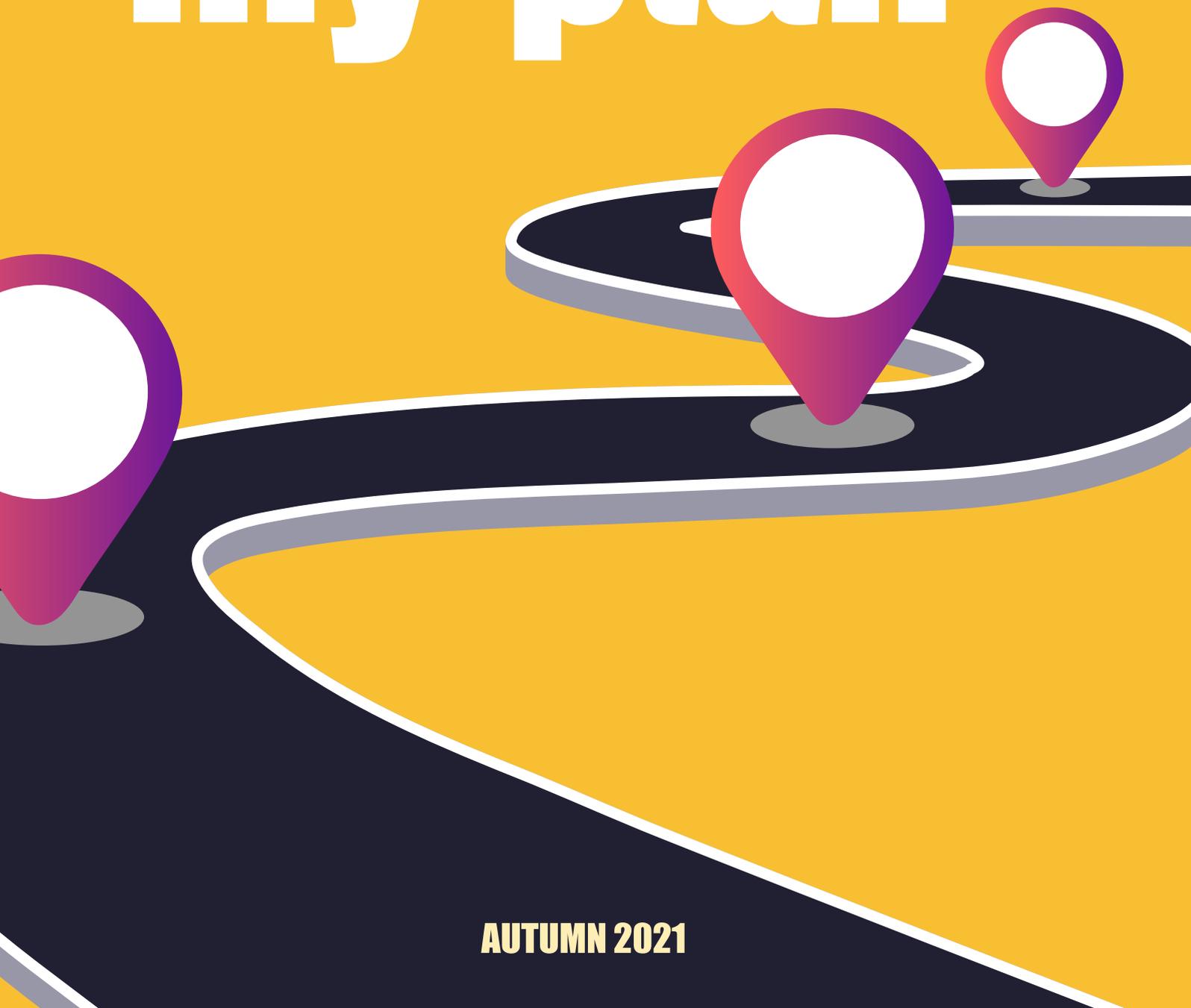


**CONTACT**

# **NOT my plan**



**AUTUMN 2021**

# NOT MY PLAN

by Ole Kristian Hunt

I thought I knew what God's plan for my life was. I was from a fairly happy home. I'd been an atheist, then become a Christian at uni. I could speak good English, decent Norwegian, and French bad enough to get most French people to kindly ask me to speak English. I'd started training for a lifetime of church work as a preacher (though probably not in French).

I was fitter than I'd ever been. I was young. I had two passports - the world was my oyster! I was enthusiastic about church. I could've talked for England, though as far as I'm aware it's not, yet (sadly), an Olympic sport.

And that was the point I was diagnosed with cancer of the tongue. I was told that if the operation didn't go exactly right (and maybe even if it did), I might not be able to talk again.

I'd been brought up going to church, and if you'd asked me up to the age of about 14, would have said I was a Christian. I thought that meant saying your prayers, being an OK sort of person, and trying to do more good than harm. Later in my teens, I saw that religion for the sham it was and ditched it, along with any belief I had in God. I went to university to

study philosophy, hoping to find the answers ("Life, the universe, and everything") that I didn't think Christianity could offer.

Uni was fun. Not because I was particularly bright, but because I was very good at exams, I even did fairly well. But it became clear to me that philosophy didn't have the answers either. Philosophy seemed less about working out how things really were than having a bit of fun with words and ideas (and justifying the funding to philosophy depts; after all, what else are you meant to do with a degree in philosophy?).

Along came a pretty Christian girl and gave me a reason to not want to be an atheist any more. After all, what had it done for me? I wasn't any happier. I had no more idea about the meaning of life, unless it was that life has no meaning. As I started going to church, I saw people around me who weren't just pretending, but had an actual, living relationship with someone they couldn't see, and who had, apparently, died almost 2000 years ago. They were dealing with all kinds of horrendous life situations, and this person, Jesus, seemed to help them with it.

**My education really started with a cancer diagnosis**

The more I looked into it, and the more I started looking with a mind that was at least open to the possibility, the more I saw that this wasn't just a therapeutic thing: It was real. Jesus really had lived, and died, and - the impossible part - come back from the dead. And somehow, through that, he had made a way for me - and everyone else who trusted in the name of Jesus - to know God. Not only to know about but have a living, breathing relationship with him that would, he promised, last forever.

And so I'd pressed on, now as a Christian, and hoping to share this Good News with anyone willing to listen. I thought I knew what God's plan for my life was: Preach at a small church; grow the church a bit; plant another church or two; active retirement; heaven.

And then my education really started, with a cancer diagnosis that made all my plans look like they'd been scribbled by a child in crayon. Would the religion that had seemed so plausible when everything was going well still serve when things started to fall apart?

Despite major surgery and radiotherapy, the cancer came back (as, fortunately for me, though unfortunately for everyone else, did my ability to speak). I had to face the possibility that this was what my life, going forward, would be.

Was God not real? I couldn't believe that - I'd seen too much evidence by then. Was he not powerful enough to heal me? Well that couldn't be true, either, or else he wouldn't be God. If he was powerful enough to bring Jesus back from the dead, then a little squamous cell carcinoma was nothing. But that meant that, if God really was God, and really was in charge, then he had let this happen to me, when he could have done things some other way.

Either suffering has a purpose, or it has no purpose whatsoever and all life is meaningless. A lot of people say they believe that, but almost no one acts as if it were true. It's not what you feel when you do a good deed that no one else knows about. It's not what you feel when you kiss your kids goodnight. It's not what you feel when a loved one dies.

Christianity is the only religion that takes the reality of suffering seriously - admitting how much it really does hurt - and offers meaning and purpose to our pain. Christianity is the only religion with a God who has experienced our suffering from the inside - and who has promised something on the other side of it which will more than make up for it.

I thought I knew what God's plan for my life was. I was wrong, of course. But even with the obvious scars I now have, and the damage to my body, and the possibility that the cancer still might come back - I can't say that his plan wasn't better: I know him more deeply. I trust him more. I've seen him keep hold of me even when I would have let go of him. In Jesus - the suffering saviour - I see that suffering can have purpose and be used to bring about the most amazing things, and have the promise - written in his own blood - that there is something better on the other side of it.

**Ole Kristian Hunt is the minister of Grace Baptist Church, Ulverston**

**If you would like to hear more of Ole's story and faith, including the chance to ask questions, then join us on an open Zoom meeting at 7.45pm on Tuesday 28th September 2021. Connect your laptop, tablet or phone using the details below or by scanning the QR.**

**ID: 860 9469 9815  
PC: 967379**



[tinyurl.com/olekh2021](https://tinyurl.com/olekh2021)



# Forest Baptist Church

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☎ 020 0222 6801

07707 052 227 (text/whatsapp only)

✉ contact@forestbaptist.org.uk

🌐 forestbaptist.org.uk

You can reach our minister, David Last, using the details above.



## Sunday Services

**Morning : 10.30am**

**Evening : 5.00pm**

## Learn English

Free Saturday classes, 10am-12pm

Beginners and intermediates

Contact Ferris: 07727 082 449

[forestbaptist.org.uk/esol](http://forestbaptist.org.uk/esol)



## Free Children's Club

Fridays from 3.30pm to 5.00pm, for ages 5-11

Includes Christian stories and teaching from the Bible

Organised by Child Evangelism Fellowship

Contact Pauline on 07895 112 915



Forest Baptist uses the Welsh Chapel on the High Road in Leytonstone, halfway between McDonald's and the Green Man Roundabout. Buses 66, 145, 257, W13, W14 and W19 all stop outside. The Tube station is just over half a kilometre away. A few car parking spaces are available on the site. Some of our activities occur in other locations. Please get in touch to find out times and places.

