

MARTIN WAY METHODIST CHURCH

Newsletter - March 2002

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Dear friends,

I have now been with you at Martin Way for 18 months. On the 4th March I have to attend the District Probationers' Committee which will have received reports on all aspects of my ministry and will make the decision whether or not I am ready for ordination. The process of preparing for ordination began, in one sense, many years ago when I first became aware that God was calling me into ministry. That calling was first tested with the candidates' selection process, which is a year of in-depth interviews, written exams and assessments. Having been accepted for training I then spent two years as a full-time student in college, where I had opportunities to learn about a wide variety of different styles of ministry. It was hard work settling down to the discipline of attending lectures and producing written assignments, but I found every aspect of the work interesting and stimulating. I had practical 'work experience' in a London circuit and with the chaplaincy at Mayday Hospital in Croydon. At the end of the time in college probationer ministers are placed in churches which have been specially chosen because they have made a commitment to support, encourage and enable the probationer to continue their training process for a further two years in a working environment. This means that sufficient time has to be made available for study and training.

During the time I have been at Martin Way I have attended probationers' groups regularly for discussion on ministerial issues and moral support; I have continued my academic study, firstly at Sheffield University, and more recently in conducting research locally into the way the church addresses the spiritual needs of older people; I have spiritual support through regular meetings with a mentor and a group of women ministers; I have regular meetings with the Superintendent who has oversight of all my work; and a number of people have assessed and reported on the way I handle meetings, pastoral work and worship. All this is called 'formation in ministry', and at the end of January this year, the probationers' retreat provided the opportunity for reflecting on this whole experience of training and fine-tuning thoughts and understanding of ministry. We were told that the most important aspect of our work is our devotion to prayer and reflection, bringing the needs of the people to God and listening to what God is saying about the work of the church. This is an aspect of my ministry which I take very seriously, and it has been such a joy to have others joining me in prayer. Preparing and leading of worship is quite a challenge

and takes up a significant amount of time each week. Two tasks still to be done before the committee meets on 4th March are a study of Wesley sermons and a study of C.P.D., the rule book which governs all the meetings and activities in the life of our church.

If I am accepted for ordination this year, the next milestone is my testimony service on 9th June, 6.30 pm at Martin Way. This is an opportunity for me to share publicly the way my time as a probationer minister has helped in my 'formation in ministry' and confirmed my calling to ordination. I still have a considerable amount of work to do in order to complete my academic studies by the end of July, and I would ask you to respect the time I need in order to do that, most especially because this research will assist our future work in the Circuit.

Ordination in the Methodist Church is a commitment to serve God under the discipline of the church, in word, sacrament and pastoral charge. This means that the ordained minister has the responsibility for preaching and teaching the word of God, for administering the sacraments and caring for the spiritual needs of the church community. If I am accepted, I will take on this responsibility with a real sense of joy and excitement at the privilege of working in partnership with God in this way. I have tremendous energy for the work and have been given a rich variety of experiences in training which I will gladly share with you.

Ministry, of course, is not the responsibility solely of the ordained person, it is the work of the whole church. It has been so encouraging in recent weeks to see people willingly taking on tasks which had previously been seen as the minister's responsibility, in preparation for the increased responsibilities I will have in September.

None of this would have been possible without the help of my family. Mike has taken a large responsibility for the running of the home, along with Fiona, and supports my ministry in the church in a variety of ways. There are some very exciting times ahead of us if we are prepared to place our trust in God, and we need to pray about the right way forward. The church stewards meet at 10.10 am every Sunday to pray for the morning worship and would welcome others joining them; or come and join us on a Tuesday evening to pray for the work of the church. Do come and join in worship as we prepare to celebrate Easter.

With best wishes,

Anne

Churches Together In Merton Park

This year the Annual Ecumenical Service during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity was held at St. Mary's Merton on the evening of 20 January. About a hundred of us came representing St. Mary's, St. James', St. John Fisher, Merton Park Baptist and our own Martin Way. We were welcomed by Rev Wilma Roest, curate at St.

Mary's and the sermon was by Rev Tom Leary, with every church taking its part with readings, prayers and music. The theme of the service was "With You is the Fountain of Life", which was reflected in the hymns, the responses to the psalm and the final blessing. It was a joyful affirming service where we could feel ourselves part of God's family. It was also thought-provoking and challenging not least in the sermon which spoke to the needs of all of us.

Tom took Mark chapter 8 verse 27 as his text :

"And Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi and on the way he asked his disciples who do people say that I am?"

If ever a question was about back to basics this questions was.

Who do people say that I am?

This is the question which has confronted every man, woman and child who has ever heard the name, Jesus. For many people today the whole question is one without any real meaning... For many of our contemporary people the words 'Jesus Christ' are used more often in blasphemy. The questions we should ask ourselves are Why is this? What are the reasons that are behind this attitude of so many people today? Where does the fault lie? We can say that it lies with the bishops and clergy; we can blame the theologians and teachers because they write and teach matters which ordinary people cannot understand. We can blame the people outside the church - we can say they are lazy - apathetic and indifferent - we can say all this but what have we said? It is not our fault, it is anybody else's fault, but it is not our fault because we are regular worshippers. We play our part in church life. Let us look at ourselves - the Christian congregation - and see whether or not we put stumbling blocks before those people outside the church who are seeking God that make it very hard for them to believe?

Who do people say that I am?

The answer of course is not simple... But one thing is certain and irrefutable. One of the biggest stumbling blocks to the spread of the Christian Gospel is the disunity of the Church. Try and put yourself in the position of a person seeking after the Christian faith. For them it is something like buying a car. You go to different showrooms - you see which car offers the best value for your money... The salesman who is most persuading and most polite will somehow influence your decision. The car which looks most attractive, which has the best name and social standing - all these criteria will affect your decision.

What a mockery when it is applied to the Church... How can we present Jesus Christ who is the Son of God to a world in need of spiritual values when we divide the one true son of God ourselves. Today we are in danger of saying it is not our fault, it is the fault of past ages. The church became disunited because of historical divisions in

the past. If the Pope hadn't insisted on selling indulgences Luther wouldn't have started the Reformation. If Henry VIII had been less virile there might not have been a rift in this country. Although some fault lies with our forefathers it is also our responsibility and it is our sins today which keep the churches separated. Who do we say Jesus is? We should acknowledge that he is the King of Kings and that it is His will that they all may be one. But do we acknowledge this? Is it not time that we left behind our denominational differences, our historical traditions and journeyed on closer together? I have tried to show the sin of our disunity. We are all sinners - we are all involved in this division of the churches. It makes a mockery of the Cross and the one Lord who died for all people. This is why the first steps back to unity must begin with ourselves and our own disobedience. If we believe that Jesus is the Son of God then the fact of the separation of the churches should be a real matter of concern for each and every one of us. It makes it so difficult for the non-Christian to make any sense whatsoever of the person of Christ...

Who do people say that I am?

This century, especially since the last war, this question has been answered with a common answer from more and more people from different churches. You are the Christ - the Son of God. The future outlook is no longer gloomy. The Spirit of God is working in and through all the churches in the movement towards unity. If you want some evidence of the existence of God look at the history of the Ecumenical Movement since the war - God is working His purpose out as year succeeds to year. Many movements and organisations have started with this movement towards unity. One of these is the Taizé Community in France. In addition a generous sign has been given to us to stimulate our hopes of unity; that is the sharing of our life with Catholic and Orthodox brethren who stand side by side with the approval of Rome and Constantinople.

Not only is disunity a stumbling block to those outside the church it is a large stumbling block to those within the church - we duplicate our structures of ministry, resources, buildings and mission.

Over the nine years in Merton Park Churches Together we have risked little in moving forward together. We still continue to do the minimum, with ecumenical matters low on our list of priorities. The struggle to keep our individual shows on the road takes up all our energies.

Thankfully there are some encouraging signs. There are the new Covenant proposals published in December with regard to the coming together of the Anglican and Methodist Churches. These will be discussed by the General Synod of the Church of England and by the Methodist Conference.

There is a special invitation to the United Reformed Church to join in with the proposals.

- Organise so that there can be a united interchangeable ministry
- Common life and mission
- Welcome each others' baptised members to participate in the fellowship, worship and mission of our churches
- Share Eucharistic hospitality
- Listen to each other and take into account each others concerns
- Develop structures for a shared ministry of oversight

Yet the most we can do together is

- Share a Lent study course
- Annual meal together
- Something at Pentecost
- An annual ecumenical service during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

There are other signs of hope - the 'On the Move' Mission in Morden in September. Yet there is more we can do

- Form an ecumenical Christian enquirers' group for new Christians
- Work together in youth work
- Examine again in principle what are we doing separately that would be better done together

All the mainstream churches in this country are in decline. The fact of disunity compels us to have a spiritual heart attack and change our attitudes. The invitation is to make changes in order that we might work more closely together locally in order to make Jesus known. If we do not make these changes then to quote from a recent article -

'It is not too much of an exaggeration to suggest that if the churches make a pig's ear of future unity plans then perhaps the last person to leave would kindly put out the light'

We had come to the church in the dark of a clear night, along paths and lanes which our predecessors had trod to church for so many years. The church with its steeple was floodlit, so that it seemed a lighthouse in the midst of the darkness towards which we made our way seeking refuge and companionship. But from its windows streamed light and within we met not strangers but friends and travelling companions. So after the service we returned to the world outside with renewed strength and courage for our witness to our neighbours and all the people whom we meet each day.

Rosemary Keen

Turkey - in the steps of St Paul : 25 May - 4 June 2002

Rev David Winwood , Haywards Heath Church, is leading a pilgrimage/holiday to the Seven Churches of Asia Minor with Cappadocia and Istanbul:- leaflet on board in corridor by vestry [it sounds wonderful!]. Call him at 01444 416170 for itinerary and costs.

Listening

You are not listening to me when...

- You do not care about me
- You say you understand before you know me well enough
- You have an answer to my problem before I've finished telling you what my problem is
- You cut me off before I've finished speaking
- You feel critical of the words I use, my grammar or my accent
- You are dying to tell me something
- You tell me about your experience, making mine seem unimportant
- You are communicating to someone else in the room
- You refuse my thanks by saying you haven't really done anything

You are listening to me when...

- You come quietly into my private world and let me be
- You really try to understand me even if I'm not making much sense
- You grasp my point even if it's against your own sincere convictions
- You realise that the hour I took from you has left you tired and drained
- You allow me the dignity of making my own decisions even though they might be wrong
- You do not take my problem from me, but allow me to deal with it in my own way
- You hold back your desire to give me good advice
- You do not offer me religious solace when you sense I am not ready for it
- You give me enough room to discover for myself what is going on
- You accept my gift of gratitude by telling me how good it make you feel to know that you have been helpful

[originating in South Africa and used by the Vice-President of Conference Mrs Ann Leck during her visit to the circuit last September]

Thanks

Joan and Albert Arnold would like to thank everyone for the many cards, letters and messages they have received. They have very much appreciated people's kind thoughts and prayers during this difficult period.

The Awards

I don't want to thank my agent, my director, my fellow actors, my friends - or even the dog for an Oscar, Grammy, Emmy, or any other worthless metal idol.

I want to say a truly, deeply, heartfelt 'Thank You' for the prize that I was nominated for even before I was born - a prize I haven't had to work for, act for, or earn. A prize more precious than can be described. Totally and unreservedly - freely given at the expense of someone else - to a very undeserving person. So from the bottom of my heart I want to say "Thank You Lord" for your sacrifice for me. A life so pure and unblemished, given unreservedly so that my sins are forgiven and I can now live and have life eternal, There is no better prize in this world. Praise the Lord. Alleluia!

Joan Harding

Understanding The Covenant Service, January 2002

Although I missed the first of the three services which led up to our Covenant Service, I was fortunate enough to read the copy of the first address/sermon of the first Sunday. I found these three Sundays excellent learning about the meaning of the Covenant Service.

Over a period of 37 years I've known of many members of Martin Way who have worried or were unhappy about the wording of certain parts of the Covenant, and many of us I'm sure really did not understand the wording. Previous Ministers have often known of our concerns but few have attempted to explain in detail the real meanings.

However over the last year our Minister Anne has heard our concerns and worries. She obviously put hours of study, prayer and hard work into explaining and teaching us about the meaning, which, from comments I've heard, were greatly appreciated by many. Sadly Anne does not always hear the feedback of how well a service has been received, so, on behalf of possibly shy folk, I'll say "Thank you" for our Covenant Service and all the worthwhile preparation that went into it.

Derek Heaton

Message from Galilee

A small group from the Amos Trust are going to the Holy Land at Easter. They ask for prayers for the visit and for their partners and peacemaker friends there. Over Christmas came this challenging and wise message: "You forget to pray, as we do, for the persecutors, the oppressors for all those who erroneously think that they have the right to "smoke people out from their caves" and "to suffocate" people under siege. They are the ones who need our prayers and God's compassion...."

An Appreciation of Rev Anne Rusbridge

Soon after Anne arrived I was asked to say, at a Circuit meeting, something good that was going on at our church. I said that we had a new lady minister and what more was there to say.

At the first family service that Anne took I remember thinking that it was a wonderful service but how was she going to follow it. I am pleased to say that she continues to have wonderful ideas for services, and makes all family services fascinating to the children. I thought the Christmas morning service was outstanding - from pantomime to pathos in a very few minutes.

Thanks Anne for all your hard work and may your ideas continue to flow.

Thanks be to God.

Joyce Plant

New Website Address

Please note: the new website address is:-

martinwy.webspace.fish.co.uk

Thanks

Joan and Albert Arnold would like to thank everyone for the many cards, letters and messages they have received. They have very much appreciated people's kind thoughts and prayers during this difficult period.

What to do with your used stamps?

Bill Cox always welcomes used stamps at any time of the year. The money raised goes towards providing guide dogs for the blind and hearing dogs for the deaf.

News from Our Neighbours

- St Mary, Merton are holding an auction of quality items on Saturday 13 April in the Church Hall Church Path. More details from Graham Clark 8542-9101
- St James' Summer Fair this year will be on 25 May

Dates for your Diary

- Saturday 9 March Big Brunch returns! 9-12 noon: full breakfast for £2.50
- Saturday 23 March JMA Day : 12 noon - 4pm
- Thursday 25 April General Church Meeting 8pm

JMA Day

Time-Travellers

Saturday 23rd March

12 noon to 4pm

Why 'Time-Travellers'? Because we are travelling to meet people who were born at a different time from us.

All ages invited to come to lunch and enjoy activities together.

(JMA - Junior Mission for All)

Easter Services

Palm Sunday 10.30 am : Morning worship led by Mr K Amoah Arko with Sunday Club for the children

Holy Week 25th- 29th March at 8.00 pm

"Words from the Cross"

- **Monday** "Stay Awake" the suffering of Jesus in the shadow of the cross
- **Tuesday** "Father forgive them" focussing on forgiveness
- **Wednesday** "Here is your Mother, here is your Son" -pain of separation.
- **Thursday** "I thirst" - unconditional love, feet washing and Holy Communion.

Good Friday 10.30 am : Ecumenical service at Merton Park Baptist Church
12.15 pm : Picnic lunch and afternoon walk.

Easter Sunday 8.00 am : Holy Communion followed by breakfast
10.30 am Morning Worship with Holy Communion and Sunday Club for children

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Church Diary for March 2002

Sun	3	10.30 am	Sunday Club Anniversary: Family Service led by Rev Anne Rusbridge
Mon	4	2.45 pm	Fellowship (Mrs Sally Peel - Local Policing)
Tue	5	10-12 am	Coffee and Chat
		8.00 pm	Time for Prayer
Wed	6	10.30 am	Toddler time in Church
		7.45 pm	Midways (Mrs Sue Champness - Friends of Cannon Hill Common)
Fri	8	12.30 pm	Lunch Club
Sun	10	10.30 am	Mothering Sunday: Family Service led by Rev Barrie Tabraham
		6.30 pm	Evening Service led by Rev Anne Rusbridge
Mon	11	2.45 pm	Fellowship (Mrs Rosemary Snell - Country Wisdom Folklore)
Tue	12	10-12 am	Coffee and Chat
		8.00 pm	Time for Prayer
Wed	13	10.30 am	Holy Communion
Sun	17	10.30 am	Morning Service led by Rev Anne Rusbridge
		6.30 pm	Youth Service led by Janet and Bob Hamblin
Mon	18	2.45 pm	Fellowship (Rev Stan Brown)
Tue	19	10-12 am	Coffee and Chat
		7.30 pm	Men's Supper Club (An evening with Suki)
		8.00 pm	Time for Prayer
Wed	20	7.45 pm	Midways (Bill Cox - Easter Meeting)
Fri	22	12.30 pm	Lunch Club
Sat	23	12-4 pm	JMA Day
Sun	24	10.30 am	Palm Sunday: Morning Service led by Mr Kojo Amoah Arko

HOLY WEEK

Services at 8.00 pm (see above)

Mon	25	2.45 pm	Fellowship (Mr J Barrington-Johnson (Whipsnade Zoo))
Tue	26	10-12 am	Coffee and Chat
Wed	27	10.30 am	Bible Study
Friday	29	10.30 am	Ecumenical Service at Merton Park Baptist Church
		12.15 pm	Picnic lunch and afternoon walk
Sun	31	08.00 am	Easter Day: Holy Communion Service led by Rev Anne Rusbridge
		10.30 am	Morning Service with Holy Communion led by Rev Anne Rusbridge

Items for the next issue of the Newsletter (April) should be with the editor, Rosemary Keen, by Sunday 17 March at the latest.