



MARANATHA NEWSLETTER

February 2017

This newsletter takes the form of a report on our recent Community Annual Gathering, which took place from 10th to 12th February 2017. It is followed by an invitation to participate in a period of 'watching and praying' at this significant time.



Our Annual Gathering, was marked by a tangible oneness in Christ; it was an inspirational time of fellowship, rest, refreshment, worship, prayer, listening and sharing.

The Lord invited us to pursue a deeper oneness with Him and with one another.

We waited and listened expectantly for a revelation of the 'new thing', for which God has been preparing and shaping us over the past three years.

He surprised us, calling us to lay down the Maranatha Community, as an old wineskin.

We did this with thanksgiving and tears, praising God for the abundance of good fruit produced through this precious Community.

With eager anticipation we continue to watch and pray as one people - little brothers and sisters of Jesus - as we wait to see what the Lord will do.

Forget the Former Things

Right now, God is speaking to many in the Body of Christ, through His Word to Isaiah ***“Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past...”*** (Is. 43:18).

Our 'identity story' as a Community is established – we are one in Christ. Our past journey has fulfilled its purpose.

To forget the 'former things' is not a discarding of precious memories, but an acceptance that they are carried in our hearts.

To embrace the new glorious thing God is doing, we must look forward not back. Put another way, ***“But forget all that – it is nothing compared to what I am going to do”*** (Is. 43:18 NLT).



To perceive – literally to 'seize and understand' – the 'new thing' we need a fresh revelation from God about the things we are seeing.

What are We Seeing & Hearing?

“See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?” (Is. 43:19)

Before we can perceive what is emerging, we must first look and see – behold – things as they are, resisting the temptation to interpret what we see through the lens of our past experience and understanding.

The Way of John

Together, we proclaim with John the Baptist, ***“He must increase, but I must decrease”*** (Jn. 3:30 ESV). Our focus is not on the ways we must decrease but is, rather, on the opening of our lives to an increase in the reign of Jesus. He gives His Spirit, the source of newness, without limit. As we intentionally pray for His increase, we 'must' decrease.

As we pray together in this way, it becomes a prayer for the whole Body of Christ. Just as John was called to 'prepare the way of the Lord', so we pray 'Maranatha! Come Lord Jesus!'



Where are We?

The Lord has been shaking the nations. We are seeing unprecedented and surprising events taking place, not least in the UK, now in the midst of Brexit, and in the USA, reeling with the surprise victory of President Trump.

This is a 'kairos' moment. There is uncertainty about who holds authority in many countries of the world right now. In our gathering, we took the opportunity to proclaim the sovereignty of Jesus Christ in the spiritual realms over two nations currently in crisis – Burundi and North Korea – with which we have special connections. The Lord is presenting us with many such opportunities in these days.

Who's Leading?

A number of our younger members spent several weeks listening to the Lord on our behalf in preparation for the Annual Gathering. Their listening drew forth a wealth of wisdom. Two words were given to the Community as a summary:

Resourcing – meaning to bring back to the source. This word was accompanied with a picture of a sword. It describes an equipping role, given by God to the Community from the beginning. It is vital now for the present younger generations as they consider who they listen to and follow.

Blessing – 35 years of walking in unity as a Community gives us an authority to bless (as in Ps. 133). This is particularly important for the young in their personal development as often their broken relationships do not give them Godly affirmation. Blessing looks forward to what can be. This word was accompanied by a picture of an arrow and a row of archers, poised, ready for battle.



Ready to Go

The Lord has prepared us as individuals with particular gifts, for specific tasks. It is as if each of us has a personalised sword, forged through the application of God's Word in the crucible of the hardships and battles of daily life. Now is the time to 'sharpen' our swords in God's furnace. The enemy is active, but we are equipped for victory.

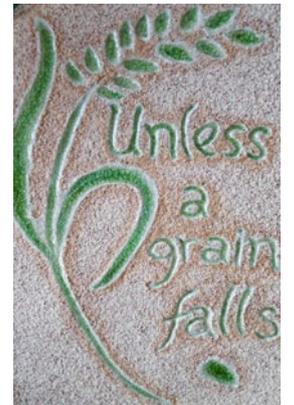
We have a responsibility to encourage one another, affirming our absolute confidence in the Lord and our mutual commitment as brothers and sisters in Christ.

It is time to advance the Kingdom of God. The Lord has opened the way through doors that were previously firmly shut. All that is needed is for us to step out in faith.

The Way of Jesus

There is an invitation for all of us, a call from Jesus Himself, to follow Him beyond our comfort zones. It requires us to renounce the idols which deceive us into staying in the seemingly safe, shallow waters. He calls us to immerse ourselves in Him.

True unity is costly. It goes beyond 'philio' - the 'brotherly' love Peter expressed to Jesus (Jn. 21.15). It demands 'agape' - the love which sacrifices self for the sake of Christ and His Kingdom.



The Way of the Cross

As we considered the Lord's call for us to pursue a deeper oneness in Him, He overwhelmed us with a further call:

Will you 'lay down' the Maranatha Community?

“Then God said, ‘Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering...’” (Gen. 22.2)

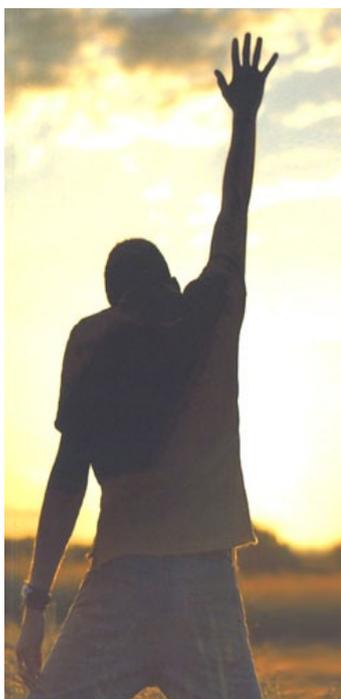
Growing Unity

Wherever the Lord leads us into the future of the Maranatha Community, we, as members, remain a people united in the love of Christ, sharing a burden to pray and work for the unity of ALL God's people.

In the face of increasing national and international divisions, and with monumental brokenness in our local communities, the need for a uniting, renewing and healing people has never been greater.



Watch and Pray



Our Annual Gathering ended with a question, which rose in all our hearts: 'What does this mean?' Our resolve, as one people, is to wait for the Lord's clear instruction in these coming days and weeks.

It is a time to watch and pray, not falling into the temptation to form our own interpretation of 'what God means' or opinion on what should happen next. It is a time to fast, turning away from human ideas, as we listen for the 'still small voice'.

Will you join in this ?

Our waiting on God, in this time of change, is being observed in our Maranatha office by the commencement of each working day with one hour of silent prayer: 9am - 10am.

To help our shared consideration of what the Lord is saying to us as a Community, we have arranged a special Day Gathering:

Saturday, 22nd April 2017 10.30am - 4pm
(Drinks at 10am)

**Sacred Heart & St. Catherine's Church hall,
208 Worcester Road, Droitwich Spa, Worcestershire, WR9 8AZ**
Please bring something to share for lunch

If you have any questions or any prompting from the Lord for the Community, please write to us at the Maranatha office or by email to: lindas@maranathacommunity.org.uk

Sharing the Journey

Last year we believe the Lord directed us to re-establish a pattern of residential Maranatha weekends during 2017 and to arrange a pilgrimage in Ireland. All these gatherings are wonderful opportunities to explore the 'new thing' God is doing in our midst as we enjoy fellowship, worship, teaching, ministry and so much more. Will you be part of this new journey? Details are available through the Maranatha website or from the office.

As a pilgrim people, we continue to pray for each other daily, uniting with the living Body of Christ in all the ages we cry: 'Maranatha! Come Lord Jesus!'

