

REGULAR MID-WEEK MEETINGS;
 PRAYER MEETING (Seven:14):Every
 Wednesday Evening at 7.14pm
 BOY'S BRIGADE:Tuesdays at Unit J1,
 Tweedale Industrial Estate
 Anchors: 6.00pm - 7.30pm
 Juniors 6.00pm - 7.30pm
 Company Section: 6.00pm - 8.00pm
 Band Practice Fridays @ 6pm
 Contact: Wayne Trumpeter - 07824 618061
 COFFEE MORNINGS:10.30am Every Monday
 and Thursday in Church
 BIBLE STUDY TBA.

Remember, remember - The Care Bears who are ready to pray with you - chat, visit or even just give a hug! They will also seek to arrange practical help when they can do so! We still have a prayer request box in church and of course the cross to attach your notes to! Please approach one of the Care Bears (listed below) if you would like someone to share with!

Marjorie 630113
 Steve 883087
 Chrissie 505945
 Lesley 275994
 Pearl 596032

Use a post-it note to stick your prayer request to the cross, or write a note and put it in the prayer request box and one or more of the Care Bears will be there for you.

MADELEY BAPTIST CHURCH

News letter 15th January 2012,

www.madeleybaptist.org.uk



Welcome in *Jesus'* Name to our services

Memory Verse: *The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.*
 (1 Cor:1 v18)

Services today 15th Jan:

10.30am: Morning Worship, teaching and communion led by Keith. Communion Stewards: Paul Booth and Meena Ledger
 6.30pm: Evening Worship

Services Next Sunday 22nd Jan:

10.30am: ALL AGE Worship led by Meena
 6.30pm: Prayer and Praise evening



Dates for your diary:

30th January: Church officers meeting
6th February: Church Members Meeting: AGM Part 1 @ 7.30pm in church. Come and hear what is happening in our church community!

Blessings Day - Wednesday 29 February

A message from the Baptist Times:

This year, use this extra day in the year to especially bless the people you meet. Take time over a conversation, show appreciation, give someone a coffee, contact the person you have been thinking about for weeks. Get everyone praying about the day and share the results. God may bless you especially too!

<http://baptistunionofgreatbritain> (Check out the website - it's good!)

CALLING Madeley Baptist Church: *What could we do for this 'extra' day in the year? We certainly don't want to 'waste' the opportunity it offers. Put your thinking caps on and let us know your ideas of what we could do on this day. I know some are working that day, but you can still be 'salt and light' by making a colleague a cuppa or just listening to what they have to say, praying for them in your lunch break etc., etc.! <><*



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**"THE CHURCH IS DYING".....
"RELIGION HAS HAD ITS DAY"....?????
READ ON!!!**

**From the Daily Telegraph, January 12th 2012:
'The return to religion'**

With the chill wind of austerity blowing through the country, religion's warm embrace looks more and more inviting. Peter Osborne welcomes the resurgence of a national pastime: churchgoing

It's Sunday morning on Upper Street in the heart of London's secular, left-wing Islington. The shops and cafés are doing a lively business and the pubs have opened. But outside the portico of a handsome Georgian church stands an anachronistic figure. His white surplice flapping in the wind, vicar Simon Harvey is intent on luring shoppers into his Sunday service. He is surprisingly successful. With a smile and a welcoming word for everyone, by 11am Harvey has gathered more than 100 worshippers inside St Marys Church, Upper Street. It is a mixed congregation: a mixture of young and old, black and white, the respectable middle class and the very poor. City bankers mingle with asylum seekers. There's a choir in the church, and plenty of children, who are taken downstairs to their Sunday School classes shortly after the service begins. The hymns are rousing and cheerful. Many of the congregation even appear to believe in God, not something that can by any means always be taken for granted in the Church of England. What's more, slowly but surely, the St Mary's congregation seems to be swelling. Over the last 12 months, attendance at the main Sunday service at the church has risen by nearly 20 per cent, from around 95 to 115. Though much of this is down to Harvey's hard work and charisma, the growing popularity of St Mary's is part of a much wider and very striking phenomenon. **Church attendances, in freefall for so long, have started to rise again, particularly in Britain's capital city.** Numbers on the electoral rolls are increasing by well over two per cent every year, while some churches have seen truly dramatic rises in numbers.

Change is afoot. For many years it was accepted by many that Christianity was all but dead, an anachronistic relic of the past whose foundations had been destroyed by modern science and rationalism, before being left behind by the cultural and sexual revolution of the Sixties. The figures seemed to bear this out. Church attendance — which stood at around 50% in the middle of the 19th century — had declined to around 12% in 1979, or 5.4 million. By 1998 it had almost halved to 7.5% and when the most recent census was conducted in 2005, it was discovered that only 6.3% of the population, some 3.2 million, were regular churchgoers. The number of people calling themselves members of the Church of England has collapsed to 20% according to the latest British Social Attitudes Survey, down from 40% as recently as 1983. More than half of all Britons, according to British Social Attitudes, say they have "no religion" and never attend a religious service.

Despondent churchmen judged that there were just too many alternative attractions — Sunday shopping, sports fixtures and the relentless secularism of modern Britain. Only Islam, fuelled by immigration and more disciplined and certain faith, appeared to be growing.

But, as St Mary's Upper Street shows, there is still that yearning for faith. Indeed, as the second decade of the 21st century gets under way, there is surely a change of public mood. There have been many wonderful things about the last half-century, but it is

impossible to deny that it has been an era of materialism and selfishness. The religious impulse has not quite vanished, but the teachings of the church have been mocked and suppressed. It may be that in an age of austerity, we are collectively coming back to the profound and ancient verities of the gospels.

Even more phenomenal growth is being seen in the Pentecostal churches springing up on the suburbs of Britain's biggest cities, and attracting vast congregations of immigrants from African countries such as Ghana and Nigeria. These Pentecostal churches meet a vast yearning for spirituality and cater for congregations of 10,000 or more. **Recently, the Redeemed Church of God reportedly attracted an incredible 40,000-strong congregation for an all-night prayer meeting at London's ExCel centre.**

This freelance exuberance has spread into Britain's cathedrals too. According to Lynda Barley, the head of research at the Archbishops' Council, attendance at Britain's 43 cathedrals rose by seven per cent last year, with 15,800 adults and more than 3,000 children attending Sunday service. More than 1.7 million attend Church of England services in the average month.

Hillsong, a Pentecostal "megachurch" founded in Australia, attracts a global congregation in London and has seen its *membership rise from 200 to more than 10,000 in 12 years*. As with other growing churches, it is about more than Sunday worship. As its website announces: **"We meet during the week in small informal groups, known as Connect Groups, we serve our local communities together, some people go to evening college to learn more about the God's word, we socialise together, we do life together..."** (Editors Note: - check out Acts?!)

This figure could be larger, but it is still enormous, **far more than the number who attend football matches**, often assumed to be Britain's favourite weekend activity. But church people tend not to be as newsworthy as footballers. Their Christian values stand at an angle to the brash, thrill-seeking, instant consumer culture that has become dominant in Britain over the last half-century. "The underlying soundness of the church will always tell," says Giles Fraser, who famously resigned as the Canon of St Paul's last autumn in a complaint against the treatment by the church authorities of the Occupy protesters. *"There will always be a hunger in people for more than shopping. The Church does not have to be trendy to meet that need."* When church attendances began to plummet in the Sixties, says Fraser, "the only value people were prepared to accept was freedom. That became the trump card that was always played, the only way of looking at the world. The Church is good at articulating other values — the community rather than the individual."

James Jones, Bishop of Liverpool, agrees: "I'm firmly of the view there's a spiritual impulse in everybody. But this impulse is episodic. For instance at times of bereavement or trouble, people open up and become more sensitive to the Christian faith. I believe the same happens with society. When the material world gets knocked people are forced to think again and that's when Christianity does have something important to say. People are aware there's a big shift in society coming along, even though they might not understand it. So I'm not surprised that the ground is now more fertile for the spread of the Christian message."

A sentiment with which Simon Harvey, surplice waving outside St Mary's Upper Street in the former Socialist Republic of Islington, wholeheartedly concurs. Looking out at the shoppers on Upper Street going about their business, he says: **"Every bar, retailer and coffee shop out there knows its clientele. But the church is there for everybody."**

Editor's Note: I have abridged the article as it was too long for this news letter. However, you can look it up on the web: http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/religion/8970031/The-return-to-religion.html#_Twh702hKaGE where you can discover more about how congregations are increasing country-wide.

They broke bread together in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. (Acts 2:46,47)