

Home Time

CHESS - Christian Home Education Support Service

issue

80

2022



Let us not become weary in doing
good, for at the proper time we will
reap a harvest if we do not give up.

Galatians 6:9

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Letter from the Editor

Ruth Barber

Welcome to our new-look Home Time! I hope you find it uplifting - a place where you are both encouraged and inspired to share your own home ed wisdom and successes.

We now have a *Letters* page, so do send your comments to me via the email address listed on the back page and you could be featured in the next issue.

Many of you have contacted us in recent days wanting to connect to others in your area, so we have upgraded our membership database, and it is now much easier to find others. Why not sign in to the website and take a look? Any ex-directory members wishing to include directory access, just drop us an email and we can easily change this.

CHESS wants to create opportunities for more members to be actively involved in some exciting new initiatives launching this year - check out page 20 to see how you can join in. We can all play a part in making CHESS a vibrant hub of prayer, support, connections and activities for Christian home educating families, wherever in the UK you are!

We need to keep praying over the political situation regarding home education in the UK as politicians increasingly want to move towards the registration and monitoring of home educators. Pray for key issues and people using the guide on page 18.

May the Lord be your strength and may He guide you in all Wisdom and Truth as you live for Him!



Family Psalm Singing

Ellen White

My husband has always enjoyed putting verses to music. At the start of the first lockdown, he had been preaching through David's adventures in 1 and 2 Samuel and finding that meditating on the corresponding Psalms (which tell us so much about David's state of mind and heart during his trials!) were massively helping him preach. As he meditated on these Psalms, tunes would come into his head, and he found himself setting whole Psalms to music as sermon prep, and teaching them to our family line by line at family Bible times.



As it happened, we were going through a trial of our own at the time – my husband's church job was coming to an end and we had no idea as to where/what next. Being a one-income, home educating family with seven children, the responsibility weighed especially deeply on my husband... We were losing our job, income, house, church, and even prospects, as sadly differences on the pastoral team meant our church leadership felt they wouldn't give us a positive reference to work in another church. Lockdown, and with activities being cancelled left, right and centre, meant we were all based at home, unable to get away from/be distracted by our stressful trial, and unable to meaningfully job-hunt or house-hunt.

Needless to say, we were properly at the end of ourselves, and could relate 100% to King David's feelings of fear, rejection, failure, hurt, despair, anger... We absolutely did not have it all together, and the fact was quite evident to our children!

Singing through Psalms word for word, day by day, became quite literally our lifeline during what turned out to be the most gruelling months of our lives so far as a family.

To pour our hearts out to Him with gutsy honesty (*The enemy...has crushed my life to the ground...Ps 143:3*), to (loudly!) praise God in spite of circumstances (*I will sing aloud of your steadfast love in the morning, Ps 59:16*), written when David's enemies were camped outside his house to kill him!), to declare His goodness in spite of evidence to the contrary (we sang, *Be exalted, O God, above the heavens! Let your glory be over all the earth! Ps 57:5*) again and again the night my husband lost his job), to boldly assert His victory over all our enemies in the spiritual realm (*Then my enemies will turn back, on the day when I call. Ps 56:9*), to look forward to our future hope with the certainty that we will overcome (*Arise, O Lord! Deliver me, O my God! Ps 3:7*)...His living and active word gave us the words and truly fed our souls, when we had nothing to say but emptiness.

One of the Psalms my husband had apparently always wanted to learn, was Psalm 119. I remember hearing him mention this about 15 years ago, and laughing at the thought of that ever happening – by anyone!

Well, in the months of being in between jobs, house-hunting (being turned down numerous times by prospective landlords for being 'too large' a family), and packing up the house whilst not knowing when/where we could go, unbeknownst to me, he started setting each section of Psalm 119 to a different tune.

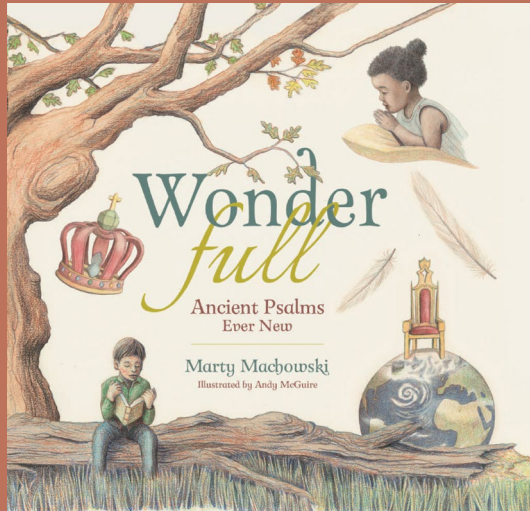
He started to teach each section to the children and me, line by line, slowly, slowly. Many times we despaired when we heard the new tune and all said, "We'll never learn that!" But the weeks turned into months, and it was with great amazement that we found by the time we had moved into our new home (miraculously provided by God out of the blue – that's another story!) and had found out that our new area was desperate for plumbers (my husband's pre-ministry trade!),

we were learning the last section of Psalm 119 and could sing the whole thing through.

After that, much to our delight, we even found out that the leaders of our new church had been wanting to learn to sing Psalms for a while, and my husband was invited to participate in the weekly live streaming of spontaneous Psalm singing with church musicians. Woohoo!

We continue to sing and learn new Psalms as a family. It remains such a source of strength for us. I now truly understand why this book is called 'the songbook of Israel'. I know we are instructed to sing a new song to the Lord, and I love new songs/hymns! But there is something about singing Psalms word for word which is so incredibly powerful, and I hope I can always sing Psalms too! Not only is it literally God's word breathed out by His Spirit, but knowing it has been sung for thousands of years by believers going through all the ups and downs of life this side of heaven, is fortifying beyond words!





Book Review

Wonder Full

Marty Machowski & Andy McGuire

Your children may know of the Psalms, but with *Wonder Full* by best-selling author Marty Machowski, young readers learn to use the whole book of the Psalms to pray and find help through the challenges life is certain to bring.

Oliver and his grandfather spend days sitting in front of an old oak tree, reading through the book of Psalms together. As Oliver's curiosity about God evolves into a deep and abiding faith, his grandfather continues to read to him and pray with him, discovering together the beauty of the Psalms.

Even when Oliver's grandpa is no longer able to read with him, Oliver continues to cherish the Psalms - especially in times of trial - and he imagines what it will be like to see God face to face and his grandfather again in heaven.

As a best-selling author to numerous books and curricula for kids, Marty Machowski draws on over thirty years of experience as a pastor to provide Scripture-based truth and hope for young readers. Machowski doesn't just help kids become familiar with the Psalms. He helps them apply what they are learning to their own lives, which is a gift that will continue to deepen their walk with Christ as they grow older.

Introducing Streams

Jo Sweetland

**‘Our vision is for all
home educating families
to thrive and find a place
to belong.’**

Editors note: Juliet English has worked tirelessly in home education circles for many years, often very closely with CHESS, so we are delighted to introduce her new project to our members with an article by Jo Sweetland.

I love reading Brené Brown books; her research-based observations and insights are fascinating and regularly challenge me. This quote below resonated with me as I reflected on my home ed journey:

‘Standing on the precipice of the wilderness is bone-chilling because belonging is so primal... Choosing the wily outpost over the security of the city gates takes a true act of courage. The first step can take your breath away...

‘But I have discovered something beautiful; the loneliest steps are the ones between the city walls and the heart of the wilderness, where safety is in the rear-view mirror, new territory remains to be seen, and the path out to the unknown seems empty.



‘But put one foot in front of the other enough times, stay the course long enough to actually tunnel into the wilderness, and you’ll be shocked how many people already live out there – thriving, dancing, creating, celebrating, belonging. It is not a barren wasteland. It is not unprotected territory. It is not void of human flourishing.

‘The wilderness is where all the creatives and prophets and system-buckers and risk-takers have always lived, and it is stunningly vibrant. The walk there is hard, but the authenticity out there is life.’ (*Braving the Wilderness*, Brené Brown 2017)

I often feel as home educators we live in the wilderness, a place of the wild and free – vibrant, authentic and rich. For some home educators the journey is like a well-planned expedition; researched, equipment/tools for the journey packed and a team in place to journey with you. For others, like me, it is a reaction to school not working; not necessarily a spur-of-the-moment decision, but not a life choice from the start. The first steps literally take your breath away.

I come from a family of teachers and school was never something I questioned. Although I had met the odd home educator, I never explored the thought as an option for my family. It was only when my son started school that something started to niggle... it took five years to actually make the decision, although only in the final year did the ‘Shall we home ed?’ question become part of regular conversations at home. I remember leaving school on that last day, walking home

with the children; within me an exhilarating feeling of freedom and excitement. I remember in those early days my big questions were: How do we find friends? What did people actually do with their children at home all day? What resources did they use? The reality was we had started our journey ill-equipped and unprepared.

We took six months to de-school and, as I began to explore available resources, I also got insight into how expensive they can be – how did people know what to use, I used to think. I almost felt sorry for the home educating mums I met in those early days as I would bombard them with questions, hungry for answers. I often used to think it would be great if there was one space where you could go and read about resources others use and learn about how they spend their days... Where social media platforms offered some answers, not being very tech savvy, I would find myself getting lost in different groups unsure where I fit and where to find community.

The desire to build community; to encourage and equip home educators, is where *Streams* came from. With two local friends, Matt Harris and Sian Lowe, we connected with Juliet English who had carried a similar vision for nine years. In those early months of Lockdown our dreaming and planning began and the vision for *Streams* was born.

Streams has a mission to encourage, equip and connect home educators. Our vision is for all home educating families to thrive and find a place to belong. Our site has gone live with the first part of the mission; a place to share stories and reviews of resources. We would love you to come sign up and submit a story and review (or more than one!). We all know how powerful it is to read a story; whether it is a good news story that lifts our spirits or a real story of the challenges we face – they warm our hearts and we connect with each other in this place of vulnerability. Reading a review of a resource that another home educator has used is so helpful as it enables you to think about if it could work for your own children. We ask people to share as much as they can in the reviews – the more that is written, the more helpful the review. Anyone who signs up on the site as a member will receive a monthly newsletter and be able to join us for some webinars which Juliet will be holding. Juliet is also offering mentoring sessions for people who want to learn from her extensive experience as a home educator. This mentoring service will grow as we recruit other experienced home educators to join our team.

Over the months ahead we will develop the site further; For a small monthly cost, members will be able to access the 'connect' part of the website which will enable them to find friends locally, discover events happening locally to them, access a safe online chat space where questions can be asked and connection made with others, receive discounts on resources, listen to webinars as well as a monthly product promotion where there will be opportunity to ask the resource creator

questions about their product and receive a discount for buying it. This is just the next phase; our ideas keep growing and we would value yours as well. Help us grow *Streams*, come and join us and shape what it could be.

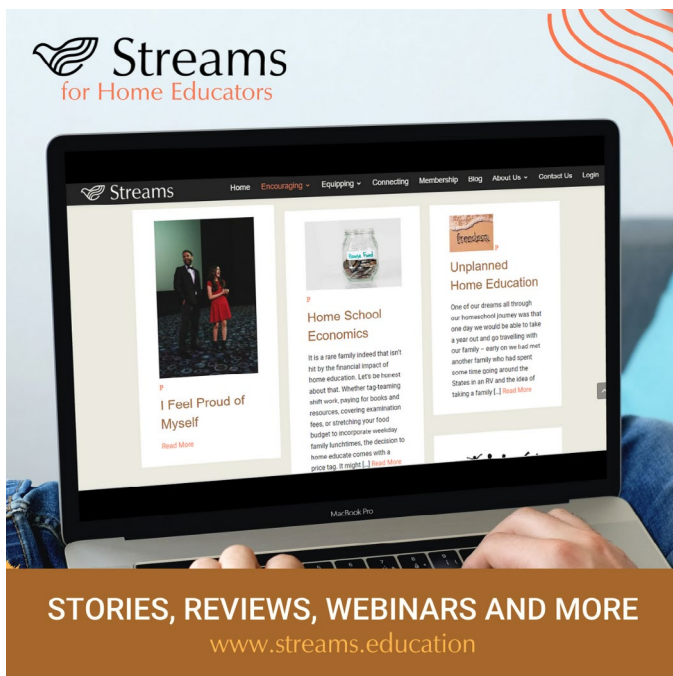
Streams is underpinned by three strong values:

Courage We're brave, we boldly communicate, we're willing to be vulnerable, we're prepared to take risks.

Integrity We're true to what we believe, we honour ourselves and each other, we're open and honest.

Community We're inclusive, we appreciate difference, we know we're stronger when we journey together.

As my home ed experience has grown, one thing I have come to love is that all of our children are different, we all do home ed differently and there is no right way. The freedom to home educate is a gift we treasure. Our hope is that *Streams* will bring another layer of connectedness and strength to our ever-expanding community. We invite you to join us.



STREAMS, REVIEWS, WEBINARS AND MORE
www.streams.education

Dealing with Anger

Ruth Barber and Zane Biele

Refrain from anger and give up
your rage; do not be agitated —
it can only bring harm.
Psalms 37:8

Anger is a very powerful emotion which I'm sure most of us struggle with from time to time, if not every day! Most of us would probably say that anger is a negative emotion that we need to eliminate from our lives.

*Refrain from anger and give up your rage; do not be agitated — it can only bring harm.
Psalms 37:8*

But I'd like to draw your attention to another verse that was sent in from Zane Biele when dealing with this issue in her home. Zane asked her child to choose one of six verses from the Bible that speak about anger, and challenged them to learn it in English and also their native Latvian! It set me thinking about anger:



Be angry and do not sin. Don't let the sun go down on your anger, and don't give the devil a foothold. Ephesians 4:26-27

We are exhorted to 'be angry' but 'do not sin'. Think about that for a minute... it's okay to be angry, but not okay to sin! So there is a difference between anger and rage. When anger is not subject to self control it can become damaging and controlling. Anger can be a positive emotion that gives us the strength and drive to confront injustices, or to make positive changes in our lives.

Early in our home ed journey, we had four children aged five and under. We did everything together - we had breakfast, cleared up, had Bible time, did Maths and so on, but always as a group. As time went on, we began to experience much frustration as some were waiting for others to finish their part of each process. This usually led to mischief whilst waiting or disobedience when we were finally all ready to start the next thing. I regularly lost my temper.

In your anger do not sin; when you are on your beds, search your hearts and be silent. Psalms 4:4

Eventually the day came where the frustration boiled over into tears and I cried,

‘This isn’t working, something needs to change!’

Charles and I sat down and began to examine the things that triggered a release of anger, discussed the issues and worked out a different approach to our days.

Everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger, for man’s anger does not accomplish God’s righteousness. James 1:19-20 (HCSB)

We made changes including individual responsibility for different ‘chores’ and a timetable for each person was introduced so that everyone knew what they were supposed to be doing, even if it took a little while to implement effectively. This was such a revelation! And it had a hugely positive impact. The timetable remains to this day, and has frequently been tweaked and amended in response to how things are going generally in our home!

All bitterness, anger and wrath, shouting and slander must be removed from you, along with all malice. And be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving one another, just as God also forgave you in Christ. Ephesians 4:31-32

Saying sorry and asking for forgiveness from each other and from the Lord is a constant theme in our home still. I found many other things to lose my temper over! Knowing what the Bible instructs about anger is very important.

Zane emailed me to share her thoughts and response to the anger being expressed in her home:

“These days people are also very angry and there are many disturbing riots in the world, even young people. I thought there was no anger in me, but if someone filmed our daily home ed life, it would look worse than I think!”

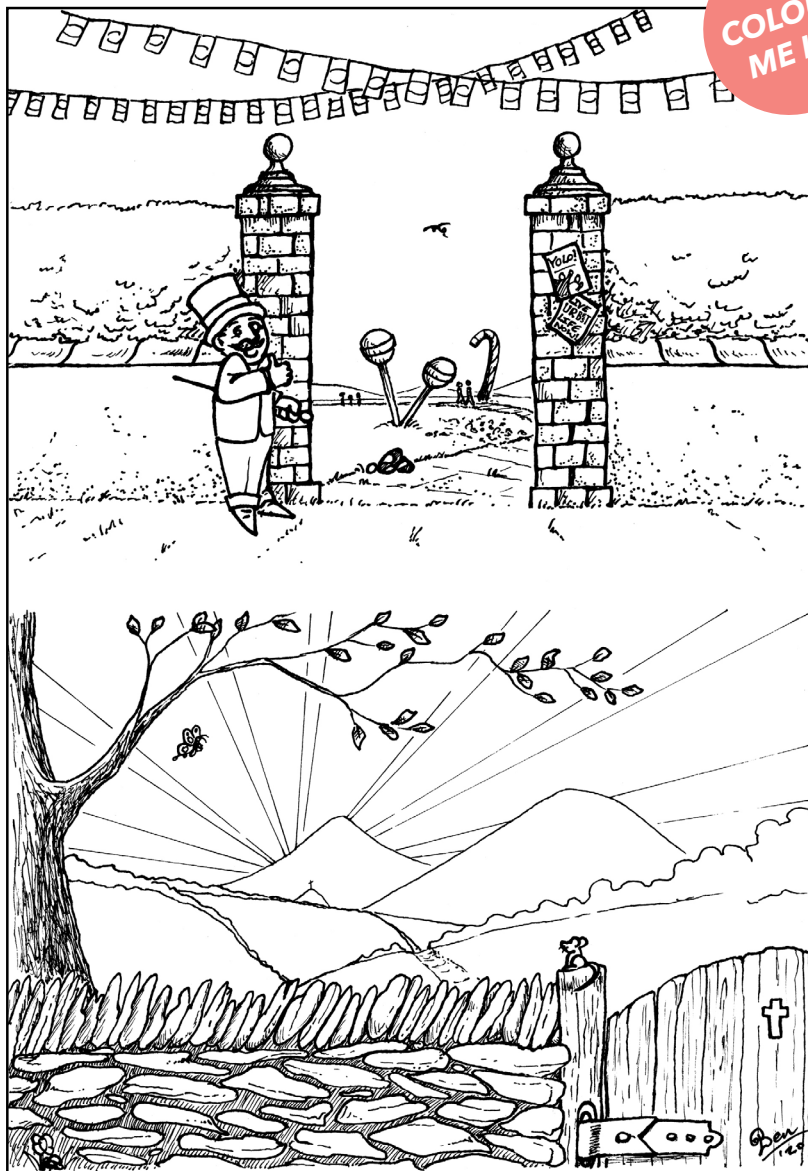
‘We need to remember His Word and if we repeat and learn His Word, we will be encouraged.’

I pray that we will be actively growing in love and grace, and in the fruit of the spirit as we seek to be made more like Jesus every day.

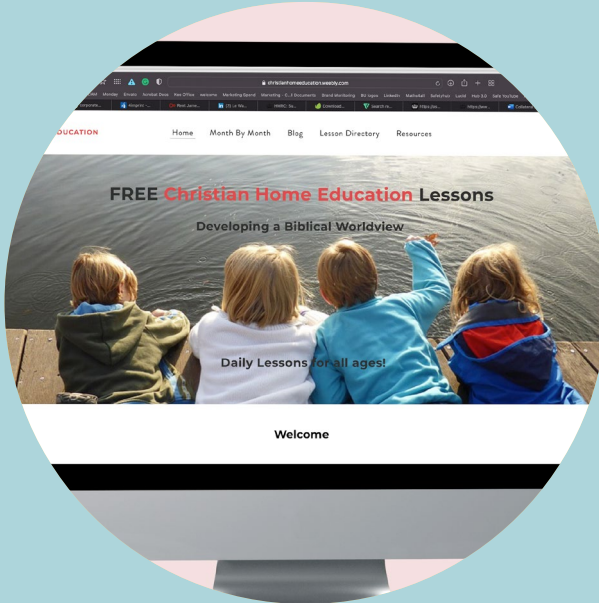
I have hidden Your Word in my heart that I might not sin against You. Praise to You, O Lord: teach me Your degrees with my lips I recount all the laws that come from Your mouth. Psalms 119:11

Which path will you choose?

COLOUR
ME IN!



An original drawing by Ben-Peter Scotton for **Rooted** – a magazine created by three home educated girls to encourage Christian young women in their walk with the Lord. Find out more at rooted-mag.com.



Letters

We have been home educating for fifteen years and, as we look to the end of that journey in a very few years, it is our desire to continue to be supportive to the community. Life is always challenging, our specific challenges have been chronic ill health in children and special needs.

We adopted and the second time around were home educating (that was interesting...!) If anyone facing the same issues as we have would like to email or talk, please get in touch... janewalkington@gmail.com Obviously we don't have all the answers but experience does help....

Free Christian resources

Have you discovered www.christianhomeeducation.weebly.com yet? For well over a year, we have been adding lessons and activities to this site and there is plenty of material now ready to use. The free lessons are laid out calendar style, some months have four or five lessons per week and all months except August have a least one lesson per week. Each lesson hinges on the particular date, homing in on something that happened on that day in history.

We've tried to make things adaptable for a wide variety of ages and also to consider families where children at different stages are working together. There is a mix of discussion topics for older children, craft activities, kitchen science experiments, suggestions for simple outings or activities you can do in the garden all keyed into the day's topic.

There is also a memory verse for each week which is often tied in to the topics under consideration and the whole thing is geared to teaching consistent Biblical world-view and values as well as reconsidering, in the light of God's word, ideas you might come across in non-Christian textbooks. It should be useful to dip into whatever curriculum (or none) you use.

Everything's free so help yourself everyone!

Chris Eastwood & Joanne Arro@smith

We live in Staffordshire, close to the borders of Shropshire and Cheshire. The chapel where we are members is very willing to host Christian home ed groups or occasional events. Please contact us if this is something you could make use of at no charge.

Lastly, we are involved in the CED Exam Centre in Mow Cop, Cheshire. It is volunteer run at Mow Cop Community Church. A faith-based, friendly setting with great views across the Cheshire plains! Again, please get in contact if you would like further information.

Ian and Jane Walkington

Ponder and Pray

Ruth Barber

Since Portsmouth home educators lost their legal challenge against the aggressive actions of Portsmouth Local Education Authority (LEA) in November 2021, many have been trying to understand the wider implications for home education in this country. Will other LEAs see the Portsmouth ‘victory’ as a mandate to step up their requirements? One thing is sure – we all need to be informed as these issues develop and pray! Visit www.he-byte.uk to sign up for regular updates if you haven’t already.

- Pray for *families in Portsmouth* and other areas where there is particular conflict with LEAs.
- Pray for *your own LEA*, for positive relations between LEAs and home educating families, that officers’ eyes would be opened to see the many benefits of home education.
- Pray for *Christians in Parliament* and for allies within parliamentary circles who will stand firm and uphold family values and especially parental rights.

The Government seems set on introducing a mandatory register for home educators. Their intent is that this would be a first step, followed eventually by monitoring and assessments. The people listed below are playing a key part in ongoing discussions and planning.

Pray for key people in England:

- *Secretary of State for Education* – Nadhim Zahawi (Stratford-Upon-Avon)
- *Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Education* – Baroness Barran, whose responsibilities include: faith schools, independent schools, home education and supplementary schools, counter extremism and integration in schools
- *Education Select Committee*: Chair Robert Halfon (Harlow), Apsana Begum (Poplar and Limehouse), Miriam Cates (Penistone & Stocksbridge), Brendan Clarke-Smith (Bassetlaw), Tom Hunt (Ipswich), Dr Caroline Johnson (Sleaford & North Hykeham), Kim Johnson (Liverpool, Riverside), Ian Mearns

(Gateshead), Kate Osborne (Jarrow), Nicola Richards (West Bromwich East), Christian Wakeford (Bury South)

- *Children's Commissioner for England* – Rachel de Souza

Pray for key people in Wales:

- Pray for a strengthening influence of www.familiesfirst.wales, a group of home educators including CHEAD members who are actively leading a push back against the call for compulsory registration of home educators in Wales. They are seeking to meet Jeremy Miles to open discussion with him. Pray he would be willing to meet with them in person. Pray for ongoing wisdom for everyone involved. Visit their page and add your support if you haven't done so.
- *Children's commissioner for Wales* – Sally Holland
- *Education Minister* – Jeremy Miles

This is not just about home education, and it is not only an issue facing us here in the UK. The Children's Commissioners are in post to 'uphold the rights of children'. This global agenda has come down from the United Nations and is continually pushing for policies that place the State above parents in protecting the 'rights' of children. Parental primacy is at huge risk.



Exciting New Initiatives

CHESS is looking for volunteers to help run some exciting new initiatives! Do you have some time to commit on a regular basis? Please email ruth@chessuk.org if you would like to know more about or apply for the following roles:

Home Time contributors - We are looking for a small team of people who would be willing to take responsibility for filling a regular column for our magazine which would mean providing three articles per year. This could be reviewing curriculum, writing book reviews, interviewing a home ed graduate – or you may have your own idea of something that would inform and encourage other members. Please email to find out more or to make suggestions of content you would like to see in future issues.

Regional Groups - We would like to introduce some regional groups so that members can find out what is happening in their area and be able to find others to connect with. If you would be willing to be a contact for your area, contact Debbie via debbie.smith@chessuk.org to register your interest.

Website roles - We need help to develop a vibrant website that enables us to meet the needs of our members and attract new members. It is an ongoing project but at present we are looking for people with interest and experience in the following two roles:

- **Website Content Authors** You need enthusiasm for Christian Education and insight into a topic! Essential skills: Succinct, clear writing abilities with a modern style that will engage and appeal.
- **Page Layout Publishers** You need an eye for design and effective page layout. Essential Skills: Basic computer skills and text editing with experience or willingness to learn online page editing tools. Experience with Wordpress would be beneficial. (The website has its own content management system based on Wordpress and a theme called *Jupiter* with *Elementor*.)

If you have experience in other areas of website structure, design and management then please do get in touch. If teens or young adults in your family have experience or knowledge in this area, then perhaps they may be interested in having an opportunity to showcase their skills.

C o m i n g S o o n

CHESSConnect

A monthly Zoom based meeting to inform, inspire
and connect our members!

R o g e r
S l a c k



Team Spotlight

Together with Mike Matthews and Steve Richards, Roger founded CHESS in 1992. His wife acted as CHESS administrator until she died in 2011. He is currently chairman of the CHESS committee.

He has three sons, all active in their respective churches and all married to lovely Christian ladies.

Team Spotlight



Esther
Brombley

I'm from Northern Ireland, married to an Englishman, Jonathan, living near Glasgow. We have five children and I am now coming towards the end of my home ed journey. We home educated from the start although the three eldest had a year in Spanish school when we lived there and also went to school for a year to complete Highers (Scottish equivalent of A levels).

Our family has thrived through being home educated, our eldest three progressing to University to study subjects including Russian, Spanish, French and Physics. Our eldest has just completed a Masters in Translation and Interpreting in Russian and French at Bath University. Our love of travel and languages has led to the eldest two, so far, participating in various short-term overseas missions projects.

So how has home ed benefitted us as a family? In one sense, it's hard to say as who knows how life would have been different without it. Family time and close family relationships, following own interests in education, being able to bring faith into our education and often using faith as a starting point. Young people who are independent learners. Most of what I do now is oversight; the two still being home largely teach themselves.

I have been a committee member for a number of years, my main role being to organise the bookings for the CHESS members' annual holiday to Cefn Lea in Wales.

Hello!

We are Jonathan and Susanna Burgess and we've been married nearly 20 years and have six children aged nearly 18 down to 3 year old twins. We have been home educating for 10 years and with the twins being only 3, then, Lord willing, we have many more years of home educating to come.

Our home education style has been an eclectic mix of semi- structured with Charlotte Mason and Classical elements, but with a healthy dose of flexibility in order to meet the various seasons of life! We moved to a more rural part of Kent a few years ago to a small plot of land and now have sheep, chickens and bees which add to the home education lifestyle for our children

We have been members of CHESS from our early days of home educating, and began going to the Cefn Lea CHESS holiday in 2013. Since then we have been most years and this has played a significant role in forming friendships, receiving encouragement and inspiration both for the children and us as parents.

We joined the committee at the end of 2015 and since then have been involved in all the work of the committee, including organising conferences.

J o n a t h a n
a n d
S u s a n n a
B u r g e s s



Committee Members

Jonathan Burgess	Esther Brombley
Susanna Burgess	Roger Slack

Admin Team

Ruth Barber	
Debbie Smith	membership@chessuk.org
Jo Clarke	

Membership details

Membership of CHESS is £20 a year, see chessuk.org/membership-benefits for details of the included benefits.

By registering for CHESS membership you are agreeing to:

- A belief in Jesus Christ as Saviour, Lord and God and His atoning sacrifice as the only and all sufficient ground for salvation
- A determination to be ruled in life and thought by the teaching of the Bible as the inspired word of God

Thank you to all those who have contributed to this issue of *Home Time*. Past issues are available on our website in our Members' Section. If you have anything that you'd like to contribute, please send them to magazine@chessuk.org.

www.chessuk.org