

— Gospel Standard Bethesda Fund —

Newsletter

Spring 2025

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Lambing at Oare, Manningford, Wiltshire

Inasmuch as ye have done *it* unto one of the least of these
my brethren, ye have done *it* unto me. Matthew 25 v 40

Who *am* I, O Lord GOD? and what *is* my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto? 2 Sam. 7:18.

God had chosen David and called him from the sheepfold, anointing him to be King over Israel. Since that time the Lord had gone out with David against Goliath and had kept him from all the vengeance of Saul. The Lord had brought him at last to occupy the throne, given him peace with all his enemies, and settled him in his palace. David now had a desire to build a house for the Lord, but God said, "No!" Then God blessed David, speaking to him of his house for many generations to come, and promising him that he would not be without a son to sit on his throne and a Levite to offer sacrifice. The promise ultimately speaks of Jesus, who as an eternal King and Priest, will never vacate the throne of David.

Our text is David's response to this blessing. In the light of the greatest of all blessings – his son Jesus promised as his Saviour, the gospel – David is brought to feel his sin, his nothingness, and to confess his utter unworthiness of such blessing. Why had God spared David and brought him to this place, to this blessing, the "hitherto" in the text? David asks: "Who am I?" The answer: "Nothing, David!" "What is my house?" The answer: "Absolutely nothing, David!" David, all his works, his gracious life up to this point, could never merit or deserve the blessings of the gospel in Jesus. David was a sinner and nothing at all before God, though he was king and one who God has chosen to be one of his children. So David knew there was only one answer: it was in his God ("thou hast brought me hitherto"). A God who delighteth in mercy. A God who had made David his son by none less than covenant transaction and blood.

But we know what was ahead of David. This event was almost a turning point in David's life. In the years that followed David fell into grievous sin. He committed adultery with Bathsheba and conspired to murder Bathsheba's husband Uriah. The Lord told him the sword would not depart out of his house. So it proved.

One by one his children fell into sin and died. The peace which David knew, trusting his God while fleeing for his life from Saul seems to have largely gone, and instead David is often filled with trouble and sorrow. If David felt unworthy in this chapter, how much more so when David has to cry out at the end of his life (as recorded in chapter 23, verse 5): "Although my house *be* not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all *things*, and sure."

David's life was a life of learning this lesson – salvation is all of grace. When the Lord first blesses us with a hope in him, we think we have learned the lesson. But the Lord deepens the work of grace and brings us to know more and more the truth – salvation is all of grace. We learn this lesson against the background of our continual sins and backslidings. It is a painful lesson. It goes against pride. It brings us low. But it is that Jesus Christ might have all the glory.

Has the Lord taught us this lesson? Where are we resting our hope? In grace, free grace alone? Is our language ever that of the text: "Who *am* I, O Lord GOD? and what *is* my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?" Our utter unworthiness, but God's great grace! It is the only way to heaven. Yet however old we are, and however near our death, we prove this a lesson; we are still learning, and a lesson we will learn in the moment of death as we have to come to it is this:

A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
On thy kind arms to fall;
Be thou my strength and righteousness,
My Jesus, and my all.

But all who fall into those arms, trusting to free grace alone, will most certainly receive the kingdom and the crown. May grace be all our hope, and grace be all our song!

From the Chairman

I would commend to you the Spring 2025 GSBF Newsletter and desire to thank those who have contributed.

In reviewing the contents of the Newsletter, the meditation by Matthew Hyde is a timely reminder of the pathway of the Lord's people, and 'those things which are most surely believed among us', as taught by the Holy Spirit, and that "Salvation is all of grace (nothing of ourselves)... that Jesus Christ might have all the glory". These truths we trust continue to distinguish Bethesda as a dwelling place for His little ones in their old age.

The article on Assisted Suicide has been included, as sadly, this 'abominable work' is further evidence of the moral decline witnessed in the British Isles over the past 70 years. This has been manifested in the passing of legislation contrary to the Word of God, which undermines marriage between man and woman until death us do part, the family, the protection of the unborn life, and now this attack by prematurely ending life. We pray that the Lord, if it be His will, might overturn this deceit of fallen man and the enemy of souls.

The Home reports illustrate pictorially the life of our residents from day to day. It is with much sadness that the trustees have had to consult on the decision to close the Bethesda Home located at Harpenden. We would hope, if the Lord will, to report in future Newsletters on the continuing care provision serving the Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire area. A feature has also been included on the work of members of the Bethesda staff who provide the loving care and support to the residents.

The financial challenges faced in running Bethesda are highlighted in the Treasurer's report. Mention is made of the proposed increase in national insurance and minimum wage which has made the national news due to its impact across all sectors.

The report also highlights the importance of occupancy on Bethesda's financial position, a sad consequence of the decline in the numbers of Gospel Standard chapels and congregations over the past 50 years.

In considering the report on Ebenezer Lodge, Swavesey, it would be remiss of me not to record once more the thanks due unto the Lord in the provision of the site, and how His Almighty Hand has gone before Bethesda in bringing the building to its current stage. The question is sometimes asked, 'How many people are interested in living in Ebenezer Lodge?' As we have had to prove in the pathway the Lord calls us to walk in, He is the one who knows the end of a matter from the beginning. He tries our faith but has promised to "supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19). He is the One who is able to order all events, in constraining those whom He would have to dwell in Ebenezer Lodge.

The obituary of George Crowter has been included as a reminder of how Bethesda has proved, over the years, to be a "House of Mercy" for those of the Lord's people.

Finally, we would draw your attention to the events page on the back cover, and particularly to the forthcoming GSBF Annual Meeting at Toddington Village Hall on Saturday, 21 June 2025 at 10:30 am (Further details on the GSBF website and the May 2025 Gospel Standard.)

One word that links the various contributions to this Newsletter is "Hitherto (up to this time and place) hath the LORD helped us." (1 Samuel 7:12). Might this be the continued testimony of Bethesda.

On behalf of the Bethesda Trustees

Michael Ridout
Chairman



Assisted Suicide A reflection

We may often comment, we trust in the realisation that all our times are in the hands of Almighty God, that we start the day not knowing how it will end. More poignantly, we started 2024 not knowing by the end of the year that, in the Lord's purposes, the "Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill" would have been laid before Parliament. The Bill is also known as the Leadbeater Bill (after the MP who proposed the legislation) or the Assisted Dying Bill, or much to the ire of the proponents of the Bill - the assisted suicide Bill. The Bill's intended purpose "is to allow adults who are terminally ill, subject to safeguards and protections, to request assistance to end their own life".

The passage of the Bill

Sadly, the Bill was passed at its Second Reading on Friday November 29, 2024 with a majority of 55 votes. The Bill is now in its Committee stage and the concerns raised, at various times, over the robustness of the proposed "safeguards and protections" have proved to be very real ones. Kim Leadbeater MP placed great emphasis on the bill having "the strongest safeguards in the world". This was based on the requirement for a High Court judge to approve assisted suicide applications, by ensuring the individual is eligible and has not been coerced into the decision being made. In early February 2025, the need for this safeguard was subsequently watered down by Kim Leadbeater who put forward an amendment replacing the Judge's role by a panel (chaired by legal figure), which could include psychiatrists and social workers. This, in turn, caused consternation as to the availability of suitably qualified people to become members of the proposed panels. The impact of this move has also caused many of those who supported the bill at the Second Reading to reverse their position at the Third Reading.

The Committee stage has been well reported by organisations such as the Christian Institute, Christian Concern, CARE, and other lobbying groups and professional bodies. The concerns are focused on the ability of health services and professionals to ensure that individuals with capacity are not coerced into making decisions against their will, and the unworkability of the alleged safeguards within the proposed legislation. Sadly, the Committee has not been receptive to many of the concerns raised including those on disability, and suicide prevention groups. These concerns remain, and following the completion of the Committee stage on March 25th 2025, a group of Labour MPs sent a letter to Parliamentary colleagues in which they stated, "The promise

made at Second Reading that it (the Bill) would be strengthened in Committee Stage has not been kept. Not only have vital safeguards been removed from the Bill, but significant new risks have also emerged. The concerns identified, in addition to those already mentioned above, included: placing the NHS at risk, no assessment being made on the impact of the Bill upon public services and costs to the taxpayer, and possible profiteering by the private sector. The Bill was described as "irredeemably flawed and not fit to become law".

The Bill will now go to Report stage and then on to the Third Reading. At the Third Reading, MPs will have a final opportunity to debate and vote on the whole Bill. However, questions have been raised as to whether the implementation of the Bill, if passed, would be deferred for four years. This does not lessen the need for MPs to vote against the Bill at the Third Reading, thereby defeating the Bill altogether. Sadly, on March 25, 2025, members of the Isle of Man parliament approved the "Assisted Dying Bill 2023". This Bill will now go forward for Royal Assent. Regrettably, another moral and ethical threshold has now been crossed within the British Isles. Similar legislation is before Jersey's Parliament and in Scotland. Mercifully, an amendment has been passed to require the Welsh Parliament to approve any changes relating to assisted suicide taking effect in Wales.

Might we also be found in our churches and closets beseeching the Lord that He might overturn the designs of those that would promote legislation contrary to the Word of God, to the honour and glory of His Holy Name.

Might the Lord grant us the faith to believe and rejoice in **Psalms 124. 'If it had not been the LORD who was on our side, now may Israel say; If it had not been the LORD who was on our side, when men rose up against us: Then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us: Then the waters had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our soul: Then the proud waters had gone over our soul. Blessed be the LORD, who hath not given us as a prey to their teeth. Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers: the snare is broken, and we are escaped. Our help is in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earth.**

The wider perspective

Although these matters are of concern, perhaps of greater concern is the impact of the atheistically inspired ideology of euthanasia and assisted dying (in their various guises) on the moral and social well-being of our country. Sadly, the victims of this type of legislation are the vulnerable, and although platitudes regarding safeguarding, conscience protection and the need for capacity are expressed, yet as has been seen in countries such as Canada, the Netherlands, and Oregon State in the USA, the safeguards are soon eroded. Dr Peter Saunders, CEO of International Christian Medical and Dental Association, has rightly identified, "Any change in the law to allow assisted suicide would place pressure on vulnerable people. This includes those who are elderly, disabled, sick or depressed, who could feel under an obligation to agree to end their lives for fear of being a financial, emotional or care burden upon others. These feelings would be greatly accentuated in a time of economic recession with families and health budgets under pressure". Furthermore, he emphasises, "Members of the medical and health professions and disabled people's advocates are strongly opposed because they fear the dangers associated with such a change".

The Word of God puts particular emphasis on the Lord's care of the poor and needy, and the widows and fatherless. The Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) made the insightful observation, "The way a society treats its most vulnerable members is often a leading indicator of how it will treat others in the future. This obligation is not only societal but personal, requiring that each of us act as individuals in ways that uphold the worth of the vulnerable". This latter point is reinforced by how abortion is now seen as an acceptable form of birth control with no concern for the vulnerable life developing in the womb.

Confused thinking

The ERLC have also identified that medical interventions to alleviate suffering should not intentionally cause death and explains this further as follows: "Christians recognise that our bodies are to be stewarded under God's design, and that we do not have ultimate authority to act as we wish. Though Christians can affirm the desire to alleviate suffering, it must not be done in ways that contradict the truth that we live within God's design. Christians recognise that death is a result of the curse of sin, and we rejoice that in Christ, death has been defeated through his death and resurrection. Attempts to pursue death as a means of escape are unnatural and conflict with God's creation order. Physician-assisted suicide, euthanasia, medically assisted death, and other forms of the "death with dignity" movement unjustly treat the body as under our ultimate authority. They take what is good medical care and twist its purpose so that it harms instead of heals. Christians should not participate in the intentional act of causing someone's death so as to avoid personal pain and suffering, even as they mourn the presence of that brokenness in the world".

In a searching blog post "Blackest of Fridays", Dr Campbell Campbell-Jack (a retired minister from the Church of Scotland) observes, "We live in a society where literally nothing is sacred. There is no moral order, no line which we dare not cross. We have rejected the God who gives us parameters for life and instead have embraced the great god Self, a greedy god who once worshipped, knows no limits and makes ever greater demands Many who voted for assisted suicide did so on compassionate grounds and out of sympathy for the very real suffering some encounter. Instead of bending every effort to help them and their loved ones in a dreadful situation, we have chosen out of 'compassion' to end their lives... A 'compassion' that demands we be allowed to help end the life of another, no matter how well intentioned, is misplaced. Life is, and remains, God's gift. To deliberately end a life, either our own or that of another, is to reject the gift and the giver. Ultimately this proposed legislation is the adoption of a new religion, one which sees humanity as disposable instead of valuable". Do we have a prayerful concern over the consequences of this Bill?

End of life and palliative care

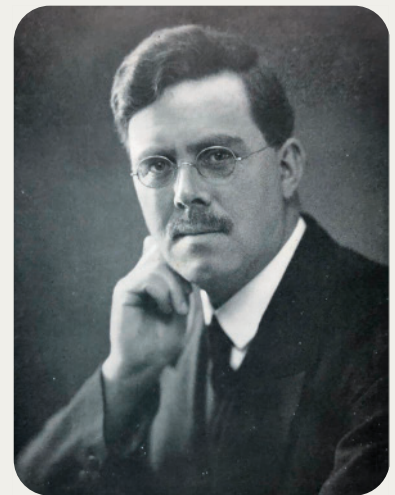
In the Lord's mercies, the UK has a history of providing end-of-life and palliative care together with a hospice provision that in many cases was pioneered by Christian doctors and nurses. One of whom, Dame Cicely Saunders, founded St Christopher's Hospice in 1967. The approach taken was not only concerned for medical care but included the practical, emotional, social, and spiritual needs of the individual. Both the dying person and their family were a unit of care, and part of the palliative care movement was supporting the bereaved family, as well as the needs of the dying patient.

This philosophy is one advocated by Hospice UK, who have stated "... everyone should be able to access high quality palliative and end of life care, no matter who they are or why they are ill. Nobody should ever feel that they have to make the choice to have an assisted death because of real or imagined fear of not receiving the care and support they need".

In October 2024, Christians in Care issued a recording of a talk on assisted suicide. This presentation is particularly helpful in providing an overview of the issues involved in the assisted suicide debate (as a precursor to the legislation laid before Parliament). There is also a contribution from a Christian who is a hospice nurse on their experiences of dealing with those at the end of life - a poignant reminder, from a biblical perspective, that this debate is about the dignity and worth of individuals who are created in the image of God with a never-dying soul. Voices have been raised over the impact of this valuable provision should the Bill be passed; especially as central and local government look to ways to address the costs of providing health and social services.

In conclusion

FH Wright, former Pastor of Hope Chapel, Rochdale, wrote a book published in 1937 entitled, "The Ten Commandments" published by the Sovereign Grace Union. In the chapter on "Thou shalt not kill", he wrote **"The attitude of the medical profession towards this commandment is particularly noteworthy."**



Not merely is it a point of honour with the doctors, but a fixed rule that no skill, pains, expense, or fatigue are to be begrudged which promise to prolong a patient's life, however useless and worthless it may appear".

How far has our country fallen in the last 85 years? Sadly, where has the voice of the Lord's people sounded and been heard during this time? We would reiterate the concerns expressed as to where this Bill will lead, particularly regarding pressures that may be put upon the old and infirm to end their lives. Although the GS causes are in decline, is there is still not a need for a "House of Mercy" to care for and keep safe those of His 'little ones' in their old age? Do pray that the Lord will overturn moves to limit the provision of end-of-life and palliative care support. Bethesda would return thanks to the Lord that it has been possible to provide end-of-life care to our residents, mainly through the help and support of district nurses and local health teams. Do also pray that the Lord will continue to support Bethesda in this endeavour.

MD Ridout

(Please note that although we have found valuable information from third party resources, we do not necessarily endorse all information, religious views, and opinions expressed.)

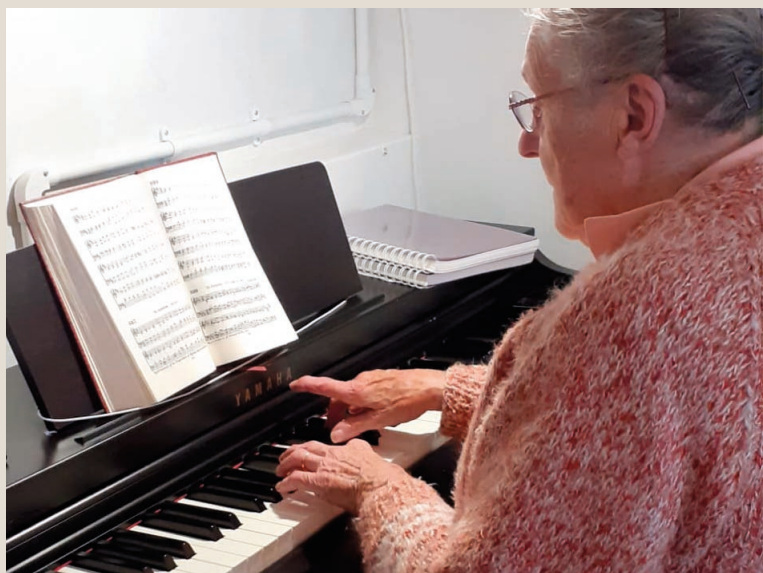
From Harpenden

In October last year, Mr Alfred Chivers was spared to his 99th birthday. In the summer, friends joined residents for tea and ice creams in the grounds of the home. Our friends Tony and Marion Haddow kindly hosted a gathering of friends and residents at their home in Hemel Hempstead on a beautiful sunny day.



From Brighton

In November, a group of residents visited Staverton Garden Centre, enjoying lunch in the cafe. At a coffee morning, greetings cards were sold on behalf of the home. A knitting and craft group was organised for residents by the home support group. Mrs Jean Saunders is photographed playing the electric piano. Two residents were thankful to be spared to see their birthdays; Mrs Margaret Hills (95) and Mrs Margaret Bailey (87).



A day in the life of a Bethesda Team Leader

In this and future issues of the Newsletter we hope to feature a day in the life of a member of the Bethesda staff, to give some insight into their roles and responsibilities

My first responsibility is to lead the morning handover and planning meeting. We discuss changes in the residents' conditions reported by the night staff or recorded from the previous day in the handover book, and we decide which carers are to assist which residents. Responsibilities are also allocated: for example, one or more carers are allocated to assist residents with breakfast in the dining room, another to take trays to those having breakfast in their rooms and to ensure each resident has a fresh jug of water in their room. Another will make beds and ensure rooms are tidy, have clean towels and other necessary equipment.

After helping in the personal care of residents with other carers, I then have the responsibility of administering medication during breakfast. Some residents choose to stay in their rooms for breakfast whilst others come to the dining room. The medication round provides a useful opportunity to check on how each resident is feeling. We have a hand-held device which indicates the medication to be given to each resident and most of these are given regularly. A small number of medicines are given as needed: for these a conversation with the resident and reference to their care plan are used to decide whether it is needed on that occasion. Sometimes there may be a need to take basic observations (temperature, blood pressure, pulse, oxygen level) of a resident we are concerned about and then perhaps to contact medical professionals. This may happen at any point during the day if we notice a change in a resident's condition. Also we need to be alert to any changes in the condition of residents' skin and any concerns reported by carers need to be followed up, sometimes contacting professionals for advice and starting records so conditions can be monitored. We have residents with very diverse physical and mental conditions and it is important that any changes or concerns are addressed promptly. If we are running low on a particular medication, I may need to call the pharmacy to check on when it is to be delivered. Some residents' food and drink intakes are recorded each meal and we need to check that this has been completed. Further responsibilities may relate to providing guidance for recently appointed carers and checking that we are up-to-date with tasks such as laundry.

At 10.15am, I need to make sure the microphone is in the lounge and welcome the minister or other friend who has come to take the morning reading which I always like to attend unless unavoidably kept away because of a phone call from a doctor or a visit by a district nurse, for example.



After the reading, I often join other carers in preparing morning drinks for the residents. Activities during the rest of the morning can be varied. If there are visits from nurses, doctors or other medical professionals, records will then need to be updated. On one day a week, the senior in charge has to carry out a medication audit, going through the medication of each resident in turn. This involves checking that the number of tablets we have left tallies with what we should have according to the electronic records, and that instructions for administration tally precisely with what doctors have prescribed. Any changes since the last audit have to be documented. There is also administrative work to be done such as reviewing and updating care plans to try and ensure that they reflect residents' changing needs and preferences. There are supervision meetings to be conducted with members of staff to discuss their roles and responsibilities and to address any concerns that may have arisen.

Once a month, all residents have to be weighed, their weights recorded and any significant changes acted upon, for example, by reporting them to the cook and discussing strategies to address them. Meanwhile, there are sometimes varied activities for residents organised by the home support group and others. Sometimes there are exercise sessions for residents in the lounge which are important especially for those with limited mobility.

As midday approaches, I assist other carers in getting residents ready for lunch which they usually take in the dining room. During lunch, medication again needs to be administered although there is a far smaller amount of this than at breakfast time. On one day a week, the fire alarm needs to be tested and this is usually done at lunch-time so that the residents can be informed together about what is taking place.

Any faults such as doors closing properly have to be recorded. Fire extinguishers and exits also need to be checked. After the residents have had lunch, I assist other carers in helping them return to their rooms or the lounge and most like a time of rest. Once they are settled, staff can have their own lunch-break. Whilst some day carers work a twelve-and-a-half hour shift, others work an early or late shift so when those coming on a late shift arrive in the early afternoon, I need to provide a handover of any changes in the residents' conditions or other issues they need to be aware of.

Activities in the afternoon, again are varied. As well as opportunities to chat informally with residents, each month, meetings with individual residents and their key workers take place. In these we discuss with the resident whether their current care is meeting their needs but also providing the degree of independence that they want, any changes they would like and what their aspirations are. Although residents can obviously make requests at any time, this is a good opportunity for them to raise any concerns. We often have friends and families visiting and they may have issues they wish to discuss. Sometimes they bring money to pay for residents' personal expenses and this needs to be carefully recorded and the money placed in the safe. Our Training sessions are also often run during the afternoon as there are a wide range of issues with which we need to be kept up-to-date. Training on issues such as moving and handling and infection control have to be repeated annually, and there are many other issues

relating to the needs of particular residents such as catheter care and dementia. There are also tasks like preparing the monthly medication order or booking in medication that has arrived. Carers are also responsible for making preparations for serving tea. I then help other carers in getting residents ready. Once they are in the dining room, I ring the general manager or the member of the committee who is due to take the afternoon reading over the phone. After the reading, tea is served during which there is a further medication round.

During the evening, there may be chapel services to be relayed to the residents. Again there may be visitors, and residents engage in different activities. Some residents like to go to bed quite early, so I join with other carers helping with their personal care. At 7.15pm we take a trolley round with supper drinks and biscuits, and when the night staff arrive, I need to provide them with a handover.

Sundays are obviously different, with only essential tasks being carried out but there is still usually a wide range of tasks to be done in meeting residents' varied needs. I need to see that the equipment is prepared for the relaying of the services and also help in getting those residents ready who are able to go out to the services. With the varied conditions and personalities of our residents, every day is different and an important part of the role is to be adaptable in working with other members of the team to meet the different social, emotional, and physical needs of those in our care.

Treasurer's Report

As we look back over the past year, we surely have to raise our "Ebenezer" for the mercies of the Lord who has enabled us to continue to the present day. As has been reported at our Annual Meeting in October and in a subsequent letter to our supporters from our chairman in November, our current financial situation continues to cause us much prayerful concern. Without repeating too much detail from these two documents, the underlying operational deficit, for the year ending 31st December 2024 was £400,000. That is, the cost of running the Homes exceeded the income by more than a thousand pounds every day. Thus, we have had to use our reserves to support the day to day running costs and that has reduced the funds available for future development.

Whilst improving interest rates have boosted our income, employment costs have risen due to the increases in the minimum living wage and employee's National Insurance contributions. As has been stated many times during the history of Bethesda, occupancy is the key to maintaining a healthy financial position. Currently occupancy across both homes is just 45%. We are truly thankful that the sale of the Redhill flats was completed during the year and are pleased that the building is continuing to be used to help those who need an assisted living environment. Our prayer is that the Lord himself will guide us as we seek to maintain the provision of Bethesda for future generations.

DF Stevens

Ebenezer Lodge

63 Middle Watch, Swavesey, Cambridgeshire, CB24 4RW

We are pleased to provide a pictorial update from our new development site at Swavesey, along with a computer generated image of what the building will look like once completed, if the Lord will.



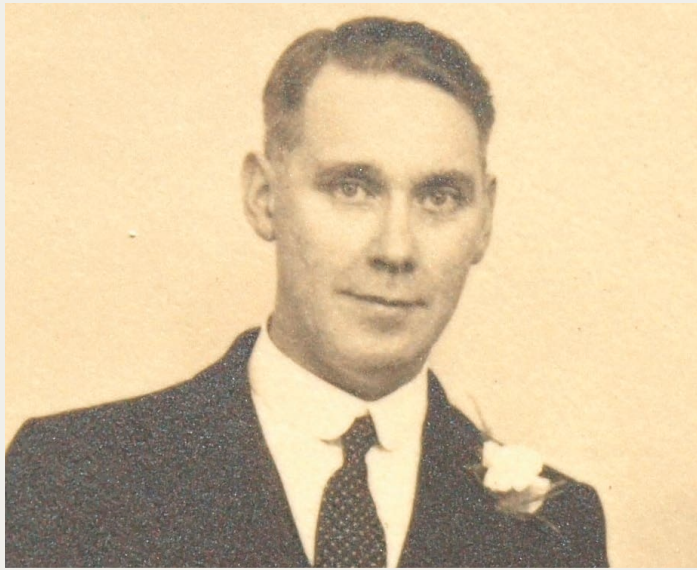
We are pleased to report that through the Lord's mercies to us the construction of Ebenezer Lodge, Middle Watch, Swavesey has reached another milestone. The whole of the structure has been completed including the main roofs. The flat roof over the communal lounge remains to be done. In tandem with this, the electricians and plumbers have been busy and made substantial headway with the "first fix" of the services to the individual apartments. Much remains to be accomplished, both internally and externally, including the surface water drainage to a watercourse bordering our paddock behind the site. The contractors we felt led to appoint have proved to be very suitable for our needs. The quality of the work has been very good, their pre-planning excellent and their cooperation has been very much appreciated. Our monthly site progress meetings continue.



A brochure illustrating the apartments together with information sheets detailing the various options available to prospective occupiers is now available. As we move forward towards completion of the site, if the Lord will, our thoughts turn to the need for those who could provide assistance to the future occupiers. In this respect we would be pleased to hear from anyone who would feel able to take on the role of either a Caretaker or Home Help. For those wishing to find out more about Ebenezer Lodge, and for regular photo updates, please use the QR code at the bottom right of this page to be linked directly to the web page. The details regarding Ebenezer Lodge will be at the bottom of the page with a link to the images of the building work.

If you are interested in further details about the apartments, or you are interested in either of the roles mentioned above, please contact:
The General Manager Adrian Topping on 01582 460970
or email EbenezerLodge@gsbf.uk.





George Crowter, member of the church at Galeed, Brighton, peacefully fell asleep in Jesus on April 5th, 1987, aged 92. Formerly he was a member at Rehoboth, Coventry, where he held the office of deacon for 22 years. He was a member of the Committee of the Gospel Standard Societies for 28 years.

Our dear father was born in Brighton. He loved and highly esteemed his own godly father and was brought up under the influence and example of the grace of God. Speaking of the time when he first started work, he would relate how that when he came downstairs in the morning, he would often find his father kneeling at his chair in prayer. Although his father started work at the post office at 6 a.m., he rose early enough to have an hour of Bible reading, meditation and prayer before going to work. The following is some account of our father's experience as recorded in his own handwriting, prefixed with the text: "They shall abundantly utter the memory of Thy great goodness" (Psalm 145:7).

I believe I was convinced that I was a sinner before I was twelve years of age and that solemn scripture, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things *done* in *his* body, according to that he hath done, whether *it* be good or bad" (2 Corinthians 5:10) lay with such weight upon me that it disturbed my sleep. Eventually I called to my dear father as he retired to bed and asked whether mention would be made of our sins in the day of judgment if they were forgiven. He replied, "No", to my great relief, for I feared I should be ashamed before God and His people if my sins were named, even although forgiven. I regularly attended a Strict Baptist chapel with the family, but at the age of seventeen, feeling I did not profit under the ministry, I ventured to break away. I first entered Galeed Chapel, Brighton, on a Wednesday evening in 1912 and had difficulty to find a vacant seat. Mr. J. K. Popham preached from Psalm 119:83: "For I am become like a bottle in the smoke; yet do I not forget Thy statutes." I felt it to be so different from the preaching I heard where I had been attending formerly. I endeavoured to abstain from the sins which lay with weight upon my conscience, but painfully had to prove, "that in me, (that is, in my flesh), dwelleth no good thing" (Romans 7:18).

They shall abundantly utter the memory of Thy great goodness

I joined the army in September 1914. After three weeks intensive training at Aldershot, I was sent to Colchester in Essex. Owing to my abnormal height, several months passed before a uniform was provided for me. During this time, I was sent with another soldier to the Headquarters of the 1st London Territorial Division, then stationed at Crowborough in Sussex. When the staff officer to whom I reported for duty saw me in civilian clothes, he hastily remarked, "I sent for a soldier." I endeavoured to explain the reason for my lack of uniform, but he obviously took a dislike to me and in six days sent me back to Colchester with one word on my papers, "Useless." I felt my position painfully, but in due season had to prove it to be amongst the 'all things that work together for good'. It was at Colchester that I met my dear wife to whom I was married over fifty years. Also, I had been in France some months in 1915 and had been promoted to the rank of warrant officer, when the 1st London Division came out to France. The officer who had so humiliated me took two soldiers of his staff in a car to find a suitable place to store gun parts, etc. He left the men sitting in the car while he surveyed the area, only to find them both headless upon his return through a shell or bomb. I could have been one of those men had I remained on that officer's staff.

In the autumn of 1915, alone in the night during heavy gun fire, I felt to be in great danger, when it pleased the Lord to apply with power that precious word, "He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep" (Psalm 121:4) which caused a sweet calm to soul and body. One Sunday when we were back at rest, I was in a hut crowded with troops, trying to read a sermon my dear father had sent me, when a warrant officer senior to me entered and called aloud the most dreadful blasphemy concerning the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. I could not be silent and reproved him openly. He said, "Who are you talking to?" I replied, "To you, for if that name means nothing to you, it does to some of us. I cannot stand your remarks." I feel this experience was used for my comfort after my return to civilian life. The first time I heard Mr. George Whitbread preach, his text was Luke 23:42, the dying thief's petition to the crucified Lord Jesus. Mr. Whitbread said, "Before the thief petitioned the suffering Redeemer, he rebuked the other thief saying, 'We (suffer) indeed justly...but this Man hath done nothing amiss.' If you are one of these petitioners, you will not want your Christ to be evil spoken of." I married in 1921, and after my second son was born in 1924, my dear wife's health was the cause of much anxiety. She was on the danger list for five days after a serious operation. My financial circumstances, in view of the need for help in the home (doctors and nurses had to be paid for in those days; there was no National Health Scheme) and many fears as to my soul's state before God, burdened me greatly.

During the night season the Lord kindly applied the text: "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him, and He shall bring *it* to pass" (Psalm 37.5). I felt this word forbade me making known my financial needs to any creature. Wonderfully did the Lord provide for us, fulfilling, I humbly hope, that promise: "They shall abundantly utter the memory of Thy great goodness." My wife's health did not improve, and the doctor advised the attendance of a specialist, who informed us that another operation was needed which would be more serious than the last. My dear one was favoured with the comforting persuasion that her times were in the Lord's hands, and all fears were removed. I was greatly tried until, I hope, the Lord granted me precious liberty to plead that the specialist's diagnosis would be proved to be wrong. The Lord was pleased to apply and fulfil the word: "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard *him*, and saved him out of all his troubles" (Psalm 34.6). My wife heard the specialist enquire of her doctor, who was present at the examination upon her entry into the nursing home, "Whatever has happened," and the doctor replied, "I have spirited it away." This poor man knew a better answer.

Some months later my employers requested me to move to Essex, the county in which my wife resided before our marriage; there her health improved and also my income. In the early days of October 1931, the application of that promise "When thou passest through the waters, I *will* be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee" (Isaiah 43.2) gave rise to hopes and fears. I felt sure troubles were coming, and I have mourned that I did not appreciate the promise included in that word, "I will be with thee". The company I represented had been taken over by a larger concern, and early in 1932 I had my territory, as a commercial traveller, severely reduced, as the parent company decreed that all grounds had to conform to their own. This seriously affected my income. I was then informed that I must be moved to a larger ground, but to my great concern I found that there was not a Gospel Standard Strict Baptist chapel on the whole territory to which they proposed I should move. I requested permission to decline this move, and this was granted.

In 1933 my employers requested me to take over a territory in the Midlands and we moved to Coventry, where we felt able to attend Rehoboth Chapel, which we felt to be the house of God. Within three months Mr. C. H. Gascoigne (a total stranger to my wife and I) prayed in the pulpit for those who had begged for one more token before venturing to walk in the ordinance of the Lord's house. Before he commenced preaching, he said, "While in prayer, I felt there were two persons here who had begged for one more token before venturing in the path of obedience." Arriving home, I asked my wife whether she had felt anything special in the service, and she told me she had prayed for one more token that morning, and I informed her that I had secretly made the same request that morning too.

We had not previously discussed our exercises concerning this solemn matter together. During the following week we had a post card from Mr. Gascoigne which read: "U have been much on my mind." [Mr. Gascoigne's quaint way of spelling "you."] This confirmed us that we must go and tell our deacon. We both ventured to come before the church; we were received, and were baptized by Mr. Gascoigne on September 14th, 1933.

The way to the kingdom is plainly described in the infallible Word of God as being brought "through much tribulation." I hope I have been brought to see in my latter days, as the path has been traced out by the Lord's servants, that I have not been left to miss the way. In self, in the church, in business, in the family, and the solemn falling away so evident in the nation have contributed to the path of tribulation. But if the trials and exercises were taken out of my life's experience, how many of the precious promises which I humbly hope have been made over to me would be missing! Dear Mr. F. L. Gosden, preaching at Coventry, said, "I have got a Bible, not very big, but those portions of God's Word that have been made mine by gracious application." I too hope I have a Bible, some portions which I have already recorded. Another is the precious text recorded in 2 Timothy: "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing" (2 Timothy 4.8) which alighted upon my spirit when heavily pressed with fears as to my state before God. I felt I could creep in with those that love His appearing, for I longed for this.

In business in my latter years particularly, I was directed to take certain steps which conscience testified against, and I was called upon to account for my attitude. Before attending a summons to Head Office after making known my objection, the word I felt was sealed upon my heart: "And it shall turn to you for a testimony" (Luke 21.13). I hope I was enabled to obey this instruction, when my chief said to me, "A man like you should be in a monastery and to a monastery I will send you." I was demoted, income reduced by nearly half and my firm's car taken away. A heavy trial, having a young family, but nevertheless I was kept from getting into debt and after several years restored to my former position. At times I felt compelled to make a stand against instructions which I felt to be contrary to God's Word and will. I have felt that Hebrews 10, verses 32 and 33, have been a word in season to me: "But call to remembrance the former days," etc. I hope the Lord condescends to speak to my soul from time to time, "Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and He shall sustain thee" (Psalm 55.22). Enabled, I hope, so to do, I was sustained and delivered in such a way that I felt the stamp of divine omnipotence was clearly seen upon it. In another business trial, the words, "Soon ye shall enter into rest, and know that he's your conquering Lord" (Gadsby's 1028/H Fowler) calmed my mind and, feeling unwell, I concluded that I was soon to be taken to a better country.

I felt I need not be over-anxious concerning an alarming change proposed, which would have occasioned moving from the chapel, where I stood in membership, into strange territory. Without a protest from me, the whole scheme was cancelled and the individual who plotted the change resigned his position as a protest. "My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from Him" (Psalm 62.5) I felt was in my Bible.

In 1941 I was seriously ill with pneumonia, and I was sorely tried as to my standing for eternity. I feared I had not received the pardon of my sins, and now with but a step between me and eternity, I felt too weak even to pray. This I confessed to the Lord and said, "All I can do is to cast my poor, helpless soul on Thee." Immediately a precious light shone into my heart, dismissing all fear, and I felt willing to depart, for the precious Person of the Lord Jesus Christ filled my heart. From fearing to die, I feared to recover, for I feared I should sin again and lose the unspeakable blessedness that I then enjoyed. Seven years later I had a nervous breakdown and was in hospital for six weeks. Mr. Sidney Pepler and his wife invited me to stay at their farm at Uffington to recuperate, and while there, Mr. L. R. Broome came to Uffington chapel to preach. I was still nervous of company and preferred to walk to chapel alone. On the journey, Moses' petition as recorded in Exodus 33.18 kept welling up in my mind: "I beseech Thee, shew me Thy glory." I felt this was too high a petition for such a worthless wretch like me, for I felt to need the beginning of things. Mr. Broome in his sermon traced out the path in which the Lord caused His people to travel; conviction, repentance, faith, perseverance, etc., and after each step he said, "This is a beam of Christ's glory." This was made a real comfort to my troubled heart, for I felt I was not a stranger to the path he described.

In 1951 our oldest deacon, Mr. Joseph Elsworth, was called to his eternal rest. Called by grace in his youth, he was one of eight children, and he had no hope of his parents or any of his brothers or sisters. He was a father in Israel and was a deacon for fifty-four years. The following year another gracious deacon, Mr. Francis Negus was called to heaven. Blessedly prepared, he prayed at a prayer meeting that the Lord would let him see the pool opened once more before he took him home. Within a few weeks, two were constrained to apply for membership. They were received by the church and baptized, and before the end of that same month Mr. Negus was called to his heavenly home. The following year another gracious, godly deacon, Mr. Samuel Burton, who had held office for thirty-three years, was called out of this world to be with his Saviour. Three gracious, faithful deacons removed in three years. I had been elected to the solemn office of deacon in 1941 and keenly felt my position as my responsibilities increased. For some time, I was sorely tried with the fear that despite all my profession, I was a stranger to the application of the precious, atoning blood of the dear Redeemer. I believe the Lord granted relief by the application of the truths recorded by dear Joseph Hart: "Every grace and every favour comes to us through Jesus' blood" (Gadsby's 180/J Hart).

A minister once declared that next to soul troubles, church troubles had been his heaviest. I certainly found being deacon in a pastorless cause a very heavy burden. On one occasion, with a particularly trying church meeting in prospect the following day, I felt so tried that I feared a sleepless night. As I dropped upon my knees, the words entered my fearful heart: "So He giveth His beloved sleep" (Psalm 127.2). I feelingly said, "Lord, if Thou wouldest give me sleep tonight, it would take me a long way in believing I was Thy beloved." I soon fell asleep and awoke at 7.30 the following morning. I faithfully record that although that took place over twenty years ago, I have never since had another night's sleep comparable to it. "Bless the Lord, O my soul" (Psalm 103.2). In 1967 my wife and I were spending a few weeks with a relative at Burgess Hill. While there, I felt a desire to go to Galeed Chapel, Brighton, one Wednesday evening to hear Mr. F. L. Gosden preach. On the journey down, I felt liberty in prayer to beg of the Lord to grant me in the service His direction as to whether it would be right to leave Coventry to attend Galeed, Brighton. I had not discussed this matter with anyone. Mr. Gosden preached from Isaiah 30. 19-21. He quoted the Lord's word to Moses in Exodus 14.15, "Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward," and then said, "You have said that you cannot move until you get a word from the Lord. My text does not say this; There is such a thing as venturing faith. Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee saying, This is the way, walk ye in it! There is such a thing as venturing faith and a confirming word behind thee." I had not mentioned my exercises to Mr. Gosden. I felt I had direction, and we ventured to move to Brighton in January 1968.

Before leaving Coventry, my dear wife had severe pains in her head and a specialist diagnosed a growth but did not advise an operation. Leaving five married children in the Midlands cast a cloud over removing a distance from them. Also, two failures from willing purchasers of our house in Coventry was a sore trial of faith, until the Lord mercifully applied the words: "One *thing* have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in His temple" (Psalm 27.4). Although born in Brighton and residing there for the first nineteen years of my life, I felt I could truthfully agree that the "one thing" mentioned in the text was my only reason for my seeking to know if it was the Lord's will for me to return, Mr. F. L. Gosden's ministry having been made a blessing to me. In consequence of my dear wife's head pains, I felt I dare not mention transfer of membership to her, for fear of coming before the church would worry her. Mr. Gosden's ministry was richly blessed to her, and upon returning home from an evening service, she said, "If Mr. Gosden had known all I had gone through on my bed this afternoon, he could not have preached it more plainly." I asked what that was, and she replied, "What I would have to tell the church here if I came before them." I said, "Shall we mention it to Mr. Gosden if he calls?" She agreed, and although I did not mention the matter to another person, Mr. Gosden called six days later. Without any prompting from me, my wife asked him if we could apply for a transfer of membership, and he agreed.

Owing to my wife's health condition, he arranged for the deacons and himself to meet at our house, and consequently before the church at Galeed. We were both unanimously received. My dear wife's testimony concerning the profit she received under Mr. Gosden's ministry excelled anything she had ever related in all our long married life together. The growth in my wife's head appeared to spread to other parts of her body. Taken to hospital for an operation, which was not successful, she returned home a complete invalid and was sorely tried concerning her state for eternity, but mercifully relieved before she passed away on June 26th, 1972, aged 75.

After our dear mother's death, all the family that were able were willing to look after father on a rota basis, if he would return to the Midlands. Our dear father was so attached to the ministry of Mr. Gosden that he felt he would rather continue to live at Brighton, where he also had a devoted sister. After some years he applied to enter the Bethesda Home at Hove. There he spent the last years of his life and greatly appreciated all the kindness and care he received. In or about 1950, our father confided in his eldest son regarding a deep exercise in respect of preaching the gospel. He stated that many gracious people had spoken to him regarding preaching, including a number of ministers. He had also received an invitation to preach from a godly Sussex pastor and his deacons, who were persuaded it was the Lord's will for him to preach. The deacons at Rehoboth Chapel, Coventry, whom he mentions earlier, requested to meet him for him to relate his exercises regarding the preaching of the gospel. Notwithstanding his own exercises and the evident exercise of others, he never felt he was called by God to preach. He was persuaded there was an anointing and a call necessary before entering such a solemn work, and that he never felt he received.

In the early part of the last War our dear father prayed publicly at a prayer meeting that if God had a favour to his soul, he would preserve the chapel at Coventry from damage from the German enemy. Although a bomb fell in the road nearly in front of the chapel, the blast went all the other way and demolished the factory on the other side of the road, not breaking a window in Rehoboth. In another air raid, a number of incendiary bombs fell in both passages on either side of the chapel, but the building was most wonderfully preserved. Although the chapel stood amidst much desolation and destruction, the only damage it received all through the War was a cobble stone from the tram track being hurled through the air and falling through the school room roof. This was one of the many prayers to which he received marked answers. On one occasion, when he heard news that it was feared a son serving in the Army in India had contracted a serious tropical disease, he said, to the great comfort of a troubled wife and mother, "I have committed those two dear lads into the hands of God." (He had another son serving in Greece.) As a family we have lost a dear praying father. Not very long before he died, he spoke to one of his sons about his solemn responsibilities in Zion, and then said, "There is not a day goes by but what I pray for you."

I believe he often prayed for all his children and grandchildren. Those prayers, especially in times of trial and affliction, we shall and do greatly miss. We know that his chief desire for us was that we might be saved. May his prayers for our never-dying souls be answered. Although our father, for the most part, was not favoured with a great confidence regarding his position as a sinner saved by grace, yet in the latter days of his life he often seemed to have a sweet confidence that he would get safely to heaven. So many times, during the last few days of his life he repeated those lines: "I could from all things parted be, but never, never Lord from Thee" (Gadsby's 1105/S.Medley). During the last twenty-four hours of his pilgrimage here on earth, there was a sweet calm, confidence and peace that those who witnessed will long remember. The funeral service was held in the Bethesda Home at Hove, conducted by his pastor, Mr. J. W. Walder, who held the departed in real Christian love and esteem. His mortal remains were laid to rest with his dear wife in Hove Cemetery.



This obituary was first published in The Gospel Standard in March 1988. If the Lord will, in future issues of the newsletter we hope to feature the lives of other former residents of our homes down the years.

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FORTHCOMING DIARY DATES DV

All friends of Bethesda are welcome to attend these events if they would like to come.
Please contact the Home concerned or the organiser for further details.

Activity	Location	Contact	Date	Time
Cooking	Harpenden	Mrs J Hadley	16th April	TBC
Hymn Singing	Brighton	Mr & Mrs A Collins	19th April	3:15pm
A-Z Quiz	Harpenden	Mr and Mrs J Wigley	2nd May	TBC
Coffee	Aldwickbury Golf Club	Mr & Mrs A Haddow	14th May	TBC
Hymn Singing	Brighton	Mr & Mrs J Hart	17th May	3:15pm
Prayer Meeting	Brighton	Dicker friends	2nd June	7:00pm
GSBF Annual Meeting	Toddington	Mr A J H Topping	21st June	10:30am
Hymn Singing	Brighton	Mr & Mrs A Hickman	19th July	3:15pm

Gospel Standard Bethesda Fund Annual Meeting

If the Lord will, the 2025 Annual Meeting will be held on
Saturday, 21st June 2025, 10.30 a.m. - 12.30 p.m.
at Toddington Village Hall, Leighton Road,
Toddington, Bedfordshire, LU5 6AN

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