

Martin Way Methodist Church

Newsletter - March 2003

Minister - Rev Anne Rusbridge

Dear friends,

February has been an exceptionally busy month, but very exciting and satisfying. Here at Martin Way we hosted the Circuit Network Event which was a very happy occasion and I thank all of those who worked so hard to make it such a success. At Raynes Park we had the regional gathering of church leaders from Sutton, Kingston and Merton to begin initial planning for SoulintheCity, the mission event in London in the summer of 2004. This meeting followed immediately on from the Circuit Discussion on the Anglican-Methodist Covenant. To see church leaders from all denominations gathered and fired-up about working together in mission further confirmed for me that unity between the churches exists very strongly at a local level and I am cautious about spending too much time talking about unity rather than actively working together.

SoulintheCity is not an aggressive style of mission. Young people from all over London are going to be working on projects serving the local neighbourhood, showing the love of God in practical ways through a willingness to create a better environment and provide facilities for those in need.

This was followed by an initial planning meeting with the group I shall be working with at Easter People this year. The theme of Easter People is 'Essence. A journey in Christian spirituality.' The style of worship this year will be more reflective and meditative and designed to help us to discover how God speaks to us through our senses. I am part of the team leading worship at St. Mary Magdalene, Torquay and we met to start thinking about visual displays and creative ways of responding to the Word of God, so you can imagine how excited I am about Easter People this year.

I have also attended a leaders' training day for 'Essence' which is a six week course in exploring contemporary spirituality which looks towards a lifestyle integrating body, mind and spirit. This course is a wonderful way for Christians and non-Christians to share together and discover the

presence of God in a deeper way. I would love to run an Essence course at Martin Way. If you are interested, or would like further information, please let me know.

Of course it is impossible to sustain this level of activity for too long, and March, with the beginning of Lent, is an appropriate time to slow down and spend time reflecting on Jesus' journey to the cross. If you would like to join others in prayer and reflection there will be a time of prayer at Raynes Park church every Thursday lunchtime at 12 noon, lasting about 20 minutes. During Lent the theme will be 'Walking with Jesus', but we intend to continue worshipping at midday on Thursdays after Easter. At Martin Way you are invited to join The Seekers on Thursday afternoons at 2.30, meeting every week during Lent, and then reverting to our normal first and third Thursday after Easter. Again the theme will be 'Walking with Jesus'. Everyone is welcome to join either group.

Lent is a time of hope and expectation. As we journey with Jesus, and reflect on the lives and actions of those who stood at the foot of the cross, we have the opportunity of reflecting on our own relationship with Jesus and our response to Jesus, and in so doing, approach Easter with a deeper understanding of the Gospel.

May God be with you as you make this special journey this year.

Anne

Quote - Unquote

Prayer is conversation with God. St. Clement of Alexandria

Wesley Tercentenary Celebrations

It is expected that a thousand Methodists gathered from all over Europe will meet in Potsdam, near Berlin, 30 July to 3 August to celebrate the tercentenary of Wesley's birth. The overall theme for the festival is 'Get in touch' - with each other, with Jesus Christ and with the world. Its aim is for people of all ages and cultures in Europe to meet together to celebrate their faith and share their mission. The programme for the festival will include Bible study, worship, sports, sight-seeing options, seminars, children's and youth activities, drama and music. The lakeside locality and proximity to Berlin make it an attractive venue for a holiday.

There will be a range of accommodation options, from camping and sleeping on floors, through guesthouses, to hotels.

For more information contact Mr Colin Ride, World Church office, Methodist Church House, 25 Marylebone Road, London NW1 5JR 020 7467 5101/5164

Advance Notice – Easter Services

Because of Anne's commitments to both ours and Raynes Park churches there will be an early morning Easter Communion at 8.00am, followed by an Easter breakfast, but there will not be Holy Communion at the 10.30 Easter morning service.

During Holy Week there will be a time of prayer and reflection at 8pm on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday at Martin Way. On Maundy Thursday there will be a service of Holy Communion at 8pm at Raynes Park. On Good Friday there will be the usual ecumenical services.

Anniversary Weekend 10/11 May

We now have an outline plan for our anniversary weekend events. We are hoping that all organisations within the church will be able to offer a flower arrangement, as simple or as elaborate as you wish. Any budding artists, needle workers, model-makers etc. amongst you, may also like to display your wares; there is an amazing amount of talent within our congregation; let it shine through! Our concert by Sweet and Low will start at 7.00pm on the Saturday, preceded by a light supper - a ploughman's meal, which will be served from 5.30pm onwards. Programmes, inclusive of meal and concert, priced at £6.00, will be available shortly. The festival itself will be free of charge, but obviously any donations would be appreciated, remembering that all proceeds will go to Christian Aid. For any further information or offers of help, please see Lesley Mortley or Mike Rusbridge.

Fellowship Coffee Morning – 15 March 10-12 Noon

We look forward to seeing you on Saturday 15 March. Cakes and gifts for the stalls will also be very welcome.

Return of big brunch – 29th March – 9 to 12 noon!

Anglican-Methodists or Methodist-Anglicans? - a personal view

The other day I came across a quarterly plan from 1966, the year I became a fully accredited Local Preacher. I had come into the Methodist church over twenty years previously when I was in my teens, probably about the age when many youngsters go through a stage of rebellion against church-going if they have not been brought up in traditionally church-going families. My initial attraction was not so much to the church as to June, who later was to become my wife. Thinking back, I realise that there have been many, many changes. That is only as it should be.

I received a draft plan from another circuit recently and on it was indicated the appropriate liturgical colours to be worn by the ministers. That is one sphere in which we have gradually come into line with the Anglicans. Our ministers in the 1940's would never wear the vestments that we have come to accept today. A dark suit and a dog-collar was the order of the day. A black preaching gown was acceptable, but not essential. The congregation would have their 'Sunday best' outfits - clothes specially kept aside for Sunday worship. There was no striving to keep up with fashion; a Sunday best suit would last for years. Ladies were expected to wear hats; it was an unwritten law. Once a year, usually at Whitsun, new hats were paraded, but that was about the limit of fashion consciousness. (Of course, clothes rationing during the war had imposed severe limitations upon what was available, apart from anything else!)

There was a much greater informality in worship generally. No such things as service books -another move towards the Anglicans? Communion services took place once a month and were often personalised.. "The body of the Lord Jesus given for you, Bill...". Ministers were expected to know their flock and to spend time in visiting, not just when people were ill or in special need. They were very much under the jurisdiction of the Leaders' Meeting and could be called to account in no uncertain manner. A Minister's day off was unheard of!

Evening services were often as well, if not better, attended than the morning services. Every church would have its choir. Choirs can enhance worship greatly, I have had the great privilege of leading worship on a Christmas morning at Central Hall Westminster. It was many years ago when the organist and choir-master was Bill Lloyd-Webber, the father of

Andrew and Julian. With him on the organ and the Central Hall choir at your back, you were immediately transported into greater heights. There used to be choir festivals which brought about keen but friendly rivalry.

The standard of preaching was variable, to put it politely. Forty minute sermons were reasonably short and some preachers were renowned for their pulpit thumping to emphasise the points they made. This was especially so on Temperance Sunday when the teetotal congregation was harangued vehemently about the perils of the Demon Drink. 'Special' Sundays came far less frequently than they do today. The Sunday School anniversary was one of the highlights of the year - morning, afternoon and evening services, usually with a tea laid on. Fairs and Bazaars lasted for three days not just a couple of hours. They were great social occasions with everyone joining in whole-heartedly. Concerts and Socials were frequently held and the lives of many people were centred around the church.

I mentioned vestments, or the lack of them, earlier. Another thing which you never saw on a Methodist altar was a candle. To many, candles smacked of Popery! The only time candles were used was for the Carols by Candlelight service at Christmas. Now we often find a lighted candle in our Methodist churches - another bit of Anglicanism that has crept in unnoticed. I have never heard a Minister comment on this or point out the significance of the candle. I must admit that I no longer have any strong objections to the use of candles. Particularly since June died I have found them more significant. One Remembrance Sunday we had an evening Communion service at Martin Way at which we were invited to light a candle for any loved one who had died, and that, for me, was very moving. If I'm away and go into a church or cathedral, I will now light a candle in June's memory, so candles have become more meaningful for me.

So changes there have been. I have heard the cynical comment that before long we Methodists will be more Anglican than the Anglicans. I hope that whatever Covenants or Agreements may be made by the two denominations in future, we shall each be allowed to keep our own traditions and our own identity. May there be a friendly co-operation rather than a complete take-over by either denomination.

Bill Cox

[Much of what Bill has written would apply equally to the many varieties of Anglican worship fifty years ago: perhaps that is why many people feel at ease in either denomination. As Anne has written and Bill concludes there is friendly co-operation in our area among all denominations. Working together may well prove God's way forward for us at this time.

Rosemary Keen]

Pastoral Training Workshop :15 March 10am-1pm

A Pastoral Training Workshop will be held at Stoneleigh Methodist Church on Saturday 15 March from 10am-1pm. The course is open to all churches in the Wimbledon Circuit. Please come if you are already a Pastoral Visitor or if you are interested in any aspect of pastoral work. The theme of the workshop is 'Pastoral visiting, prayer and care' and it will be led by John Vanek, Lay Worker for the Wimbledon Circuit. There will be a short liturgy forming the final part of the workshop. For further details please contact John Vanek: 0208-947-2672

A Letter From Sue Griffiths

Dear Friends at Martin Way

I'm writing for two reasons, firstly to thank you for your ongoing support and generosity in sending me the recent cheque to help with my studies. It has always been a struggle to make ends meet during my training and the money you have sent me over the last few years has been used for buying books and resources for my future ministry. So thank you again for thinking of me.

Which leads me into the other reason for writing. I have just found out where my first appointment will be as Methodist Minister. I'm going to be responsible for two churches in the Sheffield West Circuit, just outside the city centre. One church has 122 members and has lots of activities going on for all ages. It says that it consists of mainly professional & business people who are middle aged to elderly but there are a growing number of young families attending. They wanted a young(ish) minister to continue the work started by two previous young ministers. It's next to a school and the church also employs a youth worker and a community worker. There are also some possibilities of getting involved in a drug rehabilitation project.

The other church is a small church of 17 members which has opportunities for growth with the right leadership. It's the first time the two churches have shared a minister and the Circuit wants to encourage the churches to share and to work together in some way. The house that I'll be living in is within walking distance of the bigger church, which I think is excellent.

That's all I can tell you at the moment. It all sounds very exciting and I am really pleased.

Take care everyone, and may God bless you as you continue to follow and to serve Him.

Love Sue

NCH Action For Children

Thank you to all box-holders. A total of £279.50 was raised this last year

Quote - Unquote

"God didn't promise days without pain, laughter without sorrow, sun without rain, but He did promise strength for the day, comfort for the tears and light for the way"

Faye Merry

Winter Newsletter Victim Support Merton]

Message From John Swarbrick, Chairman South West District

Dear Friends,

By the time you read this, we may have been overtaken by events. I hope not, but what follows is offered simply by way of a personal reflection on the current crisis over Iraq. The media make constant reference to 'interests' - described as 'the national interest' or 'our interests', or more broadly as 'western interests', and defined in political and economic terms. So far, so familiar. The confrontation with Iraq is about power politics, oil, the Israeli-Palestinian dispute and 'the war on terror'. But a faith community like ours has other 'interests'. They are theological ones. They are about God. From Harran in what is now modern-day Iraq, Abraham - the father of the three great faith traditions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam - journeyed around the fertile crescent to settle in the land of Canaan. Our inheritance is linked with his. So is our present.

Towards the end of last year I read a wonderful book by the Chief Rabbi, Dr. Jonathan Sacks, called *The Dignity of Difference*. In the aftermath of 11 September 2001 and the 'clash of civilisations', it is an impassioned plea from the leader of the Orthodox tradition in Judaism for us to make space for a God who delights in diversity. He reminds us that there is a difference between God and religion: God is universal; religions are particular. He affirms that God has spoken to humankind in many languages: through Judaism to Jews, Christianity to Christians, Islam to Muslims. But he has learnt to say that as a faithful and believing Jew. Not surprisingly perhaps, he has been accused of heresy by some of his co-religionists. But the way in which he sets out his case for the way in which God deals with our distinctiveness as well as our common humanity as people of faith in a globalised world is compelling. There are those who argue that religion is part of the problem. The Chief Rabbi offers some hope that it might be part of the solution. As you consider his arguments, you may care to reflect on what they imply for you as a faithful and believing Christian.

I think that this, ultimately, takes us to the heart of the present crisis. Indeed, I suspect that it is the theological issue of the twenty-first century. It is therefore important for all of us who pray, read the scriptures and reflect upon the way in which we practise our faith as Christian people. Meanwhile, we shall all be considering the news reports and TV pictures, listening to the language of 'regime change', 'just war criteria' and - God help us - 'collateral damage'. And we shall be wondering about the presence of God in human affairs and in his beautiful though battered creation in worship and preaching, commitment and witness, and in the daily struggle to be more fully human as God intends.

*Best wishes
Yours ever John*

Church Diary For March

Sun	2	10.30 am	Family Service led by Rev Barrie Tabraham
Mon	3	2.45 pm	Fellowship (Tom Davies - Common Land)
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 (Stephen and Valerie Ashcroft - Fools for Christ's sake)

Fri	7	Women's' World Day of Prayer	
		10.30 am	Trinity United Reformed Church, Mansel Road, Wimbledon - speaker - Cynthia Jackson
		8.00 pm	Christ Church Colliers Wood - Speaker - Rev Anne Rusbridge

Sun	9	10.30 am	Morning Service led by Valerie Ashcroft and Brenda Cannon
		6.30 pm	Communion Service led by Rev Anne Rusbridge
Mon	10	2.45 pm	Fellowship (Bill Cox)
Tue	11	10-12 am	Coffee and Chat
		8.00 pm	Time for Prayer
Wed	12	11.15 am	Communion Service
Thu	13	8.00 pm	Church Council
Fri	14	12.30 pm	Lunch Club
Sat	15	10-12 noon	Fellowship Coffee Morning
Sun	16	10.30 am	Communion Service led by Rev Anne Rusbridge
		8.00 pm	Worship at 8 led by Dr Arthur Miller
Mon	17	2.45 pm	Fellowship (Tony Loft)
Tue	18	10-12 am	Coffee and Chat
		7.30 pm	Men's Supper Club (Heather Symes - City Churches)
		8.00 pm	Time for Prayer
Wed	19	10.30 am	Bible Study
		7.45 pm	Midways (Members' Evening - Quiz Night)
Sun	23	10.30 am	Morning Service led by Bob Hamblin and Paul Harvey
Mon	24	2.45 pm	Fellowship (Graham Cannon and Lesley Mortley - Talking Heads)

Tue	25	10-12 am	Coffee and Chat
		8.00 pm	Time for Prayer
Fri	28	12.30 pm	Lunch Club
Sat	29	9-12 noon	Big Brunch
Sun	30	10.30 am	Mothering Sunday Service led by Janet Hamblin
Mon	31	2.45 pm	Fellowship (Lily Dakin)

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