

Martin Way Methodist Church

Newsletter - June 2003

Minister - Rev Anne Rusbridge

Dear friends,

Thank you to everyone who helped with the Church Anniversary and Christian Aid weekend. The church was beautifully decorated; we were well fed and enjoyed a superb concert on Saturday. Sunday morning we were challenged and encouraged by our guest speaker, Peter West, and enjoyed a wonderful time of worship using the Christian Aid material. Peter helped us to see that prayer and supporting the Trade Justice movements is every bit as important as collecting money. Mike will give you details of the sponsored walk and street collections in the next Newsletter.

June 5th is our combined AGM and Church Council meeting. Both meetings are open to everyone, although only members can vote. At the AGM we elect our leadership team and representatives to the Church Council. If you've not been part of the Church Council before, do please consider putting your name forward. It is necessary for us to have representation from all areas of church life and all ages so that we ensure everyone's point of view is heard.

Watching the television coverage from Chelsea, I saw an interview with a lady in her eighties who had just moved into retirement housing for gardeners. She said gardeners never get old! They stay young because they are always looking forward to the next year and new crops and new ideas. What an excellent philosophy for us all.

Don't forget the Wesley event for our circuit on July 6th.

With every blessing,
Anne

IN 2003 - WHO NEEDS JOHN WESLEY?

In 1921 the Primitive Methodist Church removed the last remaining references to John Wesley from its official statement of doctrines. In the 20th century, they thought, they should give 20th-century reasons for what they believed. The 'Deed of Union' reveals that Mr. Wesley was brought back at Methodist Union in 1932, but the question remains. If the Primitive Methodists felt they had outgrown him in 1921, what are we celebrating in 2003? Shouldn't we simply get on with being the Church for today without spending time and energy in nostalgia?

After all, we hardly use him in the day-to-day business of Christian living. Local preachers and probationers hastily 'mug up' one or two of the Forty-Four Sermons in order to pass an oral examination. The Notes on the New Testament, given equal status by the Deed of Union as containing our doctrines, are generally ignored.

Wesley is rarely quoted in the Methodist Recorder or in conference debates - and certainly not in the manner of early 19th century Wesleyans who asked 'What would our Father have us do?' (And they didn't mean "Our Father who art in heaven..!"). People who write about him find links with present-day attitudes to poverty, ecological questions, gender issues and many more - but surely we can believe what we believe today without referring to John Wesley?

And yet he won't go away... Visitors are fascinated by historic sites such as Epworth Rectory and Wesley's Chapel. Essays, articles and books continue to appear, and not only in North America and on anniversary occasions. We maintain a Wesley Study Centre. And, most significant of all, reluctant Local Preachers reading him for the first time continue to experience the 'Aha!' factor - that sense of recognition, of kinship across the centuries, of seeing your own features in someone else's face. What's going on?

For one thing, the world John Wesley lived in - pushing, money-driven, mobile, full of opportunity for the rich, cruel and harsh to the poor - is surprisingly like our own. For another, we can discover in him, clearly spelled out (read a modern version!) beliefs and attitudes that we have long taken for granted. We can find that we know 'from the inside' his conviction that religion is a matter of the heart, not just outward show.

We can recognise his restless expectation of a deeper experience of God's grace as we 'press on to perfection'. We can be lured by his vision of the Christian community where believers support and challenge one another, sharing the stories of their pilgrimage. We can understand his insistence on 'practical Christianity', the acting out in daily life of 'faith working by love'. Maybe we are surprised to recognise ourselves. Maybe we recognise who we long to be rather than who we are. But we cannot say that John Wesley is irrelevant.

As we examine our identity and our future as Methodists it is certainly reassuring to associate ourselves with John Wesley - evangelist, friend of the poor, affirmer of the oppressed. It may be equally important to dissociate ourselves from John Wesley - anti-Roman Catholic, authoritarian father figure, guilt-driven perfectionist. We acknowledge him as an ancestor, someone who played an important (though not solitary) part in shaping the tradition we live in. We don't have to be like him in every respect, but we have to be 'true to ourselves' - 21st century Methodists. This means maintaining a relationship with our past, looking at who we are now and who we want to become. It means celebrating the grace of God at work in this remarkable, infuriating man who is still, despite everything, crucially important in making us who we are now - 'the people called Methodists'.

Margaret Jones

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Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes 2003

MERTON VOLUNTARY ASSOCIATION FOR THE BLIND

This association provides support for visually impaired people in the Borough of Merton. They provide a Home Visiting service, which over the last six years has proved to be invaluable to housebound people. There are requests for help with correspondence, or taking people shopping, or even something quite simple (if your sight is good) like checking the dates on weekly groceries. Understandably the visiting volunteers are in great demand and more are needed! We have recently received a letter from the Volunteer Co-ordinator (who recruits and trains the team) asking us to make this need known

OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD extracts from President's message

I want to thank the people of the United Kingdom and Ireland for another year of outstanding support for Operation Christmas Child. This year, you helped us collect more than 1.1 million gift-filled shoeboxes. Your gifts were sent to needy boys and girls in Romania, Serbia, Belarus, Ukraine and other impoverished countries. Many of the children were orphaned or abandoned, some were sick with AIDS or other life-threatening diseases.

Operation Christmas Child would not be possible without the help of many caring people who packed shoeboxes, volunteered, prayed and gave financially.

Thank you again, and may God bless you. Sincerely,

Franklin Graham, President Samaritan's Purse International

GARDEN DIARY

Spring has sprung and summer is fast approaching. The gardening team has been doing some restoration work on the garden now that the spring bulbs are dying back. Everything is looking quite good, but some of the pots need an injection of colour in the form of new plants. We are hoping that the clubs that so generously gave displays last year will be willing to do so again. Some of the pots will need new planting; others need a little reinvigoration. Please let a member of the gardening team know if your group is prepared to take charge of a pot again.

Pauline Riley on behalf of Derek and Mary Heaton, Gwen Edwards, Joan Harding and Ted Ashwood

WIN EDWARDS

It is with regret we have to tell you of the death of Win Edwards. Win originally attended Fentiman Road Methodist Church but when she married Percy and moved to Morden she came to Martin Way. She became involved with all the activities here finally being chairperson of the Women's Fellowship. She was a happy, smiling, much loved member of our Church and was happy and contented in her home at Alexander House over the past three years. We send our condolences to her son Keith and daughter Carol and their families

FINANCES MAY 2003

There are two financial matters to which I must bring your attention:-

Firstly regarding our Circuit Assessment - in our budget for the year 2003/2004 it had been anticipated that we could expect an increase of, say, £ 620 for the year, i.e. about £ 12.00 per week, whereas in fact we have been obliged to accept an increase of £1,820 for the year, which is £ 35.00 per week. Several matters have necessitated this exceptional increase - the Circuit budget for the year 2002/2003 indicated an estimated surplus of just over £ 4,000, but unfortunately this is now expected to be a deficit in the region of £ 5,000. Conference resolved that Ministers will receive a 7.4% increase in standard stipends, and there is to be an increase in pension and national insurance contributions. These two factors contribute to an anticipated deficit in the Circuit budget for the year 2003/2004 of £ 5,160.

The second point is that due to perfectly understandable and logical reasons we have lost income from Gift Aid giving with the consequence of the loss of tax returned. This inevitably leads me on to two points:- (1) those who pay tax and do not Gift Aid their contributions to Church funds could help restore our tax return income without cost to themselves simply by completing a Gift Aid declaration and (2) to those of you who give regularly, have you considered the amount of your giving, or do you still contribute the same as you have been giving for some time past? Each year we face increased costs on all aspects, and any increase in your giving would help and be much appreciated.

Anyone wanting further information please have a word with me.

John Butland

WHEELS FOR THE WORLD (continued)

The members of the Men's Supper club have now reached the half-way mark toward their target of £1,500. Will you please make a note in your diary of a Lunch-time Market that we plan to hold on Saturday 27 September? All proceeds will go to 'Wheels for the World'. Your on-going support is much appreciated.

Bill Cox

JMA

Thank you to everyone who sponsored us to run the London Mini Marathon. We had a great day and raised £ 472 for 'TimeTravellers', which is a joint project between the Methodist Church in Kenya, the Methodist Church in this country and Methodist Homes for All. After running in the Mini Marathon we stayed to watch Paula Radcliffe break her world Marathon record. We are too young to run in the London Marathon, but maybe one day!

Hannah, Jennifer and Rosemary Fernando

NEWS FROM OUR NEIGHBOURS

7 June St. Mary Merton Summer Fair: Fiesta: from 11 am: on the
 Glebe field

TRAI DCRAFT STALL

Anne Conquest plans to have the Traidcraft stall in the church hall after every Family Service - so remember to bring your money to buy the goodies she will have on sale!

JOHN WESLEY: HIS PORTRAIT

John Wesley was not fond of sitting for his portrait, though that was often done. On one occasion while dining with a friend in the neighbourhood of Blackfriars, an eminent artist offered him ten guineas as a bribe to induce him to allow a cast of his face to be taken. "No", said Wesley, "keep your money and urge me no further". "Sir", said the artist, "I will not detain you more than three minutes." Wesley consented. The cast was taken, and so also was the money. No sooner was Wesley out of doors, than he saw an agitated crowd surrounding an auctioneer who was about to sell not only the furniture of a poor debtor, but also the bed upon which he was actually dying. In an instant Wesley rushed into the throng, seized the arm of the auctioneer and cried, "What's the debt?". "Ten guineas", was the answer. "Take it", said Wesley, "and let the poor man have his furniture again." Then turning to John Broadbent who was with him, he quietly observed, "Brother Broadbent, I see why God sent me these ten guineas".

(The Life and Times of John Wesley. Vol 3, p174-5. Rev L Tyerman)

RULES OF CONDUCT

- Do all the good that you can
- By all the means that you can
- In all the ways that you can
- To all the people you can
- As long as ever you can

QUOTES AND ANECDOTES

Some people have just enough religion to make them uncomfortable

--oOo--

Be ashamed of nothing but sin: not of fetching wood, or drawing water, if time permit; not of cleaning your own shoes or your neighbour's

--oOo--

One day John Wesley was walking along a country lane with a friend who had many problems. The friend said that he couldn't see the way ahead and didn't know which way to turn. John Wesley paused and pointed at the thick hedge alongside the lane. They could not see through it but they could see over it. He explained that this was the only solution to a difficult situation. If we can see a distant horizon, or can get a glimpse of blue sky, it is easier to deal with our problems.

From Phyl Plummer, Upper Tooting

INSIDE IRAQ: INTERFAITH IS BODY LANGUAGE

When I was growing up in Iraq, Christians and Muslims talked to each other all the time@, says a Christian from one of the ancient Churches there.

Every Saturday the Qawaji (the coffee-maker) would come to prepare everything, so that on Sunday after prayers, the majlis could gather. Like a gentlemen's club, the elders of the community from both faiths would meet around a pot of thick, Arabic coffee to discuss the issues of the day.

We lived between a church and a mosque - the muezzin's call to prayer was our alarm clock. So I was close at hand when my father sat with the other men at the majlis. On Fridays the Muslims would be the hosts. 'Interfaith' is something we learned in the playground, part and parcel of everyday life.

Mutual respect between Christians and Muslims has been an essential part of our survival kit. But now it's in danger of becoming a luxury. UN sanctions and the war are playing havoc with the delicate balance between faiths.

The tradition of the majlis is dying. The economic situation has forced people to take two or three jobs. Teachers drive taxis after school; there's no time to sit and talk. Religious fellow-feeling depends on the economy; the better off you are - the better interfaith relations. Interfaith will never work on an empty stomach.

Please pray for the ordinary people of the Gulf region; for the tiny but deep-rooted Christian community in Iraq; for other Christians, national and expatriate throughout the region.

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SOUL IN THE CITY Merton - Kingston - Sutton

In the summer of 2004 thousands of young people will be visiting London to work alongside local churches in sharing their faith. Share Jesus International presents the launch of SJI:SOUL IN THE CITY as it works alongside churches in the three London boroughs of Sutton, Kingston and Merton.

Come and hear the vision - The night will include: - Worship led by Soul Survivor, prayer led by local Christians, vision from Cluster Churches, word from Rob and Andy Frost, and strawberries & cream!

Friday 27 June at Raynes Park Methodist Church, Worples Road

Worship from 7pm. Strawberries served from 9pm

Open to all ages. No booking necessary

An offering will be taken towards the mission

--oOo--

CHURCH DIARY FOR JUNE

Sun	1	10.30 am	Family Service led by Rev Anne Rusbridge
Mon	2	2.45 pm	Fellowship (Mr Bill Cox)
Tue	3	10-12 am	Coffee and Chat
		8.00 pm	Time for Prayer
Wed	4	11.15 am	Toddler Time in Church
Thu	5	7.30 pm	General Church Meeting followed by Church Council
Fri	6	12.30 pm	Lunch Club
Sun	8	10.30 am	Morning Service led by Mr Bill Cox
		6.30 pm	Communion Service led by Rev Anne Rusbridge
Mon	9	2.45 pm	Fellowship (Rev Anne Rusbridge)
Tue	10	10-12 am	Coffee and Chat
		8.00 pm	Time for Prayer
Wed	11	11.15 am	Communion Service
		7.45 pm	Midways (RAF reminiscences continued - Brian Stone)
Sun	15	10.30 am	Morning Service led by Janet and Bob Hamblin and Paul Harvey
Mon	16	2.45 pm	Fellowship (Miss Pauline Riley)
Tue	17	10-12 am	Coffee and Chat
		7.30 pm	Men's Supper Club (Ted Ashwood - Memories of an Army bandsman)
		8.00 pm	Time for Prayer
Fri	20	12.30 pm	Lunch Club
Sun	22	10.30 am	Morning Service led by Rev Anne Rusbridge
		8.00 pm	Evening Service
Mon	23	2.45 pm	Fellowship (Mr and Mrs Cotton)
Tue	24	10-12 am	Coffee and Chat
		8.00 pm	Time for Prayer
Wed	25	10.30 am	Bible Study
		7.45 pm	Midways (Fish and Chip Supper)
Sun	29	10.30 am	Family Service led by Janet and Bob Hamblin and Paul Harvey
Mon	30	2.45 pm	Fellowship (Mr Saleshi - St. John Fisher)