

Martin Way Methodist Church

Newsletter - June 2004

Minister - Rev John Nyota

MINISTER'S LETTER

Jambo rafiki,

"Were you there?" Have you heard this question recently at Martin Way? Most of us will remember that old song which goes on to ask were you there when they crucified my Lord, when they laid him in the tomb, etc. But this question is not about that, or is it? It is about the powerful performance recently at the church - the Godspell. For those not familiar with this it is a musical play that basically takes you through Jesus' ministry in one evening.

Back to the question! It is those who were there asking those who might not have been were you there? Were you there when this fancily dressed lady came singing and saying "What are you doing tonight honey." It depends on what captured someone's imagination. For my children it was the dancing and such funny lines like chakacha. And especially for my son it is the death of Jesus and when he sung "Oh Lord I am dead." So were you there?

Do not worry if you were not there because definitely some could not be there for a good reason. For me who actually participated in this I was extremely impressed by the organisation and arrangement as well as the enthusiasm displayed by the congregation and those others from the circuit. It was very evident that here was one body with all the pieces working in tandem. Here was love at work in a family that did more than love, they laughed together.

So were you there during the times of the Acts of the Apostles when they shared everything in common? I did not have to have been there! I could see it with my own eyes during Godspell. So when the singer said they will know we are Christians by our love, that is exactly what they meant. There are numerous occasions coming up that will avail us an opportunity to continue this act of love and laughter. I can think of many

but let me go straight on to the Church's 70th anniversary organised for the weekend of 11-12th September.

I wonder what comes to mind when you hear of anniversary. Of course you will tell me it depends on the kind of anniversary. May I hasten to say that is true. For a church anniversary it is a time of celebration. Celebrating the goodness of the Lord through whom the ministry for which we are now part of was conceived and planted. It is a time to thank God for the far he has gotten us. What a better time to do that than with all our friends past and present coming back. Their presence rekindles the memories of good times. Again many will ask each other were you there? And of course the answer will be to some, "Yes I was" or to others "it was before my time" etc.

Yet there is more to anniversary! As folk ask each other "were you there" they will be remembering nostalgically those times when the church had something that maybe they do not see any more. Perhaps some of these are better left to the past but some memories will pose the question where did we miss the step? Every organisation does ask that now and then, not so that they can feel guilty about it but so that it can stir action. So I add this caveat, it is a time of replenishing ourselves as we prepare to continue the calling that we have as a corporate body. Where that calling needs emphasizing we do that by recapturing the right ingredients. Of course most things cannot be done like they were done some years back but there is something that can still be done.

Take for example evangelism. It may be true that times have changed and Christianity is not the in-thing for most people today. Yet that does not mean that each of us does not have a neighbour or a person they are close to. People still do drop in to our churches to see whether this is the right place for them. How much love do we show them? How much of our homes do we open for them? For it takes more than just a smile after church for a person to remain in church. It takes more than the words "It was so good of you to worship with us today". Actually it takes more than a visit by the minister. It takes a church member asking someone "What are you doing on Friday? Could we stop at say my place for a cuppa etc." I know we are all careful not to smother those who come. Yet I encourage each of us to make an effort and be courageous to take a risk.

So were you there? It does not matter! As long as you are there now living your calling. Watch this column, will you?.

John

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR OF THE SOUTH-WEST DISTRICT

April 2004

Dear Friends

For those of you with long enough memories, 1976 was the year of scorching temperatures and the great drought. It was also the year in which the film versions of *Godspell* and *Jesus Christ Superstar* first appeared. Both were typical products of their times - upbeat and optimistic in their presentation of the Christian message. Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* is a more controversial film and reflects the times we live in. It owes something to Gibson's passionate but conservative Catholicism as well as the cinematic exploration of extreme violence in some of his other films; it is also a response to the events of 11 September 2001 and all that has flowed from them. The world has become a more violent and pessimistic place since 1976.

I am writing this in Holy Week - a time in the Church's calendar which lends itself to a pessimistic reflection upon the nature of violence. This week marks the tenth anniversary of the genocide in Rwanda in 1994 when some 800,000 people were killed on the basis of an ethnic distinction that does not exist. Back in 1980, I was a 'rookie' desk officer in the Central African Department of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office dealing with, among other countries, Rwanda and Burundi. (Occasional telephone calls over crackly lines to keep in touch with our Honorary Consuls in Kigali and Bujumbura stretched the available telecommunications technology of those days to the limit!) It was quite clear that the former Belgian colonists had exploited differences between the Hutu and Tutsi people in Rwanda and Burundi as part of a cynical policy of 'divide and rule' to favour their own interests. That legacy had continued since independence and there had been sporadic outbursts of violence between Hutu and Tutsi even then, but nothing on the horrifying scale of what happened in 1994.

Rwanda is a far-away country of which we know little and for which, I suspect, we care less. Iraq and the intifada between Arabs and Israelis in the West Bank and Gaza loom larger in the news. These are places where

we have 'interests' - especially in Iraq where British troops are deployed. The violence continues to escalate horrifyingly, with so much of it perpetrated in the name of religion. And lest we forget that these things happen nearer to home, we have only to remember the fragile peace in Northern Ireland brokered though what is tellingly called the 'Good Friday agreement'.

To contemplate what the death of Jesus is about, is to ask what is the problem to be addressed. To survey the wondrous cross on which the Prince of Glory died is to acknowledge the problem that we human beings go on killing one another and trying to destroy one another. We do so because we cannot live with our differences. The crucifixion of Jesus invites us to imagine whether human beings ever could live together with their differences. There are a number of New Testament texts which touch on this theme. This is how the author of the Letter to the Ephesians puts it to an early Christian community unreconciled to their differences and disagreements:

Remember then your former condition, Gentiles, as you are by birth, 'the uncircumcised' as you are called by those who call themselves 'the circumcised' because of a physical rite. You were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the community of Israel, strangers to God's covenants and the promise that goes with them. Yours was a world without hope and without God. Once you were far off, but now in union with Christ Jesus you have been brought near through the shedding of Christ's blood. For he himself is our peace. Gentiles and Jews, he has made the two one, and in his own body of flesh and blood has broken down the barrier of enmity which separated them; for he annulled the law with its rules and regulations, so as to create out of the two a single new humanity in himself, thereby making peace. This was his purpose, to reconcile the two in a single body to God through the cross, by which he killed the enmity. So he came and proclaimed the good news: peace to you who were far off, and peace to those who were near; for through him we both alike have access to the Father in the one Spirit.

Ephesians 2:11-18

So the task of individual Christians - the task of local Christian communities - the task of the wider Church - is to learn to live this way.

It means owning up to what the death of Jesus is about:

- all our murderous hatreds;
- our inability to forgive and way we cling on to festering grudges;
- our creation of victims and scapegoats to make ourselves feel morally superior;
- our resort to violence and war to settle our differences.

Then the task moves on: it is to reflect on what the resurrection of Jesus is about. I have found that the resurrection accounts in John's Gospel especially help me to do this. In John 20, we learn how the risen Christ came and stood among his frightened, demoralized disciples in that locked upper room, breathing forgiveness, peace and the gift of the Holy Spirit upon them. The power of God was released into their lives and into the world - an extraordinary, unsettling, restless, surging power for life. I believe that resurrection power makes it possible for us:

- to let go our murderous hatreds
- to overcome our inability to forgive and way we cling on to festering grudges;
- to stop creating victims and scapegoats;
- to turn from violence and war as the means by which we settle our differences

And slowly but surely, God offers us the opportunity to cooperate with him in creating new patterns for human living and human flourishing. That needs a lot of truth and honesty - and a lot of love and acceptance. It is about our search for commitment to God who creates and sustains us in life, in death, and in life beyond death. It is about a creative response to evil, suffering and death - inspired by the example of the crucified and risen Christ, so that we may act with love and struggle with the joys and tragedies of the world.

It can happen. By God's grace it will happen. Sometimes it only takes three days. Most of the time it takes a little longer. We can say to ourselves: 'Easter Day is the first day of a new creation. God's new world has begun. So we've got a job to do, and God's Spirit to help us to do it'. But don't just say it within the walls of your church. Take the love and grace, joy and thanksgiving you find there with you when you leave and let it sing through your lives and your relationships, in the places where you work

and where you take your leisure. The Resurrection is God's determined YES! to Jesus. The Resurrection is God's determined YES! to us, the world God has made, and our place in it.

*With best wishes for this Easter season,
Yours ever,
John*

BIBLELANDS CELEBRATION

On Sunday 4 July BibleLands is celebrating this year's 150th Anniversary by asking churches to promote a BibleLand's Sunday. John has agreed for our church to book this date and Nigel Edward-Few the Director and Secretary to the Trustees of BibleLands will be coming to Martin Way on that day, which will be our Family Service. Please support this special service if you possibly can.

Mary and Derek Heaton

WESLEY EMPOWERMENT CENTRE

NYOTA HELP BABY SIMBA PROJECT

At the heart of Kenya is the second highest mountain in Africa known as Mount Kenya. At the slopes of this mountain is a town known as Meru. It is inhabited by a Bantu group of people most of whom are farmers. Most of the Meruland is fertile with many large coffee and tea plantations. Yet unknown to most people even in Kenya itself is an area known as Mbeu. This place which is semi-arid has no cash crop and people depend on maize and beans for existence. Most families here own less than an acre of land which produces around five bags (450kg) of maize and half of beans (50kg) per annum. An average family of six depends on such a piece of land for all their food and cash. This is an equivalent of Kenya Shillings five thousand (£50).

We are talking of extreme poverty in a land believed to be the most fertile. As a result most children have little to eat and most barely make it through the primary school level. Worse still was during the previous government when there were extra levies in schools. At least with the new government policy of free primary education the situation has improved. Yet without food, children find it hard to last an entire day at school. Others go to school off and on, as they have to work as casuals on farms of the rich in order to earn money for the family.

Added to such extreme poverty is the malaria phenomenon. Due to some swampy water catchment areas there are many breeding grounds for mosquitoes. Indeed what is Mbeu now was a land that many people who moved to Meru a millennium ago would not touch due to this deadly disease. Some from the more fertile areas of Meru still keep off from this area in fear of being infected with malaria. As a result many have died leaving very young impoverished families with one parent, grandparent or relatives. The result has been that these young kids drop out of school to get food for themselves and their families. And Mbeu has not been spared the deadly HIV/AIDS scourge! The area has seen some deaths resulting from this disease again adding to the list of orphans. The mortality has increased especially since those catching the AIDS virus are already weakened by malaria and poor diets.

That is not a fairy tale! It is the place where John and Faith Nyota were born before they moved into the city Nairobi. At the city they have been involved with pioneering projects for the poor in the slums in conjunction with the Karibuni Trust, a British charity for Kenya children. Recently (Jan-Feb 04) John returned to Kenya and this time to Meru and helped begin one such project. This was made possible by the generous seed donation from Martin Way Methodist. Through this project children are fed, educated and made to fall in love with school again. They are happy and playful and their smiles have come back to them. For once they can be children in a safe environment and not work a whole day in scorching sun that saps childhood from their weak bones. The challenge is to keep them there.

It costs £250 to keep a child there for one year. We currently have 30 children from the poorest of the poor. There are two people taking care of them, one who doubles up as a teacher and caretaker and the other one is the social work person who ensures they are safe back home. An account has been opened at Kenya Co-operative Bank. Arrangements are being made to open another one here, but that will involve some technical issues of charity registration. (Anyone with this knowhow and willing to help can speak to John (020 8946 3181 or revjohnnyota@hotmail.com).

If you want to know more about this project please talk to Revs John or Faith Nyota at 9 Durrington Park Road, London SW20 8NU tel: 020 8946 3181 or 020 8879 0210

SUPPORTING MISSION LOCALLY 150 YEARS AGO

1 June 1858

Dear Sir,

Once upon a time Mrs Sawyer the washerwoman and Non-Churchite made a vow that all the money which came into her possession with one or more holes in it should be dedicated to some good cause. Whenever the box which contained this peculiar species of money became uncomfortably full, the contents were usually guided into the hands of the Wesleyan Missionaries, but for some reason not clearly defined that valuable cargo has this year been transmitted to me and at my instigation forwarded to you for the Church Missionaries. I feel rather scrupulous about changing the money in Wimbledon lest in time the whole amount should return again to the donor which might be rather more than she bargained for. I therefore send it to you exactly as it came minus the blue cotton handkerchief that enveloped it. Please to put Mrs Sawyers's name against the 9s. 2d*. when the accounts are made up. Alfred [her husband] suggests that it should be entitled 'holey' money.

Believe me

Yours very truly,

Kezia Peache

[*about a month's wages]

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THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH - JUNE

It is just over seven years since my dear wife June died, so this month is always a rather poignant one for me. Every time I write or see the date, I am reminded of her. Moreover it was the month of her birthday. It may seem silly, but when 8th June comes round I still wish her a happy birthday. Anniversaries ... birthdays, wedding anniversaries and other special "personal" days bring back memories, especially to those of us who have lost loved ones, those with whom we have spent the greater part of our lives. Memories come rushing back, tumbling over themselves in the rush to reach the fore-front of our minds. Memory, of course, is one of God's precious gifts which we take for granted, but God has so tempered that lovely gift that when we think about our loved ones, it is the happiest memories which spring most readily to mind. As the Psalmist said, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made". No-one else has exactly the same

memories as you have or I have. Each one has a storehouse of memories which grows with each passing day. Thank God for happy memories and for those who provided them for us May he also help us to provide happy memories for others.

Bill Cox

MULTI -SPORT COURT IN MOSTYN GARDENS

This is freely available as a community resource. It will be used by Poplar Primary School during school hours, but it is for daylight use and not book-able, so whoever turns up can make use of it. The vision was to provide a gift to the community for Merton and Morden's youth to have something constructive and free-of-charge to do with their time, and similar facilities elsewhere have made a difference to youth culture and even to crime levels. The court will be marked for basketball, netball, and 5-a-side football, but would also allow mini-cricket and imaginative creations! To find out more contact Peter Leech, Morden Baptist Project Team 8542-6581

CYRIL GRUMBRI DGE

It was with sadness that we heard of the death of Cyril Grumbridge on Monday 3 May. For some months Cyril had been in hospital following a severe stroke. A member of St. Martin's Church, he became known to us through the Men's Supper Club. From the early days of the Club in 1993 until his illness last autumn, Cyril was our Treasurer. He had a great sense of humour and was always ready with a smile. We had intended to give a small token of thanks to Cyril at our annual service this year, but we were too late, Cyril was in hospital. We give thanks for the privilege of knowing him and his wife Lilian is in our thoughts and prayers.

Bill Cox

ARTHUR KNIGHT 23 September 1909-2004 14 April

Arthur was the son of Kate and Herbert Knight. The family first lived in Dupont Road and from the 1920s in Mostyn Road. He was a keen scouter and an accomplished sportsman, playing with his brothers in various football and cricket matches. In 1931 he joined the Imperial Tobacco Company, working in the Display Service department and remained with them until he retired. On 10 June 1939 he married Josephine Field and

they moved to Maycross Avenue where they lived for the rest of their lives.

Arthur's singing career "took off" after his mother heard him singing in the bath and persuaded him to have his voice trained. Under Mr Pitt's tuition he developed a fine baritone voice that won him many medals and certificates at local Music Festivals. He was offered employment with 'The Black and White Minstrel Show' but reluctantly declined, opting for the greater security of his full time job. Arthur said that over the years he had sung more than a thousand times with various groups including 'Patchwork' and 'The Happy Wanderers'. He sang with Pat Bryant for many years accompanied on the piano by Jean Butland, but he had many singing partners, including Vida Brown, Jean Gear, Valerie and Graham Currie, Billy Thomas and Bill Bass. One of the favourite songs was "The Gendarmes". He was a great support to Jo and the 'Jolaes Puppets', at times singing with them in the shows.

In 1997 he was awarded the Queen's Silver Jubilee Medal in recognition for all his charity work. He continued singing well into his nineties, his last concert being in October 2003.

He was a member of Martin Way Lunch Club and shared his 90th birthday celebrations at the Club with Ivy Davies (also born in September). When he arrived on a Friday he usually had a word with most of the people there and always came to the hatchway at the end of lunch to thank "the staff" for his meal.

Arthur would always open the door for a lady, and raise his hat. It was especially appropriate at his thanksgiving service that his coffin was covered with the English flag and that as well as the flowers on it there was also his trilby hat. For his friends the sight of the hat brought a lump to the throat. He will be missed by many but all who knew him will remember him for his boundless generosity and for being a 'true gentleman'.

'Death is but a sharp corner near the beginning of life's procession down eternity'

OLIVE MARTIN 11 September 1910-15 April 2004

Olive was born on 11 September 1910, the third child of a family of six. Even as a youngster she was quiet and very lady-like, with fair hair and a

peaches-and-cream complexion. At school she excelled at sports, playing netball and tennis and winning the high jump in the District Sports competition.

Her cousin, whose father was a chauffeur for a High Class Hire Company remembers as a child going with her parents to collect Olive for an afternoon's drive. She would be waiting, pretty and excited and dancing with joy. She would go into fits of laughter when told "The Barrer is outside - coming for a ride? And invariably she would say "Uncle it's not a barrow it's a lovely car!". Typically she would look very smart, dressed up for the outing with hat, gloves and carrying a child-size handbag.

When Olive left school she became a very good ballroom dancer with her fiancé (later husband) Jimmy Martin, a master tailor and accomplished carpenter and decorator. They had three children, Jimmy, Ivan (Hank) and Rosemary (born after the war). At the outbreak of war Jimmy and Hank were evacuated to Winkfield for a short while, returning to London to share the doodle-bugs and terrifying V 2's. Throughout, Olive never lost her unshakeable optimism and frequently told her family that "Everything was for the best".

At Martin Way she was a regular church-goer. She belonged to the Women's Fellowship and enjoyed their outings to the coast and country, always smartly dressed, often in pale blue with matching accessories. Even her car was a pale blue Hillman Imp! It was a great sadness to her when, afflicted with painful arthritis and increasingly crippled despite two knee operations, she was forced to give up driving. She still managed to come to Lunch Club for a time but, like many of us, didn't much enjoy meals on wheels on the other days, though she never grumbled. Right to the end she maintained her cheerfulness, optimism and faith.

Throughout her life she was a kind, loving and supportive mother to her children and a devoted wife and life partner to her husband, to whom she was married for over sixty years. Her family always came first; she did all in her power to give them the springboard to make the best of their lives. Olive was big-hearted, generous and hospitable. She was a wonderful neighbour and with her happy smile and thought always for others she was a true inspiration to her friends.

SIGMA HAVE DONE IT AGAIN!!

The performances of GODSPELL at our church on Saturday and Sunday the 1st and 2nd May were both outstanding and spectacular, presenting the Gospel message in a very real and understandable way. There was a good attendance on both occasions and the gross income from the two evenings was just in excess of £1000. Unfortunately there are expenses to pay out of this, but there will still be a substantial donation to NCH Action for Children, for which many thanks.

Janet and Bob Hamblin are to be particularly congratulated for all the hard work (and time) which they put into this production - as indeed they always do, and Anne Conquest also worked hard on the drama aspect, as well as her singing during the programme! In addition mention should be made of the performance by Paul Harvey as Jesus - what a job to remember all the words, but he made it. In fact everyone who took part or helped in any way deserves to be specially thanked and congratulated for a task well done. It was also a well deserved christening for our new lighting system in the church which worked very well indeed.

For me it was very poignant that the production should have been dedicated to my late wife Jean; she would have enjoyed every minute of both performances and, as said in the programme, was no doubt singing with the choir on both nights.

Carry on with the good work - cannot wait for the next effort!

John Butland

IN MEMORY OF JEAN BUTLAND

John and the family thank everyone for the donations given to NCH Action for Children in memory of Jean which amounted to £1488 - a truly magnificent result.

NEWS FROM OUR NEIGHBOURS

Saturday 19 June: St. James are holding a parish auction of things, such as furniture, china etc and talents e.g. wash a car, do some gardening etc. Auction 7.30 pm Viewing 6-7 pm. Proceeds in aid of their Building Outward for the Future Fund.

CHURCH DIARY FOR JUNE

Tue	1	10-12 am	Coffee and Chat
		8.00 pm	Time for Prayer
Thu	3	2-3.00 pm	Seekers Group
Sun	6	10.30 am	Family Service led by Brenda Cannon
Mon	7	2.45 pm	Fellowship (Maureen Patel - National Trust)
Tue	8	10-12 am	Coffee and Chat
		8.00 pm	Time for Prayer
Wed	9	7.45 pm	Midways (Rev Paul Chapman - Army Padre)
Fri	11	12.30 pm	Lunch Club
Sun	13	10.30 am	Morning Service led by Rev John Nyota
		6.30 pm	Communion Service led by Rev Stuart Veitch
Mon	14	2.45 pm	Fellowship (Mr John Hawkes - Merton Abbey Mills)
Tue	15	10-12 am	Coffee and Chat
		7.30 pm	Men's Supper Club (Eileen Lilley - Livery Companies)
		8.00 pm	Time for Prayer
Thu	17	2-3.00 pm	Seekers Group
Sun	20	10.30 am	Communion Service led by Rev John Nyota
Mon	21	2.45 pm	Fellowship
Tue	22	10-12 am	Coffee and Chat
		8.00 pm	Time for Prayer
Wed	23	7.45 pm	Midways (Fish and Chip Supper)
Fri	25	12.30 pm	Lunch Club
Sun	27	10.30 am	Morning Service led by Dr Arthur Miller
		8.00 pm	"Worship @ 8" led by Janet and Bob Hamblin
Mon	28	2.45 pm	Fellowship (Dorothy Turner)
Tue	29	10-12 am	Coffee and Chat
		8.00 pm	Time for Prayer