

St John's Lindow

www.saint-johns.org.uk

INTOUCH

Autumn 2021



Faith for Life.

'Your faith – of greater worth than gold'

1 Peter 1:7

SIMON'S SCRAWL

by Simon Gales

Faith plays a big role in Christianity! When the apostle Paul writes to a church it's usually their faith that he is concerned about – he thanks God for their faith, he prays for their faith, he boasts about their faith!

But there's a lot of misunderstanding about faith. One dictionary defines it as '*firm belief in something for which there is no proof*', but that is **not** the Bible's idea of faith! In fact the nature of biblical faith is no different to the faith that we exercise every day of our lives (see the article on page 5).

What is distinctive about biblical faith is its direction, what (or rather who) that faith is in. At the end of his gospel, John writes '*Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, and that by believing you may have life in his name*' (20:30,31). So John expects his readers to weigh up the evidence that he has presented (miracles done in the presence of many people) and reach a considered decision – rather like a jury in any court case. He knows that the events he writes about (supremely the death & resurrection of Jesus) are open to scrutiny and he suggests there is no lack of evidence – there's lots of stuff that didn't make it into his book!

So Christian faith is not a warm fuzzy feeling or an irrational leap in the dark, but a personal trust in Jesus, based on reasoned convictions about historical events. Such faith will always be expressed

in action - as we read God's word and trust what he tells us, we change our lives to obey – if a person doesn't, that just proves they haven't been fully convinced in the first place.



Christian faith is not simply trusting in anything, like the person who says '*You've just got to have faith*' as if it were some form of positive thinking! Biblical faith is about trusting in what God has promised, and that makes the consequences of having faith very precious indeed (see the Theology Corner).

If God has not specifically promised (e.g. healing from sickness) we have no real basis for confidence, and uncertainty is **not** a lack of faith! But how much better to have a loving, wise God working out his promises than a cosmic genie granting every foolish wish I might make!

The great thing about God is that he is always willing and able to keep his promises; he is completely trustworthy. It's always sensible to trust the trustworthy. Putting your trust in a faithful God gives a firm foundation for life and all eternity. There is great comfort in that.

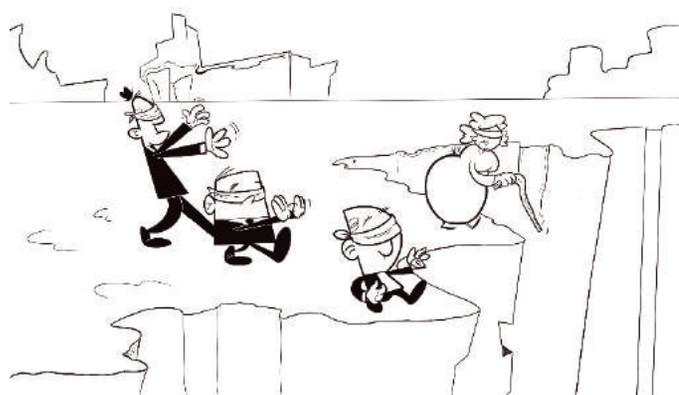
Yours, trusting in Jesus,

Simon

SKETCHY THEOLOGY

BY BEN HOLLINSHEAD

"THE VICAR SAID WE HAD TO WALK BY FAITH"



VIEW FROM THE PEW

Johnny Walsh

Marc: Where were you before coming to Wilmslow?

Johnny: I was previously in London for thirteen years working for Balfour Beatty before heading to Atlanta in the USA with my job in 2001. That came to an end in 2005 and I eventually came back to the UK and had an opportunity to work in Manchester.

Marc: So was it straight back to Wilmslow when you left the USA?

Johnny: We originally rented in Summerfields nearby for about six months when coming to Wilmslow. I remember my first visit to St John's being in a moving van!

Marc: Wow, that's quite a commitment! Did you search around for other churches before St John's?

Johnny: Not really. We just went for it! It's been almost sixteen years to the day that we've been here.

Marc: And how have you found those sixteen years at St John's so far?

Johnny: It's definitely been a time of growth. In America we were involved in some church group work but I think the biggest growth for me was when I did the Northwest Partnership Bible overview course. It was hugely transformative.

Marc: That's encouraging! Were you a Christian long before living in America?

Johnny: I became a Christian in my mid to late twenties but there were big leaps in my faith through the years. I used to understand Christianity in my head, but eventually that changed from head knowledge to heart knowledge. I was trying to be a good person but kept failing, and getting the whole picture was a big moment for me.

Marc: I know that feeling! And what about your children, Thomas and Ella? How was it for them growing up with Christian parents?

Johnny: We all went to church as a family and they grew up with good Bible teaching. I can see the genuineness of their faith through their actions and



not everyone sees their children growing up to be faithful Christians. It's a real blessing for Alison and me.

Marc: It can be rare to see that nowadays so it's great to hear. Do you share a lot of the gospel with each other as well?

Johnny: We chat more as a family about what's going on in each other's churches and what we're getting involved with. We always encourage each other and have plenty of time chatting over the dinner table. After all, it's God's work, not ours! The best way to put it is that we help sharpen each other's faith.

Marc: So how then would you say that your faith has helped sharpen you as a person?

Johnny: I have a better understanding of scripture now and how it affects our relationships with each other and with God. I regularly ask myself "How can I get to know God better? Does it affect my day to day life?" It's always important to have that heart knowledge.

Marc: I couldn't agree more. Thanks Johnny for taking some time to share a portion of your story with us.

MISSION

Introducing Gerard & Sarah Charles – Northern Representatives for OMF (Overseas Missionary Fellowship)

Sarah came to faith in Jesus at an early age and Gerard was in his final month at university when he was converted at a Luis Palau mission. We met at a Scripture Union holiday club in North East Scotland. Sarah was training as a primary teacher and Gerard was working as a forest manager. Around that time, God brought some East Asian friends to our small church in Dundee. Through those friendships, God grew a desire to go to East Asia and share the Gospel with those who would have no chance of hearing otherwise. We knew learning the language and culture would take a lot of time and effort so we were prepared to stay for as long as God wanted us to stay. After we got married, we went to Bible college in Glasgow and explored the idea of serving God with OMF by visiting the Philippines. In our final few days there, God called us very clearly to apply to OMF.

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we were prepared to stay for as long as God wanted us to stay.
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a PhD part-time as well as having a leadership position in OMF. During school half terms and holidays we would travel as a family to visit different teams and seek to encourage them in their ministry.

Since our return to the UK for family reasons in 2012, we have had several roles within OMF (UK) but in 2018

we began serving together as Area Representatives for OMF (UK) in the North of England. Our desire is to inspire and equip God's people to reach out cross-culturally locally and globally. We are based in



Huddersfield but spend quite a lot of time travelling around the North to speak at different churches, university CUs and OMF prayer groups. During lockdown, we had many opportunities to provide training sessions on Zoom and Gerard adapted to teaching and preaching online. He teaches on Christianity among world religions at the Nazarene College in Manchester and at Cranmer Hall in Durham. We both enjoy chatting with people who are exploring what mission means for them as well as getting alongside OMF candidates who are preparing to live and work in East Asia.

We have two children, Anna (20) is about to start studying midwifery at Leeds Uni and Matthew (17) is about to start 6th form.

Gerard & Sarah will be leading our church weekend 'at-home' 9-10th October

Central to healthy human society.

To have faith is to trust in someone or something. A child has to trust in their parents and teachers; a scientist trusts in the integrity of her colleagues; a citizen should trust in the authorities that regulate civil society.

That is why it is doubly devastating when someone is murdered by a police officer; as in the awful cases of George Floyd and Sarah Everard. When people cease to trust in political or religious leaders, unrest and anarchy ferment.

The essential “object” of our faith is frequently a human system or organisation established by consent. With barely a thought, we implicitly trust the *Civil Aviation Authority* or the *Medicines Agency* when, respectively, we board an aircraft or swallow our pills. We exercise faith in the *Financial Conduct Authority* and the *Bank of England* when depositing our savings in a bank. These agencies may seem remote or impersonal - rather different from trusting in the loving marital faithfulness of one’s spouse. Faith is a rational activity. Good reasons are usually available as to why we can trust in the object of our faith. These may include credible job references, certificates of educational or professional attainment or a MOT certificate for a motor car.

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Faith is a
rational
activity.”

When we examine various aspects of “system faith” often it is evident that there is a deeper (rational) basis for faith. In the case of aircraft: it is the laws of aerodynamics. In the case of medicines: the laws of physical organic chemistry. In the case of living in a skyscraper: the laws of structural mechanics. Where do these laws come from? Why should they exist?

The Christian understanding of this question is that these laws are established by a Personal Infinite Being: almighty God - as in the first article of the Christian creed. And God has enabled us, his creatures and image-bearers, to gain progressive insights into such matters. The scientific enterprise - even when practiced by atheists - is founded upon tacit (implicit) faith in a rationally ordered universe.

Christian thinkers down the centuries have come up with a Latin tag: *Credo ut intelligam* - meaning *Faith seeks understanding* - the quest for a thoughtful integration of truths apparent in God’s Two Books: the created universe - that manifests God’s power and wisdom - and Holy Scripture (the Bible). The Christian church has acknowledged a further ingredient: Christian tradition. That is best understood as recognising the person and mission of Jesus Christ as *the key to interpretation* of the Bible. Through Jesus, God invites us to be forgiven and reconciled to him, turning away from idols and joining with other believers in the fellowship of his people among all nations.

FAITH IS SPELLED R.I.S.K



Take a risk and you can lose money, lose face, lose your health or even your life. You may endanger others too. Will a wise and loving person, then, ever take a risk?

It depends. Of course you can throw your life away in a hundred sinful, wasteful ways. But losing your life is not always the same as wasting it. It's not always wise to play safe. What if a successful risk would bring great benefit to many, and its failure only harm yourself?

There are no risks for God – he knows the outcome of all his actions. But not so with us. You don't know if your heart will stop before you finish reading this page. You don't know if you'll have a head-on collision this week. Risk is woven into the fabric of our finite lives. We cannot avoid risk even if we want to. Safety is a mirage. Sometimes the fear of making a wrong decision can be paralyzing but that serves no one. It is cowardly. Risk is the only way forward. Risk avoidance can sometimes be more sinful, more unloving than making a wrong decision out of faith and love!

Esther is an example of courageous risk for the sake of others and for the glory of God. Her uncle asked her to go before the King of Persia and plead the case of her people. She knew the royal law that anyone who approached the king without permission risked being put to death. But she also knew her people's lives were at stake so she replied '*I will go to the king, though it is against the law, and if I perish, I perish*' (Esther 4:16). She did not know what the outcome

would be. She had no special revelation from God. She had to run or risk. She made her decision on the basis of love for her people and faith in God, and handed the results over to him. Risk was right.

Another example is Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, threatened with the fiery furnace if they did not worship the image the king had set up. They replied '*the God we serve is able to save us . . . but even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not worship the image you have set up*' (Daniel 3:17,18). This was sheer risk. They did not know how it would turn out. They made their decision to risk rather than run, and handed the outcome to God. And that was right. It is right to risk for the cause of God.

The great risk taker of the New Testament was the apostle Paul. Every day he risked his life for the cause of God. The roads weren't safe. The cities weren't safe. The sea wasn't safe. His own people, the Jews, weren't safe. The Gentiles weren't safe. He had two choices: to waste his life or to live with risk. His answer: '*I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me – the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace*' (Acts 20:24). The Christian life is a call to risk.

Jesus made that clear when he said '*You will be betrayed even by parents, brothers, relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death*' (Luke 21:16). That word 'some' puts the earthly life of the disciples in great uncertainty. That's risk! It's the will of God that Christians will be uncertain about how life

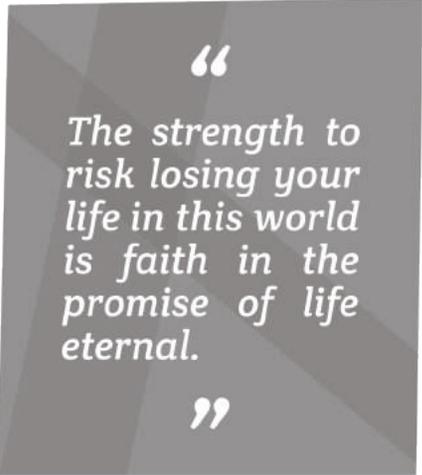
on this earth will turn out. Therefore, it is the will of God that we take risks for the cause of God.

What happens when God's people try to live in the mirage of safety? The people of Israel were on the edge of the promised land but refused to enter. They wanted to go back to Egypt – the mirage of safety. Not even Joshua could arouse them from their dream world of safety (Numbers 14:17-19). The result was thousands of wasted lives and wasted years because they would not take the risk of battling the giants of Canaan. How much is wasted when we do not risk for the cause of God!

The secret of such risk taking is faith in the all-providing, all-ruling, all-satisfying Son of God. The strength to risk losing face for the sake of Jesus is the faith that God's love will lift up your face at the end. The strength to risk losing money for the cause of the gospel is the faith that we have treasure in heaven.

The strength to risk losing your life in this world is faith in the promise of life eternal.

So what about you? Are you caught in the enchantment of security? paralysed from taking risks for the cause of God? or have you been freed by the power of the Holy Spirit from the mirage of safety and comfort? Do you ever say with Esther '*For the sake of Christ, I'll try it! And if I perish, I perish*'?



This article is taken from the book 'Risk is Right' by John Piper - a great little read.

E Y N T E C G T C H F Y
 E S P R A I E E N A E H
 R N J A D I D O F K I S
 J O S E P H S I H A O N
 O I O S P M Z A V R O L
 S N E M A H A R B A E A
 G M A S C M T S H B D E
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 H S N T M O A E A R N T
 I E F I T N T C L H A N
 V S M E V N O A D O H H
 E R A H A B U N H N D M

ABEL
 DAVID MOSES
 ISAAC SAMSON
 JOSEPH BARAK
 RAHAB GIDEON
 SARAH JEPHTHAH
 ABRAHAM NOAH
 ENOCH SAMUEL
 JACOB



KEEP ON RUNNING!

by Leonie Poole

In one of the books of the Bible, Hebrews ch12v1 the writer says **“run the race and never give up”**. He’s not talking to athletes but to Christians. The writer had heard some shocking news: **these believers were going to stop following Jesus!** They were giving up on God and his promises, they were losing their faith. So he got out his scroll and quill pen and immediately he wrote to them...

First of all he said...

“Read about all the people of faith in the Old Testament – their lives will show you what faith means.”



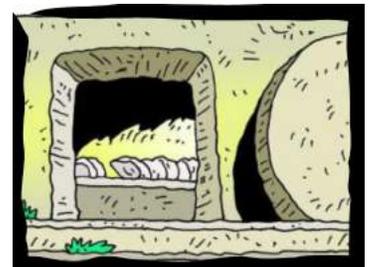
...And he gave them loads of examples of people in the Old Testament who had taken God at his word and believed he would keep all the promises he made., no matter how difficult life was for them. You see, that’s what faith is – **everyday keeping on believing that God will keep all of his promises**, even when you can’t see how.

Then he said...

“Fix your eyes on Jesus, he is the one who began our faith and the one who makes our faith perfect.” v3



When Jesus died on the cross, everyone thought that God’s rescue mission had failed but we know that is **exactly what God had planned** in order to rescue us from sin! So whenever you feel a bit wobbly and wonder if God will keep all his promises, whenever you wonder if it’s worth it to keep following Jesus when your friends make fun of you, **look at Jesus**. He is the answer to all of God’s promises and he will get us safely to heaven.



PHOTOS



Some of the Keswick party, on a walk around Derwentwater



'Lonscale', the fellside centre for the church party to Keswick



Friday afternoon homegroup enjoying Freddie's garden.



A leisurely homegroup lunch at June's, on a very hot day!



Philip Project North West 2020-21 an end of year BBQ & awards evening

BOOK REVIEWS

Faith – It's Always Been a Matter of Trust by Bryson Smith

Reviewed by Julie Brierley

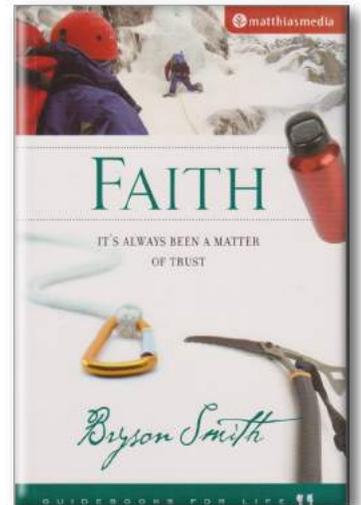
Who does not want to live in the Kingdom of Heaven where there is eternal life of peace, love and prosperity? A life free from pain, sorrow and disease. A heavenly place where everyone is equal and brothers and sisters to each other, living together with our Father, a loving caring God who promises us a glorious future through faith in Jesus Christ.

'*Faith – it's always been a matter of trust*' is a simple and easy to read book, which is great as I am not a big reader, and tend to read no longer than 30 minutes before I get tired! Once I started reading this book, I found it interesting, engaging and inspiring and difficult to put down, so luckily for me it's not a big book!

The author takes you on a journey that challenges people with or without faith. This book sends you on a journey of understanding faith, where you climb to its complete understanding. Scale the height of some majestic verses from the bible and see spectacular views along the way. Stories are told with funny scenarios that we can relate to, helping to find the truth of Christian faith.

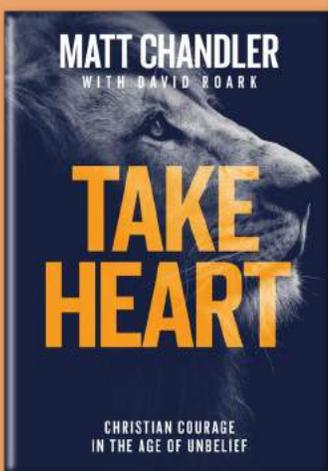
After reading this book I realised that FAITH is not just a word. FAITH is precious. FAITH is valuable. FAITH is important. Faith carries challenges and also with it great comfort knowing our lives are flooded with purpose and hope as we focus on God's promise of a glorious future.

I would recommend this book to anyone and everyone.



Take Heart by Matt Chandler and David Roark

Reviewed by Joel Norman



Western society is on a trajectory of unbelief, and is increasingly antagonistic toward Christian moral values. The age of Christendom – if there ever truly was such a thing – is over. How should we, as Christians on the edges of society, respond in this particular cultural moment? American pastor Matt Chandler wants to help steady the ship in the Church's general response to our shifting culture. He warns of the pitfalls of capitulating to our secular culture and compromising on Biblical principles, but equally challenges the Church not to withdraw from society or to become embroiled in reactionary 'culture wars'. Instead, we are to radically love God, and love our neighbour. This will require uniquely Christian courage, characterised by a life of holiness, integrity, and devotion to God.

Chandler encourages us to *Take Heart*, remembering that the kingdom of God has always thrived on the margins, and that Jesus ultimately holds all power and authority in his hands.

WHY FAITH IS SO PRECIOUS!

GEORGE CROWDER, VICAR AT ST JOHN'S OVER, WINSFORD



It must be heart-breaking for someone with a life-threatening condition to know about a new treatment but have no access to it. Family and friends will campaign and fund-raise. Every effort will be made to get hold of the solution.

For Christians, salvation is like that: it is the application of the solution to the problem. Christ's atoning death on the cross is the solution to the problem of our sin; sin which separates us from God. Yet, as Calvin explains, "*We must understand that as long as Christ remains outside of us, and we are separated from him, all that he has suffered and done for the salvation of the human race remains useless and of no value to us.*"

The very thing we human sinners need most is available in Christ, but it needs to be received. Salvation is not ours automatically; it does not simply happen to all human beings now Christ has died and risen from the dead.

Faith is required, faith in Christ as Lord and Saviour. Indeed, Jesus began his ministry with a call to repentance and faith. "*The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!*" (Mark 1:15). Putting our faith in Jesus is the way we receive the salvation we need, which he secured on the cross.

We might understand salvation as a gracious exchange. When we put our faith in Jesus, our sins are laid on him, and when he was punished, they were treated as his own and God judged him in our

place. Not only that, but, gloriously, his righteousness is laid on us, as if it were our own. In the same way that he was completely identified with our wilful rebellion, we are completely identified with his perfect obedience. Our sins go on him, and his righteousness comes on us. As Paul succinctly concludes, "*God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*" (2 Corinthians 5:21)

Salvation, then, might seem like a two-way street, with us at one end and Christ on the cross at the other. In one direction our sins go to Christ, and in the other Christ's righteousness comes to us. Yet is not a distant, mechanical swap. It's up close and personal. The way in which our sins are laid on Christ and we receive his righteousness is through personal union with him.

Martin Luther explains, "*faith must be taught correctly, namely, that by it you are so cemented to Christ that he and you are as one person, which cannot be separated but remains attached to him forever, and declares, 'I am as Christ.'*" Faith unites us to Christ. Faith makes us one with Christ, and by being one with Christ we are saved.

Faith connects us directly into the death and resurrection of Christ, which is both a blessing and a challenge. With Jesus we gain a life that is everlasting and, at the same time, a way of life that is self-sacrificial. Paul evokes this powerful paradox in 2 Timothy 2:11. "*If we died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him.*"

AUTUMN/WINTER PROGRAMME

	Mornings 10am	SUNDAYS	Evenings 6.30pm	HOMEGROUPS
5 th Sept	Holiday Club Special 'Going for Gold'			Meeting in various homes around the parish during the week (evenings and afternoons) to study God's Word and to encourage and support one another. During the first half of term we will be using 'A Better Story', a course designed to help churches participate in 'Living in Love and Faith', a study exercise taking place across the Church of England. In the second half, as Advent begins, we'll look together at the early chapters of Luke.
12 th Sept	Community 'Thank You' Luke 17:11-19			
19 th Sept	Luke: the heart of the matter Luke 17:20-37 A faith that is real		Big Question: How could God allow Coronavirus?	
26 th Sept	Luke 18:1-8 A faith that prays		2 Corinthians: Strength in Weakness 2 Cor. 1:1-11 Our Comforting God	
3 rd Oct	All age parade Harvest Thanksgiving		2 Corinthians 1:12-2:11 Love Hurts	
10 th Oct	Church Weekend at Home With Gerard & Sarah Charles			Sept 16 Prayer evening (church rooms 8pm)
17 th Oct	Luke 18:9-14 The paradox of pardon		What the Bible says about: The Real You	Sept 23 A Better Story – 1
24 th Oct	Luke 18:15-30 An upside-down religion		2 Corinthians 2:12-3:6 Men sent from God	Sept 30 A Better Story – 2
31 st Oct	Luke 18:31-43 Sight for the blind		2 Corinthians 3:7-18 Glory Story	Oct 7 A Better Story – 3
7 th Nov	Luke 19:1-10 When the king comes to stay		What the Bible says about: Climate Change	Oct 14 A Better Story – 4
14 th Nov	All age Remembrance Luke 19:11-27 When the king returns		Big Question: Isn't the Bible Sexist?	Oct 21 A Better Story – 5
21 st Nov	Luke 19:28-48 When the king arrives		2 Corinthians 4:1-6 Real Ministry	Nov 4 Prayer evening (church rooms 8pm)
28 th Nov	Luke 20:20-26 The ultimate insult		2 Corinthians 4:7-18 Eternal Glory	Nov 11 Luke 1:1-25 A Poignant Hope
5 th Dec	Luke 20:20-26 The wisdom of the king		2 Corinthians 5:1-10 Why Bother?	Nov 18 Luke 1:26-56 Conceived of a Virgin
12 th Dec	Luke 20:27-21:4 Religion, false & true		Big Question: Who believes in a virgin birth?	Nov 25 Luke 1:57-80 Rescue from Enemies
19 th Dec	Nativity Presentation		Traditional carol service	Dec 2 Luke 2:1-20 Victory in Weakness
24 th Dec	Kids' Carols (4pm)		Midnight Communion (11pm)	Dec 9 Luke 2:21-52 Waiting with Hope
25 th Dec	Family Carols (8am + 10am)			<i>Dates given are for Thursdays. In addition a men's fellowship meets at 6.30am Fridays</i>

SPECIAL EVENTS

Sept 25
Men's Breakfast Alderley Edge Golf Club, 8.15am

Sept 25-26
Youth weekend away (11-18's)

Oct 2 Prayer breakfast
Church rooms, 8.30-9.30am

Oct 9-10
Church weekend 'at home'

Dec 4 Prayer breakfast
Church rooms, 8.30-9.30am