

## MINISTER'S LETTER



Dear friends,

Each and every one of us, I would imagine, has somewhere in this world that holds a special place in our heart; a place where we believe the veil between earth and heaven to be especially thin. For me, that place is Islay, an inner Hebridean island off the west coast of Scotland. Whereas other people believe the veil between earth and heaven to be thin in the places that they love, I know it to be true of Islay, for I have evidence. Islay is famous for its wildlife – and birdlife in particular – but it is even more famous for its malt whisky, there being seven working distilleries on the island. That means that at any one time there are thousands and thousands of casks of this ‘water of life’ (the literal translation of the Gaelic term for whisky, uisge beatha) quietly and slowly maturing. The portion of stored spirit lost each year through evaporation (2%) is called the “angels’ share”: so that’s why I know that the veil between earth and heaven is especially thin on Islay!

Islay is a wonderfully varied place and is intrinsically beautiful and special yet it has been invested with even more meaning for me because of times spent there on holidays with family and friends, because of friendships made with islanders that have grown over the years and because of all the wonderful memories that this relatively small plot of ground has blessed me with. This summer we are not heading to Islay but instead to a place in France that means as much to Rebecca as Islay does to me. Plans have though begun for next year...

In Genesis 28, Jacob lies down and, with only a stone for a pillow and the night sky for company, goes to sleep and dreams. He dreams of a ladder between earth and heaven with angels ascending and descending on it, he dreams of a meeting with God in which God offers him the promise of rich blessings. When Jacob wakes from his sleep he proclaims, ‘Surely the Lord is in this place...’, ‘How awesome is this place!’ and ‘This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.’ For Jacob, the veil between earth and heaven is especially thin in this place: he realises that it is intrinsically special.

He puts down his pillow as a marker, anoints it with oil, gives the place a new name, ‘Bethel’ (‘the house of God’) and vows to return. Years later, guided by God, Jacob (now with family) does indeed return to Bethel and builds an altar to God (ch35). A place that Jacob already knew to be special no doubt became invested with even more meaning for him because of what happened there, because of what he experienced there.

In theology (don’t be scared of the word, it’s a good one – it simply means ‘words about God’) there are at least two schools of thought about the significance of place. One is that a place can be inherently special and even sacred because it is God-given and therefore full of divine meaning. The other is that a place only becomes important because of what happens there: it is that which makes a place holy or sacred. The story of Jacob’s dream at Bethel suggests to me that both views are correct. Jacob recognises the place to be inherently special – possibly reasoning that he would not have had such a dream there if it were not so – but makes it more so because of what he does there.

I hope that this summer you will have had the chance to return to places that are special to you or, if not, that you have been opened to the possibility of the veil between earth and heaven being especially thin somewhere else. I hope too that we return from the summer months refreshed and renewed, ready to ensure that the sacred place that we call ‘church’ becomes even more sacred by our actions in that place.

With every blessing,

*Paul*

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## **PUZZLE CORNER ANSWERS**

Solution to the Double Puzzle from last month’s Newsletter.

The words were:

**FLOWER, STONE, SIXTY, WORSE, ROMAN, TWAIN, UNITE, TODAY**

The verse was:

**Extortion turns a wise man into a fool (Eccl.7:7 NIV)**

## AFTERNOON BIBLE STUDY

As members of the Methodist Church our membership card says that we are called to: **learning and caring**, through Bible study and meeting for fellowship, so that we may grow in faith and support others in their discipleship. With this in mind between 6-8 of us gathered each Tuesday afternoons in June to explore and discuss Bible passages. Under the leadership of Mr David Eagle who enthused us to look at different aspects of the parables of the good Samaritan, the rich fool, the Pharisee and the tax collector and the prodigal son. We were blessed to be able to refer to several books from the Church Library especially 'The lost art of forgiving' by Johann Christoph Arnold, Corrie Ten Boon's 'The Hiding Place' has a moving passage on forgiveness and Henri Nouwen's 'Return of the prodigal son', all relating to the biblical passages which were being discussed.

These are some of the comments:

- ◆ *I feel that I now know a bit more about these familiar parables, even though I have done this in House groups before, it has meant something different this time.,*
- ◆ *The lunch time Bible Study has provided fellowship and time to explore passages of the Bible to further our knowledge and understanding, in a quiet and peaceful environment where everyone has the opportunity to contribute, with the excellent leadership of David Eagle.*
- ◆ *This has been a most valuable, helpful and informative course, friendly and unthreatening. Having learned to use some of Jesus' teaching from certain parables in our daily living, we must thank David for his patient leading of the group.*
- ◆ *From being a sceptical onlooker I became a willing participant, at ease with the group and particularly with David.*
- ◆ *It's been helpful to me giving me a new insight into the parables.*
- ◆ *It's surprising what can be extracted from what seems a simple passage.*

We are very grateful to David for giving up his time to lead this study, for drawing us together as a group and for the time of fellowship over sandwiches. We are hoping to resume in September. Please join us.

*Gwen Wildman*

# Afternoon Tea

Raising awareness of the crisis in Burma



On Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> July

3pm until 5pm

At Martin Way Methodist Church

All monies raised will be split between 'Christian Solidarity Worldwide' and 'Partners Relief & Development'; both Charities are providing help to the people of Burma.

Please come along and join us for a relaxing afternoon.

More information from Joyce Plant and Abby Herring



**Hope to see you there.**

# Free Burma Rangers

[www.freeburmarangers.org](http://www.freeburmarangers.org)

Love each other  
Unite for freedom, justice and peace  
Forgive and don't hate each other  
Pray with faith, act with courage  
Never surrender

FBR REPORT: Burma Army and DKBA mortars land in Thailand as attacks on Karen people continue in Ler Per Her refugee camp area Karen State, Burma

*12 June, 2009*

## KEY DEVELOPMENTS

- Villagers continue to flee and thousands remain displaced as attacks intensify against Karen villagers and resistance in Pa-an District
- Mortars fired by the Burma Army and the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA) landed in Thailand on June 8 and 9.
- Intensity of fighting at the frontline increased on June 12 in the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA), 21st battalion area.

Villagers continue to flee and thousands remain displaced as attacks intensify against Karen villagers and resistance in Pa-an District, central Karen State, eastern Burma. seven mortars fired by the Burma Army and the DKBA landed in Thailand, according to reports received by the Free Burma Rangers. Three mortars landed close to Ta Zu Nya, opposite a position held by the KNLA, the resistance force of the Karen National Union (KNU). Four landed close to Mae Salik village in Tha Song Yang province, Tak district, western Thailand.

The fighting at the frontline increased at the KNLA 21st battalion area (opposite Mae Salik village). The Burma Army and DKBA continuously mortared the area and are reportedly planning to attack KNLA 22 and 101 battalion areas opposite Mae Salik. Some 200 mortars landed in the areas under attack. 60mm, 75mm and 32mm shells were fired.

The Burma Army and DKBA attacked the KNLA 22 and 101 battalion areas and rained 20 mortars on the area. The KNLA resisted this attack and drove them back a short distance. The DKBA Special Tactical Command led by Ner Kha Mwe brought up more soldiers for continuing attacks on this area.

In total there are reported to be some 3,521 people who have fled across the border to U Thu Hta, Noh Bo, Mae Salik and Mae Salik Noi (Kray Hta) in Thailand as a result of the fighting. The attacks on Ler Per Her and the surrounding area began on June 5 with most leaving Ler Per Her Internally Displaced People camp by June 7.

Relief efforts are being coordinated in Thailand by the Karen Refugee Committee with assistance from FBR, Partners Relief and Development and other NGOs. FBR and Partners have sent in clothing, medical supplies, food and blankets. The Thailand Burma Border Consortium has also provided food, shelter, cooking implements, blankets and other relief supplies to those displaced. Medicine is also being provided by some Thai authorities in cooperation with medical treatment by Karen medics.

The Burma Army battalions involved are Light Infantry Division 22 of Tactical Operations Command 222, Light Infantry Battalions 201, 202, 203, 205, 210 and Infantry Battalion 81. LIBs 338 and 339 remain at their base camps. There are ten battalions in each Military Operations Command with usually only seven deployed. There are ten battalions in each LID and approximately 120 to 150 soldiers in each Burma Army battalion. The DKBA is armed with 61mm, 81mm, and 82mm mortars, and .5 machine guns. The aim of the DKBA is to displace villagers who resist their control, control additional territory and crush KNU resistance in their areas.

The Free Burma Ranger's mission is to provide hope, help and love to internally displaced people inside Burma, regardless of ethnicity or religion. Using a network of indigenous field teams, FBR reports on human rights abuses, casualties and the humanitarian needs of people who are under the oppression of the Burma Army. FBR provides medical, spiritual and educational resources for IDP communities as they struggle to survive Burmese military attacks.

For more information, visit the Free Burma Ranger's website at [www.freeburmarangers.org](http://www.freeburmarangers.org)

## OUR 50<sup>TH</sup> WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

The 28<sup>th</sup> March, 1959, saw us married in West Croydon Congregational Church. On the 28<sup>th</sup> March this year, we had our eldest son, David, and his wife, Sharon, spending the weekend with us. The following day we were joined by our youngest son, Keith, and his lady friend, Clare, along with friends, neighbours and, of course, our Church Family to help us celebrate our 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.



Paul had very kindly agreed to let us re-affirm our Wedding Vows during the morning service at Martin Way, which proved to be a very moving experience, not only for us, but also for those in the congregation. After the service everyone adjointed to the Coffee Lounge to share in our Celebration Cake and view our Wedding Album.



The six of us then went out for a wonderful lunch before diving to West Croydon Congregational Church so that we could stand once again, after 50 years, on the same church steps as when we had married all those years ago - another sentimental journey.

Many thanks to all who sent us cards and flowers, our house was filled with over 70 beautiful cards, many handmade, along with many flowers and roses.

Derek had a dream to celebrate this special anniversary by returning to our favourite Greek Island of Santorini.



Well, we finally flew out there on the 5<sup>th</sup> May, this turned out to be our 12<sup>th</sup> visit to this small beautiful island. It is only 9 miles x 3 wide but this volcanic island has picturesque white-washed houses and the many blue-domed Greek Orthodox Churches.

The village church in Kamari ‘adopted’ us way back in 1985 and even requested us to take our ‘Holy Land Pilgrimage’ film show out there a few years later. They even translated our English commentary into Greek. The church basement was white-washed to allow everyone to view it and the village people



donated over £200 in drachmas for our charity, Biblelands. Coincidentally when we delivered this money a couple of months later to the blind children at the Helen Keller Centre in Jerusalem, then driving them to Galilee for their summer camp, they stayed in the Greek Convent, so the Santorini money helped pay for their stay - coincidence? - maybe!!

A week after our arrival nineteen of our family and friends flew out to join us at our party, including Derek’s brother and wife from Canada. This was held in Dimitri’s Taverna, where 23 of our long-standing

Greek families came to help us celebrate with good food, wine and dancing, bringing with them more cards and presents - fantastic!

The Sunday Orthodox Service 7/10am saw Papa Yiorgus also giving us a 'Blessing/Thanksgiving' ceremony when our guests swelled the congregation. A picnic-style meal of meat and vegetables in gravy with bread and wine was served in the warm sunshine within the courtyard following the parade of three times around the church of a newly decorated Icon.

Our lives have been richly blessed in so many ways - our families, our health, our numerous foreign travels, but we are very pleased and thankful that many folk responded to our appeal for monetary donations in lieu of presents. This amounted to nearly £300 which will be passed to Biblelands, to be shared, as always, between the Helen Keller Centre for Blind Children in Jerusalem, the Cedars Capability Centre Al-Kafāat in Lebanon and the Harpes Christian Memorial Hospital in Egypt.

Finally we give thanks to God that we were blessed to live long enough to celebrate our marriage in this way. We thank Him for all that is past and trust Him for all that is to come.

*Mary and Derek Heaton*

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In May I wrote that I was to undertake the Mary Jones Walk. I now have the chance to let you all know how I got on.

From time to time in our life journey we have what we perceive later to be nothing short of an encounter with an angel. My walking companion Joyce Nuttall introduced me to the angel Mary Thomas from Llanuwchllyn, who accompanied us on the Mary Jones sponsored walk. She is an expert mountaineer, has a wealth of knowledge relating to the area and is more

than familiar with the route. Indeed she has submitted a detailed commentary which we did not have to refer to as Mary, having led several walks for the Bible Society, was just a mine of information and is known to many local people along the way, and especially the land owners who welcome walkers.



Unlike Mary Jones who, according to the story walked the 26 miles barefoot, I was wearing shoes but my well worn boots were no longer waterproof by the end of the first day and since we had crossed streams which were swollen from the overnight rain, my soggy socks and squelching strides illustrated that it is not an

easy journey now, let alone for a barefoot 15 year old in 1800. Many people from the Llanfihangel area were used to walking to Bala towards the end of the 1700s. They would go to listen to sermons or to attend preaching festivals. The winter of 1799 in Meirionydd was very hard and most of the sheep in the area died in snow drifts. It froze until the end of June, with torrential rain in July so that many of the crops failed.

Mary Thomas has been instrumental in preparing the six information boards and leaflets illustrating the route appropriately divided into five sections. The biblical verse on each board aptly described the majestic scenery at various viewpoints and may have conveyed young Mary Jones' thoughts along the way, as, without a bible she would have memorised these verses.

The journey began with *'Direct my footsteps according to your word- Psalm 119:133'* . From Minffordd to Brithdir- *'I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills'* because one cannot fail to notice Cadair Idris and Aran Fawddwy mountain ranges. Leaving the



Brithdir area at section 3 to Rhydymain (which was the location in the early 1950s of Richard Burton's first film, "The Last Days of Dolwyn"), the verse *'Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God'* was a reminder of how small we are when compared to our Creator's greatness.

Our 2<sup>nd</sup> day we left the valley with frequent stiles and streams and the Quaker country to forests, fields and the inevitable conversations when crossing through farmyards. By late morning we got our first glimpse of Bala lake, and knowing that the finishing post was in sight gave us a psychological boost. *'The mountains and the hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the fields will clap their hands, Isaiah 55:12b'* Mary Jones must have quickened her pace too when she got nearer to accomplishing her dream of owning her own bible.

My Ghanaian friends were most interested on hearing that Joyce and I were going to be walking the 26 mile Mary Jones route to raise money to buy bibles for bible study groups in Kenya. They recalled that during their school years they were presented with a bible and on the first page was a picture of the 15 year old and her story. I had to admit to them that sadly I have met a lot of Welsh people who have never heard of Mary Jones, but it was heartening to hear that Thomas Charles' vision that *'Beibl i bawb o bobl y byd'* *'A Bible to all the people of the world'* has been realised at least in parts of Ghana.

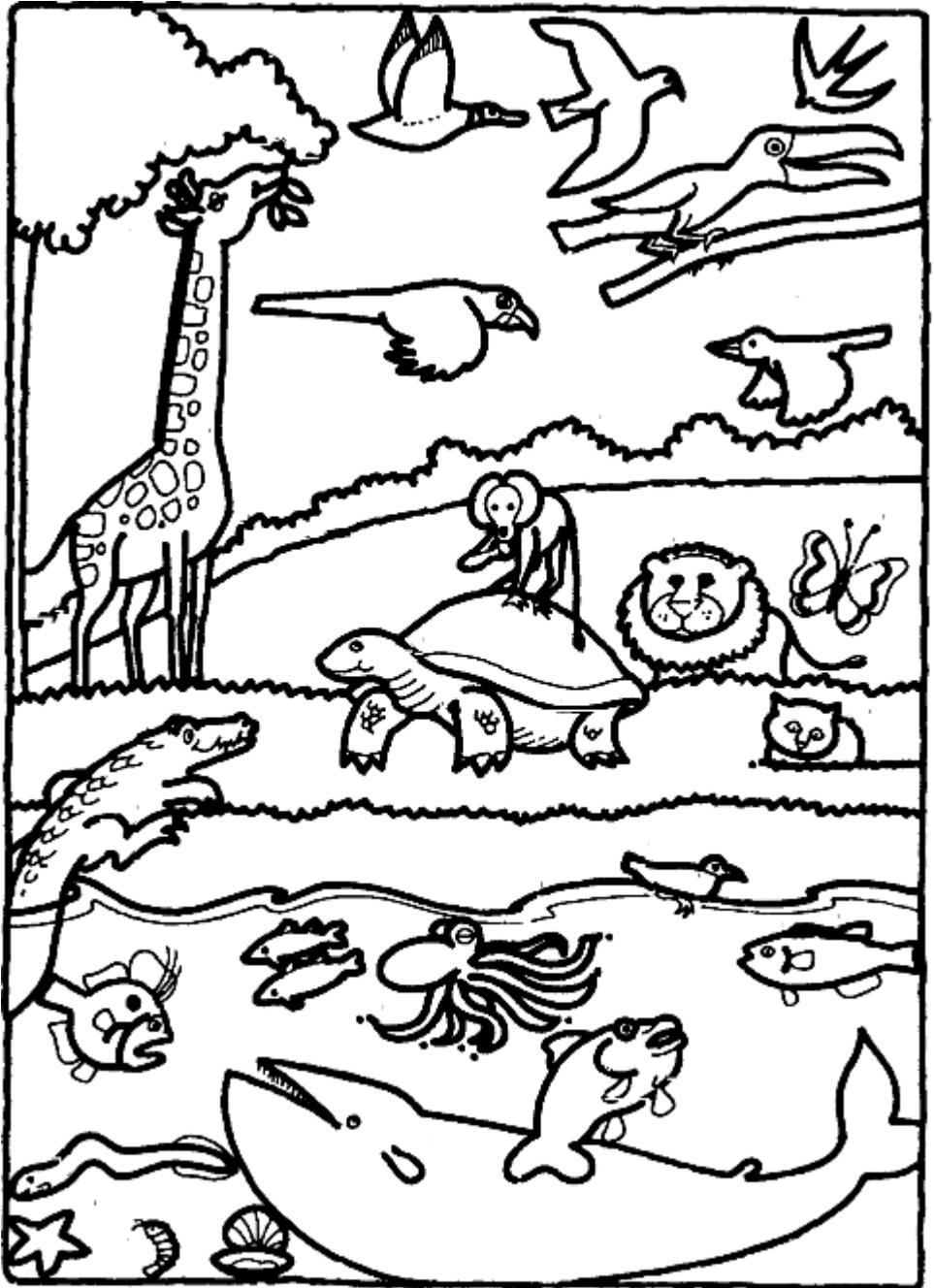


At the time of writing £700 has been raised to buy bibles for Kenya. My sincere thanks to all who sponsored me; the money will enable the Bible study groups to get materials e.g. DVDs to educate and reach young people. The walk was invigorating as well as challenging, a chance to smell the flowers and hear the cuckoo after many years! I would certainly do it all again and recommend it highly. Give it a go! You never know, you may even *'entertain angels unaware'*!

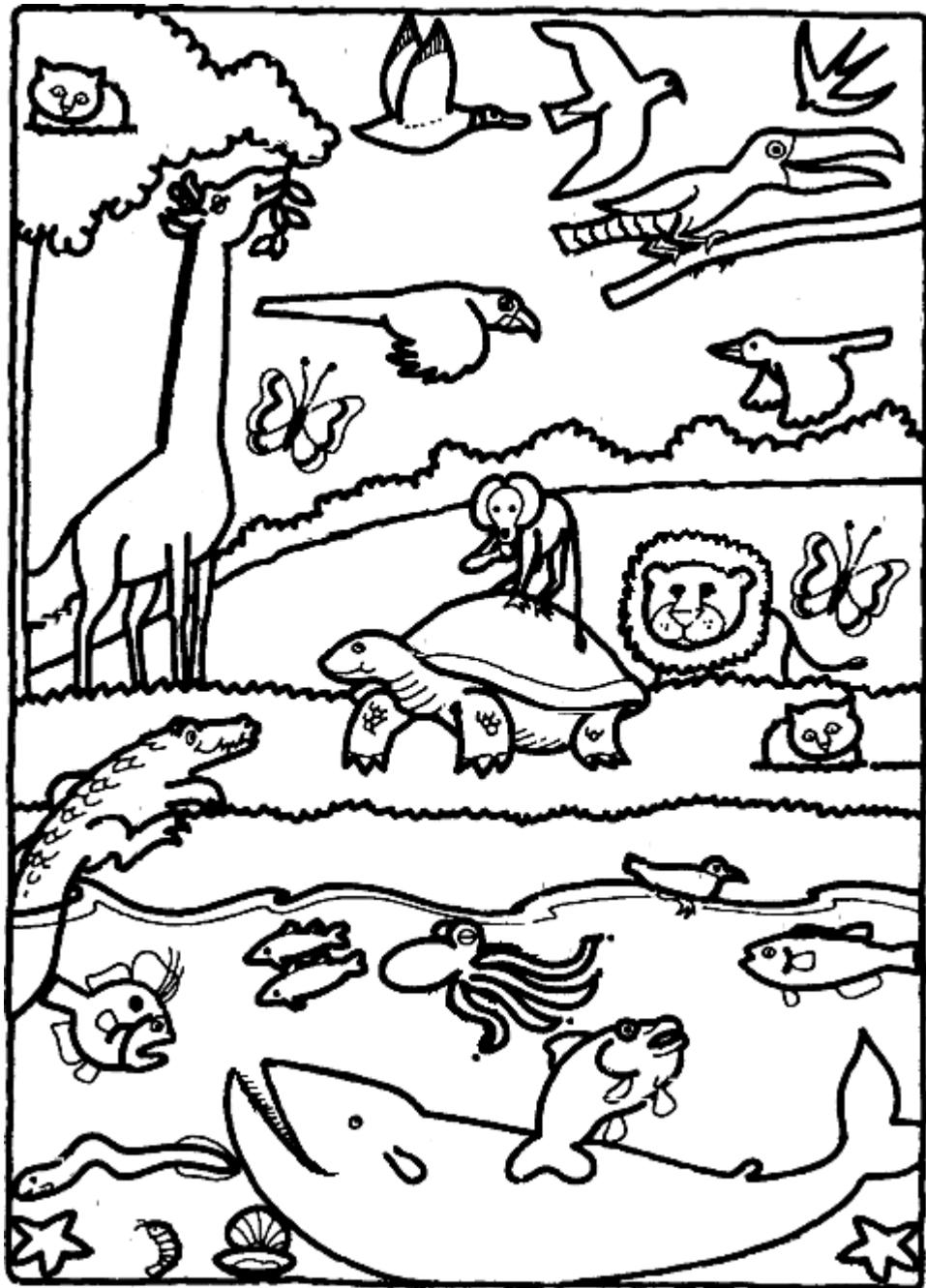
*Gwen Wildman*

## PUZZLE CORNER

As Summer is here we have a puzzle and a colouring picture for you!



There are 10 differences between these two pictures. See if you can find them all before colouring the pictures!





# JULY

## CHURCH DIARY

Tue	1	10-12noon	Coffee and Chat
		8.00 pm	Time for Prayer
Sat	4	7.30 pm	RAFIKI Trust Summer Concert
Sun	5	10.00 am	Breakfast followed by All Age Worship led by Platform 10¾
Tue	7	10.30am-noon	Coffee and Chat
		8.00 pm	Time for Prayer
Fri	10	12.30 pm	Luncheon Club
Sun	12	10.30 am	Morning Service led by David Eagle
		3.00- 5.00pm	Afternoon Tea in support of Crisis in Burma
Tue	14	10.30am-noon	Coffee and Chat
		8.00 pm	Time for Prayer
Sun	19	10.30 am	Communion Service led by Rev Paul Timmis
Tue	21	10.30am-noon	Coffee and Chat
		8.00 pm	Time for Prayer
		7.30 pm	Men's Supper Club - <i>Travels in Peru</i> - Pauline Riley
Fri	24	12.30 pm	Luncheon Club
Sun	26	10.30 am	Morning Service led by Laura Cockram
		6.30 pm	Communion Service led by Rev Paul Timmis
Tue	28	10.30am-noon	Coffee and Chat
		8.00 pm	Time for Prayer

*Please refer to the Website ([www.martinway.org.uk](http://www.martinway.org.uk)) or Weekly Notice Sheet  
for any additional information*



## CHURCH DIARY

Sun	2	10.30 am	Morning Worship led by Tony Loft
Tue	4	10.30am-noon	Coffee and Chat
		8.00 pm	Time for Prayer
Sun	9	10.30 am	Communion Service led by Rev Paul Timmis
Tue	11	10.30am-noon	Coffee and Chat
		8.00 pm	Time for Prayer
Sun	16	10.30 am	Morning Service led by Dr Arthur Miller
		6.30 pm	Communion Service led by Rev Paul Timmis
Tue	18	10.30am-noon	Coffee and Chat
		8.00 pm	Time for Prayer
Sun	23	10.30 am	Morning Service led by Rev Paul Timmis
Tue	25	10-12 noon	Coffee and Chat
		8.00 pm	Time for Prayer
Sun	30	10.30 am	Morning Service led by Brenda Cannon

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We wish all of those who celebrate a birthday  
during these months a very

*Happy Birthday*

and especially to:

**Jessica Haze on 26th July**

**Emily Bacon on 5th August**

**Rebecca Smith on 11th August**



# Wimbledon Circuit

*Fun Day*

*New Year Celebration*

*At Martin Way Methodist Church*  
**Saturday September 5<sup>th</sup> 2009**

This is going to be a great day. Come and find the "clown within yourself" at the Clowning Workshop.

Be creative with paint, chill out in the quiet zone, or sharpen up your debating skills!  
So much to do and all coming together with worship sharing all that we have done together.

This is a day for everyone, families, friends, neighbours so put this date in your diaries now!!!



More information  
to come soon.



Items for the **September Newsletter** should be with Andrew Fox, (email: roife@hotmail.co.uk) by **Sunday 16th August** at the latest