

THE BOOK OF ESTHER

A devotional challenge from Rev Ruth Turner
- North District Superintendent



Lately I have been reading the book of Esther, it's full of twists and turns, plots and subplots, in which a young Jewish woman becomes the Queen of Persia. When Esther unexpectedly receives the royal title, she bravely uses her position to save the Jewish nation from genocide. It is in Esther that we read the famous words *"For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for a time such as this"* (Esther 4:14).

While the book is jam packed with intrigue, heroes, villains as Haman the Agagite, and plots to annihilate every Jew in Persia - which stretched from India to Turkey - there are also two significant absences in the book. Firstly, there are no supernatural miracles and secondly, there is no mention of God.

God's people are in trouble but the sea doesn't part in order for them to be free. Esther, a girl in exile in the post-exilic period, just tries to live a righteous life in a pagan place just like Daniel at the beginning of the exile. However, when her life is at risk for being Jewish, there is no extra person showing up in a fiery furnace and no closing of the lions' mouths in a dramatic display of God's power and glory. The people are not left in wonder at the miracles of the God of Israel, all they have to go on is the righteousness and wisdom of Esther's behaviour. The Red Sea is not opened so the people can escape the Persian oppressor, the people and Esther remain where they are with no miraculous escape routes offered.

The absence of the name of God in a book in the Bible may come as quite a surprise! Where is God in all of this? Where is His divine intervention? Where is he in this time of trouble?

We may not hear his name, but if we are really reading the text closely this is what we will find; His name may not be present, but his presence certainly is. God is leading and guiding, moving and at work, ensuring the rescue of his people. It may not seem obvious at first, and it might not seem like the mountains are moving, but God is at work. His sovereignty remains.

What can we learn from the book of Esther? Perhaps it is this, in the places and spaces where God's name is not recognised or even spoken, His people, living out obedient and righteous lives, still make a difference. And even if the sea isn't splitting God is still at work.



CELEBRATION

Over the weekend, 7th-8th September, the Donegal Road, Belfast, Church of the Nazarene, had a wonderful time celebrating the 30 -year ministry of their pastors, Rev Philip & Rev Lorraine Bell. Guest speaker, Rev Philip McAlister, spoke at the Saturday evening meal as well as at the Sunday morning worship service.

Pictured - (l to r) Rev Philip & Ruth McAlister and Rev Lorraine & Rev Philip Bell. And those present at the Saturday evening meal.



INTRODUCING:

Dr Mark Louw has been appointed Eurasia Regional Director, effective 1st July 2024, succeeding Rev Jim Ritchie, who has become Global Missions Director of the Church of the Nazarene. Dr Louw has, for the past 12 years, served as Asia-Pacific Regional Director.

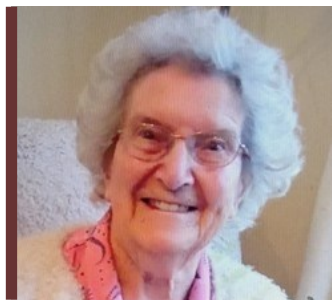
Dr Louw, and his wife Linda, have served as Nazarene missionaries for some 25 years in Cote d'Ivoire, Senegal, South Africa and Singapore in addition to serving as Asia-Pacific Regional Director. Mark, who comes originally from South Africa, holds degrees from Pennsylvania State University (USA) and Nazarene Theological College (University of Manchester). In 2014 Korea Nazarene University conferred upon Mark the Doctor of Divinity degree in recognition of his contribution to global church development and expansion.

Mark says, "We are humbled by the invitation and confidence placed in us by the Church and come committed to serving the region in a manner that builds on the positive foundation laid by our predecessors. Our simple desire is to reflect Christ and be true to the persons that He created us to be. May He be glorified."



IN MEMORIAM

Remembering those who have served



MARY WEBSTER passed away Saturday, 24th August, age 102. Mary (née Course) was the youngest of six children and came originally from Ilkeston, Derbyshire.

She attended the Ilkeston Independent Holiness Mission and became a Christian when she was about 9 years old and surrendered her life fully to God in her mid-teens. She met Frank Webster, who had started attending the Mission – he was a gas fitter and, during the war, was serving

in the Royal Engineers. Mary and Frank were married in 1945. They were to be blessed with two daughters, Rosemary and Anne.

When Frank Webster felt the call to the full-time ministry, Mary, who had been working as a book keeper, was to give up her home in Ilkeston and become a pastor's wife and partner in ministry. Rev Frank Webster, who was an able preacher and evangelist, served in Leeds, Bargoed, and Cardiff, where, in the mid-1960s, he pioneered and established the Church of the Nazarene on Stacey Road. It was in 1995 while on a preaching trip to the USA that Frank unexpectedly passed away – he was 75.

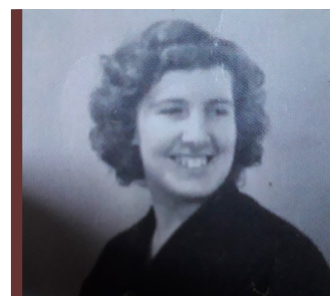
As a widow Mary continued to support the work of the church in Cardiff, and to enjoy her family and grandsons. Throughout her life Mary was always positive, teaching her family by example the power of forgiveness and

she stood on the promises of God. She was a woman of prayer saying frequently that she soaked her family in prayer and she had a real burden of the persecuted church. "She rests from her labours." Funeral: Caersalem Chapel, Cardiff, Thursday, 12th September.

PEGGY TRUMBLE - medical missionary to Eswatini (Swaziland) – passed away 28th August, age 90. Peggy was a 1963 BSc graduate in botany and zoology of King's College Durham/University of Newcastle and it was at university that she became a Christian. Moving to Sheffield Peggy became head of the blood bank at the Royal Hospital, and began attending the Victoria Street Church of the Nazarene, enjoying the ministry of Rev Leslie Evans

In the late 1960s, and as a result of an encounter with Dr Samuel W. Hynd – who was then Superintendent of the

Nazarene RFM Hospital in Manzini, Eswatini – that Peggy offered herself for missionary service. She worked for 20 years at the hospital as a medical missionary. It was following a serious car accident on 23rd December 1988 that caused Peggy to return home in February 1989. In 2019 Sue Birch, a niece of Peggy's, produced a little booklet entitled, "The Missionary – A book about the life of Peggy Trumble." "The Missionary" is now 'Forever with the Lord'. Funeral: Grimsby Cornerstone Church of the Nazarene, 27th September.



INDUCTIONS



College/University of the West of Scotland and serves the church as Chair of the District Nazarene Discipleship International Board. Married to Sarah, the Smiths have one son, Blake. Pictured (l to r) Sarah and Pastor Ryan Smith, and Rev Ruth Turner (DS).

BOLTON BROWNLOW FOLD – Pastor Beth Ford was inducted to the Bolton Brownlow Fold Church of the Nazarene on Saturday 20th July.

Originally from Cheltenham, Beth moved to Erskine in her mid-teens and eventually made contact with the Erskine Nazarene church. It was at a church weekend in 2014 that Beth had a personal encounter with the Lord. Following some 23 years working in the Financial Services Industry Beth felt God leading her to prepare for ministry and she enrolled

as a student at Nazarene Theological College, Manchester. In 2021 Beth graduated with a BA(Hons) in Theology and in 2023 with an MA in Theology (Community Development and Social Change).

Beth has served as South District Youth Pastor and, for the past year and a half, has been working part-time with the Christian Charity, Urban Outreach Bolton, as a Children and Families support worker with a primary focus on young people reported missing from home in the Bolton area.

Married to Lee, the Fords have 2 daughters, Megan and Holly. Beth is grateful to all who attended her induction – those from other Nazarene churches and colleagues from Urban Outreach Bolton. Beth says, "...it was an absolutely incredible



day with many travelling to join us. – and some from Erskine where I was a member for over a decade... [I was] incredibly humbled as Worship was led by a group of beautiful friends from Urban Outreach Bolton, the Christian Charity I work for."

Pictured (l to r): Pam Clarke (Sunday School Superintendent), Natasha Wynn (Church Secretary), Lee Ford, Pastor Beth Ford, David Hilditch (Treasurer), Megan Hilditch (NYI President) and Rev Carl McCann (District Superintendent).

TROON - Following ministry roles in the Erskine, Paisley, Belfast Megain, and Bangor Nazarene churches, Pastor Ryan Smith was inducted to the Troon Church of the Nazarene on Saturday 6th July. The church was well filled for the occasion and the service was conducted by the District Superintendent, Rev Ruth Turner.

Originally from Paisley, Ryan holds a BD degree in Theology and Pastoral studies from the Scottish Baptist

DISTRICT CHURCH HOLIDAYS

Two very successful holidays were held over the summer months with over 200 of all ages attending both venues.

The South District 'Breakthru' (left picture) was held 30th July-3rd August



at Cliff College in Derbyshire. The theme, taken from the book of Nehemiah, was "Rebuild the Walls" and the

main speaker was Pastor Simon Spalinger (middle picture) from the C3 church, Zurich. Special events included, a Christian Magician, an Inflatables Day, an NMI (missionary) cultural celebration evening, and a baptism service.

District Superintendent, Rev Carl McCann, says, "We have seen a significant growth in numbers of young people, and a growing sense of community and festival type feeling



amongst those who camped. The baptismal service for one of the young people was a blessing as was the enthusiastic worship."

The North District 'Northbreak' holiday (right picture) was held 5th-9th August at the Lancaster Royal Grammar School. The main speaker was Nazarene US Army Chaplain, Rev Capt. Wesley Streisslinger who spoke on "Frontline Faith".

Other speakers included, Rev Ruth Turner (DS), Hollie Eagleson and Lucy Allen. 'Good Morning World',

workshops, trips, games, and evening fringe sessions, featured on the programme along with the seminars, prayer times and worship celebrations.

A Northbreak testimony: "...Northbreak is where my life changed forever through the power of the Holy Spirit. I was a hopeless drug addict the first time I went and was so blessed. This year I was able to attend with my wife. The Lord has truly restored the years the locusts had eaten..."





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HAPPY BIRTHDAY NTC

It was in 1944 – the last years of the war – when Hurler Nazarene College, located on the south-western edge of Glasgow, opened its doors with just two full time students. And that means that this year the College celebrates its 80th anniversary, with heartfelt thanks to the faithfulness of God and God's people.

There will be a series of receptions around the UK, and one or two abroad, and we'd love to invite alumni and friends to join those: to celebrate with us, share memories, and dream about God's plans for the place over the next decades.

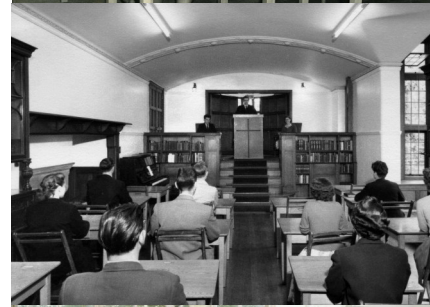
One of those keynote celebrations will be the 2024 Graduation Service, held at the Whitworth Hall, Oxford Road, Manchester, at 11:00 on October 26th. The speaker will be our new Global Missions Director, Revd Jim Ritchie, and after the ceremony we'll be gathering back at the college for refreshments, conversation, and a historic retrospective with pictures through the decades.

We'd love to have you come! Do book a ticket (free) either via the link on the NTC Facebook page, or by calling reception, so there's food waiting for you.

Those 80 years have seen a lot of history – some 1500 students have graduated over those years, and they're engaged in ministry across the globe.

And that doesn't include a further 2500 students who have graduated from sister schools that have become part of the NTC family: Beech Lawn College, in Stalybridge; Emmanuel Bible College in Birkenhead; International Christian College (BTI) in Glasgow.

We'd also love to hear YOUR memories of the College, and get you to send us copies of photos that bring back those memories. We've set up a place to submit those, so we can share those memories together.



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REGIONAL GATHERING

Cliff College in Derbyshire was the venue for the 2024 Eurasia Region M Retreat held 5th-9th August. 131 adults and children from 41 countries representing 19 different nationalities met together. The theme of the retreat was, "Together we Can!" – based on Philippians 1:3-6 which speaks about our "...partnership in the gospel..." and "...being confident ...

that He who began a good work... will carry it on to completion." Speakers included, Dr David W. Graves (General Superintendent Emeritus), Rev Jim Ritchie (Global Missions Director), and Dr Mark Louw (recently appointed Eurasia Regional Director). In addition to the plenary sessions there was also time for rest and informal fellowship. And some were able to

visit Nazarene Theological College in Manchester.

One participant commented "We were so thankful to have use of the Cliff College campus! The team there was a huge blessing to us and the kitchen team was especially great! We enjoyed the beauty of the location and the closeness of several other cities to visit for outings."



YOUTH EVENT

Running in parallel with the South District Breakthru Holiday at Cliff College, about 40 young people shared in a special youth programme. Rev Claire Fender (Nazarene minister) and Josh Green (from '24/7 Prayer') were the speakers. The week was filled with lots of activities, and the weather was good - glorious sunshine most days - water games (including the famous "Breakthru Water-slide"), kayaking and rafting, were enjoyed by those taking part. A total of 29 young people made a declaration that they wanted to know Jesus more and wanted Him to live in their hearts. And at the end of the week young people and leaders were given note-books and asked to write encouraging messages in each other's books.

District NYI President, Maria Prescott, says, "...the holiday has resulted in relationships being built between our young people... it provides a community where honest questions can be asked and young people can journey through life and explore their relationship with Jesus in a safe and loving environment."



OTHER NEWS

KENYA – WORK & WITNESS A report by Rev Bruce Lloyd (Sheffield)



A team of 15 – of all ages – from the South District was part of a “Work & Witness” group which was in Nairobi, Kenya 22nd August – 1st September. The programme included practical as well as classroom activities. The team stayed at Africa Nazarene University and travelled to the nearby Nazarene Bible College of East Africa for the W&W programme.

The team, which was organised by Veronica Dawson (Ashton/District NMI Council Member), included DS Rev Carl McCann and family. The programme involved a variety of activities including renovating the Bible College kitchen and dining room, delivering a diploma course on missions, and teaching a life-long learning module. Other activities included a youth conference, street

evangelism and preaching – and going on a safari!

(Pictures: Rev Karl Stanfield (Manchester) leading a seminar, and renovation work at the Bible College).



KENYA – MISSION TRIP A report by Rev Claire Fender



Over 100 young people (aged 18-30) from 42 world areas participated in the “Discover Missions, Kenya, 2024” event held 7th-19th June at Africa Nazarene University, Nairobi, Kenya, to explore and experience transcultural missions. More than a dozen language groups and 40 nationalities were represented. Those attending from the UK were, Joshua McConkey (Manchester), Hannah Clarkson (Perth), Lauren Hamill (Carrickfergus), Maria Prescott (Leeds), Rev Claire Fender (Eurasia Region Mission Mobilisation Liaison) and Amy Warned (Eurasia Region NYI Co-Ordinator).

Lauren Hamill says, “There were difficult and challenging times when we were out on our Ministry Days seeing and feeling the brokenness of some of the communities we were in, but we were able to pray over those communities, and I thank God that He placed us in those places. We know He is at work there, and He is doing more than we can imagine through His people in Nairobi.” Rev Claire Fender adds, “It was a privilege for small groups to lead and share in ministry at many local Nazarene churches on one of the Sundays, before a final day treat – on safari at the National Park”.

Photograph courtesy of Amy Warner

NAZARENE CHAPLAIN STEPS DOWN

Report from Crusaders FC, Belfast. “After 20 years of faithful service as club chaplain at Crusaders FC, Rev Ken White is passing the baton on. Ken has not only served the players, staff, and administrators at Crusaders FC with tremendous care and love, but he has also modelled Sports Chaplaincy in Ireland so well for the many others who have followed and we are so grateful for him...”. Rev White is the minister of the Bangor, NI, Church of the Nazarene.



Pictured:
Rev Ken White (left) with his successor, Frankie Weir.

SUNDAY SCHOOL CAMP



North District Sunday School Camp was held 22nd-26th July at the Scripture Union campsite at Kingscross on the beautiful Isle of Arran. A total of 64 attended – 47 campers and 17 leaders. Using the theme, “The Body of Christ”, Victoria Moore (Milbrook) spoke at the youth seminars about discovering our place and role in the body, and Esther Wood (Parkhead) led the kids club. The programme included, Super Sports, Officer Hunt, Water Fight, Silent Disco, “Ready Steady Bake Off” and trips to the beach and to Brodick.

District Nazarene Discipleship International Board Chairperson, Pastor Ryan Smith (Troon), says, “Camp continues to be one of the best weeks of the year...as campers [have] a week of fun, worship, prayer, fellowship and teaching. This year there was a real sense of togetherness around the camp... As a leader, one of the biggest blessings continues to be seeing new leaders stepping up as well as those who were campers now coming back as leaders. It is encouraging to see how God continues to build up future leaders through this wonderful ministry.”

BULGARIA MISSION TRIP

From 5th-15th July a team from the British Isles North District (Parkhead and Millbrook churches) served in Bulgaria alongside Rev Zhana Georgieva-Yordanova, the Bulgarian District Superintendent. The team was based in the village of Vidrare, running kids’ clubs in Vidrare and Dzurovo.

Rev Zhana Georgieva-Yordanova, says, “We are very grateful for the team that the BIND sent us! It is their 12th time and they are no longer guests, but the most welcomed family members. Their living confidence in God’s grace and love is evident through our entire community. We love them dearly and can’t wait to have them back!”



Pictured, (L to r), back row Georgia Smith, Rev Claire Fender; front row – Rev Zhana Georgieva-Yordanova, Ruby Moore, Emily Allan, Heather Allan, Beth Allan, Ruth Lloyd.