

Martin Way Methodist Church

Newsletter - February 2003

Minister - Rev Anne Rusbridge

*Wise men, seeking Jesus, travelled from afar,
Guided on their journey, by a beauteous star.*

Dear friends,

As this edition of the newsletter comes out we are still just in the season of epiphany, the time of year when we celebrate the revealing of the glory of God in Christ, and which we often associate most easily with the visitors from the east, coming to worship the new born king. I am fascinated by the story of the visit of the wise men. I guess a part of the fascination is the way we portray them in art and nativity, and has to do with the idea of beautifully embroidered fabrics and rich colours, and the whole visual potential of the story. But the real fascination is the fact that we actually know so little about them and yet there is much that is hinted at, giving an air of mystery about the story. Wise men, kings or Magi? What was the star? If we knew the exact truth, would it change anything? As it is at the moment, we have foreign visitors showing us the way to Jesus!

It is very easy to put the whole of the Christmas story into a little package that belongs to the nativity and put it away with the Christmas decorations to be kept safe and clean for next year. I think there is a very profound message here in the visit of the wise men that we should be reflecting on in terms of our relationships with one another, locally, nationally and on a world scale. If we are to work for peace, harmony, justice, within our world, then we have to think about how we relate to one another spiritually. This is challenging in terms of scripture and tradition, but I do feel that God is prompting us at the present time to consider whether our personal religious practice is commensurate with the teachings of Jesus and the unconditional love of God.

The theme of our ecumenical service for the week of prayer for Christian unity was "Treasure in Clay Pots" and focused on being aware of how we

can be led to Christ by those who are visitors or newcomers, or even strangers in our midst. The wise men are prophets for our time, and I would like to encourage you during this new year to look outwardly, to be alert to new ways of discovering the joy of Christ in your life. This new year will be a year of change. John Nyota will be coming as the minister at Martin Way and I will be moving to Upper Norwood in the Croydon Circuit.

I wish you all a very happy new year and pray that with all the changes and challenges ahead, you will embark on the next stage of your journey with God with a sense of excitement and adventure.

Anne

An Anglican-Methodist Covenant?

The Methodist Conference in June 2003 will be asked to vote on An Anglican-Methodist Covenant. This will not in itself bring our two churches into one - but if accepted it will pave the way for this to happen at some future date. The Covenant would lead to great co-operation and make it much simpler for our churches to work together and recognise each other's ministries and structures.

BUT what do you think? Will it really release energy for mission or will we get tied down in endless negotiations; will it lead to a loss of our traditions and all that is distinctive to Methodism; is it relevant, or a distraction from our real task? Will it change our church or will it help our churches grow?

On Sunday 9th February at Christ Church with St. Philip, Cheam Common Road, Worcester Park there will be a Circuit Event to find out more about the proposed Covenant and to respond to it. This open meeting will begin at 3pm and everyone is welcome. For further information contact:

*Rev. Stan Brown 020 8393 2322
or Rev Charlotte Elvey 020 8337 1327*

Quote - Unquote 1

Giving is the natural result of loving. If you plead for more love you must provide a channel for this love. To stimulate feeling without corresponding action is eventually to deaden the sources of feeling

Louisa Tristram

Wesley 300th celebration - book the date now!

A Circuit Celebration has been planned for Sunday 6 July at Ruxley Church. The afternoon will begin with a picnic lunch at 12.30 followed by an open air worship event at 2 pm. The speaker will be Rev. Dr. Rob Frost. There will be a crèche and children's activities, and provision will be made for the disabled and wheelchair users. Planning is in the early stages, but please put the date in your diary now.

The Greatest Show On Earth

If you missed SIGMA's presentation of 'The Greatest Show on Earth' just before Christmas, you missed a great treat. It really was a show that lived up to its title and a title that shed refreshing light on such important events for us all. The audience on both nights were full of praise for the enthusiasm and energy of actors, singers and musicians alike. Surely this must have been SIGMA's best production so far with a superb blend of music and humour. The whole production was the more effective for the attention to detail, the colourful dress and the magnificent setting in the big top which took hours to construct.

It was great to see children and adults working so well together. Thanks must go to all the cast and musicians, Roy, Tony and all the production team for all their hard work, and to Janet for inspiration and management. A truly enjoyable production played to full audiences.

Valerie and Graham Currie

Women's World Day Of Prayer 2003

The material this year has been prepared by the women of the Lebanon, and takes the theme 'Holy Spirit, Fill Us'. Through the story of Mary, we see how the women of Lebanon cope with the difficulties of life, and through the fruit of the Spirit - love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control - we see how we can live in peace and harmony together. Women's World Day of Prayer is on Friday 7 March and services will be held in the morning at 10.30 am at Trinity United Reformed Church Mansel Road, Wimbledon, when the speaker will be Cynthia Jackson and in the evening at 8 pm at Christ Church Colliers Wood when the speaker will be Rev Anne Rusbridge

Merton Awards

Last year, to commemorate the Queen's Golden Jubilee, Merton Council commissioned a hundred special medals featuring an image of Her Majesty on one side and the Merton Council crest on the other. There was a general invitation to nominate people to receive these medals for service to the community. On Tuesday 19th November those nominated were asked to attend a ceremony at the All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club at which the medals were presented by the Deputy Lieutenant for Merton, the Right Honourable Sir John Wheeler, in the presence of the Mayor, Councillor Edith Macauley.

Two from our Martin Way Church family received medals and certificates - **Gwen Edwards** for her work with the St. John's Ambulance Brigade and **Bill Cox** for 'bringing together men from different denominations together in fellowship at a Men's Supper Club and for raising money for charity.' It so happens that the Men's Supper Club has now been going for ten years and there are just over thirty members - a mixture of Methodists, Anglicans, Baptists and a few non-church-goers.

Both Gwen and Bill realise that there are others at Martin Way equally, or more deserving of recognition for the work they do both within the Church and within the community. It is good for all of us at times to say 'Thank you' to those who serve us in so many ways.

Bill Cox

The Way Forward - A Sikh View

Last November a group of us from many of the churches in Merton Park were fortunate enough to hear a challenging talk by Indarjit Singh, who for many of us represents the secular and religious voice of the British Sikh community. It was a lively and thought-provoking evening organised by Churches Together in Merton Park. The following extracts from his talk will give those of you who were unable to come a flavour of what you missed.

The main problem with religion is that the ethical guidance that is at the heart of our different beliefs, is extremely easy to state and notoriously difficult to live by. Therefore we perverse human beings turn to other, easier things to do in the name of religion.

As Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh faith taught, it's much easier to bathe in supposed holy waters than to practice purity of thought and action. The packaging of religion can, and has to a large extent, become more important than the contents.

As if this were not bad enough in itself, religious leaders have, over the years, created structures of power and privilege and have emphasised the uniqueness and exclusivity of their approach to God whilst rubbishing the approach of others.

This was very much the state of affairs in India, at the time of Guru Nanak, some five centuries ago and it was a theme addressed in his very first sermon when he said 'Na koi Hindu; na koi Mussalman'. That is, in God's eyes there is neither Hindu nor Muslim, nor by today's extension, Christian, Sikh or Jew. That God isn't interested in our different religious labels, but in how we conduct ourselves. Today, it's a measure of how far we still have to go in the direction of tolerance and respect for others, that the Chief Rabbi, Dr. Jonathan Sacks, got into deep trouble from extremists in his own faith for courageously suggesting that other religions also shared some of the same truths...

Until very recent times, we could all grow up in the comfort and security of a religion that we shared with those that lived around us. It was common and patriotic to go into raptures about our way of life compared with the inferior ways of foreigners. We could strengthen our sense of cohesion and identity including religious identity, by misrepresenting the ways and beliefs of others....What concerns me about such statements, made repeatedly in our smaller interdependent world, is the implicit arrogance that all is right in the Western, largely Christian world, which has higher ethical values than the rest of the world...

To me the remedy to these failings of human nature, lies with the world's great religions. But there's a problem. Today religion itself is in the dock as a major source of prejudice and conflict between human beings. It is also considered as irrelevant by much of secular society.

Interfaith dialogue exists at different levels. The first stage is being superficially nice to each other...But we must move beyond this to dismantling false barriers of belief. True dialogue means learning to

understand and respect genuine differences of belief, and importantly, discovering and rejoicing in shared ethical values....

Society has rightly rejected the so-called religious view that taught spiritual improvement and at the same time countenanced poverty, disease and suffering. Unfortunately the pendulum has swung too far and mankind is engaged in seeking happiness and contentment through the blind pursuit of material wealth.

To me as a Sikh, much of the discord in the world today stems from a basic failure to recognise that life has both spiritual and material dimensions, and if we neglect either of these, it will be to our ultimate regret. This fundamental truth has long been recognised by our religious founders. Christ taught that man should not live by bread alone.

The Guru taught that we should live like the lotus flower, which, having its roots in muddy waters, still flowers beautifully above. Similarly Sikhs should live and work for the benefit of society, but should always be above its meanness and pettiness....

Sikhs believe that our different religions should take the lead in addressing the real causes of social ills - starting with the role of the family. We see marriage, fidelity and the family as central to the health and wellbeing of society...We seek, not for condemnation of those who choose different lifestyles, but a clearer highlighting of responsibility and the benefits of stable family relations. Both those in political life and leaders of faith communities have much to do here...

We see then, the peace enjoyed by the industrialised world today is one based on politics and alliances, which mask and perpetuate injustice and is far removed from the peace based on a universal acceptance of human rights as envisaged in the UN charter. It is a fragile peace that will not easily endure. What do we need to do to make it more lasting and based on true justice? How can religious teaching help?

The first step is for religions to move from hostility and suspicion of one another to true respect and tolerance. Secondly remove dated customs and practices that have nothing to do with the teachings, and, at the same time, destroy the false barriers of beliefs between religions. Then, when bigotry is eroded by dialogue and understanding, we will see our

overlapping circle of belief. In that area of overlap we will find the common values of tolerance, compassion and concern for social justice, which is so clearly needed in our troubled world today.

Copyright: Indarjit Singh

Contributions To Charities From Martin Way

(during the financial year September 2001-August 2002)

• London Mission Fund	£195.00
• Relief and Development Fund	£160.00
• NCH Action for Children	£982.58
• Crisis at Christmas	£75.62
• Methodist Homes for the Aged	£275.86
• Merton and Morden Guild of Social Service	£5.00
• Seeds for Africa Appeal	£570.00
• Fund for Home Missions	£229.58
• Fund for Overseas Missions	£600.00
Total	£3,093.64

Church Anniversary 10/11 May 2003

As the Church Anniversary is at the beginning of Christian Aid week, this year we will be celebrating with an arts weekend. We are planning a mini flower festival, a celebration meal on Saturday evening with a concert by Sweet and Low. Sunday we hope to have a speaker from Christian Aid for our morning worship, and the proceeds of the weekend will go to Christian Aid. If you would like to help with the arranging of this event, or have any suggestions for suitable activities, please contact Mike Rusbridge.

Quote - Unquote 2

Give me one hundred preachers who fear nothing but sin and desire nothing but God, and I care not a straw whether they be clergymen or laymen, such alone will shake the gates of hell and set up the Kingdom of God upon earth.

John Wesley

John And Faith Nyota

In September we welcome to the Wimbledon Circuit John and Faith Nyota. John and Faith have two children, a daughter Njeri (Cherie) who is 5 and a son, Kimathi (Kim) who is 3. Faith will be the minister at Raynes Park and Wimbledon and John will be the minister here at Martin Way. John has a diploma in theology from Kenya University, a BD from St. Paul's in Nairobi and an MA from Manchester University. He has served in circuit ministry in four circuits in Kenya as well as a year in Ashton under Lyne. His most recent appointment is at St. Peter's Church in Nairobi where over two-thirds of the congregation are under 21! Before candidating for the ministry John studied journalism and lists as his hobbies watching football, cinema and writing. He is a drum soloist and enjoys singing in the choir. John would be delighted to correspond with groups in the church, to learn about Martin Way and to tell you more about his ministry. Anne has an e-mail address for John if you would like to contact him.

Women's Network - want to know more?

We may associate Network primarily with the Women's World Day of Prayer, One World Week and the Easter Offering Service which raise money for the fund for World Mission. There is also the Prayer Handbook and the magazine 'Magnet'. Network was created to link together all the women's organisations within the Methodist church. 'Our Calling' adopted by Conference in 2000 challenged Network to encourage, enable and equip women to participate fully in the life of the Church and in society. It does this by helping people in their own localities to learn and grow as Christians, through worship by increasing awareness of God's presence and celebrating God's love; through learning and caring by means of mutual support and care; through service by being a good neighbour to people in need and challenging injustice; and through evangelism

On Thursday February 13th here at Martin Way we will be able to find out all about Network. The day will begin at 11.30 with worship. Then lunch will be followed by a presentation by Mrs Jean Plant South West District President of Network. To book your place phone Anne Rusbridge on (020) 8542 4758

Church Diary For February

Sun	2	10.30 am	Family Service led by Rev Anne Rusbridge
Mon	3	2.45 pm	Fellowship (Mr Brown - Talking Newspapers for the Blind)
Tue	4	10-12 am	Coffee and Chat
		8.00 pm	Time for Prayer
Wed	5	11.15 am	Toddler time in Church
		7.45 pm	Midways (Ian Smith - 40 Years in BBC TV)
Sun	9	10.30 am	Morning Service led by Mr Bill Cox
		3.00 pm	Circuit meeting: Anglican/Methodist Covenant [at Worcester Park]
		6.30 pm	Communion Service led by Rev Anne Rusbridge
Mon	10	2.45 pm	Fellowship (Rev Stan Brown)
Tue	11	10-12 am	Coffee and Chat
		8.00 pm	Time for Prayer
Thu	13	11.30-2.30	Women's Network Presentation by Mrs Jean Plant, South West District President of Network
Fri	14	12.30 pm	Lunch Club
Sun	16	10.30 am	Communion Service led by Rev Anne Rusbridge
		8.00 pm	Worship at 8 led by Bob and Janet Hamblin
Mon	17	2.45 pm	Fellowship (Mr George Holland - Epsom Hospital Radio)
Tue	18	10-12 am	Coffee and Chat
		7.30 pm	Men's Supper Club (Richard Polley - Wheels for the World)
		8.00 pm	Time for Prayer
Wed	19	10.30 am	Bible Study
		7.45 pm	Midways (Julian - Dizzy Heights)
Sun	23	10.30 am	Morning Service led by Dr Arthur Miller
Mon	24	2.45 pm	Fellowship (Moira Bailey - Bumping into God?)
Tue	25	10-12 am	Coffee and Chat
		8.00 pm	Time for Prayer
Fri	28	12.30 pm	Lunch Club

PLEASE NOTE : The production of 'Mr Cinders' planned for February has been postponed until the autumn