

Welcome to Update

***Keeping in touch with God  
and each other.***

DECEMBER 2006

Dear friends,

**“It is the Lord who goes before you. He will be with you; he will not fail you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed”** *Deuteronomy 31:8*

I know you will all want to join with me in congratulating Hennie on her appointment as Associate Minister at St Philip's, Dorridge and St James, Bentley Heath. If you ask her to show you the “job specification” I am sure you will agree with me that it could have been written for her. She will be licensed by the new Bishop of Birmingham Rt Rev David Urquhart at a date to be fixed but probably sometime in early March. Those able to be in Birmingham Cathedral last Friday will delight in God's gifting of David to Birmingham and the lovely touch that he will welcome Hennie to his new diocese!

Have you ever found in your Bible reading (daily or otherwise) how God has an uncanny way of speaking from his ancient word into the exact situation you are now facing? The day after I announced Hennie's move (Sun 12<sup>th</sup> November), my Scripture Union notes (Encounter with God), in the days comment on Deuteronomy 31 (extract quoted above) said this,

“Times of transition seldom pass without challenge. ....Change can be embraced rather than feared when we know we are being led by the hand into God's future. Despite that, however, change does engender anxiety. It still demands the determination to be “strong and courageous” (vs 6,7,23).....

We face an ever increasing rapidity of change with a double edged character. Whether the result is victory and fruitfulness or defeat and barrenness depends on recognising and responding to the leading of God and his gracious presence amongst us”.

**“Thank you Lord”** I thought. You know the way that we take and you are in charge of your church. Please pray for Hennie in this time of adjustment and preparation, and pray for HTC as we think especially about the leadership of the 7.00 congregation, and the oversight of the small groups and clusters. Wonderful fruitfulness in the Cluster outreach for Christmas and the distribution of Christmas gifts to the parish; the care of the small groups and their continued focus on worship, fellowship and outreach are *essential* to the wellbeing and growth of HTC. I am so glad that Elke Every has joined with Vicki Johnson to lead the healing and prayer ministry team, look out for training days in the new year.

And then I thought of our **Advent and Christmas worship**, fellowship and outreach. The beautiful leaflets (thank you Lynn Jones) for distribution are part of our letting the city now hear the word of God speaking exactly into its own need. Thousands are coming to Primark, will they come and hear the word which will speak exactly to them? Or the lights switched on last Sunday, given to us by the City Council to brighten up the centre, able to speak those two simple words “Jesus Lives”. Could we pray every day that those words will register in the spirits of all who pass by? And can we pray that as the word is sung, spoken and preached throughout all our worship that people hear God speaking exactly into their own lives and grasp hold of it and Him? Jesus is the Light of the World and the Word made flesh. His light still shines and his word still speaks.

Change and thanks touch us all at some time or another. During December we can thank two people who will be stepping down from areas of service. **Betty Burgess** has been part of the Flower Guild at HTC for over 35 years; you might think she is entitled to take a breather! The flowers at HTC have always been beautiful, adorning

this house and giving glory to God; they don't just happen! Betty has been preparing them every Friday morning for years and we are so grateful to her and glad she will be a very hard act to follow! If you think you could help, Anne Brown has kindly agreed to put together a new rota and she (and I) would be very pleased if you could sign up through the church office if you would like to lend a hand (not necessarily every Friday!).

The other person who is stepping down is **Tom McSpadden** from being Manager of the Church Centre (the old Blue Coat School); I cannot tell you the hours of the day (and night when the alarm has gone off!) that he has put in to ensure this beautiful building is used well for the church and the city. His stewardship has made it one of the most sought out places for meetings and gatherings of all kinds of groups in the City and to say he will be sorely missed is an understatement! The Management Committee of the centre have put together a new rota as different folk are finding out what is involved in the running of the centre; it is a tribute to Tom's unfailing zeal and innumerable extra miles that no one person can just step into his shoes! Thank you Tom.

Some of the many users of the Centre are the young people and children. In case you are wondering what has happened to the "Youth Minister" we are hoping to interview someone in January who is part of a youth network in the Midlands region; we are also going to put out another advertisement to see if there is anyone else out there. Thanks to all those helping in these groups, it is enormously encouraging to see the commitment and prayer going into bringing the word of God to our young people and children, that they can hear his voice speaking exactly to them. The Youth Alpha in the city centre has continued to speak those words to over 100 young people every week.

**"It is the Lord who goes before you"**

With love in Him,

Keith