

Faith, Hope
and Love

**Testimonies to God
from Ulverston**

This booklet has been produced by people from Emmanuel Christian Centre in Ulverston. It has been given to you so that you can read the accounts of real people who have found faith, hope and love in their lives. They're ordinary people from a variety of backgrounds who have come to personally know an extraordinary God; not a God who just wants people to find religion but a God who wants people to know Him through relationship. This relationship has been made possible by Jesus Christ. It's our prayer that you will be both blessed and encouraged as you read these stories of lives that God has changed.

From rock bottom to Father's arms

By Paul Sedgwick



My wife, Karen, and I are the managers of the ReVista 'fairtrade' coffee shop which is located within the Emmanuel Christian Centre building. The proceeds from the coffee shop go towards missions we support like charity, education and child sponsorship.

I was born and educated in Ulverston and feel blessed to have enjoyed this part of the country for my upbringing. Even though I was brought up in a non-Christian home, I do have

memories of attending a Sunday school as a toddler. When I was 12 years old, I attended a little church on Union Street in the town to join a group called Royal Rangers. Initially it was somewhere to go and have fun for one night each week. I did have fun and played games but this was the place where I was given my first Bible and I couldn't write my name in it fast enough! Eventually I started attending the Sunday services and getting to know some of the people but this all ended abruptly when my teacher started attending the church. I thought it was too 'un-cool' to be seen at church where my teacher went so I left, leaving the Bible behind with my name on it!

I left home at 17 to study catering and went on to be head chef at one of the hotels in the Lake District. This is where I met my wife and we married in June 2004. Just after this I changed career and went self-employed in property maintenance which I still continue to do. We had two beautiful children, Teigan and Jaden, but life seemed to be passing by and something was missing but we didn't know what it was back then. We went through some tough times and eventually life's pressures

were too much and our relationship was seriously on the rocks. You can read more about this in Karen's testimony later in the booklet. When things couldn't get any worse, rock bottom in fact, Karen found out what had been missing in our lives and she realised it was Jesus Christ. It seemed He directed her to the church at Emmanuel Christian Centre and I followed a couple of months later after seeing the transformation He had made in her life. God changes lives and we had experienced it first-hand. We continue to thank the Lord for the love and comfort He bestowed on us when we needed Him most. By His grace, with a healthy and revived marriage, we went on to have a third child named Keira.

The miracle for me was that Emmanuel Christian Centre was formed from that little church on Union Street I attended as a child. Although it took me 27 years to return to my Father's arms, that very same Bible I was given was still there with my name written in it. As if God had it waiting for my return all along!

God is faithful and we continue to walk in His grace and build our relationship with Him who loved us so much. We aim to show Him our love

by following His plan for our lives. Who better to have in the driving-seat of our life than the one who wants the best for all His children.

To be both loved and rescued

By Lisa Smith

I don't come from a church-going family; I don't have a wonderful spiritual heritage like some people but I believed in God from a very young age. When I was 9 I used to walk off by myself to a church to try and find this God who I just knew existed. Sadly I didn't find Him there and I figured if God hadn't turned up at church on those mornings there was little point in me turning up.



My teenage years were quite difficult; all the way through high school I never felt I fitted in and was usually on the outside of friendship groups. Also, I didn't get on very well with my

sister, who I shared a bedroom with, and this just added to often feeling lonely. When I was 14 my school had a visit from some American Bible students and they spoke about a God and sang about a God who was very real. Although I had this inbuilt belief in God, He wasn't real to me but listening to these young people was the first time I had experienced feeling God and I was impacted. There was a response to accept Christ but as I looked around the room, fear of being laughed at, along with being too scared to do anything about it or speak to anybody about it, stopped me.

Things continued to often be difficult at home with my sister and I remember many times crying myself to sleep holding the small, red Gideon Bible I had been given at school which I treasured. I would look up scriptures under the section, "where to find help when". I still have that Bible today and when I look at it I feel reminded of God trying to draw me to Him all those years ago on many occasions.

Sadly, by the age of 16/17 I began to slip further away and began to do things I knew I shouldn't and lived a worldly lifestyle but nothing ever fully satisfied that 'thing', that

'hole' inside that I knew was there.

By the age of 20 because of the situation with my sister I left home and that was a very sad day for me. I was now faced with having to find somewhere to live and support myself. Then at 21 I met a young man and I had never felt this way about anybody before. He was a good man, a strong young man called David and he was just the person I was looking for to rescue me. It quickly became serious and I knew he was the one for me. We got engaged and I was happy although my behaviour, at times, could be difficult. I was so desperate to be both loved and rescued.

Around this time, my brother had become a Christian and invited me to his baptism. I was completely convinced he had been brainwashed and had joined a cult. These people had no church organ and sang with guitars and even put their hands in the air, and I thought they were bonkers! My brother then invited me to a church service and I decided to go. They had a speaker from away, who knew nothing about me or my situation but it felt like he was telling my life story. And that day, I knew I wanted to find out about this God and

although I did not have a clue who God really was, one thing I was convinced about was that God was real and that He loved me and that was enough. I made a decision to become a Christian that day.

I thought now all my problems would be solved, now I had God in my life everything was going to be hunky-dory but some new problems began. Now my fiancé, David, was completely convinced I had been brainwashed and had joined a cult! This caused major problems between us and I got to the point where although I loved him, I asked God to take David away if it wasn't going to work. But slowly, he noticed small changes in me for the better and decided to find out for himself why.

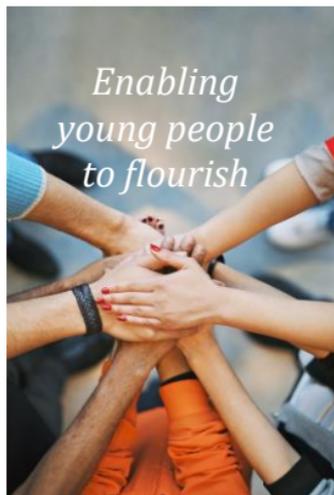


Over time, he could not deny that God was real and although he too did not come from a church-going family, he chose to become a Christian.

Thankfully we did go on to be married and have been so for over 25 years.

When I first made that decision to become a Christian, the strength of God's love I felt was overwhelming. It was amazing that He would want to love me after I had gone so far away from him and done lots of things I knew I shouldn't. The fact that God had not given up on me along with the realisation of what Jesus had done for me was so powerful. All the shame I felt and all the guilt I carried could be gone by accepting His love.

Lisa Smith is trained in youth and schools work, and is an accredited community chaplain for young people. She is passionate about young people's wellbeing and wants them to discover their true identity which



will enable them to flourish in life. Lisa also conducts school assemblies and often speaks at youth events.

If you are or you know a student who might benefit from Lisa's support then please get in touch.

She is a miracle in every sense

By Colin Thornhill

I have many examples of God touching my life. I find one is especially worth talking about because of the unusual circumstances. Just after our second child, Tim, was born, I was diagnosed with



Hodgkin's disease which is a form of cancer. At the time, the church leaders prayed for me and I really felt the love of God all over me. God told me that I would be cured of the cancer and He was true to His word. I went through chemotherapy and then radiotherapy and overcame it.

However, one side effect of the treatment was that I was told I will never be able to have more children. Sue and I were keen to add to the two children we had but the hospital informed us that if nothing happened within 5 years of completing the cancer treatment any chance of more children would have been completely gone. I am grateful to the medical profession and I believe they are a gift from God but on this occasion I can say that God chose to show Himself greater. 15 years after treatment for the cancer our daughter Naomi arrived on the scene. She is a miracle in every sense of the word and a testimony to God's amazing faithfulness. One thing I've learnt over the years is that putting faith in God (trusting that He will do what He says He would do) is one of the best things I have ever done because He is always faithful, even when I'm not.

I realise that many people's stories aren't like mine and they face health issues and challenges which don't seem to end so victoriously. I've discovered that this life has problems but I'd rather go through them with God than alone. Whatever challenge I face and whatever the outcome, I have found peace and security when

I have put my trust in God. Knowing Him and having security beyond this world is a priceless gift. The Bible describes life as a “mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes”. My advice to anyone is to spend their life in God’s arms so that whatever challenge comes your way, you face it with His love and comfort. Regardless of anything, God is good.

Behind closed doors I was a mess

By Karen Sedgwick

I’m married to Paul and his story is at the front of this booklet. We have 3 children and live in Ulverston.

In October 2008 Paul and I had 2 young children and on the outside looked like any ‘normal’ family. However, I felt lost and without a purpose and for some reason I hated who I was. I could hold myself together most of the time but behind closed doors I was a mess. I liked to escape using alcohol and I hid wine in



cordial bottles so Paul wouldn't find it. I had struggled on and off for years and I would isolate myself believing I didn't fit in anywhere. It's like I didn't know how to be 'me'. I wanted to be the good girl but I also wanted excitement and adventure which left me feeling confused, lonely and frustrated. I looked for ways to get 'better', I tried anti-depressants, counselling, cognitive therapy, meditation, mindfulness and other things. Did I mention I drank a lot of alcohol? I did and when I was drunk I would rage at my husband being violent and wrecking parts of our home. I became paranoid and I could never remember what I had done in my drunken state which would lead to so much guilt and shame.

One night coming in drunk I hit Paul while he was sleeping. For over 10 years of my struggle with alcohol he had never once hurt me. This night he swung a fist at me hitting my eyebrow which cut and bled. In my anger and stupor I called the police. He spent the night in the cells and was released the next day completely remorseful. I thought that this was my lowest point, it wasn't. Even though he struck me it was uncharacteristic and I had hit him first. I

promised to change and do better but a week later I was back on the alcohol.

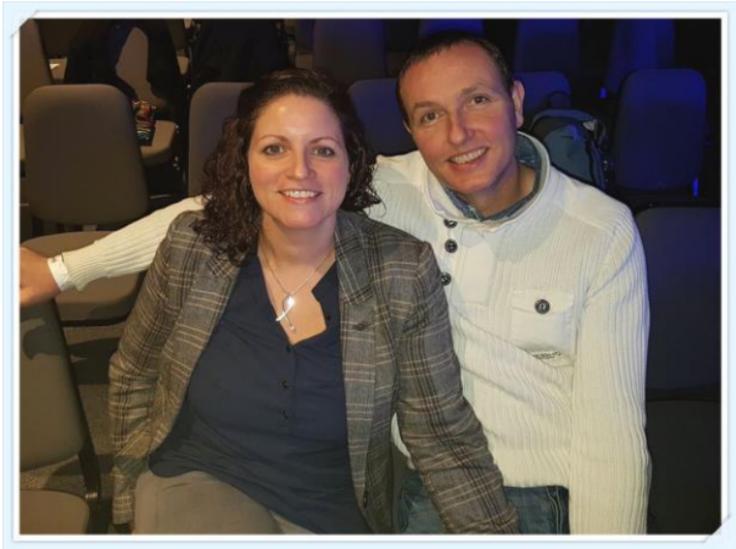
Things weren't good between us and divorce loomed. I would lose my family and potentially my life with my crazy behaviour. Paul and my mum even considered having me sectioned for my own safety.

In the early hours of 3rd October 2008 I began to sober up and sat in my lounge I thought about dying. How could I remove myself from everything the easiest way? That thought led me into literally crying out for help. I thought of myself as an atheist even though in the past I had 'believed' once. I just got to the point where I thought God couldn't be real if He kept letting me hurt this way. Surely this God was supposed to make everything ok? I mocked and said "go on then God if you are real help me!" The next thought I had was to write a letter to a priest. I couldn't think of a specific priest to write a letter to so I just wrote. What started as a sarcastic, angry letter turned out to be my confession! I was so sorry for all the hurt I'd caused and for wasting my life. I wrote that I would do anything just to have one more chance. It went on until I had nothing else to

say. I folded the letter into an envelope and left it on a shelf for when I had the courage to give it to someone, which I never did. Waking the next morning I felt lighter and happier. The shame had gone and something had changed in me. I felt refreshed and focused.

I apologised to Paul and asked him to give me some time. I went to 6 Alcoholic Anonymous (AA) meetings a week and felt led spiritually to attend Emmanuel Christian Centre. As bizarre as it all was to me I couldn't get enough of God. This God that I hadn't believed in seemed to be everywhere I looked. Things were happening in a miraculous and unexplainable way.

I wanted to know God but I was afraid of becoming a 'church person'. I thought I would have to fit in and be boring, wearing floral dresses or 1950's church clothing. I persevered and continued to seek Jesus. I had no idea how exciting and adventurous having a relationship with God could be. I felt peaceful, I had Joy, I felt brave, I had hope that I could change, and felt empowered to do so.



I remember back in one of the AA meetings they spoke of a higher power we should look to. For some reason I blurted out, “there is only one higher power and His name is Jesus”. All the things I had previously tried in order to get better had failed me but when I handed my life to Jesus everything changed.

Nearly 10 years on God has transformed my life. Now we have a great marriage and a joyful, happy home.



Paul and I serve God and aim to pass on the love to others which He showed us. Life still happens and trials come but we have hope, a way-maker through every storm, one that never leaves us and holds us through everything. His name is Jesus. I would love for you to know Him. If you're ever in the area, call into our ReVista coffee shop and ask me about Him!

www.revista.org.uk

Proceeds from ReVista coffee shop are directed to charitable purposes. Open Wednesday to Friday, 10 AM to 3 PM at Emmanuel Christian Centre.

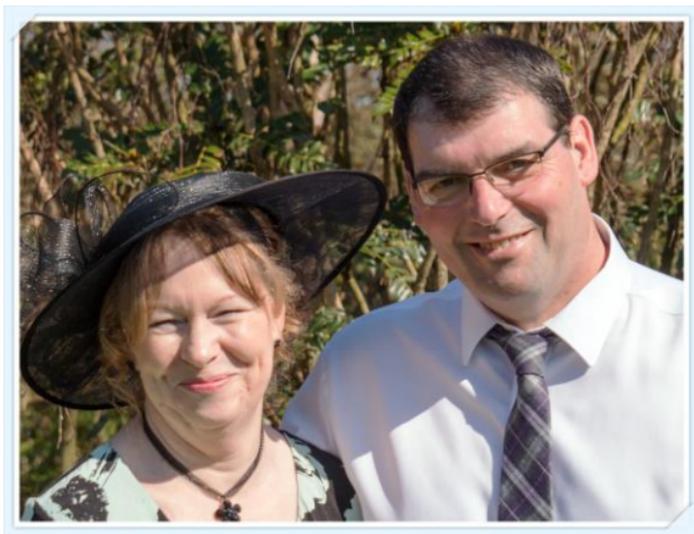
A famine of hearing the words

By Andrew Wright

I have been attending Emmanuel Christian Centre in Ulverston since 2006. I was raised in a Christian family in Glasgow but I wasn't a Christian myself. In fact as far as I was concerned, Sunday was the worst day of the week. I managed to 'escape' the family when I was 20 years old and for the next 30 years or so I ran around doing my own thing.

I got married and divorced, then married

again. Eventually my wife Christine and I came to live in Campbeltown Argyll.



She was brought up in the Catholic Church and at Christmas 2002 she asked if I would take her to Midnight Mass. She didn't enjoy it and the following Christmas she asked if I would take her to Inveraray for Mass which was 75 miles away. On arriving at the village we popped into a hotel for coffee. At 11.45 p.m. we realised we didn't know where the Chapel was and as we were running out of time we went into a local church just as their service was starting. At that service God moved on my

heart and I had an overwhelming desire to ask Him to come into my life.

During the next few days we spent time looking for a church to attend near home. We found Springbank Evangelical church and that's where I started my Christian life. During the summer of 2004 one of the church leaders was teaching from chapter 8 of the book of Amos. He started talking about a "famine of hearing the words of the Lord". I was filled with a deep, reverential fear and asked the Lord not to let me be one of the people who couldn't hear His words. About 18 months later the Lord brought me to live and work in Ulverston. When I found Emmanuel Christian Centre in the town I was amazed that part of the mission was to teach people to hear the voice of God; listening to His inner leading. He is an amazing God!

When I told my mother that I had become a Christian she told me that I was the last person she thought would live for God but it didn't stop her from praying for me all the time. We have a God that can reach anyone with His love!



Emmanuel Christian Centre is a member of Churches in Communities International (CiC).

CiC provides accreditation and accountability for Biblically-minded independent churches, to ensure, endorse and encourage their good standing in the community. As CiC advances globally, it has three core values that it keeps to the fore: compassion, integrity and co-operation.

By joining CiC, the Church at Emmanuel Christian Centre is committed to those values. The Church is also a member of the Evangelical Alliance which is one of the UK's largest and oldest organisations representing Christians.

Street Fights to the Good Fight

By Simon Cleasby

I was brought up in quite a strict single parent family with help from my grandmother and grandfather. In the mid 1970's my mother, grandmother and grandfather had all given their hearts to the Lord. One evening in



1977, I was told we were going to a large marquee on Gooseholme in Kendal because there was a Christian 'convention' on. I think it was called 'The witness' by Billy Graham.

At the time I was a member of a gang in Kendal. Not a gang like today with weapons and drugs; we were just a bunch of rebels who used to go around fighting and causing trouble. So I refused to go to the Christian convention and went out with the rest of the gang causing trouble as usual. However, later in the evening my friends spotted the marquee on Gooseholme and we went over to have a look at

what was going on.

Someone suggesting cutting all the guide ropes for the marquee but I said not to as my family were in there. "OK", one of the ring leaders said, "let's go in and see what we can do inside". I was cringing with embarrassment but followed the lads in.

The back row of chairs were pretty much empty and the gang sat down. I was amazed at this. "What were they doing? Why weren't they running amok?" but I joined them and sat down too. The minutes ticked by and the gang was not just quiet but they were actually listening to the charismatic speaker on the stage. So was I. It seemed like the speaker was speaking directly to me, not everyone else, even though he'd only glanced in my direction. "I believe there are people in here tonight who want to give their heart to the Lord", he said. "If you want to give your heart to the Lord tonight, walk up here and stand with me now" I stood up and started walking to the front. "Sit down Cleasby", my friends shouted. "Cleasby, stop messing around, sit down, show some respect". I carried on walking. I gave my heart to Christ that night. I now wanted to fight for Christ, but

not with my fists!

Over the last couple of decades, I'd fallen by the wayside somewhat and whilst I still proclaimed Christ as my saviour, I didn't lead a Christian life as I should. I met my lovely wife Ailsa in 1998 and we married the year after. I knew what was missing from life and from our marriage but I stumbled along using the excuse that I hadn't found a good church since we moved back to Cumbria.



I have a friend called Paul Brown and I knew Paul was a 'true Christian' so I asked Paul a few times if I could go to church with him.

Eventually I walked through the door at Emmanuel Christian Centre in Ulverston. Things moved quickly and within just a few weeks my lovely wife Ailsa gave her heart to the Lord. Ailsa saw so many lovely people at Emmanuel and she said to me, "I want what they've got".

So here we are in a wonderful church, with lovely people that have made us feel so welcome from day one. We are so excited about our journey ahead with Christ and with the wonderful love at Emmanuel.

This booklet has been produced by people from Emmanuel Christian Centre in Ulverston. We hope you have enjoyed reading their short stories. If you would like to hear more from them, or if you would like to experience the God of love for yourself, please feel welcome to join us for one of our Sunday services. They start at 10:30 a.m. in our building at Mill Street, Ulverston, LA12 7EB.

If you would like to talk in private, have a question, or want to arrange a meeting with our Minister, please contact us:



www.emmanuelcc.org.uk