

# By the Way

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CHRISTMAS 2015

## GOOD NEWS

### What would be the best news for YOU?

To win the lottery? To be given a clean bill of health for you or a loved one? To get a new job? To find the perfect partner? To be able to start all over again? To be forgiven for all that is past?

**The greatest news!** The 'gospel' of Jesus Christ means 'good news' – glad tidings of great joy! We believe it is still good news, even 2,000 years after Jesus was born. (See page 2 for why.)

***"Do not be afraid! I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all people,"*** said the Angel of the Lord, to the shepherds. (Luke 2:10)



### Everyone is welcome!

Here at Bethesda, we are a 'family' of ordinary people from all walks of life, who together try to follow the extra-ordinary Jesus of the Bible, and to love people. You are very welcome to our Sunday services, our informal Friday coffee mornings, or other activities (see back page).



**"The church is a hospital for sinners, not a museum for saints."**  
*(Augustine)*



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John

## Welcome to 'By the Way'

**John Bale**

It is a pleasure to be part of this first edition of *By the Way*, Bethesda's new magazine, together with Giles Meehan. Grateful thanks to Leigh Belcham for producing the excellent twice-yearly *Inside Out* for the past 10 years; we wish Leigh and Jill every happiness in their new home. Thank you also to Mary Forshaw for many of the photographs in this issue.



Giles

During my time in the police (and for many years after), I knew virtually nothing of 'God' or 'Jesus', thinking that Christianity was just another religion. In fact, as a young PC on the beat in London in the early '60s, I was told quite forcibly by my mentor that "religion and coppers don't mix"!

It was whilst in the police that I met a number of people who were to have a profound effect on my life: one such man, whom I met in the mid '80s, was Geoffrey Jackson. He had been a British Diplomat in Uruguay a decade earlier, who was captured by a guerrilla group known as the Tupamaros and held prisoner in a cage for many months. During those months of hardship and deprivation, the one thing he asked for was a Bible, and when one was eventually given to him, he began to read to his armed captors and to pray for them. From the squalor of that prison cage, he was holding his captors captive!

When I asked him what had kept him going during his captivity, he simply replied 'faith'. It would be another 20 years before I became a Christian, but I'll never forget that reply. Sir Geoffrey (he was knighted after his release) sadly died at the age of 72, only a year after I met him.

I'd like to go back and tell that mentor, if I could, that **true Christianity is not a 'religion'; it's a 'relationship' – with Jesus Christ**, something which Sir Geoffrey clearly enjoyed. Now I want to tell as many people as possible the good news of the gospel – especially at this wonderful time of the year. Happy Christmas!



## Jesus: Still good news today!

The entire course of history has never seen anything else like Christmas – when the Bible says that the Son of God, Jesus Christ, actually came into our world, fully God and fully man.

At Christmas, we try and keep right with our relatives and get back in touch with old friends; but it is even more important to get right with God. And through Jesus, we can do that.

***For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)***

Jesus' name (*Yeshua*, in his original local language of Aramaic) means "**God saves**". Jesus

came for God to save us – to forgive us all that is past, and give us a new start, a new life!

This is the "**good news of great joy**" which God's angels gave to the shepherds: "**Today a Saviour has been born to you; He is Christ the Lord.**" (*Luke 2:11*) And this is the reason for celebrating Christmas in 2015. Jesus was born into our world, not just to show us God, but in order to die to save us, and He can still save us today. This is God's amazing grace and love towards us. He offers us life 'in abundance', not just in this fleeting, temporary span on earth, but life for ever.

Jesus never promised his followers an easy or trouble-free life here and now (Christians still suffer, and some are persecuted in other countries), but He did promise to be with them always, and promised them eternal life.

Coming to know the reality of the risen Lord Jesus Christ in your life is something you will never regret. Now that is good news!

# There is something wrong with Christmas

## André Beck, Pastor

Something is always lurking in the shadows, lying in wait to spoil our fun. Whenever the light and cheer of the festive season is upon us, darkness is not far behind.

We enjoy time spent with family and friends, but also mourn the loss of loved ones. We enjoy rest from our labours, but also bear the strain of financial pressure. We experience the happiness of giving and receiving together with the sorrows of loneliness, the hope of fulfilment and the emptiness of disappointment. I could go on, but I think you get the picture. Wherever we celebrate the light, the darkness is never far behind, and to be quite honest, it ruins the mood.

The truth is that whether or not darkness ruins your Christmas depends on your strategy for managing it. Some try to pretend it does not exist. Others will try to distract themselves from it with shopping, eating and drinking. Still others seem to embrace the darkness and forsake all hope of joy and happiness.

The only way to defeat the darkness is to look beyond what Christmas has become, to how it

began: not the presents and the feast-

ing, the trees and the tinsel, – but the presence of God in the birth of Christ. He is the fulfilment of a promise made by God that He would one day step into this world in order to bring that darkness to an end forever. That is who Jesus is and why He came. If we return to Him this Christmas, we will be able to “face the truth about darkness yet joyfully hope in the light. The darkness is real but the light has dawned.”

Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace!  
Hail the Son of Righteousness!  
Light and life to all He brings,  
Risen with healing in His wings.  
Mild He lays His glory by,  
Born that man no more may die,  
Born to raise the sons of earth,  
Born to give them second birth.  
Hark! The herald angels sing:  
“Glory to the newborn King!”



Jesus said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” (*John 8:12*)

“I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen; not only because I see it, but because by it, I see everything else.” (*CS Lewis, 1898-1963*)

## Praying for peace

Peace seems to be in short supply these days. Wars, conflict, terrorism, unrest, broken relationships, anxiety ... aren't these the headlines every day? How can we find peace today?

Millions of people have found peace through proving the truth of the Bible (still the world's best seller). Christians know that the Bible is God's message for all ages and generations, and their lives have been transformed by its message.

***Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. (Romans 5:1)***

As Christians, we do pray for an end to wars, and we pray for wise and just leadership of the nations – but our hope is in the Prince of Peace, whose birth we remember at Christmas, and who will come again to bring in His righteous rule.

## Meet the church

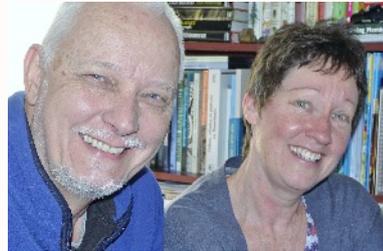
About 100 of us meet on Sunday mornings, a mixture of ordinary folk of all ages, backgrounds, nationalities and experiences. You met our Pastor, André Beck on page 3. Assisting him in the leadership and spiritual direction of the church are five Elders – John Bridge, Peter Croft, Keith Doust (who is also the Pastoral Secretary), David Forshaw and Clifford Lewis. We also have five Deacons, each with individual responsibilities in the church – Richard Adams, Neil Blundell, Lorraine Doust, Kevin Hudson and Jacqui Lewis. Please do say hello, we are looking forward to meeting you!



John & Andrea Bridge



Peter & Betty Croft



Keith & Lorraine Doust



Mary & David Forshaw



Richard & Theresa Adams



Neil & Sarah Blundell



Kevin & Alison Hudson



Clifford & Jacqui Lewis



### Jean Hawkes

“Although I went to church as a child, and even went to the Convent school for 3 years, I drifted away as a teenager. I married at 19, and later, when

my son attended Bethesda Sunday school, I decided to go to the Services.

**“I felt at home there; no pomp and flowing robes, a man in everyday clothes giving a talk from the Bible in simple English, a breath of fresh air – and joyful hymns!**

“At about that time, a challenging conversation with a Jehovah’s Witness made me realise how little I knew of the true Bible, so I started to become an avid reader. I became amazed by its relevance and that it answered all my questions. Although I’ve been through some very difficult times, God has been my support and comforter and I never feel alone. That turning point was nearly 60 years ago.”

### Don & Lauren and James Anthony

Growing up in a Christian family, Don was a part of the church’s young people’s groups throughout his life. In 2011, he started out on his own as a mobile mechanic, and today his business, *Grange Farm Car Care Ltd* in Ipswich goes from strength to strength – so much so that he has now taken on another mechanic. Don loves his work – the busier the better!

His wife Lauren became a Christian about 8 years ago,

and has attended a *Christianity Explored* course in Felixstowe. Lauren began her working life in a children’s nursery but more recently she worked in a local Bingo hall. “I loved my job there,” she says.

When she isn’t singing in the church band on Sunday mornings, Lauren is busy with their son James, who is happily following in Dad’s footsteps at Bethesda’s weekly toddler group, *Jelly Tots!*



Whatever your hand finds to do,  
do it with all your might. (*Ecclesiastes 9:10*)

## Bethesda celebrates century of God's faithfulness



We recently celebrated 100 years of worship, since the original foundation stone of the church building was laid on 20<sup>th</sup> October 1915, by the first pastor, Mr F R W Heath. More than 100 members and visitors enjoyed a memorable day, poring over displays of photographs, the register of members, the original church minute book, the superb history of the church by Mary Austen, a Sunday School presentation Bible – and even the engraved trowel presented when the church was first built.

Hymns and children's songs which would have been sung in 1915 were enjoyed in a modern setting, and special memories were shared from two previous pastors who could not be present, Mr Alford and Mr Murray, as well as by Peter Croft who retired in 2010 and now serves as a church elder.



A wonderful lunch was provided for all, by Fiona Fisk and her team (one visitor to the church remarked that the fruit crumble was “the best I’ve ever tasted!”).

André Beck, now Bethesda's 10<sup>th</sup> minister, said, “A healthy church is one which does not boast, because we are not any more special or clever or good than anyone else at all; but all we do is hold onto God who has proved His faithfulness to us as a church over the last 100 years. And so we want to keep preaching faithfully that God's Son, Jesus Christ, died on the cross, to take on Himself all that we have done wrong, and to give us all that He did perfectly right. We need to tell this good news in a way that people can still understand today, but never changing that message.”



Built during the first world war, the church also lived through the second, as well as the devastating floods of 1953, and more recently was given an award-winning extension.

In memory of the tragic Armenian genocide that took place in the same year as Bethesda's foundation, 1915, the church members offered a gift to Armenian Ministries in that poverty stricken land (between Turkey and Russia).



## Bear Grylls: do you think he is strong?

Edward Michael ‘Bear’ Grylls, the well known British adventurer, explorer, writer and presenter of many TV series including *Man vs Wild*, is one of the youngest men ever to have climbed Mount Everest – 18 months after breaking three vertebrae in a parachuting accident. He was appointed the youngest ever *Chief Scout*, 6 years ago at the age of 35. A former Serviceman, he holds the honorary rank of Lieutenant Commander in the Royal Naval Reserve, and Lt Colonel in the Royal Marines Reserve. He has survived extreme heat, cold, drought, floods, wild animals ... and the list goes on! But Bear Grylls, a practising Christian, says about himself: “I’ve definitely learned that I am weak, but God is strong. So I’m not afraid to say that I need my faith.”



One life.  
What's it all about?

Christianity  
EXPLORED

Reach out to the Lord Jesus Christ today:

***“Salvation is found in no-one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12)***

As you do so, you'll discover that He is already reaching out to you!

We run short, friendly sessions called *Christianity Explored* for everyone interested in finding out more about Jesus, what the Bible says and what Christians believe. Phone our pastor André on 01394 270187 or see our website [bethesdafelixstowe.com](http://bethesdafelixstowe.com).

If you'd prefer to talk informally over a cuppa, then the Friday coffee morning (at church, from 10:30am) is a great place to start. You can also find us at the Triangle most Saturday mornings.



*Santa, by Thomas Nast, 1881*

## Santa or Saviour?

If you were asked, “Who takes centre stage at Christmas?” you might be forgiven for answering “Santa!” The white-bearded man in the red suit giving out presents to deserving children seems to be everywhere at Christmas. But what do we know about Santa, and what do we know about Jesus? Let's look at the facts.

Born more than 1,700 years ago in Turkey, **St Nicholas** was a Christian Bishop who was known for his “secret” giving of gifts to the poor. Over the centuries, his Dutch nickname *Sinter Klaas* and his Saint's Day (6<sup>th</sup> December) tradition of giving presents to children, merged with other myths and legends, became **Santa Claus**, and became associated with Christmas. **Father Christmas** was originally a separate character, a figure of old English folklore and pagan yuletide celebrations, where he had a beard, wore fur-lined green or red robes, and brought good cheer and joy.

Clement Moore's popular poem *The Night Before Christmas* in 1823 called Saint Nick “**a right jolly old elf!**” and gave names to the reindeer. And from the 1860s, American political cartoonist Thomas Nast was drawing Santa, depicting him in 1881 as a round, cheerful man with a full white beard, a bright red suit, a bag full of presents, and a North Pole workshop complete with elves – a few decades before Coca Cola's festive advertisements drawn by Haddon Sundblom embodied the Santa Claus we still know today.

It may be tempting to try to write off **the birth of Jesus** as just a nice story for children, but his birth is not a story of make-believe; it's a **story of history** written down by eye-witnesses. Although the exact date of his birth is not known, Jesus was born just over 2,000 years ago in Bethlehem (about 80 miles north of Jerusalem). Not only do the writers of the Bible state this clearly, but also other 1<sup>st</sup> century historians (many of whom had no sympathy with the Christian message) spoke very clearly about Jesus Christ being a real historical figure, about his followers, and how he died on the cross for saying he was God. **As Christians, this is the real-life Jesus we follow, and his actual words and teachings written down in the New Testament.** If we can't escape the fact that Jesus was a real man, ... then what about his extraordinary claims, what he did and said? Jesus asked his disciples, **“Who do you say I am?”** (Luke 9:20). As Christians, our response is the same as the shepherds in the picture above, and the same as the old Christmas carol: **“O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord!”**



*The Adoration of the Shepherds, by Gerard van Honthorst, 1622*

*And the Word [a title given to Jesus] became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory. (John 1:14)*

## Where is God when I am worried?

**“When we are feeling full of fear or anxiety, we typically feel alone and think that God is silent. Which is ironic, because He is just the opposite of silent!”** claims Ed Welch M.Div, Ph.D, of the *Christian Counseling and Educational Foundation*. “In fact, Scripture, the Bible – God’s communication to us – gushes with words and promises spoken to fearful and anxious people. Like a mother who keeps talking to her child during a long walk through a dark place to assure the child of her presence, so our Heavenly Father says to us, ‘Listen to my voice,’ and He keeps talking and talking.”

- **“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest,”** said Jesus. “Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” (*Matthew 11:28-30*)
- **“Peace I leave with you, my peace I give you,”** Jesus told his disciples. “I do not give you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.” (*John 14:27*)
- Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. **The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything,** but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And **the peace of God,** which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.  
(*Philippians 4:4-7*)
- **“So do not fear, for I am with you.** Do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you ... For I am the Lord your God, who takes hold of your right hand and says to you: Do not fear, I will help you.” (*Isaiah 41:10,13*)
- **“Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about many things,”** the Lord answered, **“But only one thing is needed.”** (*Luke 10:41*)
- The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want ... Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, **I will fear no evil, for you are with me.** (*Psalms 23*)
- Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that He may lift you up in due time. **Cast all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.** (*1 Peter 5:6-7*)

If you are anxious and troubled, call out to Jesus, because He cares for you. These are not just fairy tale words to pretend things are OK when they’re not – but we believe that these are indeed the words of the living God, and many of us can testify how He has carried us through some very difficult and dark times as we have trusted Him. Please do contact the church, or come along to see us. We cannot promise to fix your problems, but we will do our best to be here for you, and to try to help you find the peace that comes from knowing God through Jesus.

### “Saved alone – what shall I do?”

Those were the words of Anna Spafford after her four daughters drowned at sea in a collision as they travelled with her from America in 1873.

Her family’s home and business in Chicago had already just been destroyed by fire. Her husband, Horatio, had stayed behind to clear up there. He then followed to re-join his distraught wife in Europe.

As he reached the very spot in this vast ocean where his four daughters had lost their lives, he wrote the inspiring hymn:

***When peace like a river, attendeth my way,  
When sorrows like sea-billows roll;  
Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to know:  
It is well, it is well, with my soul.  
It is well, it is well, with my soul.***



## Four Kinds of Christmas

Which are you?

**Shopper? Santa? Scrooge? Stable?**

Join us as we discover the best kind of all!

# Carol Service Christmas Day

**Sunday 20<sup>th</sup>  
5:30 pm**

**Friday 25<sup>th</sup>  
10:30 am**

## WHAT'S ON AT BETHESDA FELIXSTOWE

### Sunday – Morning Service – 10:30 am

*Crèche is available, and Mini-Zone for ages 3-8  
Communion after the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of the month*

### Sunday – Evening Service – 6:30 pm

*Communion after the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of the month*

### Sunday – Connect for 20s & 30s – 8:00 pm

*Every other week, at the Pastor's house*

### Monday Madness – Children's Groups \*

*Fun & Games, Crafts & Quizzes, Bible Talks &  
Discussions, Refreshments and more ...*

#### 1:30 pm - 3:00 pm – Jelly Tots

*Babies & Toddlers with Parents & Carers*

#### 5:00 pm - 6:00 pm – Smarties

*Reception to School Year 4*

#### 6:00 pm - 7:30 pm – All Sorts

*School Years 5 to 8*

#### 7:30 pm - 9:00 pm – After 8s

*School Years 9 to 13*

### Tuesday – Women's Groups \*

#### 10:00 am Women of the Word (WOW)

#### 2:30 pm Bethesda Women's Fellowship

*1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesdays of the month*

### Tuesday – Prime Time for Seniors – 3:00 pm

*2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of the month*

### Thursday Meetings – 7:30 pm - 9:00 pm

#### Prayer Meeting at the church

*1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> Thursdays of the month*

#### Home Group Bible Studies at members' homes

*2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Thursdays of the month*

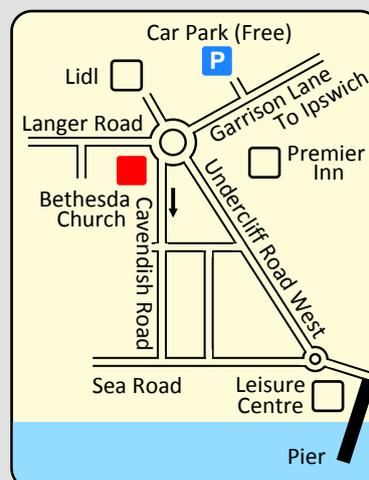
### Friday – Coffee Morning – 10:30 am - 12

*Everyone always very welcome!*

### Saturday – Meet us on the Triangle – 10 am - 12

*Opposite the cinema. Come and chat!*

\* During school holidays and half-terms, children's groups and women's groups do not meet regularly. Other meetings may occasionally change; please check with us for details.



Bible verses are taken from the New International Version (NIV).

Bethesda Baptist Church Felixstowe is a member of the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches. There are more than 500 F.I.E.C. churches in the UK.

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