

MARTIN WAY METHODIST CHURCH

NEWSLETTER - December 2000/January 2001

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Living Water

Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water

John 7, v.38

Dear Friends,

At the time of writing there were 29 shopping days to Christmas! I hope your preparations for the Christmas celebrations are going well, and you are not too stressed with all the practical arrangements that need to be made for celebrating this festival with family and friends. Within the church our preparations for Christmas began on Saturday 24 November with our Quiet Day, and continue throughout the season of Advent leading up to our service of Holy Communion at midnight on Christmas Eve and our family worship on Christmas morning. Advent is our time of preparation for the birth of Christ, and this year I am taking as our Advent theme ?Living Water?. Well you might say, what has that got to do with Christmas? Has she gone completely mad now? When we speak about the birth of Christ we use words like incarnation and revelation, a visible and tangible presence of God in our world. As I was reflecting on the birth of Christ in this way I had a picture of the pouring out of God into our lives and world like a river flowing through the countryside and town, living water bursting its banks when there is insufficient room in the riverbed. The first miracle of Christ, the moment when the disciples first had an inkling of exactly who Jesus was, was a miracle involving water - water changed into wine. Throughout Advent we will be reflecting on different images of living water during our Tuesday evening worship (8pm to 8.45pm each week) building up to that moment on Christmas Day when the water becomes wine as we celebrate the birth of Christ. May you find enough moments during Advent to be still and enjoy a sense of deep peace as you reflect on the wonder of the birth of Christ.

Every blessing for Christmas and the New Year.

Anne.

The Covenant Service

I have taken the decision to hold the Covenant Service on the third Sunday in January next year. This is because a number of people have expressed difficulty in understanding this service, and consequently stay away. I therefore propose on the first three Sundays in January 2002 to preach on the theme of >covenant=, celebrating with the Covenant Service on 20 January.

The book of rules says that every Methodist Church should hold an Annual Covenant Service early in the New Year. It is a practice that John Wesley instituted, based on biblical ideas of the people of God being a >covenant= people, people living within a covenant relationship with God. The Covenant Service is not so much about us making promises to God, but about responding to the promises God has made to us. We also need to remember that we respond as members of a faith community, so our commitment is not only to God, but also to one another. Equally, we are not bearing the responsibility of these rather serious promises on our own shoulders, but sharing in the task. Wesley saw the Covenant Service as a corporate re-affirmation of faith and commitment to God the for Methodist people.

Early covenant services were based on the Puritan idea of making personal promises to God, a little bit like bargaining, but by 1748 Wesley had begun to encourage the idea of covenant with God, seeing the Methodist people as a pilgrim people journeying together with God. The first formal Covenant Service took place in 1775, services being held fairly frequently. In 1762 it became an annual event on 1 January each year, and then from 1780, on the first Sunday in the year.

If you want to know more, come along to morning worship in January and we will learn together what it means to be a covenant people. Anne

Worship Leaders Course

Seven sessions at Stoneleigh Methodist church on Tuesdays 8 pm
January-March led by Rev Stan Brown and David Eagle

- Jan.15 Introduction to Corporate Worship
- Jan 22 The Structure of Worship
- Jan 29 The Leader=s Presentation

- Feb 5 Preparation for Leading Worship
- Feb 12 No meeting
- Feb 19 Leading Prayer in Worship
- Feb 26 A Miscellany of Aspect
- Mar 5 Enabling Worship

The course gives a deeper understanding of worship, but stresses practical skills - how to prepare, how to be heard, how to read, how to pray, how to choose and use music. It is for anyone interested or involved in leading or preparing for worship and aims at developing gifts and encouraging wider participation within the church.

For more information or to join the course contact Rev Stan Brown 020-8393-23322.

Keep your fork!

There was a young woman who had been diagnosed with a terminal illness and had been given three months to live. So as she was getting her things in order, she contacted her pastor and had him come to her house to discuss certain aspects of her final wishes. She told him which songs she wanted sung at the service, what scriptures she would like read, and what outfit she wanted to be buried in. Everything was in order and the pastor was preparing to leave when the young woman suddenly remembered something very important to her.

"There's one more thing," she said excitedly. "What's that?" came the pastor's reply. "This is very important," the young woman continued. "I want to be buried with a fork in my right hand." The pastor stood looking at the young woman, not knowing quite what to say. "That surprises you, doesn't it?" the young woman asked. "Well, to be honest, I'm puzzled by the request." said the pastor.

The young woman explained.

"My grandmother once told me this story and from there on out, I have always done so. I have also always tried to pass along its message to those I love and those who are in need of encouragement. In all my years of attending church socials and potluck dinners I always remember that when the dishes of the main course were being cleared, someone would inevitably lean over and say, "Keep your fork". It was my favourite part

because I knew that something better was coming---like velvety chocolate cake or deep-dish apple pie. Something wonderful and with substance!. So I just want people to see me there in that casket with a fork in my hand and I want them to wonder "What's with the fork?". Then I want you to tell them: "Keep your fork...the best is yet to come."

The pastor=s eyes welled up with tears of joy as he hugged the young woman good-bye. He knew this would be one of the last times he would see her before her death. But he also knew that the young woman had a better grasp of heaven than he did. She had a better grasp of what heaven would be like than many people twice her age, with twice as much experience and knowledge. She KNEW that something better was coming.

At the funeral people were walking by the young woman=s casket and they saw the pretty dress she was wearing and the fork placed in her right hand. Over and over, the pastor heard the question "What's with the fork?". And over and over he smiled.

During his message, the pastor told the people of the conversation he had with the young woman shortly before she died. He also told them about the fork and about what it symbolised to her. The pastor told the people how he could not stop thinking about the fork and told them that they probably would not be able to stop thinking about it either.

He was right. So the next time you reach down for your fork let it remind you, ever so gently, that the best is yet to come.

Friends are a very rare jewel indeed. They make you smile and encourage you to succeed. They lend an ear, they share a word of praise, and they always want to open their hearts to us.

Show your friends how much you care. Remember to always be there for them, even when you need them more.

For you never know when it may be their time to "Keep your fork"

Cherish the time you have, and the memories you share....being friends with someone is not an opportunity but a sweet responsibility.

[with thanks to Rev. Fa'eq H Haddad, Saviour Episcopal Church]

[Sent in prior to the 1998 Lambeth Conference of the Anglican Communion as part of section 2 ?Called to Live and Proclaim the Good News?]

<http://website.lineone.net/~martinway>

Toy And Gift Service 2 December 2001

This year's annual Toy and Gift service will be in aid of our local Family Centre - Leyton Road which is run by NCH Action for Children. Since Penfolds in Central Road Morden closed down this is now the only Family Centre in the London Borough of Merton.

The Family Centre has recently developed new ways of working with families particularly those in a state of crisis, by using methods such as solution focused therapy. This has been particularly successful with families who are experiencing major difficulties in parenting young teenagers.

The Centre has also developed an Asian women=s support group. Some of these women find themselves isolated in an alien culture. They are unable to speak English and cannot communicate. A worker who speaks different languages/dialects enables these women to be encouraged to become actively involved in the group and hopefully benefit from it and make new friends. Of course the Centre still provides nursery facilities for the young children identified or deemed to be >children in need=. The actual needs of these children and those of their parents are numerous. One very real and obvious problem these families experience is a financial one particularly one parent families on income support. Christmas time very often means extra anxiety and stress as they struggle to provide that little bit extra for the children. As the Centre now works with young teenagers and their families, gifts such as cosmetics, bubble bath, soaps etc or books and games suitable for this age group would be appreciated. The usual gifts of toys for the smaller children will also be welcome. We have supported the Family Centre many times in the past and they have always been enormously grateful for the gifts. Brenda Cannon

Music In Worship

“There is no art which has not been used in worship. Architecture is, in a sense, the most important of the arts as used in religion because a building for worship is almost a necessity. But music is, in another sense, the most important as it can carry the listener into regions far beyond the reach of painting and poetry@” These words are taken from a short history of church music from the Oxford Companion to Music. This may not meet with the approval of you all, but for me, a lover of music, it <http://website.lineone.net/~martinway>

means a great deal. The words and tunes of many hymns have given me comfort in times of stress, particularly during the war when far from home, during the night watches with nothing to look at but the sea.

Music in the Christian Church developed in various ways from the Jewish religion. The existence of the Book of Psalms is sufficient evidence for this. In the books of Samuel and Chronicles we read that "David played before the Lord on all manner of instruments made of wood, even on harps, and on psalteries and on timbrels and on cornets and on cymbals". David too was said to play on his harp to soothe King Saul when he was in a bad mood! When Christianity came there was at first no break with the Jewish Church, but the only record of a communal song was at the Last Supper - "When they had sung an hymn they went out into the Mount of Olives".

If you have read Thomas Hardy's novel 'Under the Greenwood Tree' you will know that late in the 18th century the parish church orchestra was being replaced by the barrel organ and harmonium to accompany the hymns sung by the choir and congregation. In that same century Methodism was born. The first Methodist tune book was one published by John Wesley in 1742 which cost only 3d [about 1p]. It gave only the melody line. Although he was musical he completely lacked any technical knowledge of the art.

The Methodists were a singing people. The Archbishop of Canterbury at that time commended the design of one of the clergymen to bring out a new psalm and hymn book with tunes. "Something must be done" he said, "to put our psalmody on a better footing: the Sectaries gain a multitude of followers by their better singing". Towards the end of the century the Rev Dr Dodd, chaplain to George III, in alluding to Methodist singing urged that "it is lawful to learn even from an enemy". John's brother Charles was the author of over 6000 hymns and both of his sons, Charles junior and Samuel, were child prodigies. "Charles could before he was three years of age, play on the harpsichord any tune he heard, adding a correct bass to it". He later, like his brother Samuel, became organist at various London churches.

It is not surprising therefore with this background that music and singing plays such a large part in the Methodist church. Although we and other

denominations still sing and enjoy the old Methodist hymns and tunes we must add to our repertoire many hymns by more modern and contemporary composers. I know that musical appreciation depends to a large extent on personal taste, and I for one do not really feel inspired by some of the songs and choruses in Mission Praise, but there are many that are growing on me!

I would like to conclude my reminiscing on the music I have enjoyed as a member of Martin Way Methodist Church Choir over the past 60+ years. Before the war the choir numbered in the region of 30 voices at Sunday services and anthems were generally sung at the evening services when the congregations were usually larger than in the morning. On Palm Sunday every year there was a rendering of Stainer's 'Crucifixion' or Mander's 'Olivet to Calvary'. During and after the war Miss Vida Brown led the choir, ably assisted at the 'harmonium' or piano by Mrs Grace John and Mrs Vi Bolton. Then we ventured into oratorio, beginning with selections from Handel's 'Messiah'. Later we gave a full rendering of Mendelssohn's 'Elijah', 'Hymn of Praise' combining with the Wimbledon choir, and also a full rendering of Handel's 'Messiah'. In many of these our own choir members took solo parts. More recently, before the choir became too small, we also repeated 'Elijah', Haydn's 'Creation', Thiman's 'Last Supper', Somervell's 'Passion' and Faure's 'Requiem'. The Methodists are a singing people.

Douglas Gear

A Small Blessing

I sense that if we paid more attention to our mission and ministry of nurture in the faith to children, we would have less trouble with our youth ministries. This is a story of the potential of children. It moved me very deeply. I was attending a service in another diocese, not my own, and the pastor had asked the congregation to pray for each other. Out of nowhere, a little boy tugged at my jacket and asked me if there was anything I had for him to pray for. I said that as a matter of fact there was. I had knelt down to be near his face, and I told him of a problem in my own diocese - nothing this seven or eight year old could know about. With the most natural gesture in the world, this small boy reached out his hands and placed them on my shoulders. He prayed with great simplicity and concern. Oh, I was truly prayed for, truly blessed.

CAROL SINGING IN MORDEN make a note of these dates in your diary!

Saturday 15 December 10.30am to 12.30

The group of churches involved in >On the Move= are joining together again to sing Christmas carols outside the Civic Offices. We will be serving a hot non-alcoholic >punch= with mince-pies, and handing out leaflets with details of all the Christmas services in the participating churches. If you would like to support this event by helping to serve refreshments, singing, or talking to people, please pass your name to one of the stewards.

All the churches will be meeting together at Martin Way church on **Wednesday 12 December, 8pm to 9pm** to pray for this event and to give clear instructions to those who are willing to help on the day. Even if you are unable to come on 15th please come and support this venture in prayer. Once again we are offering the food and drink as a free gift, particularly appropriate at Christmas as we celebrate the free gift of God, in sending our Lord Jesus Christ.

Valerie Rogers 1928-2001

Although Valerie had been in hospital for some weeks her sudden death came as a great shock to her many friends. At the service of thanksgiving for her life her sister Gillian spoke of happy memories of her childhood days and Doreen Warren paid the following tribute for all that she had contributed to Martin Way.

I feel privileged to have this opportunity to pay tribute to Valerie, a gentle person, a much loved and valued member of this church for over fifteen years. She enjoyed many of the activities that take place here.

I think anything involving music and singing would probably have been top of her list and she will be greatly missed in the choir, where she had occasionally very ably taken a solo part. She attended the Fellowship each Monday afternoon and was their pianist for several years. She regularly took part in the Bible Study and Prayer Group, was a member of Midways, attended Coffee and Chat and enjoyed the company and the food at the Lunch Club, where she had also been a helper when she was able.

Most of all, Valerie liked to be with people and had in fact encouraged others to come and join her at Martin Way. It is no secret that she loved outings - one of the first I can recall is when she came with us on a Midways outing to the Thames Barrier in 1987 and the most recent when she was taken on the Church Picnic in July just two weeks before she went into St. Helier Hospital. She thoroughly enjoyed that outing, sadly to be her last, and thanks to those who made it possible,

Valerie appreciated all the help and support she received and despite her circumstances was uncomplaining. We shall all miss her wit and quirky sense of humour.

She was convinced everything would come right in the end and she would say that she would like to wake up one day and find that she was free from pain and disability. We know with certain hope that her wish has now been fulfilled.

Despite adversity she never lost her faith in Christ and was a true Christian whom it was a privilege to know and call a friend,

We extend our sympathy to her family and friends.

I was one of the friends whom Valerie brought to Martin Way. We met travelling up to town when she was working for the Salvation Army and I was at CMS. More recently she helped me with CMS work at home and we had many a merry afternoon with work interspersed with cups of tea and games of Scrabble. She was great fun to be with and, as with all one=s friends, while rejoicing for her that the pain and frustration is over, her passing leaves a gap that no-one else will fill.

Rosemary Keen

News From Sue Griffiths

Friends will remember Sue Griffiths, who was a member of our Church prior to going to Manchester to study to become a Methodist Minister. At the last Church Council Meeting it was unanimously agreed that we should send her a gift of ,250.00 to help her to purchase some of the books she needs for her studies, and I am pleased to produce below for everyone to see a copy of the letter I received in reply to mine sending the gift.

John Butland

24 October 2001

Dear John

Thank you so much for sending me the cheque from Martin Way. What a generous gift and one which will be put to good use. Sometimes it is a struggle living on the grant we receive and I am not always able to buy the books I need for the course so the money is very much appreciated. Please pass on my thanks to the members of Martin Way and remember me to them.

I am now in my second year of studying for a degree in Contextual Theology and have another two years to go. I should have only stayed for another year and would have been sent to Circuit next August/September, but I asked to do an extra year to finish my degree and to gain as much experience as possible. I feel the time will be valuable in preparing me for ministry.

As well as working hard on the degree I am also on placement at a local church where I live. It is a small congregation in an inner city church and I am learning as much as I can about ministry as well as all aspects of church life. I am preaching more regularly as well as leading a bible study group, helping with confirmation classes and learning how to chair meetings!! All part of the life of the church. Next summer I am hoping to do an overseas placement and I am considering going to South Africa for a month. This has yet to be confirmed.

Please accept my thanks again for the money and pass on my best wishes to everyone. I will always remember the support and kindness of those at Martin Way and would love to catch up with folk at some time.

With very best wishes

Sue

Holiday snapshots - 2. Spalding

Spalding itself is situated in the South Holland district of Lincolnshire. It is a market town, and had until a few years ago a thriving livestock market, indeed areas are still known as the sheep market and cattle market. It has been, and still is best known for the production of flower bulbs. The annual flower show is known worldwide, and well worth a visit if not seen before.

The South Holland Methodist circuit has 14 churches with only 3 ministers. Most services are therefore led by local preachers, without whom the circuit would quickly fold. The churches range from large ones like Broad Street in Spalding with 123 members, to village chapels like Lutton Marsh with 3 members. There were at one time 5 Methodist churches in Spalding alone, and many chapels holding no more than 15 to 20 people in the small surrounding farming communities.

The church that we attend is Broad Street, and dates from around 1837. It was built on the site of the old town gaol. It is a large building and typical of that era, with seating for over 650 people including balcony. Some pews still have the brass holders for the names of the sponsors, plus racks underneath for the gentlemen=s top hats. The 12 foot wide pulpit is on a raised platform in front of the massive 1896 Forster and Andrews organ. This organ has sadly succumbed to time, and is in need of an ,18000 restoration, which the church cannot afford. A small Eminent electronic organ is now used, much to the writer=s dismay. The welcome in church is always warm, typical of country folk, and we were soon invited to join all the various groups. We are now readers, help with the cooking and run the church book club. They haven=t found out that I play the organ yet, so we do have some time to ourselves. I=m sure it is only a matter of time.

A verse published when the new church opened on the site of the old gaol:

Reader, if thou hast time to spare,
Turn o'er St. Matthew's leaves,
You find how once a "house of prayer
Became a Aden of thieves".

But now the case is altered quite,
Oh! reformation rare!
This recent "den of thieves" tonight
Becomes a "house of prayer".

Peter Judge

Family News

George Green writes:

My friend Annie has asked me to return thanks for your prayers during her recent illness, a very severe chest infection, contracted while in hospital with an ankle fracture. In her own words: "I couldn't have got through these weeks without the prayers". I personally want to say thank you to Anne our minister and other friends for their help and advice to me during what was a somewhat stressful time.

Win Murray We send our sympathy to the family of Win Murray who died in November having been a regular member at Martin Way over so many years.

Olive Martin wishes to thank everyone who has sent good wishes and letters. She cannot write but would love to receive telephone calls.

Congratulations to

- **Bill Thomas** (of Happy Wanderers) on his 90th birthday on 8 December. Keep singing Bill!
- **Andy and Jane Smith** on the birth of their daughter Sian on 5 November - a sister for William.

Dates For Your Diary

16 December: Christmas Lunch

- Tickets obtainable from Maralyn Loft and Sylvia Baxter. Adults ,5, under 12s ,2.50, under 5s free.

22 and 23 December

- SIGMA presents "Alternativity" a musical with a message. A collection will be taken for NCH.

NCH Action For Children

Would all box holders please let me have their boxes for emptying as soon as possible. If you would like me to collect the box from you please ring me at 020-8540-4961. Thanks!

Lesley Mortley

Christmas Cards

Post them at church and raise money for Methodist Homes For The Aged

The Post Box will again be available in the church vestibule on 9 and 16 December for Christmas cards for your Martin Way friends. Please contribute an appropriate amount of postage money saved which will go to the MHA funds. Please ensure that you include surnames as well as Christian names and only include folk who actually come to the church. Edie Winrow is again acting as sorting office, but cannot be a postman on the beat. The cards will be ready for collection on 23 December. For those who are away that weekend Edie is very willing to negotiate an alternative collection time.

Coffee and Chat as usual takes its only break in the year over the Christmas holiday reopening on 8 January.

Items for the next issue of the Newsletter (February) should be with the editor, Rosemary Keen, by

Sunday 13 January

at the latest.

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Church Diary For December

Sun	2	10.30 am	Family and Parade - Gift Service led by Rev Stan Brown
Mon	3	2.45 pm	Fellowship (Mr Michael Ross - Magistrate)
Tue	4	10-12 am	Coffee and Chat
		7.30 pm	Men's Supper Club Annual Social Evening
		8.00 pm	Time for Prayer
Wed	5	10.30 am	Toddler Time in Church
Sun	9	10.30 am	Morning Service led by Rev Anne Rusbridge
		6.30 pm	Holy Communion led by Rev Anne Rusbridge
Mon	10	2.45 pm	Fellowship (Mrs Lily Dakin)
Tue	11	10-12 am	Coffee and Chat
		8.00 pm	Time for Prayer
Wed	12	10.30 am	Holy Communion
		7.45 pm	Midways (Christmas Meal and Carols)
Fri	14	12.30 pm	Lunch Club

Sun	16	10.30 am	Holy Communion led by Rev Anne Rusbridge
		12.30 pm	Christmas Lunch
Mon	17	2.45 pm	Fellowship (Carols and Mince Pies)
Tue	18	10-12 am	Christmas Coffee and Chat
		8.00 pm	Time for Prayer
Wed	19	10.30 am	Bible Study
Sat	22	7.00 pm	SIGMA - "Alternativity" - a musical with a message
Sun	23	10.30 am	Carol Service led by Rev Anne Rusbridge
		8.15 pm	SIGMA "Alternativity" - a musical with a message
Mon	24	5.00 pm	Christingle Service
		11.30 pm	Midnight Holy Communion
Tue	25	10.30 am	Family Worship led by Rev Anne Rusbridge
Sun	30	10.30 am	Morning Service led by Mr John Sephton

Church Diary For January

Sun	6	10.30 am	Morning Service led by Rev Anne Rusbridge
Mon	7	2.45 pm	Fellowship (Stephen Ashcroft - Clowning)
Tue	8	10-12 am	Coffee and Chat
		8.00 pm	Time for Prayer
Wed	9	10.30 am	Holy Communion
		7.45 pm	Midways (Hilary Finch - St. Raphael=s Hospice)
Sun	13	10.30 am	Morning Service led by Rev Anne Rusbridge
		6.30 pm	Holy Communion led by Rev Anne Rusbridge
Mon	14	2.45 pm	Fellowship (Helen Stanley - Highlights of Laughter)
Tue	15	10-12 am	Coffee and Chat
		07.30 pm	Men's Supper Club - Members Evening
		8.00 pm	Time for Prayer
Sun	20	10.30 am	Covenant Service led by Rev Anne Rusbridge
		6.30 pm	United Service at St. Mary Merton
Mon	21	2.45 pm	Fellowship (Pauline Riley)
Tue	22	10-12 am	Coffee and Chat
		8.00 pm	Time for Prayer
Wed	23	10.30 am	Bible Study
		7.45 pm	Midways (Pauline Riley - Central America)
Sun	27	10.30 am	Morning Service
Mon	28	2.45 pm	Fellowship (Bill Cox)
Tue	29	10-12 am	Coffee and Chat
		8.00 pm	Time for Prayer
Thu	31	8.00 pm	Church Family Committee

Please refer to the Weekly Notice-sheet for additional information