



Link Up!

**‘For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.’
Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV)**

Still to come in January

We are continuing our series on parables with: -

On Sunday 19th January we will be looking at Matthew 18: 21 – 35, The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant, with the title ‘Borrow’.

And on Sunday 26th January we will be looking at John 10: 1 – 21, The Parable of the Good Shepherd, with the title ‘Steal’.

Looking forward to February

On Sunday 2nd February, Ken has been asked to take the service at Buckland Road Baptist Church. We will have Rev John Good to lead our worship that Sunday.

Then on Sunday 9th February, Ken will return to the series on parables with The Parable of the Mustard Seed (Mark 4: 26 – 33)

On Sunday 16th February, we will look at The Parable of the Wicked Tenants (Mark 12: 1 – 12)

And on Sunday 23rd February, we will look at The Parable of the Weeds (Matthew 13: 24 – 29 & 36 – 43)

I love it when a plan comes together...!

At a Monday Night bible study, we talked about the importance of listening for, and following, God’s plan for our lives and to do this each day. Rarely does He give us the full plan up front – sometimes we might get a glimpse of the Big Picture to which we are working towards, but it would be unusual to get a full roadmap ahead of time. God does not usually say, *“Today you do this, next week you do that, and in three months you will do the other.* He usually says *“I will lead you, but you must trust Me and follow Me where I take you. It might be scary, and sometimes it might seem you are going down a wrong path, but I know what I am doing, Trust Me.”*

Too often I’ve not recognised God’s leading until after I’ve reached the destination when I look back and reflect on what happened – sometimes it may just be a few days, sometimes it takes a few years. And sometimes it needs another person to point it out to me! This is why reflection is so important – yes, we should pray for the future, but we should give thanks for the past and for God’s leading up to this point. I may not have realised it at the time, but Kim and I becoming part of Longfleet Baptist Church was definitely a leading from God, and we have been very blessed by the people we have met here and are privileged to be part of the team!

Other events in January

January is always the month when the events for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity take place.

This year we will be meeting with our two nearest church neighbours, St Mary's RC Church and St George's C of E, at **St George's Church in Darbys Lane, on Sunday 19th January for a service starting at 4pm** for around an hour with refreshments to follow the service. Ken will be preaching and others from each of the three churches will be taking part in the service. Last year, when we hosted this event, the other churches brought a good number of their folk along. So, please can we try and do the same this year.

Then, on Tuesday 21st January, Churches Together in Poole are holding an event at St Edwards School starting at 7pm. They have two speakers coming to address that meeting. The first, Mr Michael Antram, is the headteacher at St Edwards. The second speaker is Mr Andy DeFeu who is the Principal of Moorlands Bible College. He will be speaking on 'Winning and Equipping the Church in the 21st Century'. There will also be an opportunity to meet others from different churches over refreshments which will be served before the main event. Details of how to book a place for that (just so they have an idea of how many are planning to come!) can be seen on the poster in the church entrance foyer.

Most of you will now know that our former minister, Rev Brian Gill, passed away on 5th January. His funeral will take place at Harbour View in the Long Barrow Celebration Hall on Saturday 1st February at 10.30am. All are welcome. Do remember Sandra, Jonathan and Beth and the rest of the family in your prayers at this time.

At the recent joint service with Parkstone Baptist Church, we spent time giving thanks for the work done by God over the past year. When you think about it, a lot has happened which we should give thanks for – a new minister (the seeds of which were planted several years ago one rainy Sunday afternoon!), new members, new friends, a wedding, new connections with the community – all part of God's wider plan for LBC.

God has a plan for each of us as individuals, and for us all as a collective gathering together under the name 'Longfleet Baptist Church'. It might not be clear what the plan looks like, but this is how God works. He wants us to trust Him and follow His leading and guidance so, at the end of the day, we will say 'God did that', rather than 'We did that'.

I'm not one for New Year Resolutions – no matter how well intentioned they are, they've all been broken by the end of the first week (especially any to do with eating less chocolate!). There are things I would like to do – visit somewhere new, clear out the garage, retire, (ah, the last one's not allowed yet, I've just been told!). I'm sure we all have things on our own to-do lists we would like to get done.

But, as followers of Jesus, top of our to-do list for 2025 (and beyond) should be to seek out, and join in with, God's plan for LBC. There is a plan, I'm sure of this, and my prayer is for us to unite as one body and work together for the Glory of God in this place. Because when a united church works together, amazing things happen, and we will see God move.

Have a blessed 2025 everyone.

Stephen Chaloner