

# HEARING EYE

*The voice of Open Ears*

Hard of Hearing Christian Fellowship

No: 159

January 2019



## Editorial

Welcome to the New Year! I hope you had a lovely Christmas? Mine was a very busy time but it was lovely sharing it with the various friends who came to visit. For some of us Christmas can feel a bit of a whirlwind as we try to get together with family and friends, buy and wrap presents, organise food and write cards. But for others that very busyness just brings home the fact that they are on their own or facing a difficult situation. That is tough and my heart goes out to any of you who have been struggling or feeling lonely over this time. It is our culture that's made it such a busy, pressured time but the true Christmas good news is something that we can all be joyful about. That God in His incredible love for us has come to be with us. Jesus came as that tiny baby knowing to the full our frailty and weakness. Listen to these lovely verses in Isaiah 63:9:

‘In all their distress he too was distressed and the angel of his presence saved them. In his love and mercy he redeemed them. He lifted them up and carried them all the days of old.’ (NIV)

The context of these words is the time when the Israelites were wandering in the wilderness having failed to step into the promised land because of their many rebellions. They sinned repeatedly yet God never abandoned them. He shared in their pain and continued to provide for them and guide them. Now, because of Jesus, we can know the wonder of His care and companionship to an even greater degree. He comes alongside to share

in our everyday lives and to bring the comfort of His unshakeable love for us. He opens our eyes to see life in new and exciting ways and opens our ears to hear His voice. Most of us in Open Ears struggle to hear physically but we can all hear the Lord and He loves to speak to us. Later in this edition I will share some ideas about hearing His voice and it would be lovely if some of you could send us your stories of how He has spoken to you to comfort, help or guide you for a later edition. It is quite something to think that however much it may be a struggle to hear people, all of us can hear God because He has given us all we need to tune into His voice. So be inspired and encouraged.

Also in this edition there'll be news about the work in Nepal, poems, reflections, a puzzle, the all-important prayer fortnight and another important one, a notice about the Open Ears conference weekend break in October. Lots of other things too so do make a cuppa, get a mince pie before they're all gone and read on!

**Tracy Williamson**

### **Out of the mouths of babes**

Here's another lovely contribution from our two youngest members, Nadine and Dominic Willdig.

**Breakfast time.**



**Victor: Let's have crumpets.**

**Nadine: Yes! I want two!**

[there are only 2 left]

**Victor: You want two... but then what's Dominic going to have?**

**Nadine: A carrot!**

**Such a lovely big sister!**



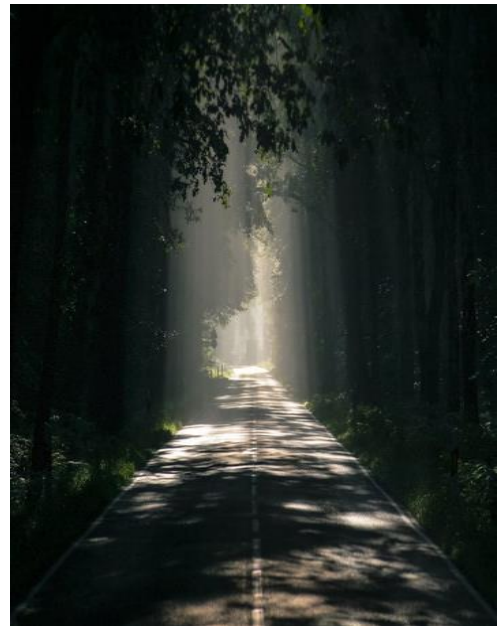


Thinking again about it being New Year and the importance of living in hope because Jesus is the light of the world and always overcomes the darkness, I thought it would be lovely to include this little reflective poem called 'Dusk to Dawn' used by kind permission of a writer friend of mine called Hilary Hughes.

## DUSK TO DAWN

That time when the sun's gone down  
beneath the horizon but you still have  
light to see by; purplish-blue clouds  
hang in a washed-out sky; tree shapes,  
black, lumpy, stand proud of hedges  
and a solid wall of black hides the  
gradient of the ground. Then, the  
the land grows darker than the sky,  
the light is slowly squeezed until it  
merges with buildings, fields, forest.  
In the distance, the glowing headlamps  
of an approaching car, a moving fan  
of threadbare gold, then, gone, as the  
angle of its motion switches to the east.  
Grey. Dark. Night.

No light to see by now; above, the  
purple's turned to charcoal; below,  
landmarks are hard to check, direction  
immaterial; no lamplight, curtains closed  
against the night, even your own eyes  
distrust themselves ... until the pre-dawn  
comes, demystifying the gloom of dark,  
and then day arrives, lifting the veil of night,  
exposing landscape, skyscape, the actions  
of the morning. That time, when, not all  
at once, but steadily, the boundaries show  
themselves, familiar shapes reappear, size  
and shape and colour return, to create a  
structure for the coming hours. Browns,  
greens, blues, golds and silver threaded  
into the tapestry of time.



Hilary Hughes

## Mike and Fiona Smith's Nepal News, August 2018

**'The most important commandment,' answered Jesus, 'is this: Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: Love your neighbour as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these.'** Mark 12: 30-31

Dear friends and family,

As we returned to Nepal the verses above encouraged us to focus again on the work God has called us to at the Ear Centre and the amazing people we share our lives with.



David Hill kindly drove us to Heathrow airport with over 100kg of luggage. God had smiled on us when we were upgraded, at the last minute, to business class as far as Delhi!

The temperature in Kathmandu was pleasant but the heat hit us like a wall when we stopped in our air-conditioned vehicle half way to

Pokhara for "dal bhat" (curry and rice). Only a month to go before the monsoon starts to fade away and we can look forward to seeing the mountains again. The heavy monsoon rains have caused flooding and landslides in many areas.

E D, the Ear Centre manager, organized a very nice welcome programme for new staff and our return. It was also an opportunity to say goodbye to two Nepali audiology interns and to announce that all staff are now on permanent contracts rather than daily wages.

Dr Nirmal has just arrived back from a fellowship in the USA and a new Nepali ENT trainee doctor has recently joined the team, which is great. There are now 36 staff members.

There are lots of patients waiting for surgery as both main surgeons have been away. We plan to train ear care paramedics and send them out on community visits. To do this, with contacts in the UK we have made a very

full training curriculum and are wondering how we can possibly deliver all this! The numbers coming to outpatients are also rising weekly. One day this week 90 people attended.

Thank you for your prayers, love and support.

Prayer points:

- NEED FOR MORE ENT DOCTORS TO WORK IN THE HOSPITAL
- PRAYER FOR THE MANAGEMENT CHANGES IN INF AND GREEN PASTURES HOSPITAL
- TIME AND ENERGY TO SET UP TEACHING PROGRAMMES FOR NEW STAFF
- SAFETY AND GOOD OUTCOMES FOR THE PATIENTS WE TREAT
- TO HELP US REACH AND HELP THE MOST DISADVANTAGED
- THERE IS A LOT OF DISCONTENT AMONG DOCTORS IN NEPAL ABOUT A NEW LAW THAT APPEARS TO MAKE THEM LEGALLY RESPONSIBLE FOR ANY BAD OUTCOME, EVEN IF NOT THEIR FAULT, AND STRIKES HAVE STARTED.

### **International Nepal Fellowship Green Pastures Hospital** Extracts from the Annual Report for 2017-2018

Annually, INF's Green Pastures Hospital serves 40,000 patients and remains the largest ear, leprosy and rehabilitation hospital in Nepal's western regions.

Having 100 beds (20 for ear patients and 80 for patients with other forms of disability) Green Pastures remains the hub for referrals from other INF centres, as well as hospitals and local partner organisations across western Nepal.

There were 11,459 visits to the Outpatients Department, while 326 patients were treated in Inpatients and 346 surgeries were carried out. INF run ear camps for two reasons: to reach people who otherwise would not receive treatment due to the distance they are from the Ear Centre (time and cost of travel), and also to refer people to the Ear Centre for treatment. A one-day ear outreach camp was held in Nirmal Pokhari (a nearby town) in March. An incredible 150 ear patients were seen in just five hours.

An Otology seminar for 16 ENT surgeons and audiologists (led by Dr Adam Masters, a visiting Senior Fellow from a prestigious ear institute in Los Angeles) plus a training event for over 40 ear care nurses was held during the year.

Some new equipment has been used for the first time at the Ear Centre this past year, for instance a new diagnostic system for patients, including newborn babies. The plan is to use this as the Ear Centre develops a neonatal hearing screening programme to identify early those babies and young children at risk of severe hearing loss. The first endoscopy surgery was successfully conducted at the Ear Centre in March. The team are very excited to continue. A portable KTP surgical laser has also been used for 'Stapes Surgery' to restore hearing, a new procedure. (see photo © INF)



A new speech therapist joined to conduct speech and language therapy sessions for 72 new and follow up patients.

Green Pastures Hospital and local churches work very closely together. From time to time, church leaders lead hospital fellowships, and also refer patients – thereby increasing the reach of the Ear Centre.

Green Pastures Hospital operates a medical charity fund, which benefits patients who are unable to contribute towards the costs of their treatment. Each patient is assessed on a case by case basis. In order to provide that fund, we charge patients who can afford services. This also is helping the Ear Centre to become more financially sustainable.

A new community ear care service was started in mid-2018 in order to receive more patients from rural areas of the country. The actual cost of the ear community work will not be self-sustainable, as this will be a free service. However, the referrals to the Ear Centre will help generate increased revenue.

Green Pastures Hospital is undertaking to prepare a 5-year strategic plan and direction for each department of the hospital in a participatory approach. This will help to create a clear vision and improve quality without unnecessarily increasing the cost of care.

After the preparation of the strategy plan document of the Ear Centre, funding from a Swiss donor (SON - Stiftung Ohrchirurgie Nepal) has been secured for three years, which started in July. We are delighted to have fresh support from this faithful donor.

For more details visit the International Nepal Fellowship website, [www.inf.org](http://www.inf.org)

**With our love and thanks for reading this.**

*Mike and Fiona*

## In the Spotlight



**For this edition of Hearing Eye, I thought it would be brilliant if we could hear a bit more about our lovely administrator, Christine Pitts!**

**T. Chris, can you tell us a bit about yourself? Where do you come from and where do you live now? Do you have family?**

**C.** I was born in Bournemouth and lived there until 1966 when I married and moved about 8 miles to New Milton where I still live. We have a son and a daughter and five granddaughters aged between three and 12.

**T. Do you have a hearing loss? If so when did that begin and how did it happen? Has it changed over the years? Is there a primary way that your deafness affects you? What things help you the most?**

**C.** I now have a profound hearing loss but started going deaf in my late 20's with otosclerosis and became increasingly deaf until the most powerful hearing aids were no longer much help. I found I was missing out on so many things and felt isolated especially when with the family but with the encouragement of many people in Open Ears and at my church I decided last summer to go for a cochlear implant. It is one of God's amazing miracles of modern science for which I am extremely grateful as I am now hearing so many different things and beginning to socialise more and am gaining confidence. It is changing my life and I know that it is going to improve it even further so it is very exciting!

**T. That is wonderful Chris, the implant has been such an immense journey for you and challenges some of us to consider it. Now, how long have you been part of Open Ears? What drew you to join in the first place and what is your role on the committee?**

**C.** When my son was about to leave school, he borrowed a huge Christian directory hoping to find a Christian firm where he might be able to apply for work. Out of interest I flicked through the pages and came across a charity called: 'Hard of Hearing Christian Fellowship'. I decided to write to them to find out what they did. I received a very helpful lovely letter from Don Mason, and a little later another letter from Richard Livermore inviting me to sit in on a committee meeting. Much to my surprise at the meeting I was invited to

become a committee member which happened in 1994. Not long after that I became the Administrator which I still enjoy doing.

**T. You are a great administrator Chris, as you are so helpful to us all. Has administration been a key part of your working life or was your work in other areas?**

C. I started my working life as a secretary and worked in a variety of different jobs but when the children came along I gave up work until they were old enough to start school. From then onwards I had two roles: helping adults with learning difficulties, and as a keyworker for children with special needs aged from birth to 4 years old; I really enjoyed both roles.

**T. I can really imagine you in those roles as you are a great encourager. Now one thing I wonder is, as a mother and grandmother has your deafness posed difficulties? How do you overcome these?**

C. I have been fortunate in that my deafness has happened very gradually so I learnt to cope fairly well up until the last 4 or 5 years, also I lipread reasonably well. The most difficult part has been family gatherings when everyone talks at once; also trying to understand the grandchildren but they all know that they have to speak slowly and clearly for me. One of the main problems was not being able to hear the children at night without my hearing aids when my husband was away or out but they learnt to come and get me if they needed help.

**T. That is really interesting. So how did you become a Christian and in what ways do you love to serve the Lord? Do you find you are able to be actively part of your church life despite your deafness?**

C. I come from a family of Christians so was taken to church right from birth and have always believed in God but it wasn't until I was in my 40's that I really came to know the Lord for myself and realise that he loves me and wants to have a close relationship with me. Music was a big part of my life especially at church where I sang in the choir for many years and after the choir was disbanded I played the piano most Sundays, but when my hearing loss became too profound I sadly had to give that up. I now preach from time to time in various small churches who are without a Minister.

**T. Chris, what have you enjoyed most about Open Ears since you joined it and what would you love to see being developed more in its work?**

C. Open Ears is like a very special family where everyone understands the problems we all face with our deafness, God's love seems to shine out of everyone, and it is where my faith has grown due to the good teaching received at our events and the encouragement and inspiration of so many wonderful



Christians. Because deafness brings isolation and loneliness I would love to see Open Ears reaching out to more and more people who are struggling in their own churches so that they can grow in their faith.

**T. What are your favourite things that bring you joy and fulfilment in life?**

C. I love running and belong to the New Forest Runners Club, although these days I can only manage short distances. Being with my grandchildren brings me enormous joy and pleasure and I love watching them as they grow up and achieve new things.

**T. Wow, running, I didn't know you are a runner! Well done for that, I get puffed running for the bus and I'm only in my 50's! Now my final question, Chris, at the start of this New Year what are your hopes and dreams for the coming year?**

C. For myself I would like to keep growing ever closer to Jesus and fulfil any plans he might for me. For Open Ears I would like us to be able to reach out to more people with a hearing loss and to help churches understand and provide for their needs.



**Thanks so much Chris. Maybe some of us will take up running like Chris but whether physically or in our minds and hearts, let's keep choosing to joyfully run deeper into God's love and His great plans for each one of us and for Open Ears too.**

**Tracy Williamson**

**Don't forget to visit our newly refurbished website  
[www.openears.org.uk](http://www.openears.org.uk)**

# **Open Ears Conference Weekend Break 11-13 Oct 2019**

**At Torch Holiday & Retreat Centre  
Hurstpierpoint, Sussex**

**With Tracy Williamson - Speaker**



- **We are also really excited to tell you that in October 2019 we are holding one of our biennial conference weekend breaks at the Torch Trust Holiday and Retreat Centre, Hurstpierpoint, Sussex.**
- **This will be a Friday to Sunday afternoon event with inspiring teaching and worship sessions to draw us deeper into God's love and purpose for our lives.**
- **The Centre is owned by Torch Trust for the Blind and is an attractively designed house with a loving family atmosphere. Comfortable en-suite rooms, delicious food and caring staff will ensure it's a lovely relaxing break. There'll be time on Sat afternoon to relax and enjoy the beautiful location and an Open Ears Family fun time together on Saturday evening. More details of costs and a booking form will be in the next Hearing Eye, but please consider coming and if you've never been to an Open Ears break before, we'd love to have you join us.**
- **Loop, Speech to Text (STT) and BSL will be provided to cover all hearing needs.**

# Puzzle Page

It's that time to put your feet up, get yourself a cuppa, grab a pencil and try out your skills on this edition's Sudoku puzzle. If you're not familiar with Sudoku it's a simple concept – every full line both down and across needs to contain the digits 1 - 9. And every smaller block within the square also needs to contain the digits 1 – 9. Simple? Well, have a go and have fun!



|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|   |   | 1 |   | 6 | 5 |   | 3 | 7 |
| 3 |   |   |   | 2 | 9 | 1 | 6 |   |
|   | 6 | 4 |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|   | 2 | 8 |   |   | 4 |   |   | 3 |
|   |   |   | 1 |   | 7 |   |   |   |
| 5 |   |   | 2 |   |   | 6 | 9 |   |
| 4 |   |   |   |   |   | 5 | 2 |   |
|   | 5 | 6 | 9 | 4 |   |   |   | 8 |
| 9 | 1 |   | 5 | 8 |   |   |   |   |

## Many congratulations to Viv Whitfield!

We are delighted to hear from Viv Whitfield that she is now a locally-deployed self-supporting minister in her church in Chelmsford Diocese. She began her curacy last year when she was ordained deacon. In September she was ordained priest. This photo was taken with Bishop Roger after her 'priesting'.



She says that while it is hard to believe it has happened, she has taken to it like a duck to water! but still has a great deal to learn. She is enjoying new experiences and responsibilities: taking baptisms, funerals, organising a confirmation service, being responsible for some 'clusters' of small discipleship groups, and for some special events and services (Good Friday reflections, a Service of Light for bereaved people, a seminar about growing old gracefully, and so on). She even has a couple of weddings lined up for next year, which, she says, will be

fun! and, of course, leading services, preaching, and presiding at communion.

Apart from training and meetings galore she continues to take communion to the sick, the housebound, and to a local care home. Andy (her vicar and training incumbent) is keen she should do more one-to-one meetings with people wrestling with issues, or needing to talk, which she enjoys doing. She has been astounded to realise how much goes on behind the scene for vicars and her respect for them has gone up by leaps and bounds! She also continues with her ministry among deaf people although less than before as one can't do everything! She says that without her cochlear implant she would never have been ordained or serve as a curate.

We wish her all the very best in everything she is doing.

**Chris Pitts**

# Open Ears 15 day prayer diary



**‘In Him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in Him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by His Spirit.’ Ephesians 2: 21 – 22**

I love the idea of us rising together, a beautiful building in which God lives by His Spirit, each prayer we pray, or loving action creating another block in its walls. Let’s pray together over this fortnight that God’s words of love and power will be released to do their work.

**Sunday** Pray for God’s gift of hope and peace to fill our hearts as we face all that this New Year holds for us.

**Monday** Thank the Lord for all the advances that have been made in the fight to help those with hearing loss. For new types of hearing aids, for cochlear implants, loop systems and new technology, for flashing light systems, for Hearing Dogs...Pray that people in poor countries will also be able to access the help they need.

**Tuesday** Pray that in 2019 there will be a growing awareness and desire in our churches to understand the needs of those with hearing loss and to take any needed steps to ensure their hearing impaired members are included.

**Wednesday** Pray for those struggling with loneliness or isolation that they will know the joy of the Lord’s presence with them and that He will open the door for more people to come alongside and be part of their lives.

**Thursday** Thank the Lord that He has a plan for us to make His kingdom known. Thank Him that we are all included and He is not limited by our deafness. Pray we will know for ourselves how the Lord wants to use us and will have the courage to step out.

**Friday** Pray for Open Ears Committee members as they do the work to keep Open Ears running as an organisation. For anointing and wisdom in all decisions they need to make.

**Saturday** Pray for those in Open Ears who have suffered bereavement or life changing circumstances in the last few months. For the families of Janet Andrews, Barbara Rooney, Mary Dixie, Michael Brown and Don Mason who will still be missing their loved ones.

**Sunday** Thank the Lord for the powerful ministry of the Open Ears conference and holiday breaks in drawing people together bringing joy and laughter, shared experiences and inspiring worship and teaching. Pray that more people will be encouraged to come to the breaks that they too can have this wonderful encouragement.

**Monday** Pray for Theresa May and the Government at this time of great change, that the enemy's strategy to bring division will be overcome by the Lord's power. Pray for Brexit to be determined in a godly way with miracles in those difficult areas like the Irish border.

**Tuesday** Pray for Julia Chapman as she deals with Open Ears finance, for Marilyn Kilsby in her role as Chair and Mary Bucknall as Vice Chair that each will be empowered above their own abilities.

**Wednesday** Thank the Lord for Susanne and Victor's children, Nadine and Dominic and for all the children in our lives. May God protect them as they grow and help them to discover His love for themselves.

**Thursday** Thank the Lord for Viv Whitfield and her wonderful ministry and pray for others in Open Ears who are actively serving the Lord.

**Friday** Pray for the Lord to anoint us all that we can witness to our unsaved loved ones. That we will hear His promptings for when to speak them and how to touch their lives with His love.

**Saturday** Thank the Lord for the amazing work of International Nepal Fellowship and for all those they are serving in Green Pastures Hospital. For ongoing financial provision and the best surgeons and doctors.

**Sunday** For us all as we worship that we will know the joy of the Lord and will be enabled to be fully part of the services and teaching.

## Prayer for our nation

Following the prayer fortnight, I felt it was very important to include this special prayer for our nation (submitted by **Marylin Kilsby**). In December the Archbishop of York invited everyone to join him in a vigil of prayer ahead of the Commons vote (now delayed until the new year) on the Brexit deal.

The Archbishop, after much prayerful consideration, wrote a special prayer which he encouraged everyone to pray on the hour, every hour throughout the three days. Although that specific vigil time has passed, the vote is still to take place and it therefore seems vital that we continue praying God's Lordship over the whole process.

THE ARCHBISHOP SAID:

“At this time of uncertainty I have been asked by many people to call for prayer. Please may I encourage you to join me in this Prayer as we work for peace and unity at this time.”

THE ARCHBISHOP'S PRAYER:

**God of eternal love and power,  
Save our Parliamentary Democracy;  
Protect our High Court of Parliament and  
all its members  
From partiality and prejudice;  
That they may walk the path of kindness,  
justice and mercy.  
Give them wisdom, insight and a  
concern for the common good.  
The weight of their calling is too much to bear in their own strength,  
Therefore we pray earnestly, Father,  
send them help from your Holy Place, and be their tower of strength.  
Lord, graciously hear us. Amen.**



Lord, have mercy;  
**Christ, have mercy;**  
Lord, have mercy.

**Let's pray the Lord's prayer together for our Nation**

**Our Father who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name;  
thy kingdom come;  
thy will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive them that trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation;  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
the power and the glory,  
for ever and ever. Amen.**

## **Subtitled televisions for deaf people**

Readers will no doubt be aware that Richard Baker, the well-known television newsreader, died recently at the age of 93.

In 1981, he presented a BBC TV appeal by the RNID (now Action on Hearing Loss) for more subtitled televisions for deaf people. My sister and I, who are both profoundly deaf, were invited to appear in the programme, which featured sample pages from Teletext (Ceefax) including "No Need to Shout".



At home, I spoke to camera about my inability to lip-read fast moving dialogue on TV, and then I demonstrated the use of '888' on the remote control to bring up subtitles on the screen.

In the next two weeks following the BBC TV appeal, £13,000 was raised for the purchase of specially adapted television sets for deaf people.

Speaking for myself, viewing subtitles for the first time ever on TV was truly wonderful – albeit they were not always accurate – I remember seeing the



words “the air to the throne” appear on screen while watching the Royal Wedding of Prince Charles and Lady Diana Spencer in July 1981. My life was revolutionised from that time on, for which I have a lot to be thankful. Nowadays, the range of TV output is so wide we are spoilt for choice. Spare a thought for the hard working subtitlers behind the scenes over the years, and give them a round of applause when their names come up at the end of the credits for helping us to “hear” dialogue on TV.

**Mary Bucknall.**

### **Special Notice**

**I urgently need your contributions for future editions of Hearing Eye, for this magazine to truly be what it says it is on the front page: The Voice of Open Ears, I need contributions from the whole Open Ears family, not just committee members!!!**

**You may not consider yourself a writer but that doesn't matter.**

**You have a unique testimony to share of how you became a Christian; you have experiences to share, like from your working life or your experience of being a parent, or how you became deaf and how that has affected you...Some of you may have a favourite book you'd like to tell us about, or a film or a hobby. Have you won an award? Had an unusual holiday? Experienced God helping you through a difficult time? Is there a recipe you love? An inspiring sermon or a favourite Psalm?**

**Try jotting your thoughts down, some of you may like to try writing a little poem or a reflection....**

**Whatever the format and theme jot it down and either post it or email it to Christine who will then forward it to me.**

**Let's try for the April edition to truly make it 'The Voice of Open Ears.'**

**(Submissions by end of March please.)**

**Many thanks. Tracy**

## ***He called my name* by Tracy Williamson**

A short story based on the account of Zacchaeus in Luke 19: 1-10

Head down and panting for breath, Zacchaeus shoved desperately through the crowds. It had come to him, like a whisper in the breeze that the moment he'd been yearning for, to see Jesus, was within his grasp. Even now he was within Jericho's gates and coming along the road. Crowds had been gathering all day, the excitement intense, the rumours rife.

Zacchaeus had to see him, he had to.

No one had talked directly to Zacchaeus, how could they? But as he sat in his booth he caught enough of the whispered words to fuel his longing. "Miracles like no other," one man whispered to another. "That blind man's eyes just started seeing," the tough looking merchant responded. "The food just multiplied in their hands," exclaimed a woman, her eyes shining under her veil.

Zacchaeus had strained his ears trying to take in every word, so caught up that he almost forgot that he was despised and hated, that he wasn't one of them anymore. "So who do you think he is?" he'd asked the man who'd been describing with great excitement how a leper's skin had become smooth. Zacchaeus was mortified when the man had snapped his mouth shut, slammed his coins down and face averted, disappeared into the crowd.

"You traitor," hissed the next man, spitting in Zacchaeus' direction. "You better not be thinking Jesus'll be interested in you. He knows everything. He'll know what you've done."

The crowd roared, shaking their fists, spitting, the mood now black where it had been full of joy.

Zacchaeus had known what to do. He was serving the Romans, power was on his side. But as he cursed them and raised the tax yet again, he had never felt more lonely. "If only....." he thought. But no, he was stuck in this way of life now. He had made his choice and couldn't go back.

But now Jesus would actually be passing, if only Zacchaeus could see him. Cursing his shortness that had always been such a

source of mockery by the embittered Jews, Zacchaeus pushed through the massed bodies, not caring whose feet he trod on or old women he shoved out of the way. Something was pulling him to Jesus. He didn't understand it because he knew the men were right and if Jesus really did know everything he certainly wouldn't even look at Zacchaeus, so why this longing to be near him?

Zacchaeus cursed again as the crowd pressed even harder, more people pushing into the narrow road by the second. Excitement was pulsing, whispers, cries, shouts. How was he ever going to see him? There were just too many people. It was pointless.

But then he saw it, the huge sycamore tree rising in his path. That strong densely covered branch half way up. That was it, he would climb the tree. No one would see him but he would see everything and most importantly, he would see Jesus. But up there he wouldn't have to face the shame of Jesus' rejection.

Fuelled by a strange energy, Zacchaeus tore through the dense ground foliage to get behind the tree and in a few minutes



had climbed to his chosen branch. He expected shouts and jeers to follow him but no one even seemed to notice. Lying full length but hidden by the thick leaves, he was just in time. A throng was pushing along the road, crowds shoving to get near the man in the middle. A cry, a chant, screams, calls, "Jesus,

son of David, Lord.."

Jesus drew closer, closer. Zacchaeus peered down, enraptured, safe in the knowledge that Jesus couldn't see him. Jesus was almost beneath him now. He was dressed simply. He looked ordinary. Yet there was something almost magnetic exuding from him.

If only he could speak to Jesus but no, a great sadness filled Zacchaeus' heart for he knew that Jesus would have no choice but to reject him. He was pure and holy and Zacchaeus was scum.

"Goodbye Lord," Zacchaeus whispered, peering through the leaves. "I'm sorry.."

And then he heard it.

“Zacchaeus, come down, I must stay with you today.”

Zacchaeus froze. “He called my name,” he murmured, “He called my name...” Tears already falling, he half fell down the tree desperate to reach the one who had called his name so knowingly, so lovingly. How could that be? Scrambling up from the ground, dirty and dishevelled, he gazed into Jesus’ face. All he could see was kind acceptance, knowing, love.

Zacchaeus melted; all the pain, anger, cruelty, his need to crush, to pay back, to destroy all disappearing like a dream. Jesus loved him, and wanted to be with him. He’d called his name, the first time Zacchaeus had ever heard his own name spoken with love. What else could he do but respond and give back the love he’d just received, to love the One who loved him?

# We love because He first loved us

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