

Friston Baptist Church

Mill Road, Friston, Saxmundham, IP17 1PH

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To our neighbours near the church in Friston village and our neighbours near where we individually live.

Dear neighbours,

With this letter I am enclosing a copy of a booklet entitled, "How we got our English Bible". I hope you will read it and that you will hand it to your children to read. The English Bible is a national treasure. I hope you will read the Bible itself and encourage your children to read it or read it to them. Perhaps start with the Gospel according to Mark. We used to read stories to our very young children from Katherine Vos "The Children's Bible" in 3-volumes; then the older children read it to the younger children. You could find a stockist on-line or I could find a copy for you.

Bible expressions have become part of our language. Like "the salt of the earth", "good for nothing" (Matthew 5.13), "pearls before swine" (Matthew 7.6), "safe and sound" (Luke 15.27). These all began with Jesus. He thought of them. And they have been translated from the Greek in which He spoke to become part and parcel of our language. And there are many others from the Old and New Testaments.

It is a shame that the Bible has been largely abandoned by people who **can** read. Once the Bible was the way children and many adults **learned** to read and was their first reading matter. Now there is so much literature, much of it trivial, much of it fantasy. And the Bible which speaks of everlasting truth is not read adequately, if at all. We shall be much poorer for neglecting it.

Jesus said, "I am the way, the **truth**, and the life" (John 14.6). Jesus also said, "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you" (John 14.2). He claims to deal in the truth. Faith accepts the rightness of that claim.

We are a Bible-believing church. The Gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ alone is preached every Sunday afternoon at 2pm. The public ministry within a service of worship on a Sunday morning at 10.45am and on Tuesdays at 7.30pm is "to read in the law of God distinctly, give the sense, and cause people to understand the reading" (Nehemiah 8.8).

We call our meetings "services:" because the occasions are directed to serve the Lord; like a waiter waits in a restaurant to serve those who order their meals, so we "wait upon" God to express worship of Him who made us, supplies us, forgives us and bestows eternal life. Our worship is Bible based.

However, the Bible points to Jesus Christ. We do not worship a book. This was a mistake some Jews made in the time of the Lord Jesus. Jesus said, "Search the scriptures; for in them did ye think ye have eternal life" (John 5. 39-40). We would love you to come to the Lord Jesus Christ for **life** through reading the Bible and seeking every opportunity to understand what it says. It is the way we ourselves have come, young and old.

God speaks to us by the Bible. Like all literature it appeals to the mind. God has made the mind to influence our affections and our wills. The powerful Holy Spirit of God takes the words of the Bible and lodges them in our minds where they nag away; or, like seeds, they grown and spread into a part, and then finally the whole of our thinking.

I will give you one example. Try other examples for yourself. Read the Bible and/or come to our services. The opening words of the Bible are, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Genesis 1.1). You may have been taught evolution. But these words challenge the mind to be sure that all previous thinking has been rightly thought out. Who taught you about evolution? Was it second-hand information? Or, if you do not believe in God, it challenges you to ask yourself again – at this stage of your life – did you have a secret motive to disbelieve in God? Was there something you wanted to be or do which you knew instinctively God would not allow?

In such ways the Bible speaks. And sometimes it speaks disturbing things we don't want to hear. If we are wise we will listen none the less. And think again.

The church also uses the Authorised Version of the Bible translated in 1611. It will be 400 years old in 2011; and 400 years ago it was in the middle of being translated. It has moulded our language and has been in constant use since then. It is what Brits hold in common. There have been more modern translations made. We use the AV, because in our opinion, it is the most accurate and its rhythms lend themselves to memorising it. Even the language of the translators themselves, if you read their preface, is dated; but it is because the Biblical languages themselves are timeless that their translation is simple.

Of course, our language changes. It is in a constant flux. But attempts to move with every flow confuses in the end. The AV Bible is a stabilising influence, a rock in a weary land. As is the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, whom it proclaims. It is easier to learn old expressions than to master new translations. But, mostly, the Bible is simple in its language. Jesus said, "I am the light of the world" (John 8.12). Nothing difficult in the language but what depths of thought!

It is necessary to master IT language, or garden flower language if you value communication or gardening. It can't really be done without. It is worth the small effort (it only needs to be done once) to learn the older usage of our language for the accuracy it provides. Accuracy is also provided by the italics in the A V; they show words that were not in the original language but needed

to be added to give sense or flow to the English. They are not emphatic as in modern literature.

And, in order that you may verify every quotation, I always give you the reference so that you can find it in the Bible. If you do not have a Bible you can view the sales website of the Trinitarian Bible Society at www.TBS-sales.org and order one from orders@TBS-sales.org. The church can provide a free copy for your immediate use.

So, I do hope you will read the booklet. I do hope that it will lead you to explore the Bible once again. And, in turn, that that will cause you to come to our services to hear the "truth of the gospel" (Galatians 2.5). And, so long as the church's teacher and preacher preaches not his own ideas but explains the Bible, then these words of the Bible will be found true -"for this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God" (1Thessalonians 2.13). "For we can do nothing against the truth but for the truth" (2 Corinthians 13.8).

Yours sincerely,

Michael Harley