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h HERALD

The magazine of
Grace Baptist Mission

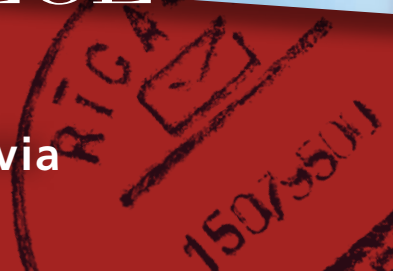


THE PRIVILEGE OF SERVING

Twenty-five years in Latvia



GRACE BAPTIST
MISSION





CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

Reflect and anticipate

The turn of the year provides an opportunity to look forwards and backwards, to reflect and to anticipate—and so we shall do in this issue of the *Herald*.

One couple have been serving the Lord in a country where state surveillance has reached ominous levels, and freedom to live as a Christian has been severely impacted. They have been faithful in the midst of increasing pressure and personal experience of the state's heavy-handed methods. Reading their reflections will help you to appreciate the circumstances in which some of our brothers and sisters live.

Malcolm and Ruth Firth's time in Latvia demonstrates that it is the Lord who builds his church, and that he can do so from very small beginnings. Now back in the UK, they leave behind an established work and rejoice to know that the Lord has wonderfully provided a pastor to take the ministry in Riga forward into 2023 and beyond.

Different areas of the Lord's work have different seasons of sowing and reaping. You will be encouraged to read what Aries Liboro shares about advances in the work in which he and Jodith are involved. I trust that it will help you to pray with anticipation that we may see similar things in our own churches. A holy jealousy for God's name and the expansion of his kingdom is surely no bad thing!

You may not be able to visit Kenya, but you can join Daryl and Julia who were able to do so in November. They stayed with Graham

and Sally Jones and took part in various ministry opportunities. Don't miss their report.

Thinking ahead, could you, or someone you know in your church, be involved in an Envision team this year? See page 15 for further information. These are wonderful opportunities to see an aspect of mission work first hand, while deepening your interest in Christian work and witness outside your more immediate area (and perhaps your comfort zone!). Serving as part of a team, often with different backgrounds and levels of experience, is always valuable and something you may remember with gratitude for a long time afterwards. The minimum age is eighteen, but there's no maximum—if it is an encouragement to you, I joined an Envision team to Bordeaux when I was on the final approach to 70!

And finally, thinking back and forward, our Annual Mission Day this year was a real blessing both in terms of numbers attending and the content of the programme. Our brother Paul G, the closing speaker, brought challenge and encouragement to us with warmth and clarity. The report and pictures will give you a flavour of the day if you were not able to be there. Please note this year's date in your diary now—Saturday, 28 October. If you possibly can, aim to be there and encourage others to join you. I am sure it will be well worthwhile!

Keith Johns
GBM Council Chairman

GBM exists to help churches support their missionaries worldwide, in ministries of evangelism, church planting, training, compassion and radio

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Our faithful God in a changing world

One missionary family, based in East Asia for seventeen years, have now resettled in the UK. While much has changed here during that time, they tell the story of far greater changes in the country where they served

We had been away from the UK for a long time. The first thing that filled us with trepidation was the thought that everything will have changed and will look different. But while we were abroad, we could revisit a part of the city after *just six months* and find whole neighbourhoods demolished, with new high rises springing up in their place. Compared to that, not a lot has changed in the UK on the outside—buildings are still in the same place and people, although a little older, still have their familiar faces. In our host country we had grown used to change. When we first went out it seemed that things were always changing and

improving—new underground lines, new school buildings and hospitals springing up everywhere. During our time there, even the smallest regional airports have all been transformed from their former dreary Soviet style into modern temples of technology.

ENDLESS POSSIBILITIES

As the country became more open, it seemed the scope for doing more gospel work was ever expanding. There was the Christian bookshop where you could buy Christian classics such as *Knowing God*, translated into the local language; the Christian coffee shops where churches would hold their weekly Bible studies; hospital visitation ministries and even Christian schools had begun





One day it was suddenly announced that Bibles would no longer be available for purchase online

to spring up across the country. The possibilities seemed endless. The authorities generally turned a blind eye to these religious gatherings as long as they weren't causing larger societal problems such as noise or fire hazards. Large numbers of people were searching for spiritual input into their lives—often as a reaction to the growing materialism of society. We had gone from meeting as a small group of believers in small living room, to a point where we needed to change the house around to fit the twenty to thirty people who came every Sunday to listen to preaching.

It almost sounds too easy, doesn't it? Don't get me wrong, there were some equally difficult times during this period, such as when a group from a domestic cult try to infiltrate our service. They brought along their own translation of the Bible and tried to hijack the discussion afterwards. Another time a person came along and claimed that he had some special revelation which he

could tell only to certain people and not others. We also faced the ups and downs of ordinary church life, including members who fell into sin but didn't like being pulled up. Then there was just the general busyness of everyday life—I was holding down a busy day job and my wife was running the school. We were managing two kids and bearing responsibility for caring and ministering to this little group of believers. When things go wrong it's tempting to give up, to compare yourself and your efforts with others, and to think that those who are privileged and should know better should do more. But what kept us going was thinking of the Saviour we serve. What we were going through didn't even register in comparison to what he'd done for us.

SIGNS OF A NEW DIRECTION

The society where we lived was a very politicized one. You might wonder if it was worth watching the news in such a place. However, it was useful as you learned to read between the lines of the news bulletins and policy items. New appointments to various government committees hint at the future direction of different policies which might affect various aspects of your life. Certain groups of local people had become very adept at reading the signs and would rush off to make particular investments or suddenly change the scope of their company's business. So when the president changed, several things about the future were mentioned. Looking back, I think these were the first signs that things were going to start looking very different.

ERODING FREEDOMS

One day it was suddenly announced that Bibles would no longer be available for purchase online. In future, if you wanted to buy a Bible, the only place to do so would be at the state church shops which open 9am – 5pm, Monday to Friday. We had previously purchased Bibles by the box load online, but overnight that became impossible—people now had to travel down to the shop in work hours to buy one. You dare not go in and



ask for a box full. Other spiritual books were gradually withdrawn from online sale too. It was the beginning of a new political campaign. These hadn't been in fashion for a while, but what soon transpired was that the entire energy of the state was focused on preventing online sales of religious books. The message was clear: these books are not approved and you should stay away from them.

Once the campaign was over, it remained illegal to sell them. New laws would be drafted and, depending on how much of a nuisance a book was deemed to be, a further crackdown may ensue. Pastors were tracked down and taken in for questioning all because of a book they may have bought. The oppression started branching

The oppression started branching out into all kinds of other areas: education, publishing...

The authorities often wouldn't admit they were directly targeting churches, but certain activities were being forbidden

out into all kinds of other areas: education, publishing, entertainment. The Party was making it clear that there was no longer room for anything which didn't fall under their complete control. For Christians who recognize God as the final authority, this was a sign that life was going to get considerably harder. Large well-known house churches were closed down in the capital city. The aim was to discourage the smaller ones and to send a message that no place was too big to be removed.

THE COVID EFFECT

These campaigns followed one after another and churches would often get caught up in them. The authorities often wouldn't admit they were directly targeting churches, but certain activities were being forbidden. At one time we did an outreach in the park – singing and handing out evangelistic leaflets – but now this was no longer permitted. The biggest change that came along was Covid. It affected everyone, but particularly the churches, as the political campaign-style warfare was deployed against the virus. After

the initial first wave passed and the borders were sealed off, life seemed to return to normal. But with the appearance of the more contagious Delta variant (which had probably been imported), anywhere that had an outbreak was quickly locked down. So people who went to church were suddenly at risk of being quarantined if they were a close (or even secondary) contact of people who had Covid. People were locked down in their compounds and couldn't even go to work—let alone meet with other believers. Many people stopped coming to church as they couldn't afford two weeks off work if they ended up in quarantine. Large gatherings were suddenly frowned upon—no concerts, no cinema and certainly no church. If you tried to hold church for twenty in your apartment, the compound management would soon come and tell you that you were bringing an additional risk to everyone by inviting so many people to your house. People were dissuaded from entering the compound if they were from outside, and churches began to close. Even today, many churches across the country still cannot meet and it looks like this will continue for the foreseeable future. Some meet sporadically in smaller groups – in a coffee shop or restaurant – but people are more wary of venturing out for fear of being quarantined. Some can only meet one-to-one and those on university campuses need special wisdom as they seek to reach out to their classmates—not knowing whether their message will put them in danger of being thrown off their course.

GOD'S PURPOSES

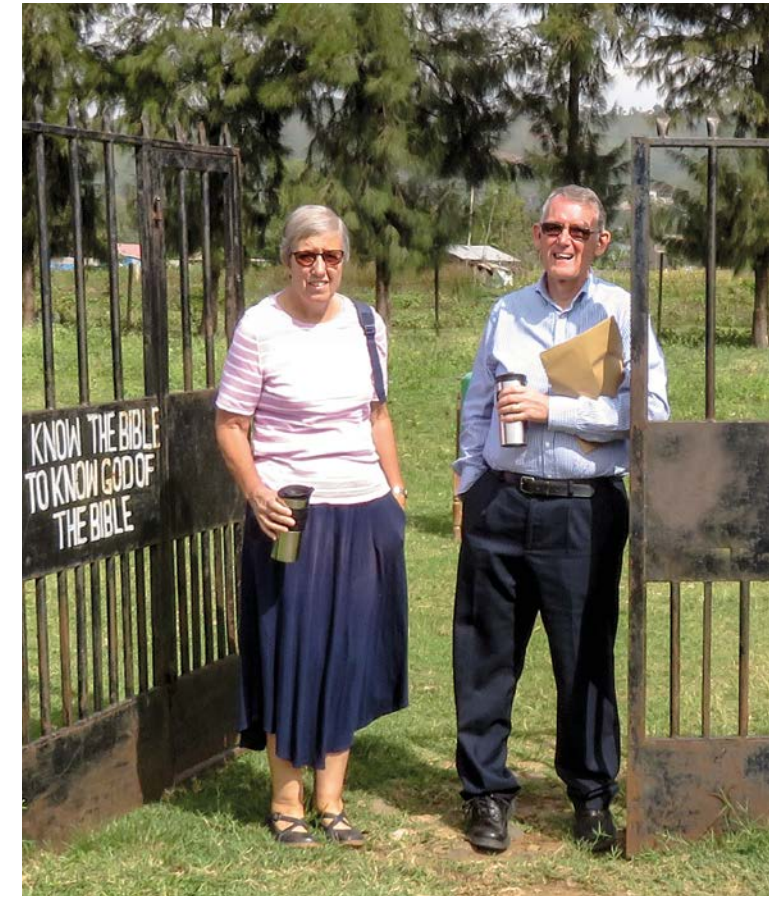
What future is there for the Church in such a situation? It is easy to feel a sense of hopelessness as things get increasingly difficult, and with no signs of when restrictions may ease. But we must remember that even when the going is tough, there is still a remnant of people who want to read God's word and continue to gather. Those who really care about it will find a way! It is especially encouraging when you can meet others who make sacrifices in order to share the gospel, read God's word and meet fellow believers.



Our experiences have given us a much better appreciation of the freedoms we have in the Western Church. We are reminded not to shrink back when the environment changes or life gets harder. Finally, we must never forget that God loves his Church so *much more* than we do. No matter what political campaigns come or go, God is using all these things to mould us and shape us to conform to his likeness.

There really is no greater joy than being able to look back on our experiences with this in mind. It makes all the difficulties seem worthwhile, all the setbacks and trials a necessity. We never would have done what we did without God's guiding hand over everything. Our hope is in the Saviour who is in control, no matter what!

Our experiences have given us a much better appreciation of the freedoms we have in the Western Church



Above: When they are not visiting other rural churches, Graham and Sally attend their local church in Kisumu

Making an impact

Graham and Sally Jones are greatly appreciated by the pastors and churches they serve amongst in Western Kenya. **Daryl and Julia Jones** saw this clearly when they visited in November, even being asked to send more Graham and Sallys!

As the plane touches down on the small runway at Kisumu we wonder how different it will be from our first visit eight years ago. Walking through the new Arrivals archway we see that things have changed. Graham and Sally welcome us amongst a host of eager taxi drivers and we exit via the smooth dual carriageway—the heap of rubble that used to link the airport to the main road has gone. Much is new but as we soon discover, much is the same. The water must be filtered (we drink bottled), the crickets at night are deafening and the power cuts are frequent.

MINISTRY AT MARANDA

Graham and Sally have been in Kenya for seventeen years working amongst the rural churches, training pastors and their wives. On the first Sunday we travel seventy-five minutes to Maranda Church. There is much excitement among the congregation with the new church building – enlarged due to growth – but it still needs glass in the windows, a proper concrete floor, and the gaps in the brickwork require filling. The church toilet is of the long drop nature—a challenge to us. The welcome is warm, as always. We're greeted by the Sunday School of about

twenty children, which is led by one of the men. Following that the service starts and the pastor, John-Mark, welcomes everyone and introduces us to the congregation of about thirty. He speaks Luo and will also translate Daryl into Luo as he preaches. John-Mark has recently completed the Explore training course and obtained the highest marks—he is an able man. After songs, prayer and news, Daryl preaches on the Rich Man and Lazarus, explaining and applying the passage to all. Later in the men's and women's groups it was encouraging to hear how the message was remembered and had impacted lives.



Daryl taught the men on Sunday afternoon at Maranda Church

Lunch followed, which was a hot meal of rice, chicken and ‘push you’—a green spinach-type of vegetable. The kitchen consists of three pots on open fires outside the building. After lunch Julia leads the women and Daryl the men. There are contrasts between these gatherings, with Daryl able to lead the discussion in English whilst Julia needs to be translated. The level of discussion is also different with the women at a more basic level, such is the education within that part of Kenya. Primary education has only been free since 2003. There are only six men but over twenty women.

UNPACKING CHRISTMAS

The next day was the pastors’ conference. Graham and Sally have to provide so much for these events, including hymn books, Bibles, soap, drinks, hand wash, books for purchase and to give away—the back of their car was full as we set off. They are using a new conference centre at the ‘Wildlife centre’ in Kisumu. It has a large room for teaching, dormitories for over-night stays and toilets (upright and one with a seat!). Sadly, we see little wildlife except some monkeys in the morning, but the men (and later the

women) hear the lions roaring at night. Sadly – or thankfully – the lions aren’t wild but in cages! A great and very time-consuming challenge Graham and Sally face is helping the men and women to attend—providing transport costs which are simply beyond the means of many. In the days before each conference they are taking frequent calls and sending money via their phones. Nearly thirty men arrive and we enjoy a lunch of lentils and chapatis—the food was rather indigestible to our stomachs but loved by the men and women, and now also by Graham and Sally.

Over the past year there have been four men’s conferences focusing on the life of Christ, his second coming, his death and resurrection, and his ascension. This time Daryl is speaking on the incarnation. Over four sessions he deals with the themes of salvation, faithfulness, sovereignty and presence within the Christmas narrative. The men are receptive and engaging, with the teaching sessions prompting helpful discussion. A number say they will be preaching this in the next few weeks.

In conversation and sharing items for prayer the challenges of the rural life become evident. Much is said about illness and accidents (some can’t



Maranda Church Sunday School

attend due to family issues) and money. Most live a hand-to-mouth existence which is so difficult when secondary education and health care must be paid for. This is tough for them, but also for Graham and Sally who need immense wisdom to know how and when to respond to requests for financial help.

UNDERSTANDING MISSIONARY CHALLENGES

After the conference we have time to rest and reflect with Graham and Sally. At home we take for granted our fresh running water, our reliable electricity and security. Graham and Sally must have a security firm, and travel after dark isn’t possible without a guard. We have access to multiple shops, supermarkets, entertainment (cinemas), sport and, above all, church. On the first Saturday we met with some other missionaries and asked them what the greatest challenge is. They all said it was the local church. We discovered that, sadly, some other missionaries had given up attending church. On the second Sunday we went with Graham and Sally to the church they attend in Kisumu. The muddled preaching and smallness of the congregation revealed how challenging this is

Most live a hand-to-mouth existence which is so difficult when secondary education and health care must be paid for...



Julia spent two days teaching the pastors' wives

for them. We need to pray for our missionaries in such situations. In the evening we joined Grace Church Guildford's online service, and were blessed by the time—but obviously lacked physical fellowship.

MEETING THE NEED

At the end of the week Julia spoke at the pastors' wives' conference. It was a repeat of the men's with the same organisation and provision, all dependent on Graham and Sally. But there were also differences—there were fewer able to attend (just nineteen) as some were stopped by rains further south which made travel on muddy roads and tracks impossible. Julia was again translated and the level of teaching needed to be lower. The fellowship and engagement were warm and encouraging.

At the same time, I met with four of the key pastors. It was a joy to hear how they appreciate Graham and Sally and their ministry of training. Our discussion is wide-ranging, thinking about

the work done, the progress made in training and what the future needs are. The men are beginning to put 2 Timothy chapter 2 into practice as they train others, but they need help in that, which Graham is providing. They asked for two things: more Graham and Sallys, and resources of all kinds to enable the men to be stable.

As we set off on our 24-hour journey home we had much to give thanks for and to ponder. Graham and Sally are continuing to make a significant impact in the rural areas of Western Kenya. But the challenges are many, and they need our ongoing prayers and support. It is lonely and isolating; perhaps you might encourage them by sending them a card or email, or a present for a birthday or at Christmas? Little things like this can be very encouraging.

There are also many opportunities to work alongside them and develop new areas of training. Are you experienced in pastoral ministry and teaching? Could this be something you might consider?



GBM Family Camp 2023 ATHELINGTON HALL

Friday 28 July — Friday 4 August 2023 *

Join us for GBM's Summer Event at Athelington Hall Farm in Suffolk

A lodge and camping holiday with daily Bible ministry from **Daniel Caballero**, children's and youth activities, and evening mission speakers

Booking opens 9 January 2023

gbm.org.uk/familycamp

* Please note: these dates have been brought forward by one day from the originally advertised Saturday – Saturday dates.



Join us in Madeira!



After a break due to the pandemic, we plan to run an **Envision Team to Madeira** in 2023. (We have sadly had to cancel the proposed team to Legionowo.)

The Madeira team will serve alongside Jason and Andrea Murfitt and their co-workers in Funchal, helping with evangelism and at church activities. The week will include some time to relax and enjoy the beauty of the island. You will have plenty of opportunities as an English speaker to reach locals and tourists, but ability to speak Portuguese will be an extra benefit.

Dates: **24 June – 1 July 2023** | Estimated cost: **£600**

Closing date: **27 March 2023**

Envision Teams are open to baptized church members aged 18+.

For further details and an application form please visit gbm.org.uk/envision2023

THE PRIVILEGE OF *serving*

Twenty-five years in Latvia

Malcolm and Ruth Firth have returned to the UK after twenty-five years serving with GBM in Latvia. As they begin their next chapter, as church-based international workers in Wales, they reflect on God's faithfulness during their time with GBM

It barely seems possible that so much time has passed since we drove away from our home in Whittlesey – on Wednesday, 18 September 1996 – to catch our flight to Riga, Latvia. We had a large amount of luggage (and worried that we wouldn't be allowed to take it all on the flight!), including a child's guitar and a Thomas the Tank Engine case full of trains—which our three-year-old son Jonathan would not be parted from. We returned permanently to the UK on 6 July 2022—this time carrying with us a rich store of experiences and rather less luggage!

So what happened in between those two journeys? Obviously it's impossible to recount everything that happened during that time, so these reflections are just an overview, giving a small glimpse into our experiences over twenty-five years, and sharing a few of the lessons we have learned (at least partially!).



MALCOLM AND RUTH FIRTH

A country looking West

We arrived in a country that was newly independent from the Soviet Union, and very different from what it is now. There were no supermarkets, no cash machines, no mobile phones, no public transport schedules, no-one who could speak English in the immigration office, to mention just a few of the challenges. Today, however, Latvia has one of the fastest internet services in the world, free wifi is everywhere, internet banking is wonderfully efficient, every school child has a mobile phone, and almost all young people speak English. From Latvia's accession to the EU in 2004, daily life certainly became more Westernized, and therefore easier, but we are so thankful to have experienced the difficulties. Through all the many challenges that simple daily life involved we learned again and again to ask our heavenly Father for help, as we were forced to see that we really needed him. We were learning that it is much better to ask him for help first – before we try to solve our problems in our own strength – no matter how mundane those problems might seem.

Learning to adapt

Initially we worked alongside a local pastor in a Russian-speaking church plant, in a disadvantaged suburb of Riga. Culturally, church life was very different from what we were used to. We had a lot to learn, including the Russian language (not an easy task). We greatly enjoyed the warm-heartedness of our church family, although it took time to adapt to the spontaneous nature of church life and relationships. Throughout our time in Latvia we have been blessed to meet Christians from all over the world, and from many different church backgrounds. It has been an enriching experience, seeing that the worldwide church is so diverse, and yet we have a supernatural bond that is far deeper than all our differences of culture, language and ethnicity, as we are one in Christ. Having said that, it wasn't always easy—we had to change our Western mindset, which was predominantly about planning and efficiency, and be prepared to be more spontaneous and flexible. Russian culture, in particular, is far more impulsive, and plans are made to be tweaked and changed—this can actually work out for the best if you didn't much like the original plan!

Initially we worked alongside a local pastor in a Russian-speaking church plant, in a disadvantaged suburb of Riga



Andrew Sadler visited in 2012



Malcolm had the joy of baptising Jonathan in 2012



A new generation

After five years in this Russian-speaking church we moved to a largely Latvian church. Malcolm served as pastor for several years and was involved in training elders. This was a church which had begun shortly after Latvia became independent from the Soviet Union and was largely composed of young believers (young both in terms of demographics, and spiritually). It was a new experience for us to find ourselves being the longest-married couple in the church in our mid-thirties, and being among a handful of church members who had grown up with Christian parents. Often as we entertained people

in our home we were made aware that they had never been in a Christian home before. In some ways it seemed similar to what we see in the book of Acts—a whole new generation of believers, all becoming Christians around the same time from a background that had little or no Christian influence. Around this time we also began to have contact with international students – mainly from Sri Lanka, Nepal, Pakistan and India – who were coming to Riga to study medicine. We began an international café ministry, having no idea at the time that we would go on to have much more contact with internationals in Riga.



Beach baptisms in 2017



The church moved into new premises in 2021



Beach baptisms in 2017

Church planting

Probably our most enjoyable time of ministry in Latvia began in late 2010. We had moved into a new suburb of Riga, and had been praying for several years about the idea of planting a church in the area. Finally we decided to simply begin meeting in our home, and see what might develop. It's hard to put into words all that we experienced during twelve years of seeing a church grow out of nothing, but it was a wonderful demonstration to us (and to everyone else) that if God chooses, he can bring a church into being. We could never have predicted that what began in our home as a small group of four believers would develop into a church of over eighty people from all over the world. Our initial vision had been for a local church in our area, but we can see now that God clearly had other plans, and he brought about something far more wonderful than we could have imagined.

There are many lessons that we take away from this time, but most especially we treasure the experience of the early days of beginning a church in our home, when we quite literally had nothing to lose. It was so clear that, if a church were to begin, then it had to be God's work, as we

could not do it ourselves. We are still completely convinced of this as we see Grace International Church continuing in Riga, under the care of a local pastor whom God so wonderfully prepared to take over from Malcolm.

Immense privilege

As we look back over almost twenty-six years in Latvia, our main sense is of the immense privilege it has been to be sent as missionaries to work alongside local Christians, to learn from them and encourage them, and to serve the church of Jesus Christ. Throughout this time we have been wonderfully supported by our sending churches and many others who have faithfully prayed for us, and without whom we would not have survived. Those prayers have been answered, and we are enormously grateful to God for them. Looking back at ourselves over a quarter of a century ago, we can say with certainty that our Father is indeed a good and faithful God, and he has sustained and provided for us every day. We are truly blessed to be his beloved children.

'Lord, you establish peace for us; all that we have accomplished you have done for us.'
(Isaiah 26:12 NIV)



Church planting, 2011



Watch Paul Brunning's interview with Malcolm and Ruth (8-minute edit) on our Vimeo channel:

vimeo.com/gracebaptistmission/oct2022

The full-length audio from this interview (15 minutes) is also available on our podcast—search 'GBM Media Podcast' or visit: podbean.com/ew/pb-bu6px-12ef5bd



SWEET FELLOWSHIP

a year of joy, unity and growth

As the Philippines emerged from the struggles caused by the pandemic, the Lord opened a season of great encouragement for **Aries Liboro** and the church in Valenzuela City. Aries tells us of a year of growth and blessing

Like most churches, throughout the years we have gone through difficult times. Life can get very stressful when the church has had to deal with disciplinary matters. Sometimes this ends up with the church having to remove the person from membership, but usually they repent and are restored into fellowship—for which we are very thankful.

We also have seen encouragement as people have been saved under the ministry of the church. Yet there have been seasons when we have waited several years before seeing new people added to the church. But this past year has been different! So far in 2022 we have seen twelve applicants for church membership. We have already received five of them and, as I write, we

are in the process of receiving the remaining seven new applicants. For a small congregation like ours, this has been a great encouragement.

What is wonderful about the new members is that everyone gets involved in the ministry. We have some who are now helping out by teaching, cleaning the building and preparing the snacks for the children's Sunday School. Others help in the youth ministry in the same way.

Sunday School

Most of the children who attended our Sunday School have now grown up and attend the youth programme in the afternoon. We prayed that the Lord may bring in new children who will come for the children's Sunday School, and the Lord answered our prayers. After just a week of praying for this matter, we saw new children joining!



Above: Saturday night Bible study **Below:** Aries baptizing Leslee

In the past, most of the children who attend the Sunday School lived near the old church building, but these new ones live near our current location. Hopefully not only the children will attend, but we are keen to also see their families attending the church services. Last Sunday we had thirteen children in our Sunday School—ten of them are new attendees.

Women's fellowship

On average the ladies have a quarterly women's fellowship. Sometimes this is held in the church building; at other times we host this meeting in our home and two other members usually open up their homes to host this meeting. I encouraged the ladies to have a meeting and organize themselves regarding their women's fellowship. They decided to have a monthly





women's fellowship, which I think is very good. It gives them an opportunity to study God's word together, spend time with and encourage one another, and get to know the new members and applicants for church membership. This also gives an opportunity for new members to get involved in teaching the Bible—they have assigned among themselves each month who will teach during this fellowship. This also gives another opportunity for evangelism as there are often unbelieving family members who live in the homes of those who host this meeting.

Renz

One of the new members is Renz. He is twenty-six years old, and has especially been of great help. In my conversations with him, it is apparent that he has been thinking and reading about various doctrinal matters—which is great to hear. In my assessment he certainly could be assigned to some of the teaching ministries of the church. He works as a quality control officer for a company that develops computer programmes, and is definitely a 'techie' person—we certainly could do with a techie guy in the church! He has already improved our live streaming in various ways. Renz now helps out with teaching in the youth ministry and has preached for

us once. He really has been a big help and has great potential for bringing further blessing in the ministry.

Youth ministry

We have seen a great increase in the attendance to our youth ministry on Sunday afternoons. I had asked for prayer that we may see a snowballing effect, with those who attend beginning to invite their friends so that we continue to see new faces in the youth programme. We are amazed at how the Lord is answering our prayers!

Last Lord's Day we counted forty-eight in attendance. Their ages vary from 13–21, with about half in the 17–21 age bracket.

A good number of them are already in college, and virtually all of them live in small homes in which they and their families cram in together. Some have asked if they can come in on Saturdays to use the Sunday School room to study, so they can get some peace and quiet and concentrate on their studies. We are of course more than happy let them use the Sunday School room for this purpose. I also let them know whenever I am in the church building so that, if anyone wants to come in and study (whilst I am also doing my studies), they can come and use the building. We are happy that we can help them in this way—and this also gives us a chance to talk to them and get to know them more. Perhaps someday we can purchase a desktop computer and a printer which they can use to help them with their studies. Please do pray for their salvation and for the Lord's provision for them, that they will be able to finish with their education and find work. Life can be very



The women's fellowship now meets every month

hard in the Philippines; it is often difficult to find a regular job and people don't get paid much. May these young adults be able to finish with their studies and get jobs so that they can provide for themselves, help their families and the church. Most of those who are in the 17–21 age range also attend the worship services in the morning.

I don't know for how long some of these teenagers will attend, but while they are regularly with us we will try to make the most of it. Please pray that they will listen attentively to the teaching of God's word, that our Lord may open their hearts to receive the gospel.

Additional Bible study meeting

There seems to be a hunger for the Word of God amongst the new and prospective members. After discussing this with everyone, we decided to add a Bible study every Saturday night at the church building. This will be a book study—at the moment we are going through Richard Barcellos' book *In Defence of the Decalogue*. Once finished we hope to study and read together other theological books. We hope this will greatly help in our understanding of God's word and encourage everyone to be regularly reading theological books—as well as the Bible of course.

Fellowship lunch

After the church service, virtually everyone stays and we all have lunch together, sharing food we have brought with us. There is a wonderful atmosphere: there seems to be great joy, unity and sweet fellowship in the church. This year has really been extremely encouraging. We praise God for all his blessings, we give him all the glory and praise for what we are seeing in the church right now.



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☐ I have downloaded a GBM standing order form from the GBM website:
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Please notify Grace Baptist Mission if you:

- Want to cancel this declaration
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- No longer pay sufficient tax on your income and/or capital gains

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Or scan and email to infodesk@gbm.org.uk

GBM FAMILY NEWS

From our churches and our Mission



Adam and Jules Laughton

Adam Laughton welcomed as the new pastor in Whitstable

On Saturday 15 October, over 150 people gathered to welcome GBM Council member Adam Laughton as the new pastor of Hamilton Road Evangelical

Church, Whitstable. It was a wonderful time of praise and fellowship, with representatives from many local evangelical churches present.

The church in Whitstable had been without a pastor for eighteen years, yet the Lord enabled them to maintain a witness in the community. They enjoyed incredible support over the years from some very

committed visiting speakers; it was a particular delight that so many of these faithful men were able to be there to rejoice with the church and their new pastor.

Tom McAdam (deacon) gave a welcome from the church and David Platts (deacon) then outlined how the Lord had led the church to call Adam as pastor. Adam responded with a brief testimony of the Lord's ►



Jonah Manuel Caballero

Congratulations to Daniel and Ellie Caballero!

We rejoice with Daniel and Ellie at the birth of their first child. Daniel writes: 'Jonah Manuel Caballero was born on 11 September at 8:45pm at the Royal Jubilee Maternity Hospital in Belfast, weighing 8.9 lb. Both mother and son

were in good health. Praise the Lord!

'The first few weeks after the birth of our son was a difficult time—bad nights and tiredness were the norm. I think during that time we appreciated the value of having family and friends close by. However, the last few weeks have been much better, as Jonah is sleeping better. Adjusting

to having a child has changed our family, but for the better. We trust in the Lord, and pray for Jonah every day, that the Lord will work a work of grace in his life in due time. We would appreciate your prayers for us as we adjust to this new phase in our family, and for wisdom in how to guide Jonah. Thank you very much.'



Farewell to Derek French

In November we said a fond farewell to Derek French, who for thirty years has served as part of the GBM Radio team. Although Derek 'retired' in 2012, he continued to work one day each week supporting Andrew Cook's Serving Today ministry. Derek has retained a keen interest

in the work of the gospel in Zimbabwe, having visited the country many times, and he continues to serve as a trustee of the Zimbabwe Partnership Trust: www.zpt.org.uk (see also the May 2021 *Herald*).

Join us in giving thanks for Derek's work for the Lord, and praying for God's continuing blessing and help for him and Jacki.

◀ Continued from previous page

leading of him and Julia to accept that call to Whitstable. Stephen Lloyd (Hope Church, Gravesend) and Richard Hagan (Emmanuel Church, Canterbury) respectively questioned Adam and the membership about their commitment to serve the Lord together. After this, Gilbert McAdam (Wick Harbour Mission) prayed for Adam and the church.

John McDonald (Trinity Baptist, Tenterden) preached from Romans 1:1-17, reminding everyone of Paul's great burden to preach the gospel and our great need to hear it.

Adam asks us to pray for Hamilton Road, Whitstable: 'We believe the Lord has kept the work open through much difficulty for a reason! The work is still very fragile, but there is so much opportunity and potential. It would only take a few people committing to join with us to make a huge positive impact. We are praying for conversions of course, but a few faithful believers moving to Whitstable would be amazing as well!'



New ministries for the Firths and the Hawthornes

After returning from their missionary service with GBM, both Malcolm and Ruth Firth and Chris and Helen Hawthorne have been seeking the Lord's will for their future ministries. We give thanks with them that the Lord has led both families into new ministries for the new year.

Malcolm and Ruth have been appointed as International Workers at Grangetown Baptist Church, Cardiff, beginning in January. In November they moved into temporary accommodation

in Cardiff while they look for a permanent home. Malcolm and Ruth write, 'We are very conscious of our need for God's wisdom and power. Please pray for us in our weakness and pray for suitable accommodation in the Grangetown area.'

In December the Hawthorne family moved to Abingdon, after Chris accepted the call to serve as minister at Abbey Baptist Church. He starts this new ministry in January. Please pray for them all as they settle into their new home, church and town.



Centenary in Namakkal

In January Graham Field, Mick Lockwood and Colin Grimwood will be visiting Tamil Nadu. Their visit coincides with the centenary of Tamil Baptist Church in Namakkal, which is being celebrated on 14 January. Graham has been asked to bring 'a felicitation on behalf of GBM', in recognition of the long history of gospel partnership that the Mission shares with the church. There are few records of the beginning of this work, but it seems that the chapel building had been constructed earlier (it is dated 1904) – probably by the London Missionary Society who had first operated in Namakkal – then in January 1923 the Tamil Baptist Church was constituted there.

Top: The Namakkal chapel in 1923

Below: The chapel today

Right: The *Herald* announces the expanded mission field in 1923



The Strict Baptist Mission HERALD.

The Monthly Magazine of the STRICT BAPTIST MISSION,
Founded in 1861 as a Foreign Missionary Society.

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OUR NEW FIELD.

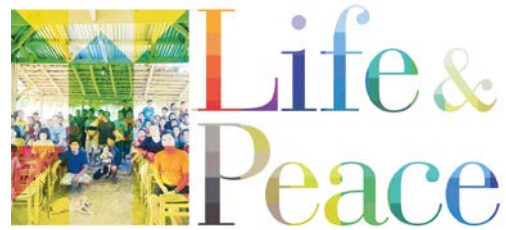
WE gave last month a brief intimation concerning the new field of missionary labour which we have just taken over in the Namakkal Taluk (or County). It is an extension of what we have hitherto called the Sendamangalam Field but which should more properly have been called the Namakkal Field, as we shall do in future. We hope to have a map of the whole Namakkal Taluk ready for the February number of THE HERALD. Meanwhile we ask our friends to give this eastern half of the Taluk a place in their prayers with the other areas of our missionary operations, viz., the Western Half, the Kolli Hills and Madras and its villages. We are sure that Mr. Morling will need our prayers as he seeks to minister to the spiritual needs of the many thousands of practically unevangelised people inhabiting this extension of our Namakkal Field.

Two or three things should be said about this extension which may meet possible objections or queries on the part of some and help to stimulate or satisfy the missionary fervour of others.

This new field is not of our seeking, and we have no plan of campaign but our Lord's will. We had as wide an area—and wider—to evangelise in the Namakkal Taluk as our existing staff and means could manage; but if our Lord has called us to this field, and we believe He has, we should be disobedient to Him if we failed to enter it, and we should, at least to that extent, miss the fulfilment of His promise, "And lo, I am with you all the days." The case has some parallel with Paul's call to Europe. Apparently there was quite enough evangelistic work for him to do in Asia Minor, but as soon as he knew the Lord's will he passed over into Europe. We, therefore, enter the eastern half of the Namakkal Taluk, although not leaving the western half, "assuredly gathering that the Lord has called us to preach the Gospel unto them."

We regard it as an axiom in Christian service, that where the Lord appoints His servants to any work He provides all necessary means. In this case we have in preparation two young missionaries for whom it will be necessary in a year or two to provide fields of service; and here is ample territory and almost virgin soil. For the present we expect Mr. Morling in 1923 and Mr. Watts in 1924 will carry on the work as far as the Lord may enable, and with such means as He may provide; and then we may hope that one of our missionaries will take full and permanent charge. But the point to be kept in mind is that in this large new area containing 100,000 to 150,000 Christless unevangelised souls, the Word of the Lord will be published.

Since our Lord knows what means are needed, we make no appeal: it is sufficient that His servants in our Churches know the facts.



Annual Mission Day 2022

More than 400 representatives from Grace Baptist churches came together in October at Friends House in London, for Annual Mission Day 2022. The strap line for the day was most appropriate: 'Life and Peace—our mission of grace to a troubled world.'

Our chairman, Keith Johns, encouraged us at the beginning of the day with a reminder from Daniel chapter 2 that Christ's Kingdom will triumph over all other kingdoms. The AGM considered and endorsed the Annual Report and accounts, giving thanks to our faithful God who has supplied all the Mission's needs through another year. Copies of the Annual Report are available from the Mission Centre in Abingdon.

The day included a programme of seminars at which GBM missionaries from four continents gave reports of their ministries. At one notable session led by our friends from EMF, two guests from Ukraine brought moving accounts of the situation in the churches in their country. The Lord is mightily

at work among that war-torn nation bringing 'Life and Peace' to troubled souls in their troubled world.

Radio ministry is being blessed in lands where there is distress under persecution. We were encouraged on several occasions throughout the day to pray for the programmes and accompanying literature, which is eagerly received and greatly appreciated.

Three mission families have returned to the UK this summer, while others went overseas during the year. They each need our prayers in their new ministries. The day came to a climax with ministry from Paul G, who serves in Central Asia. He powerfully expounded 2 Corinthians 3:1–4:6, reminding us of what kept the apostle Paul going: The Gospel Message, The Gospel's Power, God's Presence and The God-given Method of Ministry. It is available to hear via the GBM Media Podcast and is highly recommended listening.

Howard Sayers (GBM Mission Council)





Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart.

2 CORINTHIANS 4:1

