

The city of Philippi was a trading hub connecting East and West. It was the perfect place for the Apostle Paul to establish the first church in Europe in 52AD, in response to a vision from God. Paul's sponsor was an early convert, a rich woman called Lydia, who provided him and Silas a home until violent opposition ended with the apostles being imprisoned—though they were freed after an earthquake led to the jailer's conversion (Acts 16).

Less troubled than the correspondence with Corinth, less formal than the message to Rome, more personal than the epistle to Ephesus, this is a spontaneous, warm and loving letter. Written about a decade after Paul founded the church, it lays out again the essential truths of the faith. He employs Epaphroditus, their envoy and a bearer of gifts, to deliver his message, as that brother is about to return to them from Rome.

Paul states in various ways how much joy the Philippian church brings him—and how much he wants them to rejoice in their salvation.



*A caring community with every member equipped to demonstrate Christ, working with others to advance God's Kingdom in Chard and the world*

**Seek God** – in prayer, worship, study of the Scripture and fellowship, we value the pursuit of God in Jesus Christ;

**Love Generously** – in time, talent and treasure, to stimulate one another to good works and a lifestyle of generosity;

**Expect transformation** – to see God's Holy Spirit move in individual lives, in the church and across our community

You may have been coming to Forefront for years. Or maybe you just popped in for one Sunday. Either way, if you feel moved to act on anything mentioned in the talks, we would be pleased to pray with you.

Ask someone in the service to point you in the right direction, or call in during the week at Forefront Community Centre (next to Chard Post Office sorting centre).

# Joy in Jesus

## Paul's letter to the Philippians



Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!

**Philippians 4:4**

## 1 – Saints in Christ

1 October: Jo Kerr

### Php 1:1-11

How does Paul describe his feelings toward the people in the church at Philippi? Why does he 'always pray with joy' for them? (To understand his phrase 'partnership in the gospel' take a look at 4:15, too.)

If a church is well-founded and its people love one another, there is still a need for progress. Paul's prayer (9-11) paints a picture of how a church should desire to mature further.

## 2 – To live is Christ

8 October: David Burfield

### Php 1:12-26

The historical account of the founding of the church, the book of Acts, ends with Paul under house arrest and proclaiming the gospel to anyone who would visit him (Acts 18:16-31). What details does our passage add about his detention at this time? What is the effect of his imprisonment on other Christians? What shapes his attitudes and his resolve to continue living, not giving in to the temptation to abandon the gospel? What gives him joy in the dark moments?

## 3 – Worthy of Christ

15 October: Nigel Marsh

### Php 1:27—2:18

The call to 'stand firm' is written at a time of peril and possible death for those proclaiming Jesus (rather than Caesar) as Lord. What does it mean to us, whose temptation is to compromise and accommodate, and where the threat to our spiritual life comes from entertainment and politics rather than persecution?

## 4 – Imitating Christ

22 October: Michael Tiffany

### Php 2:1-11

The goal of the Christian life is not to follow rules better, but to be more like Jesus. Believers hunger to sacrifice anything—any sin, but also any pleasure—if it means the possibility of being a little closer to Jesus Christ, more like him, a better ambassador for him. The hunger grows as we get to know the Lord better. Paul urges the Philippians to "have the same mind as Christ Jesus" (2:5), the same humility and willingness to sacrifice for others.



## 6 – Knowing Christ

5 November: David Burfield

### Php 3:1-11

Paul always has tough things to say about people who want to bring legalistic rules into the church. Calling them 'dogs' and 'evildoers' may seem surprising! If someone was to ask you what Paul's goal was in his life and ministry, how would you answer, based on this passage? How does it reflect your own motivations?

## 8 – Standing Firm in Christ

19 November: Dave Sutcliffe

### Php 4:1-9

Even mature Christians can fall into disputes, it appears, and Paul urges two prominent members to sort their issues out, with the help of others. Then he can close his message with an appeal to the whole church, to do the things which lead to joy, peace and purity of thought and action.

## 9 – Our Riches in Christ

26 November

Jo Kerr

### Php 4:10-23

Paul's account of the Philippians' support for him reveals an interesting attitude to wealth—the money given is less important than the motive for giving it (see Matt 6:21). He is grateful for their partnership in his ministry, demonstrated through their gift; but he is not dependent on it. Their gift is an offering and a sacrifice not because of the amount, but because of the love and desire for participation that it reveals.

## 5 – True Servanthood

29 October: Tom Smith

### Php 2:19-30

The story of the early church is the story of real people laying down their lives for Jesus, and for one another. Here, we get deep insights into three of them; Timothy, Epaphroditus and Paul, their leader and mentor. What more do you feel you know about them after reading this passage? What makes them tick? How should we follow their example? (Note the way 2:4 applies to the church, and 2:21 makes Timothy the example.)

## 7 – Transformed by the Power of Christ

12 November: Peter Glasgow

### Php 3:12-21

We should be careful to choose whom we want to copy, in an age of vengeful superheroes, "post-truth" politicians and money- and sex-crazed celebrity. Paul is bold enough to set himself up as an example of one "pressing on" toward heaven, in contrast with the model offered by the world (vv18,19). What is the danger for us of following that example?