

Martin Way Methodist Church

Newsletter – May 2004

Minister – Rev John Nyota

MINISTER'S LETTER

Jambo rafiki (dear friends)

Just to continue from where I left last month let me tell you a story of a Muslim who became a Christian in Africa. Some of his friends asked him, "Why have you become a Christian?" He answered, "Well it's like this. Suppose you were going down the road and suddenly the road forked in two directions, and you didn't know which way to go, and there at the fork on the road were two men, one dead and one alive - which one would you ask which way to go?" But that first Easter Day did not start out that way. It began as a day of defeat. Verse 1 of chapter 24 of Luke reads, "On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb." You may have heard the saying that goes, "Have a great day ... unless you have other plans." Well these women had other plans! They were planning to have quite a miserable day.

I imagine! It is dark. The forlorn troop of women wend their way through the narrow streets of Jerusalem as the sun begins to rise. It probably took over half an hour to walk the kilometre or more down to the garden tomb in one of the valleys which surround Jerusalem. It was a situation of complete defeat. These women felt utterly crushed and defeated: well meaning but completely wrong in a fundamental issue: seeking the living among the dead!

Just before we blame them let's spare some thoughts for how we operate as Christians in the world. And I think let's forget the bigger screen for a moment and look at the local situation. As I write I am an extremely happy man. The holy week has been refreshing and it was good to see people faithfully come day after day to be at the feet of Jesus. Thanks to Brenda, Bill, Janet and Bob who shared with me in the evening services. Geraldine was very good on the music side as well as Bob. Then came Friday and the turnout at Morden Baptist was beyond anyone's

imagination. Sunday was a great climax of people who have experienced the risen Christ. Consider this poem by Annie Johnson Flint.

Some of us stay at the cross, Some of us wait at the tomb,
Quickened and raised with Christ, Yet lingering still in the gloom.
If the Christ who died had stopped at the cross,
His work had been incomplete.
If the Christ who was buried had stayed in the tomb,
He had only known defeat,
But the way of the cross never stops at the cross,
And the way of the tomb leads on
To victorious grace in the heavenly place,
Where the risen Lord has gone.

What a great momentum to carry us through as we engage to rethink about our mission strategy amongst ourselves and in the Martin Way area. We have a great responsibility ahead of us as we continue to deliberate on the best ways to live out the purposes of the risen Christ. We have no time to dwell at the tomb: the tomb of whom I like and whom I don't like; the tomb of bitterness and unresolved anger; it could be the tomb of despair, this-place-shall-never-be-better, the tomb of sticking to tradition and dare I say hating tradition so much; the tomb of church as business as usual. You name the tomb! The urgency facing us cannot afford such idling at the tomb. We must go out and announce to a hostile world that Jesus is risen indeed, The many activities in the Church do this but could even do better. That Martha aspect of the church is a big Plus at Martin Way.

Yet for us to maximise our strategy we must first experience this risen Christ and feel him. Ask the two Marys and Joanna and they will tell you how good it feels to hear Rabboni calling your name! Indeed that process of reaching out has become very evident to me as we continue to rehearse for 'Godspell'. What an opportunity for us on a silver platter. I note there are numerous other activities that are geared towards this at Martin Way. Indeed we have very many people hanging around the Church doing one stuff or another. The million-dollar question remains. How can we make them join us for our Sunday celebrations? And even for us who are regulars how could we enhance the Mary side of our personality, I mean the lady who enjoyed being with and not doing Jesus stuff? Maybe how do

we achieve a balance because both of these are primary to a thriving church?

I offer no answers to these questions because I have none. What I do know is together we shall find out. Meanwhile we continue to celebrate, for Christ who is risen has come to raise all that is positive and all that is dead in and within us.

John

BIBLELANDS

A very big "thank-you" to those of you who supported us at St. Mary's Charities' Fayre on 27 March when we took £57-80. Also our grateful thanks to all who kindly purchased from us on Sunday 28 March when we took £118-85 making a grand total of £176-65. God bless you all!

Mary and Derek Heaton

GODSPELL - MAY BANK HOLIDAY 1-2 MAY

BASKETBALL AND MULTI-SPORT COURT, Mostyn Gardens

This will open on Saturday 22 May. On Sunday 23 May in the afternoon there will be a Celebration with picnic and informal games to which all local churches are invited. There will be a Basketball Shoot for teams from churches and others. So we'd better start practising

FULL CIRCLE

Those who came to the Men's Supper Club annual service on 30th March heard a very inspiring address by Paul Dicken of "Wheels for the World" and "Through the Roof". We began our year of fund-raising for "Wheels" on 1 April 2003 at our annual service aiming at raising £1500 by Christmas. God gave us his blessing and by Christmas we had reached £3000. The wheelchair in front of the church at the start of our effort was refurbished and presented to someone in Ghana. As we closed the year another wheelchair was at the front of the church. Where that will end up we do not know, but we can be sure that it will be gratefully received.

Many thanks to all who have contributed in any way to our fund-raising over the past year. The final total raised was £3400.

Bill Cox

JEAN BUTLAND

John and Family would like to express their grateful thanks for the many messages of love and concern following the passing of Jean and also for the magnificent attendance at the service of Thanksgiving and Celebration of her life at the Church on Thursday 18th March. Jean would have appreciated the singing of the hymns of her choice, together with all that was said in her memory and thanks to everyone who took part or helped in any way. She is now safe with her Lord who she served so well during her nearly 75 years

NORA WYETH

It was with great sadness that all her friends at Martin Way were informed of her death which occurred at the end of March. Nora had moved away to Abingdon to live near her family about two years ago. She had been a regular worshipper here for many years, and despite her serious hearing disability she was always able to give everyone a very happy smile and a chat. Nora will now be very much missed by all who knew her and we send our sincere sympathy to all her family in their sad loss.

Bill Goodrum

QUOTE - UNQUOTE

It is not in our choice to spread the gospel or not. It is our death if we do not.

P T Forsyth

Just as one could not speak of the church without speaking of its mission, it was impossible to think of the church without thinking, in the same breath, of the world to which it is sent.

David Bosch from Transforming Mission

CHRISTIAN AID WEEK commences 9 May 2004. If you could/would like to help with the door-to-door collection please see Tony Loft. The more helpers the easier the task! At the end of Christian Aid week on Sunday 16 May there is a sponsored walk around London. Tony and several others will be walking - if you would like either to join them or sponsor them please let Tony know.

SATURDAY 22 May: there will be a fund-raising event for Christian Aid led by Tongues of Fire (A Christian Band including Anne Conquest & Colin and Andy Smith). Please book the date. Tickets for the event, which includes a Ploughman's Supper, will be on sale from Sunday 25 April.

GIFTS THAT CHANGE LIVES through Christian Aid

- £5 buys rice for a family in Sierra Leone to plant, providing food, income and seeds for the next season
- £10 - pays for taps and troughs to provide two villages in Bolivia with a safe and reliable water supply
- £15 - trains a Guatemalan woman in business techniques, and gives her the opportunity to learn how to make a sustainable living
- £17 - provides a month's food rations for four Burmese refugees. Completing the Gift Aid form declaration would provide them each with a blanket too

CHRISTIAN AID WEEK 9-15 MAY

LIVING LIFE TO THE FULL

Christian Aid Week begins on 9 May, and the money raised this year will be used to improve people's lives in more than 50 countries worldwide. One of the places that Christian Aid has recently begun working in is the former Soviet republic of Tajikistan. Here, as in many other poor countries, money raised in Christian Aid Week is being used to help people live life to the full.

Khurshed Khuinov is 17 and lives in Tajikistan's capital Dushanbe. He shares one room in a city hostel with his mother and his brothers and sisters. Life in the hostels is bleak and dangerous, so the organisation Zumrad, which is supported by Christian Aid, runs youth clubs to improve the lives of vulnerable children and give them emotional support. They enjoy climbing and camping expeditions, as well as workshops in which they make their own rucksacks and tents.

Zumrad is one of ten partner organisations in Tajikistan supported by Christian Aid. Tajikistan is one of the poorest countries in the world outside Africa, and Christian Aid began to work there quite recently.

Situated in central Asia, north of Afghanistan, it was part of the Soviet Union until independence in 1991.

Subsequently, the economy has collapsed and there has been a bitter civil war. One in three workers is jobless, and vulnerable people such as children and the elderly have little or no support. Children are particularly at risk if they are orphaned. Fifty thousand were orphaned during the war, and many more have parents who have been forced to leave home and seek work in Russia. Huge state orphanages provide schooling and shelter, but they are overcrowded and poorly resourced. Children living in these conditions often do not have enough to eat, and are starved of affection.

In Khurshed's case, his family situation was made harder because of his poor health. Until he was 12 he had to walk on crutches. "After two operations the doctor succeeded in fixing my bones" he explains. "My family wanted to buy a house, but they used the money for the operations. Life became very difficult for us. So now we live in a hostel."

For ten years Zumrad has given children such as these a richer education and deeper relationships than are possible in an orphanage or hostel. They offer canoeing expeditions in the mountains, with teenage children learning a range of climbing and environmental skills.

"I thought I would never be able to work as normal, but I have been hiking with Zumrad for four years" says Khurshed. "At first it was really hard. But it is so important for me. When I come on hiking trips I feel at home, I'm not afraid of the difficulties now, I'm going to be an artist. So I am not just looking around; I am studying the countryside and keeping it in my head."

By attending local clubs several times a week, the young people also learn the sewing skills they need to make their own rucksacks, tents and clothing. Courses in computing and English mean that they can improve their potential. But perhaps most important of all is that Zumrad provides a safe place where children find genuine care and can develop higher hopes for the future.

A £25 gift to Christian Aid buys the material for ten young people to make their own rucksacks for a camping expedition

LETTER FROM JERUSALEM : FORGIVENESS, NOT REVENGE

Let me introduce you to a lady called Cedar. Cedar is Palestinian and in her late sixties, and is a member of the board of the *Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Centre.

In 1948, as a girl of 12, she fled with her family from their home in Haifa (in the Galilee) as the forces of the Jewish underground military approached. Her family, like many others, lost their home and their identity - becoming 'non-Jewish citizens' of Israel: a sort of second-class status within the new state. And they lost their faith. Cedar tells how her father could no longer attend church and how her mother would weep in prayer, trying to understand God's purposes in the midst of injustice.

Today Cedar, like most of her people, still lives with the consequences of these losses. From her home in Ramallah (a prominent West Bank town north of Jerusalem), Cedar must cross two checkpoints to get into the Jerusalem Sabeel office, She never knows how long this will take, whether the checkpoints will for some reason be closed, or whether her papers will be questioned and she will be refused entry.

Cedar is angry, but she is not bitter. She claims that forgiveness, not revenge is the truly human response to suffering caused by others, and calls on Palestinians and Israelis to forgive "Taking the pain twice" and thus end the cycle of violence.

It is the loss of faith among the ever-shrinking Palestinian Christian community that pains Cedar most. As another Sabeel colleague said "Everything about our life here is a challenge; staying Christian is a challenge." This is why Cedar and the other founders of the Sabeel movement began the ministry 10 years ago to be a prophetic voice, calling for justice for the Palestinian people not only on the basis of international law but also following the example of Christ

**In Arabic Sabeel means 'The Way' and also a 'Spring of Water'*

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THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

We are all guilty of taking many things for granted. We also take many people for granted. Have you given thanks to God for your friends lately?

In the normal course of events we just accept that our friends are there, but then there are times when we begin to realise how important our friends really are. If we are ill or depressed it is good to have the company of a friend, if only by contact through a phone call. In our darkest hours, particularly when we suffer the loss of a loved one, we are strengthened by the love and concern of friends. When we are left on our own it is comforting to know that we have friends to whom we can turn if our bearable aloneness becomes intolerable loneliness. It is not only a wonderful blessing to have good friends; it is also a privilege to be counted as someone's friend. R W Emerson said "The only way to have a friend is to be one". Someone else commented "There are no such things as strangers, only friends we have not yet met".

We are all invited to share the greatest Friend of all. What a difference it would make to the world if everyone accepted Jesus' offer of friendship. It is easy to understand why "What a Friend we have in Jesus" is so greatly loved by many, many people. If you are feeling a bit low, just sing it to yourself and really think about the words. You'll certainly feel better if you do!

Then think of all your other friends and give thanks for them. God bless you in all your friendships, both given and received.

Bill Cox

ANOTHER TALE FROM KENYA

Last month John our minister talked about the Maasai warriors. Here is an anecdote about the Maasai women. It is just as true of any rural community all over the world and it is just as true of us - if you really want to learn words it is much easier to learn them as a song and the beauty of the music doesn't necessarily have to match the content of the script!

There was a woman who spent some months serving God in Kenya. On her final visit to a remote township she attended a medical clinic. As the Maasai women there began to sing together, she found herself deeply moved by their hauntingly beautiful harmonies. She wanted to always remember this moment and try to share it with friends when she arrived home. With tears flowing down her cheeks she turned to her friend and asked, "Can you please tell me the translation of the words to this song?" Her friend looked at her and solemnly replied, "If you boil the water, you won't get dysentery."

CHURCH DIARY FOR MAY

Sat	1	5.00 pm	Godspell
Sun	2	10.30 am	Family Service led by Janet and Bob Hamblin
		7.00 pm	Godspell
Wed	5	8.00 pm	Mission and Service Committee
Thu	6	2-3.00 pm	Seekers Group
Sun	9	10.30 am	Morning Service led by Valerie Ashcroft
		6.30 pm	Communion Service led by Rev John Nyota
Mon	10	2.45 pm	Fellowship (Derek and Mary Heaton)
Tue	11	10-12 am	Coffee and Chat
		8.00 pm	Time for Prayer
Wed	12	7.45 pm	Midways (Julian Hoad - Vet)
Fri	14	12.30 pm	Lunch Club
Sat	15	10-12 am	Midways Jumble Sale - proceeds for church funds
Sun	16	10.30 am	Communion Service led by Rev John Nyota
Mon	17	2.45 pm	Fellowship (Stephen Ashcroft)
Tue	18	10-12 am	Coffee and Chat
		7.30 pm	Men's Supper Club (Councillor Edith Macauley - "My Year as Mayor")
		8.00 pm	Time for Prayer
Wed	19	8.00 pm	Church Council
Thu	20	2-3.00 pm	Seekers Group
Sun	23	10.30 am	Morning Service led by David Eagle and Williamson
Mark		8.00 pm	Service led by Janet and Bob Hamblin
Mon	24	2.45 pm	Fellowship (The Gideons)
Tue	25	10-12 am	Coffee and Chat
		8.00 pm	Time for Prayer
Wed	26	7.45 pm	Midways (Annual General Meeting)
Fri	28	12.30 pm	Lunch Club
Sun	30	10.30 am	Morning Service led by Rev John Nyota