

Happenings at Balham: February 2015

Catch The Vision

If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O King. But if not, be it known unto thee, O King that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up - Daniel 3:17,18

What does a Christian do when their view goes against the grain of the Community in which we live or against the conventional wisdom of the day. The obvious answer is obey God rather than man but how easy is it to stand alone. I have been listening to LBC radio on the issue of embryonic experimentation by using a technique to avoid genetic disease being passed from generation to generation by using new IVF techniques with two women and one man. Some suggested it is progressive science, others it is playing God and messing around with nature. Then there is the issue of abortion, for some Christians it is simply murder but what if society goes the way of feeling it is a 'woman's choice' what they do about their bodies. Then there is the issue of same sex marriage and the move to call anyone who criticizes it publicly as homophobic, bigoted or backward thinking. Then there is the issue of evolution v creation. Those who hold onto the creation view are repeatedly labeled as naïve and simplistic, can we still be expected to hold onto our traditional view even if it out of step with scientific thought? Some Christians have attempted to reconcile the creation story with evolution by suggesting that God has used evolution and that the Genesis story is not to be taken to literally but figuratively.

My mind goes to the story of Hebrew boys in Daniel chapter 3 when King Nebuchadnezzar set up a golden image in defiance of Daniel's interpretation of the dream in Daniel chapter 2 and ordered everyone to bow down to the image. What fascinates me about the story is not just that three Hebrew boys refused to bow down to the image but what about all those other Hebrew boys that were brought to Babylon as slaves? The story suggests that some of them did bow. There no doubt was a lot of pressure to accept the order and maybe the conventional wisdom that it was ok to bow but three decided that they wouldn't bow even if God didn't spare their lives they wouldn't serve other Gods (Daniel 3:18). Maybe other Israelites try to urge them to bow, maybe they said 'don't be such a legalist, we are saved by grace and not by works' (Ephesians 2:8,9) or don't bring persecution on yourself just bow, God will understand.

In the increasing secular society in which we live and the way politics can quickly change the call for Christians to stand up for the right though the heavens fall is increasingly necessary. As Adventists we often (or maybe not so often nowadays) talk about impending Sunday Laws. It may seem far off but I can image there will be relentless pressure from those within and without our Church just to conform to what the majority say or think. I can imagine that they who oppose the Sunday religious laws will be seen as agitators or even naive, what then ? will we be able to stand if we find it difficult to hold onto bible truths, now, when the pressure is off?

Spiritual backbone, a love for bible truth and a love for God is what we need to build up now when the going is good if we are to stand when the going gets tough. To take a stand for the right when you are in a small minority and when people who you grew up with, who maybe mentored you and you look up to are urging you to go another way and when conventional wisdom suggests you are wrong is a challenge that we may need to face sometime soon and we need to be ready when it comes because prophecy suggests that it will.

We need to hold onto the promise that 'Blessed are they that are persecuted for righteousness sake for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven.' (Matthew 5:10). As society becomes more secular and the Word of God (or at least a correct interpretation of it) is trampled to the ground and the pressure to serve man rather than God becomes more intense, I hope we will say like the 3 Hebrew boys. even if .. we still won't bow to the dictates of anyone else except the true and living God.

A reflection on January 2015

2014 ended and 2015 started with a service of Thanksgiving reminding us of God's leading and goodness and a social as we spent time having fun together. On the heels of this was a welcome addition to our Church Calendar, the Ten Days of Prayer programme. This was truly a blessing and included a mid week anointing service and a Sabbath Day of Prayer and Fasting where over 80 members attended the session after the Divine service and we ended the fast with a light fellowship meal. This month saw the relaunch of the AYS programme and a Pathfinder's Induction. Evangelism took centre stage again, firstly as several leaders joined others from around the Conference for a day of training at Newbold College, called an 'Evangelism Expo' and secondly the monthly street witnessing venture took place.

Sabbath 7th February- Youth Day

The Youth will be leading out in the services all day. The Divine service preacher will be a guest called Costa Vegas (a former London Youth Federation President)

Wednesday 11th February - Sunday 15 February: Worship conference

A not to be missed programme where we will be sharing how our corporate worship services and private worship times can be more fulfilling. This will lead out by Pastor Russell, leader of one of the biggest and vibrant churches in America. He is a well known trainer, preacher and motivational speaker.

Sessions are: Wed 11th & Fri 13th @ 7pm, Sabbath 14th (Divine service and afternoon programme (4,30pm) & Sunday - Leaders conference - 10am-2pm

Sabbath 21st February: Street witnessing

Join us for our monthly witnessing venture as we sing, meet the public, share the gospel with them and invite them to attend our Church.

Sabbath 28th February: Family Ministries Day

A Sabbath to focus on the family and God's will for us to be a part of healthy families.

The Core of the Church

Bible Study sessions, Prayer meeting sessions (including Wednesday evenings) and Witnessing ventures continue to be at the heart of the Church's programme and we encourage members to take full advantage of such opportunities.