



Flame Trust

A Christmas Message

- education
- supporting disadvantaged people and the voiceless
- local and worldwide community involvement
- mentoring and social development in a variety of cultures and situations
- tours and events bringing insight and challenge to audiences in the UK and overseas

Many years ago, when I was in Sunday School, we were taught to sing 'choruses'. Not quite like the worship songs that abound today, and I also have to say that some of the theology left much to be desired. Nevertheless, they proved to be formative in understanding some of the basics of the Christian faith.

One of those songs was 'Jesus bids us shine'... and I know that some of you of a certain age, are beginning to sing it as I mention it(!). It concludes with the injunction,

**'In this world of darkness, so we must shine;
You in your small corner, and I in mine'.**

Now I know what the writer was trying to say, but in this season when I am reminded of how dark this world has become, shining in our respective small corners does raise some questions.

However, we do have personal responsibility to be lights in our own corner of the Kingdom, as well as wishing and hoping for a collective voice that generates plenty of light, rather than heat. The latter gives me great cause for concern, whereas the former gives me hope and confidence.

I was due to be in Israel as I write this letter, and some of you would have been with me. I am a seasoned news follower, but have to say that I have been shocked by the horror and atrocity that I am witnessing at this time, and am struggling to understand the level of violence and brutality that is on our screens.

In a few weeks' time, we shall be singing another well-known line:



'But in the dark streets shineth, an everlasting light; The hopes and fears of all the years, are met in Thee tonight'.

Is the message of that carol appropriate for the streets of bomb shattered Gaza, anxious Bethlehem or divided Jerusalem? The same question hangs over the dark streets of Birmingham, Burnley and Belfast and countless other centres of society across our world.

How can hopes and fears, accumulated down through the years, be met by the baby in Bethlehem? How can the hate and prejudice of humanity be met by the depth of love in divinity?

A question was asked of me just the other day. 'Where is God in all of this?' I avoid glib answers, but remind myself that in this world of darkness, His light of hope still shines, even though His heart breaks with the depravity and depth of pain and hurt reflected in His creation.

And if Jesus was to walk this earth in this season, I don't think that He would be heading for the UN building in New York, or for Westminster.

I've a suspicion...or rather a certainty.... that He would be in the food banks, the soup kitchens, with the street pastors and with the homelessand dare I suggest it, on the streets of Gaza or what's left of them.

In our deeply disturbed world, perhaps it is worth revisiting that simple chorus. A ray of light that brings light into the lives of a family destroyed by hate and violence, with an act of kindness in Jesus' Name, can be effective in dispelling darkness and doubt.

Offering subsistence and support to marginalised people can help replace anguish with hope. A cup of tea and a conversation using our ears more than our mouths, can shine Jesus' light into a troubled mind.

A tin of baked beans, in Jesus' Name, is a powerful shaft of light for a hungry soul.

Don't forget to shine your light this Christmas.

The Flame Chronicles: December 2023

Dear Prayer Partner

I originally intended to write a short opening paragraph before giving insights into what we have been doing in and around Flame over the past few months, but as I wrote, I found my heart heavy with thoughts that I wanted to develop and share.



Hence my 'Christmas Message' as an introduction, but it does nevertheless give you a 'window' through which you can appreciate our activity.

Flame's ethos is to support marginalised individuals and communities, to give voice to the voiceless, as well as to give an explanation of why Jesus is the Light of the World at every opportunity. This is why we do what we do!

THE PLAYGROUND PROJECT

A massive thank you to all of you who rose to the challenge of providing the support that was

needed to build the playground in Pascani, near Iasi in Romania.

Planning and preparation has taken six months, but at the end of October, Calin Rezmuves, Flame's Practical Assistant, travelled to Romania to volunteer for one of Habitat for Humanity's projects, and then to move onto the playground site, taking some of the Habitat skilled workforce with him to build the Flame facility.

There is always an element of concern on these projects. Will the equipment arrive in time? Will the weather be appropriate? Will there be any unforeseen circumstances? Well, I am thrilled to report that everything went according to plan, and the pictures reveal a little of the construction and completed facility.

The faces of the children say it all, and the Mayor of the town was moved to tears as he witnessed the excitement and joy amongst these children in a deprived community. In time, we shall post more pictures on

our website, but a huge thank you again to all of you who gave so generously. **A little light is shining in Pascani.**

And, it looks as if we have been successful in acquiring some contributory funding for the next three years as we develop this ministry. We still look for that to be matched, but it is a lovely endorsement of what is being achieved.

Just an idea - if your church takes up an offering at Christmastime to support a specific project, do give the Playground Project a thought for consideration. We would certainly be very happy to furnish you and your fellowship with more detail and our plans for the future.





ISMA PINTA

Through the generosity of one of our prayer partners, we have been delighted to be the channel of support for Ismael and his family as they join the Portuguese Missionary Society 'MEVIC', to develop the production of animated Bible stories. Some of these have been used for broadcasting on National Television, and the resource is widely

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available for schools and childrens' ministries. We first met Ismael when we visited Madeira, and he helped us to appreciate the value of what he is doing.



We will provide a link to some of his ministry on our website, but in the meantime, pray for him and his family as they prepare to move to mainland Portugal, and specifically for the opportunity to see his animations translated into English, which will give much wider use for this excellent resource.

A bright light to help children understand the Bible.

CHAPLAINCY

Gerry Denston has been developing the ongoing links and support with the Invictus Trust academies, as well as organising a conference for Sixth Formers at the end of the summer term. With speakers, committed to a Christian ethos, many students attended and listened to addresses on 'climate change', as well as engaging in broader activity.

As you will remember, I stepped back from the role of 'Chair' at Q3 Langley at the end of July, but at the request of the Board of Governors, was invited to develop the role of Chaplain, to build on the foundations that I have been privileged to help formulate.

We decided that there should be a time-period when I would disengage from governance responsibility, and then re-engage as Chaplain. In the next few weeks, we are meeting to discuss this role and the level of involvement. I am thrilled with this, as it serves to underline yet again why I do what I do, and I am hoping that I can allow some light to shine into the lives of students and staff who are so often under pressure in the educational environment.

Please pray as we plan and prepare.

MADEIRA:

4th–11th MARCH 2024

As I intimated in my Christmas message, several of you were planning to join me on the visit to Israel in early November. For

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understandable reasons, this was cancelled, and although there was disappointment, of course this was eclipsed by the horror and distress of the war. However, the visit to Madeira is still in the diary, and our agents are still taking bookings. If you are interested, please contact Sharon on 01902 267260, and she will update you with what is available.



Our guest speakers are Ian and Ruth Coffey (above), and it will be a time of spiritual refreshment, relaxation and encouragement. (Full details are on the Flame website).

And we are also researching the opportunity for an 'Autumn Break', so watch this space!

FAMILY DAY

What an encouragement! Almost 90 people came together on September 30th friends, supporters, prayer partners and

the curious(!), to enjoy ministry, reports and some good music.

Pastor John Price set the tone for the day by encouraging us to listen to what God has to say when we move from one season in our Christian experience to another, there was music and input from a variety of folk, and then Chris and Abby Eaton sang and **shone their light at the end of the day.** (They even persuaded me to warble a few notes). The feedback has been such a blessing. Will there be another next year? Many of you have asked the same question, so let's wait and see.

PERSONAL JOTTINGS

A few flutters from the cardiac department of my body serve to remind me that I am heading on into increasing years, but my head doesn't seem to listen! Seriously, I am feeling quite well at present but am beginning to be more realistic about what I can do. The AFib episodes are almost non-existent, but other indications serve as an alert when I tend to overdo things. Where have I heard that one before?

Of course, I am greatly helped by 'Team Flame' – Jackie, Calin,

Jennifer, Clare, Stewart, Gerry, and my loyal Board of Trustees. Most help in a voluntary capacity, and I am deeply grateful for their donation of time, patience, expertise and input.

I've just recently had the joy of helping a lovely Christian family from Syria who have been living in a hotel room for 12 months. They are effectively asylum seekers who will never be able to return to Syria. Originally they were placed in a facility in Warwickshire where they attended a lively church where **members, for one year, have shone light into their lives.**

I was then alerted that they were being transferred to Dudley, and have engaged with them, trying to bring help and resources together. To be honest, they have ministered to me more than I have been able to help them. **Their light has shone into my life in no uncertain terms.** Mom, Dad and two children... politeness and courtesy personified with a humility that defies description, and almost resistant at times to accepting help and practical expressions of love and support.

Pray for them as they try to find appropriate schools for the children, and as they develop

links and friendships with a local church and as they settle into the area.

I close. I think you will have sensed the 'pulse' of my Christmas message. Please feel free to accept this as my Christmas greeting to you at this time of the year and if you want to pass it on to others then please do so. It will be at the heart of what I share in various situations on the approach to Christmas.

May God bless you as you look for that small corner to let your light shine, and may this Christmas season be a time when in the midst of a troubled and deeply disturbed world, you will find peace and re-assurance through God's gift to us all.

Emmanuel...He is with us.

God bless,

Dave

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