

Martin Way Methodist Church

Newsletter December 03/January 04

Minister – Rev John Nyota

Dear friends,

Jambo!

And now the Birth!

You remember where we left last time? About birth happening right here as we watch? About us having to PUSH which we described as Pray Until Something Happens? Well nothing can illustrate that as the season we are about to enter.

We all call it Christmas. It does not matter what religion we come from or whether we no longer believe in Christ. No one can ignore the effect of this season. For some it may just be another good time, time off work or time for gifts. Time to shop or go places. And all this is good provided we do not miss the reason behind Christmas.

Jesus is the reason behind Christmas. He was born because things had gone bad. He was born where there was no hope to bring hope. When Simeon and Anna, two people, a man who had been in the temple praying for salvation of God's people, saw this boy their words summed up the feeling of the people of their generation who had eyes to see. "Now let thy servant depart in peace" said Simeon, "for mine eyes have seen the salvation of the Lord" Luke 2:29ff.

I refuse to buy into the theory that Christmas is part of our Christian Heritage, a part of the culture that we have inherited from our lovely ancestors but one only to be relived once a year. I refuse to classify it together with the other solemn events of the past like the victory in the second world war, thanks-giving or remembrance ceremonies. All these events are honourable and bring back deep memories. But you see Christmas is not an event. And that is where the difference is. It is a daily act. Yes for our today the soldiers gave their yesterday. Peace be with them, I salute them. But Jesus went further than that. For our eternity he gave all he had. Every day I wake up and take a breath it is

because Jesus was born to pay my debt of wrongs. Because he lives I can face tomorrow and life is worth the living just because he lives. So go tell them for their eternity I gave my all, says Jesus.

That's for all the world, so joy to them the Lord is come. But what is in it for us at Martin Way? It is a virtual reality of all that we have been sharing since my first entry in this church. We have talked about moving on, Birth point, PUSH, Letting go and letting God, Total commitment. And now here at Christmas that birth happens for us to see. Won't we let this be our crunch time when we will decide that I am going to take all these messages to heart and live them, be a doer not a hearer. Won't we please say this is a new day for me so that as Jesus is born he finds a room ready in our hearts for him.

It is also amazing that Christmas is followed immediately by the new year, a time for new resolutions, a time for especially the Methodists to renew their covenant. Won't you say with God that you can use anything Lord use me in your Kingdom. Won't you declare the coming year the year of total commitment to God and his work. Won't you fall in love again with him and feel the warmth of his embrace. And won't you make his word your meditation day and night. Oh yes I will. Come Lord Jesus, we are waiting, we have made way for you.

John

Quote - Unquote

The coming of Christ by way of a Bethlehem manger seems strange and stunning. But when we take him out of the manger and invite him into our hearts, then the meaning unfolds and the strangeness vanishes.

Neil C Strait

Carol Singing in Aid of NCH

Come and join the carol singers at Morden station on Friday 19th and Monday 22nd December and help raise money for the NCH. More details from Lesley Mortley or one of the stewards.

NCH Action For Children - Box Holders!

Please would you let me have your boxes for emptying ASAP. Thank you!

Lesley Mortley

Letter from the Chairman London South-West District

Dear Friends,

This September there were 17 Welcome services for 23 ministers taking up new appointments across the District. If Jenny Impey, the Deputy Chair and I had not shared these out between us, I suspect that I alone might not have been able to complete them all until about the end of September! Those services in which I participated were as remarkable for their diversity as they were for a palpable sense of joy and celebration, and it was a delight to be present. At Synod on 13 September we went through that time-hallowed ritual of asking the new ministers to stand, so that we could briefly identify names and faces, and it struck me forcibly how many of our new colleagues were from a non-white British culture and context. In one sense I shouldn't be surprised by that. After all, what is this but a reflection of the ethnic and cultural diversity which makes London such an exciting place in which to live and work? Our London churches are growing as they attract new members from overseas, and Methodism in the capital is reshaping itself in remarkable ways.

I chair the Chinese Ministry Support Group where we seek to resource and support the work not only of the Chinese congregation at Epsom, but as it expands around the country: a seventh Chinese Methodist congregation has recently been planted in Newcastle-upon-Tyne. In addition there is a Reference Group for the Ghanaian chaplaincy which extends across a number of inner London congregations. Most recently, I have begun to chair the Southall Reference Group which seeks to sustain and support the mission and ministry of the Urdu-speaking churches at King's Hall, Southall and at St. Andrew's Slough, which draw members and friends from all over the London area. Finding ways to address the specialised language and cultural needs of such Methodist communities is both a challenge and an opportunity. It is at times like these when I can see how the proposed London regional district will help us as a Church to respond to the changing shape of mission and to do it holistically, rather than with our present boundaries, which tend to hinder rather than help.

I recognise too, that in terms of mission there are other positive factors which make the proposals for the London Regional District attractive. All four of the present London Districts support the proposal. What is less

clear is what the future holds for those parts of the district outside Greater London. The original proposal was for the creation of two Regional Districts north and south of the Thames for those circuits in the four existing London districts outside London. My reading of the situation so far is that London North-West and London North-East have taken a very positive view of the proposals for their Regional District.

In London South-East the response has been cooler; but in London South-West there is clearly a much higher degree of scepticism about the proposals for a Southern Counties Regional District, and that scepticism shades into strongly expressed disagreement. So there is clearly further work to be undertaken. I hope that this can be done in such a way that it will not prevent the implementation of the proposals for London in 2005, though it may mean interim arrangements for the circuits outside London beyond 2005 until we can agree a workable and sustainable solution that commands assent and consent.

Structural change at District level will sound remote to many of you in local churches. The only reason for doing it is the hope and intention that the end result will more effectively offer resources to support and sustain the mission and ministry of the local church. All of us engaged with this will need your prayers as we seek to discern the way forward..

Mention of mission and ministry brings me to the Anglican-Methodist Covenant about which I wrote in my last letter. At that point, we did not know how the General Synod of the Church of England was going to vote, but they endorsed the Covenant with a resounding vote in favour. On 1 November the Covenant was signed by the leaders of our two churches at a special ceremony held at Central Hall Westminster and Westminster Abbey in the presence of the Queen. What we now have to do is to turn the texts and the signatures into a lived reality. I am aware that ecumenical relationships vary considerably across a District where we relate to five Anglican dioceses. In some places, there are good stories to tell and good relationships to celebrate; in others, conversations have hardly begun or have historically been difficult. If the latter is the case, what possible ideas could you envisage to put some flesh on the bones of the Covenant in your local situation? And if your church shares one of the good stories, how could you begin to make it a better one? When the initial conversations about the covenant began in the mid-1990s, our two

Churches published a preparatory report called Commitment to Mission and Unity. Please note the order of those words! The focus from the beginning has been about how Methodists and Anglicans can share in God's mission as they work together towards unity. That may help us, as we embark on the next stage of the journey together.

Best wishes

*Yours sincerely,
John*

Thought for the Month

So we have come to the end of another year and the beginning of the next. Our lives are made up of beginnings and endings from start to finish.

January gets its name from the Roman god Janus who has two heads, one looking back, the other looking forward. How appropriate for the time of year! We look back over the past year and forward to the new year. We seem to have an inbuilt feeling that the best is still to come.

For the first fifty years of our lives, we spend much time looking forward - to weekends, holidays, special treats, all sort of things. We are guilty of wishing our lives away. But when we grow older, we spend more time looking back, remembering the past. We come to realise that the time we have left grows shorter with each passing day and we appreciate how precious the gift of time is.

We need to look back with thankfulness and to look forward with hope. By the very nature of things we have to plan ahead. But we must not become so engrossed in the past or so pre-occupied with the future that we miss out the NOW moment, which is the only one we can really be sure about. Remember ...

Yesterday's history, tomorrow's a mystery,

But today is a gift from God.

That's why it's called THE PRESENT.

May God help us to make the most of each new day he gives us.

Bill Cox

No Excuse Sunday

A parish decided to hold a 'No Excuse Sunday' and put the following in the newsletter the previous weekend.

To make it possible for everyone to attend church next Sunday, we are going to make it very special. A bed will be provided for those who say "Sunday is my only day to sleep". We will have helmets for those who say "The roof would cave in if I came to church". Blankets will be provided for those who think the church is too cold and fans for those who say it is too hot. Score cards will be available for those who would like to list all the hypocrites present. A selection of trees and grasses will be available for those who prefer to see God in Nature. A putting green will be provided for those who say "Sunday is my day for golf". Dinners will be available for all those who can't go to church and cook the dinner as well. The sanctuary will be decorated with both Christmas poinsettias and Easter lilies for those who wouldn't recognise the church without them

[From the magazine of St. Joseph's Church Dorking]

NCH Action For Children

What's New in fund raising?

Friday 16 January will be known as Give it up for Children! Day and NCH will have the backing of some major sponsors. Friends Reunited and AOL will be publicising the event on their web sites, EDF energy will be sending information about the event with their electricity bills, Comet, Virgin Retail, Peacock stores and TK Maxx will be publicising the event in their stores, Prima Magazine is sponsoring Give it up and OK magazine will have a celebrity feature on Give it up at a future date.

There are two ways in which this new event will raise money

CHOOSE - participants will be sponsored to give something up

CHALLENGE - participants will challenge a friend or colleague to give something up in return for a donation to NCH.

Win a car - everyone who registers for Give it up for Children! will have the opportunity to win a car donated by Daewoo.

You have the opportunity to be part of a major event and there are a number of celebrities who will be giving things up on the day too. To find out more, check out the web site www.giveitupforchildren.org.uk

Love is Tough

Good as gold?

Not enough - Love your friends?

Good as God. **Not enough -** Go to church?

Love is tough. Enemies too. **Not enough -**
Love is tough. Carry your cross.

Love is tough.

Walk a mile?

Not enough - Feeling happy?

Keep on going, **Not enough -** All you want?

Love is tough. Share it round. **Not enough -**
Love is tough. Giving, giving,

Love is tough

Jesus Christ?

He IS enough -

Died...risen!

Love is tough...

...but... GREAT!!!!

*[from Reporting Stratford-upon-Avon
Methodist Church news sheet]*

A Dream

I dreamed I had an interview with God.

"Come in", God said. "So, you would like to interview Me?".

"If you have the time," I said.

God smiled and said: "My time is eternity and is enough to do everything; what questions do you have in mind to ask me?".

"What surprises you most about mankind?".

God answered:

"That they get bored of being children, are in a rush to grow up, and then long to be children again. That they lose their health to make money and then lose their money to restore their health. That by thinking anxiously about the future, they forget the present, such that they live neither for the present nor the future. That they live as if they will never die, and they die as if they had never lived...".

God's hands took mine and we were silent for a while and then I asked:

"As a parent, what are some of life's lessons you want your children to learn?"

God replied with a smile:

"To learn that they cannot make anyone love them. What they can do is to let themselves be loved.

To learn that what is most valuable is not what they have in their lives, but whom they have in their lives.

To learn that it is not good to compare themselves to others. All will be judged individually on their own merits, not as a group on a comparison basis!

To learn that a rich person is not the one who has the most, but is one who needs the least.

To learn that it only takes a few seconds to open profound wounds in persons we love, and that it takes many years to heal them.

To learn to forgive by practicing forgiveness, to learn that there are persons that love them dearly, but simply do not know how to express or show their feelings,

To learn that money can buy everything but happiness.

To learn that two people can look at the same thing and see it totally different.

To learn that a true friend is someone who knows everything about them...and likes them anyway.

To learn that it is not always enough that they be forgiven by others, but that they have to forgive themselves."

I thanked Him for his time and for all that he has done for my family and me, and he replied "Anytime. I'm here 24 hours a day. All you have to do is ask for me, and I'll answer"

from 'Talkabout' St. John Fisher magazine]

The Methodist Church's Best Kept Secret

Few people know that each of our ministers and deacons has to do an Accompanied Self-Appraisal each year. The minister chooses one aspect of his/her work and looks at it with the help of members of the congregation. This is one of the ways in which we can all affirm and support our minister in what is sometimes a lonely and demanding life. And it is intended to be as much about achievements and hopes as it is about disappointments or failures.

For each Minister the district appoints an Accompanist who has been trained to be a sympathetic, listening partner but who is also willing to ask challenging questions about the part of ministry the minister has chosen to look at without prescribing answers or courses of action. Self-Appraisal belongs to the minister. It is for her or him to invite two or three different people each year who can share their thoughts about the particular part of her/his work she/he has decided to look at. This is called feedback.

The most obvious things to look at are preaching, visiting or administration, but increasingly Self-Appraisals focus on vocation, community involvement or further training.

Feedback can be either written or verbal, presented individually or in a group. But it is important that people most closely involved in the chosen aspect of his/her work can tell their minister or deacon what she or he does well and what she or he could do better. It's all about appreciation and development. The minister talks over the feedback with the Accompanist and the minister decides on a course of action.

Because conversations between the Self-Appraiser and the Accompanist are confidential the scheme has at times seemed as though it was all hush-hush and secret. In fact any member of the church can be involved. For example, you or any member may be asked to say what you think of the part of her/his work she/he is looking at this year. And if she/he has decided to look at community involvement or ecumenical relations she/he may also be asking people outside the normal confines of the church to provide feedback from their point of view. It's a question of finding out how the people who matter most react to our present ministry and see it developing in the future.

You may also be asked to consider training to become an Accompanist. An Accompanist needs to have an empathy with the ministry, the ability to listen and ask challenging questions and also to stand back and allow the minister or deacon to draw her/his own conclusions from the feedback and choose what course of action to take. The demand on an Accompanist's time is not great but being an Accompanist can be exhausting in terms of listening and patience.

Michael Meech

[The Rev Michael Meech is Chair of the London South West District's Accompanied Self-Appraisal Group. Further details can be obtained by emailing Michael at MichaelMeech@care4free.net]

Thank You

- Doris Klass wishes to thank everyone for their messages and prayers whilst she was in hospital and the rehab. Home and also to say thank you for the many visitors, They were very much appreciated
- Bill Bass and family would like to thank everyone for their kindness following Ivy's death. He was very glad to know that so many of her friends attended the Service of Thanksgiving at the church after the funeral.

Christmas Greetings

Vida Brown wishes to send special Christmas Greetings to all her friends at Martin Way. Although unable to attend these days she still keeps in touch and takes a great interest. She extends her warmest thoughts to everyone for a peaceful and blessed New Year

Flower Rota

The new flower rota is in the corridor. Please would you add your names for donation and arranging next to the dates required. I am also looking for dates for volunteers to help distribute the flowers to people in the prayer book or to anyone who is need of a kind thought and a friendly face. Either put down your names or for further details see Anmarie Pallister

Oliver!

12 December 7.30pm, 13 December 3pm and 7.30 pm: New Creations Presents Lionel Bart's >Oliver': tickets: Adults ,7, Concessions ,4, Family ticket ,18: Lantern Arts Centre: Box Office 8944-5794

CHURCH DIARY FOR DECEMBER

| | | | |
|-----|----|------------|--|
| Mon | 1 | 2.45 pm | Fellowship (David and Evelyn Mortimer - Slides of Italy) |
| Tue | 2 | 10-12 am | Coffee and Chat |
| | | 7.30 pm | Men's Supper Club - Social Evening |
| | | 8.00 pm | Time for Prayer |
| Wed | 3 | 7.45 pm | Midways (Christmas Meal and Carols) |
| Thu | 4 | 2-3.00 pm | Seekers Group |
| Sat | 6 | 2.30 pm | Action for Independence in Merton: Carol Concert |
| Sun | 7 | 10.30 am | Tree and Gift Service led by Rev John Nyota |
| Mon | 8 | 2.45 pm | Fellowship |
| Tue | 9 | 10-12 am | Coffee and Chat |
| | | 8.00 pm | Time for Prayer |
| Fri | 12 | 12.30 pm | Lunch Club - Christmas Dinner |
| Sat | 13 | 2.30 pm | Arthritis Care: Carol Service |
| Sun | 14 | 10.30 am | Morning Service led by Mrs Brenda Cannon |
| | | 6.30 pm | Communion Service led by Rev Stuart Veitch |
| Mon | 15 | 2.45 pm | Fellowship (Cards and Mince Pies) [next session on 5th January] |
| Tue | 16 | 10-12 am | Coffee and Chat [next session 6 January] |
| | | 8.00 pm | Time for Prayer |
| Thu | 18 | 2-3.00. pm | Seekers Group |
| Fri | 19 | | Carol singing Morden Station (NCH) |
| Sun | 21 | 10.30 am | Carol Service led by Rev John Nyota |
| | | 8.15 pm | SIGMA Christmas presentation |
| Mon | 22 | | Carol singing Morden Station (NCH) |
| Tue | 23 | 10-12 am | Coffee and Chat |
| | | 8.00 pm | Time for Prayer |
| Wed | 24 | 8.00 pm | Christingle Service |
| | | 11.30 pm | Midnight Communion |
| Thu | 25 | 10.30 am | Christmas Day service |
| Sun | 28 | 10.30 am | Morning Service led by Rev John Nyota |

CHURCH DIARY FOR JANUARY

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|-----|----|-----------|--|
| Sun | 4 | 10.30 am | Covenant Service |
| | | 12.30 pm | Covenant Meal |
| Mon | 5 | 2.45 pm | Fellowship (Mr R Cutler - RNLI) |
| Tue | 6 | 10-12 am | Coffee and Chat |
| | | 8.00 pm | Time for Prayer |
| Wed | 7 | 7.45 pm | Midways (Travels of Mary and Derek Heaton) |
| Thu | 8 | 2-3.00 pm | Seekers Group |
| Fri | 9 | 12.30 pm | Lunch Club |
| Sun | 11 | 10.30 am | Morning Service |
| Mon | 12 | 2.45 pm | Fellowship (Mrs Sue Biddle - Handwriting) |
| Tue | 13 | 10-12 am | Coffee and Chat |
| | | 8.00 pm | Time for Prayer |
| Sun | 18 | 10.30 am | Morning Service |
| Mon | 19 | 2.45 pm | Fellowship (Mr Plaistow - Windmills) |
| | | 8.00 pm | Family Committee |
| Tue | 20 | 10-12 am | Coffee and Chat |
| | | 7.30 pm | Men's Supper Club - Heather Symes - The River Thames |
| | | 8.00 pm | Time for Prayer |
| Wed | 21 | 7.45 pm | Midways (Quiz Night) |
| Thu | 22 | 2-3.00 pm | Seekers Group |
| Fri | 23 | 12.30 pm | Lunch Club |
| Sun | 25 | 10.30 am | Morning Service |
| Mon | 26 | 2.45 pm | Fellowship (Mr Michael Coles - Stained Glass Windows) |
| Tue | 27 | 10-12 am | Coffee and Chat |
| | | 8.00 pm | Time for Prayer |