistle for the day, 'Jerusalem ... which is the mother of us all' (Gal 4:26)."

[from *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*]

The Bible makes clear that we ought indeed to give thanks for and pay respect to our mothers. In Ephesians 6:1–3, for example, Paul notes:

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honour your father and mother" (this is the first commandment with a promise), "that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land."

Easter Craft Evening

Ladies! Join us at 19h30 on Friday, 15 March for a fun craft evening, to include the making of Easter cards and Easter wreaths. The evening will end with cakes, hot drinks and a short talk by Laura Dampney, who had cancer when her children were still very young.



There will be a modest charge of £5 per person for the session.

For more details of the evening, or to reserve places for you and your friends, see Jane Green as soon as possible.

To help with different aspects of the evening, Jane would welcome contributions of forsythia, pussy willow/catkins ... and Easter cup cakes!

in conversation

Our **English Conversation Club** has got off to a very good start. The 90-minute sessions take place on Monday evenings, starting at 19h00, and each is self-contained: you do not have to have come last week to come this week. Note that we are able to cater for all levels of ability, there are no 'entry requirements', there is no charge ... and light refreshments are served.

If you, or someone you know, would like to take part in the Club, please chat to Steven Green. There are still places available, and we would love to have them filled.

in prayer

One of the hallmarks of the early church was its devotion to prayer (e.g. Acts 2:42). Still today we recognise the importance of prayer and we include several prayer meetings in our regular schedule of events. At present, these are held:

- every Saturday morning, via Zoom;
- on the second Tuesday of each month, in the afternoon and currently at Pilgrim Gardens;
- on the second and fourth Wednesdays of the month, as the focus of our evening meeting.

We pray also in our *Life* groups, and there are several smaller and informal groups meeting informally from time to time to pray. We know, however, that some people have suggested that it would be good to have an opportunity to pray together one morning, so Paul Whalley will lead sessions of **Morning Prayer** on the second and fourth Thursdays each month in the extension. These sessions will follow the pattern adopted by the Church of England:

- Preparation – a call to worship and a psalm;
- Scripture Readings – to include one or more of a psalm, an Old Testament passage, a canticle or song, and a New Testament passage;
- the Benedictus (Luke 1:68–79) said together;
- prayers of intercession;
- the collect for the day, the Lord's Prayer (said together) and a simple conclusion.

Each session will start at 09h30 and should last for no more than half an hour. All are welcome to these sessions, as to all of our prayer times.

Amen

part 2

The word *amen* is a transliteration from the ancient Semitic language, Hebrew, in which the Old Testament was written. Derived from a root meaning 'to be firm, steady, trustworthy', it can be translated *certainly, truly* or *verily*. One writer suggests that the word means "it is and it shall be so" when said by God, and "so let it be" when said by men.

We routinely say *amen* at the end of our prayers, particularly when we are praying together. This reflects ancient practice (e.g. 1 Chronicles 7:36), though we noted last time that *amen* was much more than a formula to indicate the end of a prayer: it was really a solemn declaration, said in earnest by those who had followed the prayer and wanted to confirm publicly their support of and commitment to all that it contained. It was as if to assert, "I agree with that; I share those beliefs and concerns; I want to add my voice to those words of adoration, confession, thanksgiving and supplication."

We may associate the word *amen* with prayer, and especially with a confirmatory response to prayer, but that is not the only context in which it appears in the Bible. Did you realise that it is used also as a description of God?

Moses told his people that "the LORD your God is God, the *faithful* God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments" (Deuteronomy 7:9). God's message to Israel included a reference to "the LORD, who is *faithful*, the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you" (Isaiah 49:7); truly He is "the God of *truth*" (Isaiah 65:16, twice). In each of these verses in the Hebrew original, the word *amen* is used: the faithful God, the God of truth, is 'the Amen God', the God of Amen.

The utter faithfulness of God is one of the great themes of Scripture and so, not surprisingly, is reflected in our hymnody:

*"Great is Thy faithfulness", O God my Father,
there is no shadow of turning with Thee;
Thou changest not,
Thy compassions, they fail not;
As Thou hast been Thou for ever wilt be.*

● God is faithful to His person

He is "the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change." (James 1:17) Only He could say, "I the LORD do not change" (Malachi 3:6); only His well-loved Son, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today and for ever." (Hebrews 13:8)

● God is faithful to His purposes

"God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfil it?" (Numbers 23:19)

● God is faithful to His promises

As God's ancient people confirmed, "Not one word of all the good promises that the LORD had made to the house of Israel had failed; all came to pass." (Joshua 21:34; cf 23:14,15)

● God is faithful to His people

Moses was right to teach his people that "the LORD your God is a merciful God. He will not leave you or destroy you or forget the covenant with your fathers that he swore to them." (Deuteronomy 4:31)

This is 'the Amen God', the firm and faithful God who can ever be trusted. As again we sing, this time in a more modern hymn,

What a faithful God have I, faithful in every way.

The first references to our God being 'the Amen God' appear in the Old Testament, but the idea is found also towards the end of the New Testament, where the letter to the church at Laodicea is described as being "The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God's creation." (Revelation 3:14) The wealth and pride of the city of Laodicea had rubbed off on its local church, which became lukewarm in its affection for God. His stern call to repentance came from one who knew all that was going on: as "the Amen, the faithful and true witness", He would not fail to tell the truth about the parlous state of that body of believers. What a contrast there was between the faithfulness of God and the unfaithfulness of His people in Laodicea!

Praise God that He is 'the Amen God', the ever-faithful God. And pray that, in all circumstances and at all times, we might be faithful to Him.

prayer points

- “David did what was right in the eyes of the LORD ... all the days of his life” (1 Kings 15:5), so he is a most helpful example to us, not least in relation to his enthusiastic worship of God. In **1 Chronicles 16:23–27**, David urges us to “Sing to the LORD” and gives us some reasons why He is worthy of our praise. Let us heed that call to worship before we go on to pray for the various matters noted below.
- We continue to pray for countries in turmoil – Afghanistan, Israel and the nations around it, Sudan, Syria, Ukraine, Yemen etc. Pray for God to restrain forces of evil and the spread of godless ideologies, and that the different governments being elected this year will be caring, diligent, honest, peace-loving and willing to grant Christians gospel freedom.
- 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, educational establishments, judiciary and the NHS; for our role in the international community.
- Thank God for the history and pray for all the ministry of Melbourne Hall Evangelical Free Church. Further afield, pray for God’s work: in Tamil Nadu, especially through the varied work of Valathi Outreach Church Ministries; 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 and Latin America, and for Ian and Brenda Darke who are working there.
- Pray for OEFC and our wide range of regular and new ministries over the next few weeks; for the work of our Missionary Matters group; for those in hospital, recently out of hospital or struggling with illness or infirmity; for those facing problems at home or at work; for our impact on the community of Oadby.

members' ministry

Mike Stringer will be leading the 10h45 services at Carley Evangelical Baptist Church, in the city centre, on 10 March and 17 March.

Steven Green is leading the service at Laburnum Road Community Church at 10h45 on 10 March. 11h00 devotions at Evington Home will be led:

- by Madan Kallow on Tuesday, 12 March;
- by Steven Green on Thursday, 14 March.

Life in Oadby

About 200 copies of the Spring/Summer issue of the *Life* magazine have been distributed to homes in the Rosemead Drive area of Oadby, but there remain just over 100 copies still to be posted through letter-boxes.

On Thursday, 14 March, after our new time of Morning Prayer (see overleaf), Paul Whalley would welcome some help: from *three* people to prepare copies of the magazines for distribution; from *one* person to share in the job of distributing the magazines.

If you are able to help in either of these ways, please let Paul know via Paul@oefc.co.uk

serving in the church

At their recent meeting, members of the church resolved to appoint **Luke Carter-Whittle** as a deacon. We are delighted that he will be serving us alongside our other deacons – Alejandro Joya and Judith Chinnery – and we commend all three of them to the Lord in prayer.

Please do not hesitate to contact our deacons, by e-mail or ‘phone, if you need help in any way.

OEFC is a registered charity, number 10340055, and is affiliated to the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches (FIEC).

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).

Please chat to Stuart Glover if you would like to know more about boosting your gift via Gift Aid.