



Message of hope to counter mistrust



LET'S be honest – average church attendance in the UK has been declining for the past 50 years.

People have stopped for a variety of reasons: some think it's boring, irrelevant, or untrue: some have fallen out with the vicar or another member: others just have other things to do on Sunday, such as shopping or sport.

Yet that's not the whole picture. A majority of British people still believe in God and consider themselves to be spiritual. Many churches are growing – **tbc** is one of them. Nearly every week, new people arrive at **tbc**, especially young people in their 20s and 30s. They find a welcoming and very diverse community, with a message of hope in dark times.

Who can you trust these days? People feel let down by politicians, banks, pension schemes, employers and even their own families. Why not give God a try? Church is a group of ordinary people – just like you – who have found that following Jesus is a great way to live life to the full. In this edition of *tbc Times*, overleaf, you will read accounts from people who have come back to church recently, or some who have been members for many years, but all have found God to be relevant in their lives, in good times and bad.

On September 27, **tbc** will be one of many churches across the UK inviting people in on *Back to Church Sunday*. If you've given up on church, or maybe you've never even tried, you are warmly invited to come back and find out for yourself. There's no need to put on a suit – or a mask – just come as you are. You will be very welcome.



... a welcoming and very diverse community, with a message of hope

Church in your lounge

THAT'S right, a major part of being church doesn't occur in a grand old building, but actually happens in the front room of some hospitable soul's house. It could be happening in your street without you realising it. If you live in Friendship Road it is; that's where the imaginatively-titled 'Friendship Group' meets once a week.

So what are these so-called 'Home Groups'? They're small gatherings who meet together regularly to help each other live out the Christian life. We all know life can be hard, so it's a place where we meet friends to share what's happening in our lives and get the support and comfort we need, both from each other and God.

We discuss the Bible – even the difficult bits – to help each other understand it and apply its message to us. It may be thousands of years old, but it's amazing how much applies to life in



Bristol in 2009. We also pray. It's a special feeling having someone pray for you and your situation. Tea and cake also feature largely at all our meetings, (see picture bottom left) as does plenty of chatting and laughter.

So home groups are a place to make friends and become a close, caring and supportive community, which is what church is all about.

come as you are



A working bloke's view of church

DAN WARNES and his wife, Barbara, lead the **tbc** 'Friendship' Home Group.

Dan, left, an aircraft safety engineer, writes: "As a bloke, I obviously wouldn't admit to having any insecurities, but you know I'd be lying. So at church, to have been welcomed by a diverse group of people who seemed to like

me just for being me, was a bit weird.

"They weren't after anything in return, they looked past my obvious failings, they didn't care how I looked, and they weren't judging me.

"Then I read the Bible and realised that Jesus was like that and it all started to make sense."

Being God's family, helping people to know Jesus



JESUS once described Himself as 'Lord of the Harvest'. Living as we do in the city, it is easy to forget the importance of harvest. We go to our nearest shop and buy all we need and food is in plentiful supply. In fact, we can even buy strawberries all the year round!

Yet it is still true that 'one person plants the seed, another waters it, but God makes it grow.'

So at **tbc** in September, we'll be celebrating harvest and giving thanks to God for the food we enjoy.

We'll remember those who grow and process our own food and celebrate our multi-national community with a "World Food Harvest Supper", but we'll also hold our annual harvest appeal, *Seeds of Hope*, to support the work of farmers in war-torn Lebanon.

WHO OR WHAT IS **tbc**?

tbc is the group of people which meets in the building known as **Totterdown Baptist Church**. Our vision and purpose are summed up:

Being God's family, helping people to know Jesus

tbc meets every Sunday at 10.30am and 6.30pm, plus midweek meetings

Bible verse in control of my life



DAVE and Elaine Temlett came to **tbc** in 1977, along with their first two children. Elaine has always enjoyed working with children and led a playgroup at **tbc** in 1978, long before Sydenham Road Under Fives was formed.

With her earnings of 50p per session, she bought a bird bath which still stands in their Tynning Road garden. Now she is well known locally as a registered child minder during the week, but still helps co-ordinate **tbc** Junior Church on Sunday mornings.

Elaine says: "Looking back over my time at **tbc**, children have played a central part in my life, which has been controlled by the Bible verse 'Since you are God's dear children, you must try to be like Him.' (Ephesians 5:1)."



Redeemer

LOOKING after children runs in the family, because Elaine's mother, Mavis, died suddenly on her birthday in 2005 doing what she loved - teaching in **tbc** Sunday School.

Despite losing his wife so tragically, Elaine's father, Richard Chapman (now 83) who used to visit many homes in the area, reflects: "Now it's the evening of my life and I'm full of thankfulness to God. He has been so wonderful, kind and forgiving. Without the Lord, life for me would be meaningless, but I can say with Job, 'I know that my redeemer lives, and that at the end He will stand upon the earth.'"



AS one who suffers from MS, Sue Purnell, writes: "**tbc** should stand for Thoroughly Brilliant Community! I only joined a few weeks ago, but the love and kindness I have been shown is unbelievable.

"So far this year, I have had two major worries to cope with: the first was that I lost my Mum on Good Friday, which I am just beginning to accept. The other was that our daughter was expecting her second baby at the end of July, but he decided to arrive on the first day of the month, four weeks early. He had great difficulty feeding, and had a hole in his heart, plus some other problems.

"I added his name to the prayer tree and the church prayed for him in the service. He's now doing fine, but two ladies in particular, Sheila and Denise, gave me a shoulder to cry on during that worrying time. All this is why **tbc** is a thoroughly brilliant community to be part of."

Coming up at **tbc**

September

Saturday 12, 10am - 12 noon
Open Doors with free coffee and cakes. Come and look inside.

Saturday 26, 6pm
World Food Harvest Supper and ceilidh
Bring and share food from your own nationality or culture.

Sunday 27, 10.30am
Back to Church Sunday, with Harvest Festival
6.30pm - Evening Harvest Celebration followed by drinks and canapes.

November

21 and 22 - Front Room Art Trail in the Saltcellar

Totterdown Baptist Church
Wells Road, BRISTOL BS4 2AX

Side entrance in Sydenham Road

Church Office: 0117 977 8040

Website: www.tbc.org.uk

Minister: Rev Laurie Burn

Tel. 0117 941 8326

e-mail: laurieburn@tbc.org.uk

Keep an eye out for the new-look **tbc** website:

www.tbc.org.uk - up and running soon.

Sydenham Road U-fives

SRUF is an independent group which rents the premises every weekday morning for activities with under fives. The Toddler group welcomes parents and carers with babies or under-threes, and the Playgroup is for pre-school children, three and upwards.

Contact SRUF administrator, Maria Hulme on 0117 377 8665 for details.



Fears were groundless

ANGELA WATTS, who works in Bristol as a nurse, writes: "I took a break from church for six months and was worried how people would react when I came back. To be honest it was like I had never left.

"On the way to church that first Sunday, I felt really nervous: butterflies were multiplying in my tummy and I was scared stiff. Meeting new people can sometimes be really hard, but at **tbc** people make that extra effort to go out of their way and talk to you and make you feel welcome.

"There is a real sense of community and everyone is part of a big family. Friends are quickly made and you can share each others' trials, as well as laugh and cry together. I like the services because they are made interesting and they involve everyone. It's modern, lively worship with prayer and Bible readings. Everyone encourages one another with their faith in God to read the Bible and apply it to our lives."

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