

MARTIN WAY METHODIST CHURCH

Newsletter - April 2002

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Dear friends,

I would like to wish you all a very happy Easter. I would also like to thank you for all the cards and letters I received last month.

To the man brought on a stretcher and lowered through the roof, Jesus said: Friend, your sins are forgiven. To the man at the pool of Bethesda, Jesus said: Stop sinning." So often Jesus made the connection between physical illness and the need to be right with God.

I went to the doctor with eczema and was sent to see a psychologist! We none of us like to think that it could possibly be a sense of sin in our lives which could make us physically ill, but it is well documented that the symptoms of many physical illnesses, heart attacks, ulcers, fainting, blackouts, skin problems, disappear when we receive forgiveness and our relationship with God is restored. It is thought that up to 75% of physical illness could be caused by psychological and spiritual disease. When we are right with God our general health and well-being improve. Sometimes our healing can be a long and painful process, and it may be that the physical symptoms may not change, but a sense of freedom and peace will enable us to feel whole again as we release to God all that contributes to our sin or estrangement from God. The treatment recommended by my doctor was three weeks complete rest and I am pleased to say that my skin has healed remarkably quickly, but my soul has also been restored.

The rest gave me the opportunity to spend time in prayer and reflection, but also to do lots of reading. Whilst I have been resting I have read four books:

"Soul Survivor" by Philip Yancey, which is a collection of short stories paralleling the author's faith journey alongside a number of well known people who have inspired him. An excellent book and a very easy read.

"The McDonaldization of the Church" by John Drane. Wow! This book had me gripped and rejoicing. The front cover has an illustration of brightly coloured people of all ages going into church, and grey people coming out all carrying their little boxes. The book sees the analogy of the McDonald type restaurants, which serve a limited selection of pre-packed meals. If you don't like the choice on the menu, there is nothing else on offer. Drane suggests that in recent years this is how the church has

become. At a time when there are more people than ever searching for a spiritual meaning in life, the church is failing to relate to most people because of its reluctance to change. This book shows how Jesus and the early church used all forms of creative arts and inter-active dialogue to enable people to understand the love of God, whereas today many churches seek to "conduct" worship from a pulpit thus segregating priests and laity, and denying the people the opportunity to respond. We often try and hold on to the past because we are afraid of the church declining any more, but the word of God will never die. Whilst we may see the demise of the church as we know it, our Easter hope is the promise of resurrection, and who knows what wonderful gifts God has in store for us if we would only let go of the burger in the box and move into the food court with its variety and choice.

"Calling and Character" by William Willimon. Although this book is specifically about the calling to the ordained life, it would be a very valuable read for anyone who seeks to understand better the work of ministry. Through the book Willimon constantly reiterates the need for clergy to place at the top of their priorities time spent in prayer, bible study and theological reading. It is this that facilitates the work of ministry not the constant activity, and this is good advice for us all. Willimon says that much havoc has been wreaked in the world due to our ceaseless work and striving. "Babel is the result of human busyness". We all need to spend more time resting in the presence of God, and placing worship and praise at the top of our agenda.

Without doubt the most significant book I read was "What's so amazing about Grace?" by Philip Yancey. I read the book in three days. As I read each page I felt as if the grace of God was being poured out on me. This book is such an easy read and yet explains in the most profound way the nature of forgiveness and the amazing grace of God. Every Christian should read it. I'm going to put two copies on the church bookstall, Please read this book, but be warned, it may change your life for ever! Are you prepared?

Happy reading,

Anne.

Come into the garden!

For some years Ted Ashwood has created and maintained a lovely memorial garden behind the church. Maintaining a garden is hard work and so helpers have been recruited to try to retain Ted's high standards.

Although we want to keep the garden as a beautiful place for relaxation and enjoyment, we also want to reduce the dependence on annual plants as these are costly to replace every year, they need a lot of water in summer and they tend to make the garden labour intensive. We hope to convert the beds into herbaceous/shrub borders which will provide colour throughout the year. We have

some shrubs already, what we need is herbaceous perennials to provide flowers and ground cover. To this end we would request the help of church members in the following ways:-

1. If you have perennials in your garden such as penstemons, geraniums, begonia, anemones, hellebores, to name but a few and if these perennials need dividing, or they have produced new seedlings, please think of the church garden before throwing the extra plants away. If you can spare some plants, it would be helpful if you would attach a label to each one giving its name (English name will do), the months for flowering, the colour of the flower and the approximate height of the plant. This information will help us to select suitable sites for each plant.
2. If you have rooted cuttings of flowering shrubs or herbaceous perennials, and would like to find the youngsters a good home, we will try to provide one for them. Please label the plants as above.
3. With fewer annuals the garden could look dull during the summer months, when it is used quite intensively. To overcome this problem, we are inviting the clubs and societies within the church to each plant a pot to place on the patio. For example, we could have a Guides pot, a Midways pot, a Men's Supper Club pot. Colourful, original creations will be welcome. The pots will need watering, but this can be covered by someone from each club/society watering all the pots on the day/evening that the club meets. I am writing to the leader of each club in the church, to assess the interest in sponsoring and giving free reign to their creativity with a patio pot.
4. If any member of the congregation would like to see particular plants in the garden we would welcome any ideas, also if anyone plants seeds of either annuals or perennials and they are too successful in rearing the new plants, we would welcome any gifts.

We hope to have a successful year in the garden and we hope that you will be able to enjoy, not only the fruits of our labours, but your own involvement.

The gardening team includes:-

Ted Ashwood, Jean Butland, Gwen Edwards, Derek and Mary Heaton, Joan Harding, Lesley Mortley, Pauline Riley and Mike Rusbridge

Elizabethan Flower Arrangement Group

Saturday 18 May: Enchantment of the Season: in the Church Hall: a flower arrangement demonstration by Christina Wallis. 7.30 pm (doors open 6.45): tickets £6.50: for more details ask Lin Edmonds (8648-9991) or Doris Bedborough

Challenged To Reconcile - Women's World Day Of Prayer

The service this year was compiled by the women of Romania and was based on the Romanian Orthodox traditional liturgy. At St. John Fisher we were met by ladies in the traditional dress which is still worn at religious festivals and on special occasions. They offered us bread and salt as a sign of welcome and hospitality. The country ranges from mountains to plains and is rich in natural resources such as iron, gold and uranium and its great variety of flora and fauna includes rare species such as pelicans and bustards - with the river Danube flowing into the Black Sea where there are resorts and health spas.

People still struggle after years of difficulty and oppression, but they are resilient and do not lose hope. This is evident in their faith and hope in God and in their country.

In learning more about their country, the culture from which they come and the difficulties many of them face we cannot help but be 'Challenged to Reconcile' and this was the theme of the service.

The speaker was Major Rosemary Randall of the Salvation Army who shared her own experience with us. The following is an extract from her address -

"Some time ago I had the privilege, along with eleven colleagues, to take relief aid out to Romania. The relief aid consisted of clothing, toiletries, food, medical aid and toys, which was to be taken to a town called Yashti, not far from the Russian border. Four colleagues took turns in driving the relief truck, whilst I myself and three others did four hourly shifts in driving the mini-bus. We drove through Belgium, France, Germany, Switzerland, Hungary and then into Romania. In Romania we drove through some beautiful and picturesque countryside. We saw windmills, wayside shrines and many of the village houses had old pumping wells in their front gardens. As we passed through the villages, we handed out fruit and sweets - the children were really delighted with their gifts. Finally, on arriving in Yashti we went straight to the church where we unloaded the relief aid with the help of church members.

After this I was taken to stay with a family of five - Dittron and Anna and their three daughters, who lived in a block of flats in quite a 'run-down' and dismal area. They were fairly poor but shared what they had.

At five am the bath taps were turned on until the bath was full, as by 6 am all water in the flats was officially turned off. This was a daily occurrence. Water was then taken from the bath to meet all the needs of the day - and what was left was shared - as one by one the family had a bath."

The introduction to the service by the two voices of Romania had spoken of the political and economic changes that have taken place in Romania since the 1980s which, despite the enjoyment of peace and democracy, have made daily life difficult for many ordinary citizens. Food prices are high, many families are burdened by

unemployment and poverty and housing conditions are difficult. There are many abandoned people and the gap between rich and poor is growing rapidly. There is a great need for change and the churches are called to make their influence felt.

The Bible reading was taken from 1 Samuel 25, the story of David and Nabal's wife Abigail. Four women readers then commented:-

"Abigail is a wise woman. She immediately realises the danger that threatens them. We, too, have to be wise, in order to recognise the signs of our times and to be aware of the destructive trends or forces in our society.

Abigail is a courageous woman. She dares to face her strong and armed enemy without any weapon in her hands. We too, have to be courageous, to name the injustice and to protect the weak.

Abigail is a faithful woman. She believes in God, the Divine Creator and Holy One of Justice. We too, have to be faithful, acknowledging God as the Lord of the universe. God will inspire us and guide us in all our deeds.

Abigail is a woman with prophetic powers. She speaks to the future King David about his dynasty. She prevents David from killing innocent people by reminding him of the role which God has reserved for him. We, too, have to pass on a message. We are called to be ambassadors and to beseech others, "Be reconciled".

While we prayed in London women in Israel and Palestine were also praying for peace. Despite roadblocks and shelling there were services in Jerusalem, Ramallah, and Bethlehem. Mrs Suad Younan spoke at the Jerusalem service, challenging Palestinian mothers to take a strong role in peacemaking and reconciliation. She said "It is, unmistakably and unequivocally, the role of mothers at these times to awaken the conscience of leaders and politicians, to admonish and show them where and how they have failed. Suffering Palestinian mothers and suffering Israeli mothers join league to work for justice, peace and reconciliation for the sake of our children."

Major Randall had quoted Pope John Paul II in her address -

"There is a word that must be part of the vocabulary of every Christian, especially when barriers of hate and mistrust have been constructed. This word is reconciliation, 'Leave your offering and be reconciled with your brother'. This command of Jesus is stronger than any barrier of human inadequacy or malice can build ... there is one source of power that is stronger than every disappointment, bitterness or ingrained mistrust, and that power is Jesus Christ, who brought forgiveness and reconciliation to the world.". The service concluded with a message and challenge for us all individually: each one of us was asked to place our hand on our neighbour's shoulder and thus linked together the leader spoke "Jesus Christ calls upon me to work for reconciliation. Receive then this call and pass on the challenge to reconcile." It was a moving end to a challenging service.

Rosemary Keen

The Al Ahli Hospital In Gaza: Report Of Local Group Visit

A sign at the checkpoint for entry to Israel from the Palestinian Territory of Gaza declares, "Better the pains of peace than the agonies of war". For an 11-person Church Mission Society visit to Gaza this week (Monday Feb 11) offered a first-hand taste of war agonies. No sooner had the group joined the staff of the CMS-founded Al Ahli Hospital in Gaza for a communion service than aircraft were heard overhead. As worshippers exchanged The Peace the chapel lights flickered and then came the dull thud of explosions nearby.

Later, inside the hospital's office block, the group was able to watch the aftermath of the Israeli action on the local cable channel... One of the group, from Guildford, commented "I will never forget that communion service, the sound of the bombs and my thoughts of the suffering they were no doubt bringing. I was appalled at what seemed to me to be the utter senselessness of bombing in an area crowded with civilians including women and children already struggling for their very existence". It emerged that the Israeli action had hit a Palestinian Authority security compound containing a prison, less than a mile from the Al Ahli Hospital, injuring at least 30...

This was the first daytime raid on Gaza for about three weeks. The night before, however, Israeli warplanes conducted a raid that hit United Nations offices, injuring staff. "With jets coming and going, last night was very scary," Suhaila Tarazi, director of the Al Ahli Hospital, told the group. We [Arabs and Israelis] are children of Abraham. We are brothers but because of politics we are 'blood' brothers."

Constantine Dabbagh of the Gaza office of the Near East Council of Churches, and himself a Palestinian refugee, said, "The aim, perhaps, is not so much to maim or kill as to traumatise people... For my generation hope seems to have passed, but we don't say that to the younger generation. They must go on."

Meanwhile, the Al Ahli, Gaza's sole Christian hospital, remains a beacon of hope and compassion in an area with over 60% unemployment. The hospital currently provides 105 of the 960 hospital beds that serve Gaza's 1.2 million population. It has an ambulance and emergency unit on standby. Even so there are severe shortages of medical supplies and the operating theatre is only open three days a week except for emergencies. A staff of 185 has been cut to 80 ... and no overtime payments....

Last Monday's communion service was the first held in the Al Ahli chapel in many weeks. Twice, recently, the Anglican Bishop in Jerusalem, the Rt. Rev Riah Abu el-Assal, whose diocese includes Gaza, has been turned back at the checkpoint while attempting to visit.

Palestinian spokeswoman Hannan Ashrawi told the CMS group: "They [the Israelis] are targeting the very existence of the Palestinian people, destroying our institutions and breaking our spirit. But no army has defeated a nation and no colonial occupation can last for ever."

[CMS News Release 13 February 2002]

Family News

Christine Fincham would like to thank all friends at Martin Way church for their kind thoughts in words and prayers during this stressful period. Hetty has been in Springfield Hospital since last December with a mental disability affecting her speech. She does keep fairly cheerful and always has a smile when I visit her

London Marathon - Sponsor Steve!

On 14 April Steve Pallister will be running the London Marathon. You may have seen him after church, covered in mud following his gruelling 20 mile run!

He has decided to run for the National Meningitis Trust. This is very important to us as a family as Alex had it as a baby and was very ill. We were lucky Alex survived, but many don't.

If anyone would like to sponsor Steve (any amount welcome) see Annemarie or Steve. Thank you!

Annemarie

Christian Aid Week

Christian Aid Week this year begins 13 May 2002. If you would like to help with the door to door collection please see Mike Rusbridge. There are about 12 roads allocated for Martin Way, so the more help then the easier it will be.

On Sunday 19 May, to mark the end of Christian Aid week, there will be a sponsored walk round part of London, covering many churches. Mike will be walking again this year, so if you would like to join him on the walk please let him know and ask for a sponsorship form

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

Thursday 25 April **General Church Meeting** 8pm

Items for the next issue of the Newsletter (May) should be with the editor, Rosemary Keen, by Sunday 14 April at the latest.

Church Diary For April

Tue	2	10-12 am	Coffee and Chat
		8.00 pm	Time for Prayer
Wed	3	7.45 pm	Midways (Bees and Honey - Martin and Helene Steggals)
Fri	5	12.30 pm	Lunch Club
Sun	7	10.30 am	Family Service led by Ms Gill Hulme
Mon	8	2.45 pm	Fellowship (Miss Carol Carbine - Hearing Dogs for the Deaf)
Tue	9	10-12 am	Coffee and Chat
		8.00 pm	Time for Prayer
Wed	10	10.30 am	Holy Communion
Thu	11	8.00 pm	Pastoral Committee
Sat	13	10-12 noon	Fellowship Coffee Morning
Sun	14	10.30 am	Home Missions Service led by Rev Anne Rusbridge
		6.30 pm	Communion Service led by Rev Anne Rusbridge
Mon	15	2.45 pm	Fellowship (Mr John Taylor - The 'Mary Rose')
Tue	16	10-12 am	Coffee and Chat
		7.30 pm	Men's Supper Club (A welcome return visit from Rosemary Snell)
		8.00 pm	Time for Prayer
Wed	17	7.45 pm	Midways (Musical Evening - with Jean Butland and Lesley Mortley)
Fri	19	12.30 pm	Lunch Club
Sun	21	10.30 am	Communion Service led by Rev Anne Rusbridge
		6.30 pm	Celebration Praise led by Mr Martin Brown
Mon	22	2.45 pm	Fellowship (Rev Anne Rusbridge)
Tue	23	10-12 am	Coffee and Chat
		8.00 pm	Time for Prayer
Wed	24	10.30 am	Bible Study
Thu	25	8.00 pm	General Church Meeting
Sat	27	7.30 pm	Youth Club Quiz Night
Sun	28	10.30 am	Morning Service led by Mr John Sephton
Mon	29	2.45 pm	Fellowship (Mr Bill Cox)
Tue	30	10-12 am	Coffee and Chat
		8.00 pm	Time for Prayer