

Westminster Baptist Church

Newsletter

Autumn 2018

Serve the Lord
with gladness
Come before his
presence with singing.

Psalm 100:2

From the Pastor

Dear Friends,

Recently we have been looking at Hebrews 11 and the well known list of those set forward as those who have faith in God's promises. Hebrews 11 is situated after the conclusion of Hebrew 10.38,39,

"Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul."

It is on this basis that we have this great cloud of witnesses there for our encouragement that we might hold fast the profession of our faith (Hebrews 10.23). These all died having not received the promises but having seen them afar (Hebrews 11.13); so we who trust in the promises of God for our salvation do not enter into immediate heavenly rest on conversion or Christ's return but await their fulfilment. We, like them, see the promise of eternity with Christ (Rev 21) afar but are fully persuaded with complete confidence in what we have not yet seen—what God

has said will happen will come to pass (Heb 11.1). It was so with those names here in Hebrews 11—God was faithful—and it will be so with us.

Another gleaming example of this is the first advent of Christ, which we celebrate during this upcoming season. Prophecy predicted he would be one of the descendants of David, born in Bethlehem (Micah 5.2); he was to bear the chastisement of his people's peace (Isaiah 53); and he was to be known as 'wonderful, counsellor' (Isaiah 9.6). These verses are just a snippets of God's deliverance on His promises. Christ came—the Lord was faithful—as He always has been, and will be.

So as we think of Christ's birth we have a God, an almighty God, that brings his promises into reality. and therefore,

"Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)"

Heb. 10.23

With love,
Pastor Jonathan Arnold

Upcoming Dates

- Short presentation during Friday Fellowship, 7 December at 7:00PM. **'Emotions & assurance amongst 19C Dissenters'**
- **Carol Services:** Thursday 13 December at 1:00PM, Sunday, 23 December at 11AM and 6:30PM.
- **Christmas Day Service:** Tuesday 25 December at 11AM.
- Short presentation during Friday Fellowship, 18 January 2019, **'Enduring impact of the Great Ejection'**
- If you have no plans, join us for fellowship and fun on **New Year's Eve**, beginning at 8PM.

Prayer Requests

- **Mary Ward**—she is now in a care home near the church and continues to have health difficulties.
- **Marta Jinx**—despite poor health, she continues attending when she can.
- **English Classes and Sunday School**—that they would continue to grow and be God-glorifying ministries.
- Our (yet) unknown **recipients of the Christmas boxes** we have sent this year—that they would know the love & comfort which comes from salvation in Christ.
- Remember others in the fellowship who are unwell or dealing with difficult issues.

News



Happily, we have been visited by many from the UK and abroad with whom we have enjoyed fellowship. We especially note Jason Ritchie, who gave us a brief report on his family's missionary work in Mongolia over recent years.

We were pleased to send two shoeboxes of Christmas gifts to impoverished children abroad; one to a boy and one to a girl, ages 5 to 9 (see attached images). In the early new year, we should know where our boxes were received.

This year, we will be introducing a 'Christmas Gift Exchange' for attendees at Westminster Baptist Church. If you would like to participate, please see the Pastor's wife, Angela. On Sunday, 9 December all participants will be given one name for whom they are to make or purchase a gift (of no more than £5 value) to be given to them on or the Sunday before Christmas Day.

We are hoping to reintroduce short historical presentations on occasional Friday Fellowship meetings. Please see the calendar for upcoming dates.

A Bite of History

Christopher Woollacott was the second pastor at Westminster Baptist Church (when it was known as Romney Street Baptist Church). After Henry Paice (the first pastor) left RSB in 1823, Woollacott was invited to preach on a probationary basis, and shortly thereafter invited to be pastor—which he accepted.

Woollacott is an interesting and somewhat controversial character in the Church's history. He remained pastor for ten years, until discontentment began to arise, and congregants began to wonder if Woollacott was best suited for their ministry. This was not an uncommon occurrence in Baptist and Independent churches in this period; with the rise of 'democratic church order' which progressed substantially in the 18th century under evangelicalism, the 'power' of churches was, in a sense, transitioned from the pastor to the laypeople. While the pastor held spiritual authority over his flock, his position depended on whether or not the people believed him to be a suitable pastor for themselves. This was often assessed according to the felt spiritual growth under his preaching, as well as the quantitative growth of the church.

In Woollacott's case, the Church began to experience consternation—they believed they were not profiting from his ministry. When other ministers experienced this same (somewhat unfortunate) act of democratic spirit, they typically removed themselves immediately and quietly. Woollacott was a bit different; when he left Romney Street he stirred up controversy, and caused a split in the church. He left, taking a substantial portion of the congregation with him. If this wasn't enough, Woollacott then caused greater consternation by asking whether he could hire the premises of Romney Street to start a new church, with the members who had vacated with him. Obviously, this was met with considerable chagrin, and the incumbent members of Romney Street emphatically refused. Woollacott ended up using the premises of Little Wild Street Church, who were without a pastor, to conduct a church instead. He was shortly invited to become the pastor of the incumbent congregation at Little Wild, and the two amalgamated—Woollacott was to remain the pastor there until 1863.

More can be learned about Woollacott by reading a memoir he wrote in 1868 titled 'A Memoir to Elizabeth Woollacott'—his wife who had recently passed away. Interestingly, the mainstay of this book was about Christopher, rather than his wife—which he does admit in the beginning of the memoir, noting that he could not have been the man he was without her influence in his life.

Notably, his view of the controversy in which he left the Church suggests that the consternation about his ministry was limited to a few people who were becoming troublesome; feeling disheartened by this activity, Woollacott decided to leave the Church, even though he had previously hoped to continue his ministry there until his death. In this memoir, he notes how ardently he sought to trust God in his occasion, and how thankful he was for the long and fruitful ministry he held at Romney Street. He notes, *"I look back with tears—not of sadness, but of thankfulness."*

What can be learned from this interesting insight into a complex, yet earnest Baptist minister?

1. Historical documents don't always reveal the whole story, which always involves two sides.
2. Ministry is difficult—for congregations who want to see success and growth, and for ministers who want the same but often feel a heavier burden of the weight to 'make this be so.'
3. Even godly Christians—as noted by both sides of this controversy—are still human, and will still fall into less than noble behaviour from time-to-time, as sanctification is a process.



By Angela Platt-Arnold