



LBC Life

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In conversation with Esther Prescott

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How well do you know our LBC youth?

Our young people have pulled together a 'fun facts' quiz - see if you can match up the names with the quirks. p13

Welcome to LBC Life! A round-up of news, testimonies and stories from your church family, with faith-related creative and interactive content thrown into the mix. We hope you enjoy reading through and in doing so feel better connected to our church community and encouraged in your faith.

- The LBC Life team

Reconnecting with God and one another

Jonathan Bramwell

One of the things that always amazes me is that God cares about us and that he wants us to know him.

At the start of the Autumn term the leadership team spent a day away together, praying for direction and guidance for the coming months. We came with a few of our own plans and ideas. Amazingly, as the day unfolded we felt God speak to us. We came away convinced that the next season for LBC was to be a time of; 'Reconnecting with God and Reconnecting with each other.' Quite a snappy slogan, but what does it mean?

The last 3 years have been something of a challenge. For 2 years we were in and out of restrictions which changed our shared worshipping life. Even as restrictions ended, for many of us the threat posed by the pandemic has remained. It's not always been easy to get back into patterns of worship and sharing life together.

This is where the language of reconnection can help us. To reconnect is to actively pursue God, and to be reminded of why knowing God and journeying alongside fellow Christians is so important.

Since the New Year we've spent time remembering things such as: Who is God? How does God speak? How do we share life together? We have also spent a week together seeking God in prayer.

We hope and pray that during this season God will be building strong foundations: Enabling us to reconnect to him and to each other. Readyng us for renewed mission and discipleship as we continue to follow him.

Reconnection involves relationship. So, whether it's joining a small group (in person if you can, but we also have Zoom options), joining in with a prayer meeting or coming along on a Sunday, we'd love to encourage you to take part in this season to reconnect.

Meet the LBC leadership team: Esther Prescott

Interview by Amy Coppeard



Hi Esther - tell us a bit about yourself..

I've lived in Lymm for 20 years after moving with my husband Andy from London, and we've raised our three boys, Ben, Charlie and Josh, here. I remember coming to LBC when they were young and looking at the families with teenagers at the time, unable to imagine my little ones being that big. Now suddenly they are!

In my day job I'm an actuary at an insurance firm. Basically, it's like being an accountant, but using those mathematical skills to calculate and manage risk. It's a busy job.

So how did you become a leader at LBC?

I've always been involved in serving the church in different ways: creche, Sunday school, youth, and I host a Bible study on Friday mornings. Doing these things has really helped me get to know different people, so I'd really encourage anyone who doesn't yet feel settled in church to get involved in volunteering. Feel free to chat to me or any of the other leaders if you don't know where to start.

Last summer, vacancies came up in the leadership team and the church asked for people to step forward if they felt called. Honestly, my immediate reaction was to shy away. But over the following weeks, a few people approached me to say I should put myself forward. A little voice inside me saying 'you should do it' got louder and louder - so I went for it.

I'm not someone who would want to stand up and speak in front of everyone, but I've learned that you can absolutely be a leader without doing that - we need all sorts of different skills and strengths within a leadership team.

What have you been doing so far?

We meet monthly and discuss agenda items that include both practical and spiritual matters. Each leader has also taken on specific roles - mine is around church policies, where my experience as an actuary comes in very handy! It includes things like health and safety and safeguarding - all the rules and processes that are there to help protect us all

from things going wrong. We're a big church and we've got to make sure we're being responsible and keeping everyone safe. On top of that, I share responsibility for staff welfare, a role I am just starting to get to grips with.

I've also been here for the refreshing of the church vision. We had an away day to talk about the future of LBC, and everyone came with different ideas and potential projects to put forward ... but when we came together and prayed about it, none of them felt right. It became clear to all of us that God was saying LBC's immediate focus should be on 'reconnecting with God and reconnecting with each other'.

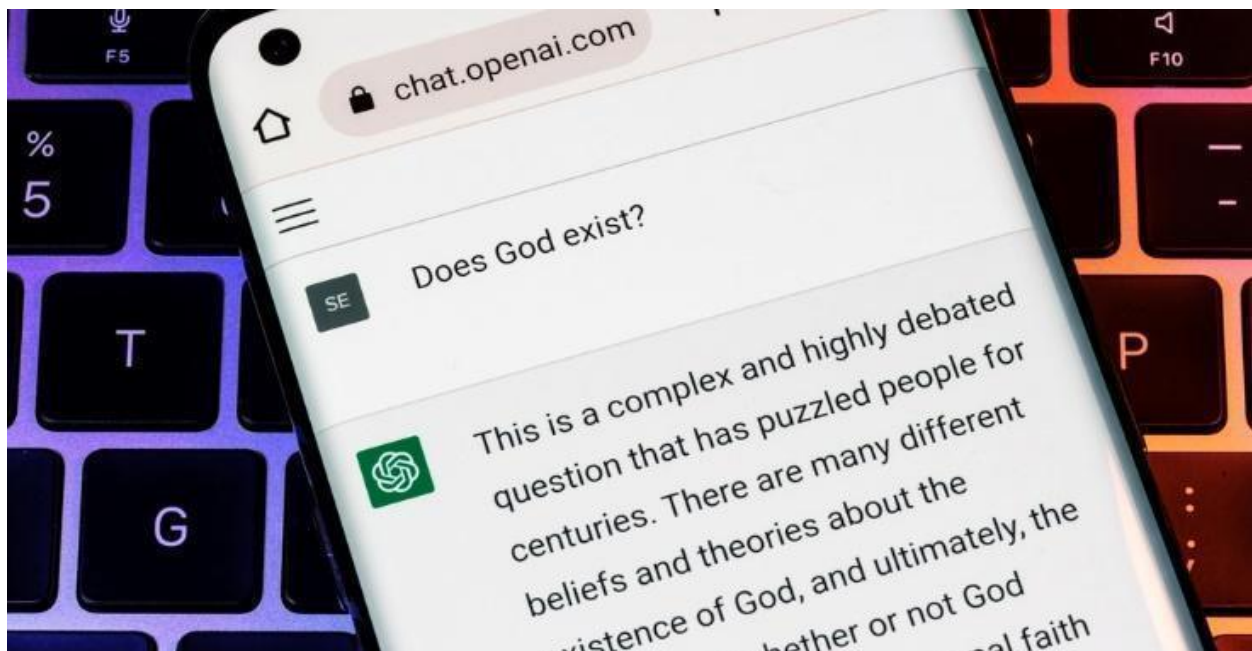
What can people chat to you about next Sunday in the coffee queue?

I've just started tennis lessons, and I'm currently undertaking a (self-imposed) challenge to walk the 1,680 mile Welsh coast - a chunk at a time on weekends, not all at once! I'd love to chat to people about their favourite parts of the Welsh coast... or hear their walking tips!

ChatGPT - the biggest leap forward in artificial intelligence for decades

But is the Church ready for auto-generated sermons, prayers and worship songs?

Chris Goswami



Have you come across a sermon written by Artificial Intelligence (AI)? Or read an AI generated prayer or thought for the day? Bizarre as it sounds, all of these are now possible. Unlike the time-consuming human versions, AI sermons appear in seconds - and they're not bad!

The free AI tool ChatGPT was launched on 30 November 2022 and gathered 100 million users in two months. Unsurprisingly, the world's media are all over it. The Financial Times reported: "An AI just passed a university exam (but don't worry it was only Economics!)" while the Daily Mail warned: "Teachers' concern that ChatGPT is 'so powerful' it could end homework".

What can ChatGPT do?

Here's an example. I asked ChatGPT to "write a short sermon for a Christian audience on 'encouraging one another' based on Hebrews 10:23-35."

Within 3 to 4 seconds a new, unique sermon began to appear:

"Life can be tough and it's not always easy to remain strong in our faith when we're going through hard times. That's why having the support of others is so important—not just spiritually, but emotionally too. We all need a little encouragement to get us through the tough times, and it doesn't have to come in the form of grand gestures. A hug, a kind word or just taking time out to listen can make all the difference when someone is feeling low.

The Bible is full of examples..."

Then followed examples from Moses to Jesus before ending up in Hebrews 10. It wasn't a great sermon but, with some (human) re-work, it was a *passable* sermon.

ChatGPT (and similar tools such as Jasper) work best with tough, quick-fire requests. For example: "Write a scary story in two sentences". The more detail you add, the better the response.

For example, I asked "Got any creative ideas for a low-cost eight-year old's birthday party, in my town?" Numerous suggestions followed, including making your own pizzas, tie-dye shirts, camping in the garden, a baking party, and even a science-experiment party, which it followed up with details of seven safe but exciting experiments (if only I was 8!).

Can God work through AI?

Using AI to personalise or summarise content already available on the internet is a good thing, eg when I asked:

"Produce a personalised Bible reading plan covering Luke's gospel in one month. Every day I want a reading followed by a short reflection from Nicky Gumbel. Add a short prayer."

It worked well! So what's the problem?

I think the main problem for Christians is hearing the voice of God versus the voice of a machine in the image of God.

Speaking God's word to people requires relationship. It requires empathy to place ourselves in the shoes of our congregations, their experiences, their perspective. It also requires a relationship with God to enable a "prophetic imagination" - being able to look into what God could do in *this* particular place based on a fresh move of his Spirit.

AI will provide huge and unimaginable advantages to churches and society. But our relationship with God and with other members of our church cannot be faked.

Extracted from Chris's article for Christianity Magazine which you can read at [7minutes.net](https://www.7minutes.net).

Supporting Ukraine: one year on

Lester Barr (interview by Amy Coppeard)

It was a year ago that we watched coverage of Russian tanks invading Ukraine in horror and disbelief. As the war began to unfold and people desperately sought a way out of the war zone, we all had the same immediate question: how can we help?

As a church, we've answered that question through supporting relief efforts, through church members hosting Ukrainian families fleeing the war, and by doing what we can to help welcome those families who have settled - for now at least - in the local area. A year on, we're still running a Saturday coffee morning for Ukrainian families. Lester Barr shares an update on what that's looking like - and how the church can continue to support.

Saturday mornings started when LBC volunteered to be a hub as the first families started arriving in Lymm, including setting up a free shop for school uniform, toys and toiletries. English lessons were quickly arranged to take place in the church, with refreshments and hospitality set up around them, offering welcome and community to all Ukrainian refugees in Lymm and the surrounding areas.

English teachers and the hospitality team (of which I'm part) arrive at 10am to set up the classrooms, ranging from little children to intermediate level, and the craft activities we offer for older children.



Our Ukrainian guests start arriving at 10.30. Typically, there will be between 15 and 20 adults, and up to 10 children. The hospitality team chat to anyone who isn't in a lesson and prepare for 11.30 when the lessons end and we have a social gathering where people catch up over tea and biscuits.

Many of the adults are now in employment and their children settled in local schools or colleges. We're just one part of a wider support system, but people value the relationships they've built on a Saturday morning and they've helped them integrate into our community.

Our church purpose (it's on the sign!) is 'building community – exploring faith'. Having spent a year doing the first of those things, we now want to give these families the opportunity to explore faith – as far as we know, none of the regulars have any prior church connection other than a loose affiliation to the Ukrainian Orthodox church. In the run up to Easter, we'll be expanding Saturday morning to include lunch and screenings of episodes of *The Chosen*, a series about the life of Jesus Christ, with subtitles in Ukrainian.

The war in Ukraine continues, with a worrying renewed Russian offensive. Although Ukrainian families locally are well-supported, they're still displaced from their home country, missing loved ones still there and worried about the future. Our church still has a part to play in all of this: let's keep praying over the war, pray that our screenings of *The Chosen* will see some fruit, and continue to think about ways we can share our faith and involve Ukrainians in church life.

For more information, speak to Lester Barr or Simon Fawcett.



My trip to Kirinya, Uganda

Sarah Cross (interview by Richard Evans)



Last November, I went on a mission trip with a small team to support the Kirinya Children's Centre, a nursery and primary school in Kirinya which is located near to Kampala. It was founded by Helen Owen to educate very poor children (helenmargaretowenfoundation.org).

The purpose of the trip was to spend time at the school and work closely with our Ugandan Pastor friends in holding conferences in several parts of Uganda. We were also distributing the contents of a container previously sent out by CARE UK, a humanitarian aid charity where I volunteer. This was the first one to go to Africa. Hallelujah!

The container was crammed full of wheelchairs, crutches, zimmer frames and other walking aids, school desks, chairs, cupboards, filing cabinets, sports equipment, toys, clothes, educational resources, sewing machines, baby equipment/clothes, bibles, PPE equipment and so much more. Despite experiencing issues during the shipment process, I was thrilled that most of the donations were distributed and blessed many people. Every family represented by a child at the school was given a gift, not one person was left out! We were also able to bless some of the staff who worked at the Ugandan government tax office and warehouse where the items had been stored, with bibles and Christian magazines, which was an incredible and very humbling experience. We also ran a training day for local church leaders.

Not only did the school and local community get to benefit from the aid but people further away. Some of the sewing machines were given to refugees from bordering countries, in conjunction with a young lady called Lucy who works with them, providing them with hope and a lifelong skill making beautiful handbags, a way out of poverty. She told us she'd been praying for some time for some sewing machines. Praise God!

We also gave the children and teachers dental hygiene lessons ahead of the dental charity, Dentaaid visiting and working with them this coming autumn. It was also a great pleasure to take the children swimming, something they seldom get to do as it's so expensive.

As some of the aid was being given out, the headteacher, Geoffrey, said "We are so thankful to God and all involved for the way in which you've brought us from grass (roots) to grace."

Prayer points:

1. Good health and protection for all staff and children.
2. The students are bright, very hard working and caring, but sadly there is no high school for them to go to when they reach 12-13. Please pray for opportunities for further education for them.
3. Financial support, which is always welcome.
4. Personally, I know that God has given me a heart for mission (this was my fifth trip abroad) and I'd really welcome prayer for the next step of His plan for my life.

Thank you!

That was the week that was... reflections on the week of prayer (24-29th January)

Andrew Begent Peers (interview by Richard Evans)

The purpose of the week of prayer was to reconnect with God and each other, using the Lord's prayer. Meetings were held at 8am, 1pm and 8pm each weekday, culminating in a breakfast and time of worship and prayer on Saturday morning. The week was brilliantly organised by Andrea Goswell (LBC's Prayer Coordinator) who managed to sign up 14 different people to lead the 18 meetings. They did so in very different ways which was so refreshing. We had some really special get-togethers with God and each other! Meetings

were all well attended and around 70 different people took part, some coming along on a number of occasions.

Looking back on the week, folk who came along felt that God had spoken in a number of ways, challenging us to: pray big and not limit Him given his infinite resources, urging us to forgive and be forgiven so that we are at peace and at one with each other, and prompting us to seek ways of sharing our wealth with those that are struggling to get by in the current cost of living crisis.

Here is what the week meant to just one of our members, Andrew Begent Peers:



The good Lord truly blessed me and answered my prayers in so many ways over the week of prayer. I am disabled and find periods of low pressure during the winter months particularly restrictive as this causes me increased pain, lessens my mobility and makes me largely housebound. During the week of prayer, the weather improved which meant I was able to enjoy a week of wonderful fellowship.

I asked other members of my small group to pray that I would be able to attend the group bible study on the Wednesday night, and I did, for the first time for 18 months! I then attended prayer meetings on the following two days and felt so full of the Spirit. I almost spoke in tongues, but for some reason held back.

I also went along to the Saturday breakfast and again really felt spirit-filled. We separated into small groups and after two people had laid hands upon me, I did speak in tongues which was truly a blessing and amazing experience, praise the Lord.

The fellowship has been an awesome experience for me too, which was what I needed so much. Without doubt the Lord is working in my life. Thank you to all who have prayed for me and for your fellowship over that week.

Grey days

Reflection by Carol Best

One morning in late summer, I caught a bus over a mountain road. The journey was a feast for the eyes. An amber sunrise shimmered on the calm sea; grass glistened green and the hilltops were dusted with lilac heather.

Fast forward two days. It was the same journey, same time... but the best description would be grey, grey, grey. There was no view at all, only the steamy bus windows and the clunk of the windscreen wipers.

If today is your 'grey day', please remember that the sun still shines and the mountain is still dressed in all its beauty, just temporarily out of sight.

Why, my soul, are you downcast?

Why so disturbed within me?

Put your hope in God,

for I will yet praise him,

my Saviour and my God.

Psalm 43:5

Prayer

A poem by Janice Slater

Can prayer be just an inclination towards the light
Or a captivating immersion in brilliance?
Do I kneel face to the ground
Or raise my arms in wonder?
Shall I use sophisticated words or will my simple mumblings do?
Will it matter if I pray for a minute or stay an hour?
When I can't find words
Will you know,
my need for forgiveness, mercy
Or heartfelt thanks for so many blessings?
Do I pray believing?
or just hope that you will hear this insignificant travelling from my mouth to your ear.
Within this intimate conversation
Is your voice my conscience?
An invisible holy connection
Existing with me side by side
A tiny bit of God's intention
Almost too immense to comprehend!

.....

Just for fun

Stretch your brain with some topical puzzles and quizzes!
Answers on page 16.

How well do you know them? LBC youth quiz

LBC has some amazing youth, but how well do you know them?

A: I have a freckle in one eye

B: I don't like sausages

C: I once pulled a hamstring doing the splits

D: My favourite dog breed is a sausage dog










E: I have posted a YouTube video that has had over 3,500 views!

F: I did a paraglide from the top of a Turkish mountain aged 9!

G: I travelled to 4 different countries in 24 hours

H: I cracked my head open twice in the same week

I: I can complete a Rubik's cube in less than 60 seconds

<p>1. Sophia Chadwick</p> 	<p>2. Charlie Prescott</p> 	<p>3. Ethan Denbow</p> 	<p>4. Esther Compton</p> 	<p>5. Miriam Denbow</p> 
<p>6. Reuben Compton</p> 	<p>7. Emily Buckthorpe</p> 	<p>8. Leah Denbow</p> 	<p>9. Livvy Compton</p> 	

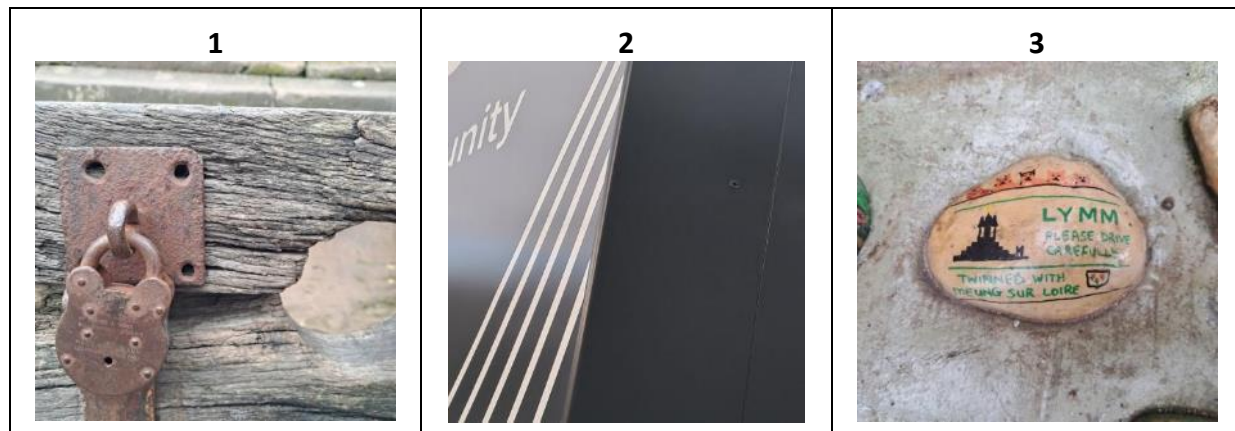
Word search

Can you find the names of 11 Biblical trees hidden here?

Y	R	R	E	B	L	U	M	D
S	A	Y	L	E	L	N	P	N
S	F	A	C	E	D	A	R	O
E	P	I	Y	A	L	K	W	M
R	C	T	G	M	M	A	F	L
P	E	V	I	L	O	O	I	A
Y	M	M	U	S	T	A	R	D
C	O	A	P	P	L	E	P	A

Out and about

Can you identify the following 12 landmarks and where you would find them?





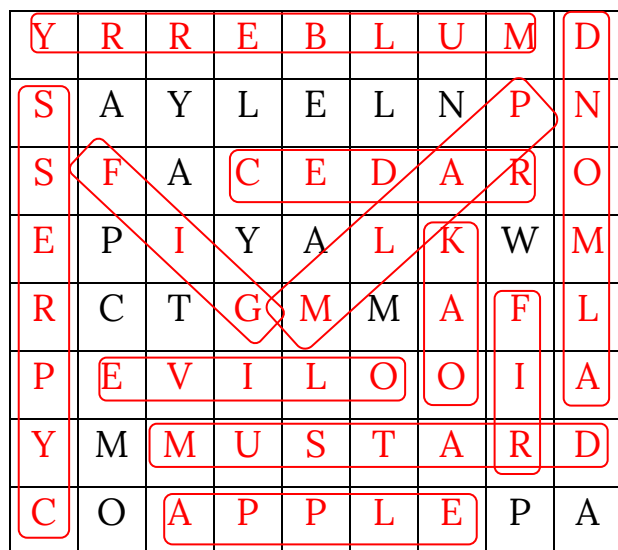
Answers on the next page



LBC youth quiz

1. Sophia Chadwick- I did a paraglide from the top of a Turkish mountain aged 9! (F)
2. Charlie Prescott - I have posted a YouTube video that has had over 3,500 views! (E)
3. Ethan Denbow - I travelled to 4 different countries in 24 hours (G)
4. Esther Compton - I once pulled a hamstring doing the splits (C)
5. Miriam Denbow - I don't like sausages (B)
6. Reuben Compton - I cracked my head open twice in the same week (H)
7. Emily Buckthorpe - I can complete a Rubik's cube in less than 60 seconds (I)
8. Leah Denbow - My favourite dog breed is a sausage dog (D)
9. Livvy Compton - I have a freckle in one eye (A)

Word search



Out and about photo quiz

1. Stocks, The Cross
2. LBC sign, Higher Lane
3. Lymm Heritage Centre, off Henry Street car park
4. Old entrance to Beechwood, Crouchley Lane
5. Guide Dogs dog outside Hopkinson's Butchers, The Cross
6. Thelwall Ferry, Ferry Lane
7. Transpennine Trail sign, off Statham Avenue
8. Spread Eagle pub sign, Eagle Brow
9. Old road sign, Booth's Hill Road
10. Dinosaur's footprint, The Grove, Lower Dam
11. John Wesley plaque, Millington Lane, under M56
12. Crosfield Bridge, The Avenue

Calling all photographers...

Entries to our photographic competition are invited on the subject of '**Connecting / Reconnecting**'. Please email submissions to news@lyymbaptistchurch.com by 31st May, 2023. The competition will be judged by Chris Beesley, Honorary Secretary of Lymm Photographic Society, whom many of you know.

We will publish the winning photographs in the next edition of LBC Life. Happy snapping!



Email news@lyymbaptistchurch.com
with questions or to suggest content you'd like to see in future issues