

MINISTER'S LETTER



We find ourselves at an interesting point in history, financially speaking. The world has been transformed in recent years. As we have been sold - and believed - the message that we need bigger cars, bigger homes and altogether more “stuff”, our aspirations have soared. And as our aspirations have soared, people have borrowed - and have been actively encouraged to borrow - in order to sustain lifestyles beyond their means. So individuals took risks with money when they couldn't really afford to take them. And some financial institutions did the same, allowing individuals to borrow when in reality they knew that they couldn't even afford to make their monthly repayments. It sounds like a recipe for financial meltdown - and so it ultimately proved - but with so much money being made, and with aspirations so high, Governments around the world turned a blind eye. After all, in many ways, we'd never had it so good.

But what a mess we're in now. Just taking the UK as an example and according to the Office for National Statistics, in the calendar year 2009 the UK recorded a general government deficit of £159.2 billion, which was equivalent to 11.4 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP). At the end of December 2009 general government debt was £950.4 billion, equivalent to 68.1 per cent of GDP and the Coalition Government forecasts that it will soar to £1.1 trillion by 2011.

When the figures get that big, it's difficult to get our heads around them isn't it? We know it's a lot, but still it's impossible to make any real sense of. So here are some other figures that might help us to understand what kind of mess we are in.

According to Credit Action, a national money education charity, £38.06m worth of loans are currently being written off by our banks & building societies every day. 1,666 people are being made redundant every day. The amount of personal interest being paid each day is £183m. Average household debt is now £57,789. It's perhaps not surprising then that, according to the same source, 9,000 new debt problems are being dealt with by CAB each day, a property is being

repossessed every 14 minutes and someone will be declared insolvent or bankrupt every 3.78 minutes.

We can blame the bankers - and certainly having to bail out the banks has undoubtedly increased the deficit enormously - but surely we have to take some personal responsibility as well. We've fallen for the narrative that says that we need more stuff, that more stuff will make us happier, and we've been quick enough to take the credit when it's been on offer when deep down we've known that we couldn't really afford it. And we're in a mess.

The question is, what to do? And again we're being sold a narrative. Well, two narratives actually. One says that we need to cut the deficit quickly in order to avoid the soaring borrowing costs (that's interest payments to you and me) and send out a clear signal to the financial markets that not only do we have a plan as a country, but it's a good one and one that'll ensure that the UK remains a safe bet for future investment and growth. The other narrative is that to seek to cut the deficit too quickly is counter-productive and will see jobs lost and growth undermined. This narrative offers an alternative based on boosting jobs and growth and a steadier deficit reduction.

The question is, which narrative should we believe? And the problem is, and it's the same problem that people faced when listening to the prophets of old, we'll only discover who's been telling us the truth after the event.

But at a time when so many people are facing such economic hardship, it's perhaps especially important to listen to those prophetic voices that have stood the test of time: voices of such people as Amos and Jesus, voices that have spoken out on such issues, to hear what they have to say to us.

How we view money, is hugely important says Amos. How we use our possessions is key says Jesus. Amos launches a blistering attack on the money-makers of his day (Amos 8: 4-7). Highly critical of those so motivated by money and the desire to make more of it that they fiddle the books, engage in mis-selling he accuses them of trampling on the poorest and most vulnerable in society and, in God's eyes, Amos

declares, this is pretty much unforgivable. Amos leaves us in no doubt, God's bias is to the poor.

Jesus, speaks on more than one occasion of the need for his followers to sell their possessions and give the money to the poor. The gospel is 'good news' to the poor precisely because it calls for a redistribution of wealth.

None of this helps us as we seek to make sense of the current economic situation and as we try to choose between the narratives being offered to us about the required course of action to reduce the deficit.

On the one hand, it was frequently the case with the prophets that the one who painted the gloomiest picture of the future was ultimately proved right. That might lead us to believe that hard, swift and deep cuts now are indeed the order of the day.

On the other hand, one of Jesus' stories (Luke 16: 1-13) seems to indicate that those accused of squandering wealth in the past may well yet prove to be shrewdest managers in a crisis and that offering incentives now may well be the best path to future security.

What we can be sure of, however, is that each and every one of us needs to take responsibility for the way in which we use both our money and our possessions, and take very, very seriously indeed the Biblical instruction to sell our possessions and give alms.

It's a radically different narrative to that we've been sold and bought into in recent years, of course. But it's one of the most consistent, persistent and insistent narratives found in our scriptures. And it reminds us that as a society, as individuals and, perhaps most especially as the Church, we'll ultimately be judged, in God's eyes, on how we treat the poor.

May God help us all.

With every blessing

Paul

God Answers Prayers



Imagine two young women, arrested and tried, mindful of living in a land where the death penalty can be handed down for leaving Islam. But strengthened by the prayers, the women courageously choose to stick by their faith in Jesus.

Maryam Rostampour and Marzieh Amirizadeh Esmaeilabad did exactly this. They faced trial in Iran's highest level court, suffered solitary confinement, deteriorating health and disturbing events in prison.

In March 2009 their homes were searched and their Bibles and other personal items were confiscated. They were interrogated and subjected to sleep deprivation. Later that year they were tried in a court usually reserved for military trials and anti-state crimes.

After persistent prayer, they were conditionally released in November 2009 while waiting for a further hearing in a lower level court. By then they had experienced poor health and psychological distress in the infamous Evin prison in Tehran.

Maryam and Marzieh's confidence was strong as they entered court again this April. They made a firm decision to stand by their Christian faith no matter how tough the opposition in court. Thousands of Christians worldwide, who supported them with prayer, eagerly awaited the outcome. There was a news blackout - no clear information for a number of weeks about what had happened. Then finally news came flooding through of their full acquittal! Once again, the power of prayer was undeniable.

Speaking soon after the trial, Marzieh said "we are most grateful to everyone who prayed for us ... I have no doubt that God heard the prayers of His people." With great confidence in the providence of God, Maryam added, "I believe our arrest, imprisonment and subsequent release were in the timing and plan of God, and it was all for His glory. But the prayers of people encouraged and sustained us throughout this ordeal."

Prayer makes the greatest difference, and is not the 'least' you can do - it's often the most! Please continue to pray for their full recovery, emotionally, physically and spiritually.

Get involved in the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church (IDOP) in November and see for yourself the difference we can make!

*This article is taken from September issue of Response.
With thanks to Joyce Plant*

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**SIGMA
CHRISTMAS
PRODUCTION**

SIGMA are now meeting every Sunday between 4.00 to 5.30pm at Martin Way Methodist Church for rehearsals of their Christmas musical called 'The Greatest Show On Earth' , to be performed at the church on December 18th and 19th.

SIGMA is a Greek letter meaning ‘All things coming together’ The group is made up of mixed ages and is a mixed medial creative art group (singing, dance, drama, musical, instruments, back stage), So if you enjoy singing/acting/dancing, please come and join us.

For more information please contact Anne Conquest.
Tel no: (020) 8942 7147 or Email aconquest@btinternet.com

What it Means to be Poor

A rich parent, wishing that his son learns what it means to lack the luxury he lived in, sent him to stay with farmers on their farm.

The son spent three days and three nights on the farm.

Driving back to the city, the father enquired on his son's experiences, to which the son replied that his stay was a positive one.

Have you learnt anything, asked the father.

Oh yes, replied the son:

1 – We have one dog whilst they have four.

2 – We have a swimming pool as large as our garden and full of chemically treated water. They have a river with crystal clear water, full of various types of fish and fauna .

3- We use electricity to lit up our garden; they have the moon and the stars to brighten up their fields.

4 – Our garden extends up to the boundary wall; their land up to the horizon.

5 – We buy our food; they grow it in their fields, harvest it and cook it.

6 – Our music comes from CDs; their lives are brightened by a continuous symphony of birds, crickets , animals and other sounds from nature

... And which, on occasion, is also accompanied by the voices of neighbours working in the adjoining fields.

7 – That we use microwaves and other modern appliances, but our food lacks the flavour of their food, which is cooked on a slow buring fire.

8 – That to protect ourselves, we live behind walls and burglar alarms whilst they live with doors wide open and protected by their neighbours' friendship

9 – That our lives are dependent on mobile phones, computers, television and theirs enriched by life, the sun and the sky, the land and their livestock, their families.

The father was utterly stunned by his son's reflections. His son then added:

In a nutshell, thank you for showing me how poor we are!

Indeed, with every passing day we tend to become poorer because we distance ourselves further from nature, God's greatest gift to mankind.

And we are more preoccupied with accumulating possessions and riches rather than enjoying this wonderful gift of nature and being thankful for being alive and well.

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ONE BIG FAMILY
Sunday 3rd October
3.00-8.00pm

MESSY PLAY
ALL THE FUN, NONE OF
THE CLEARING UP

FOOD FEST
SAUSAGE SIZZLE AND ICE CREAM

FREE FUN FOR ALL THE FAMILY
COME AND JOIN THE FUN AT MAR-
TIN WAY
METHODIST CHURCH. WE CAN'T
WAIT TO SEE YOU!

FOR MORE
INFORMATION
CONTACT

REBECCA
0208 337 2348
or
ABBY
0208 543 9093



FAIRTRADE RECIPES

Nutty Chocolate & Coffee Brownies **Makes about 12 brownies**

An ideal treat!

- 110g butter
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 50g plain flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- pinch of salt
- 100g hazelnuts (chopped in half)
- 225g unrefined (golden) Fairtrade sugar
- 50g dark Fairtrade chocolate, roughly broken up



For the frosting:

- 100g butter, softened to room temperature
- 100g icing sugar
- 1 tablespoon strong black Fairtrade coffee
- 100g cream cheese

Pre-heat oven to 180°C/350°F/gas mark 4. Grease a tin measuring approximately 27cm x 18cm and line with baking parchment, allowing paper to rise 3cm above the tin. Toast hazelnuts in oven for 10 minutes (maximum) until lightly browned. Melt chocolate and butter in a bowl over a pan of simmering water. Sieve flour, baking powder and salt into a bowl. Stir in sugar. Beat in eggs and chocolate mixture until well-mixed. Stir in hazelnuts. Pour mixture into the tin and bake for 30-40 minutes until centre springs back when lightly pressed.

Remove from oven and allow to cool completely in tin.

To make frosting, beat butter and icing sugar together until pale and fluffy. Beat in cream cheese and coffee. Spread frosting on the cooled Brownies. Chill in fridge for 30 minutes, then cut into squares before serving.

PUZZLE CORNER

CODEWORD CROSSWORDS are a different type of crossword puzzle in which **conventional clues are omitted**. Instead, answer **words in the diagram are represented by numbers**.

Each number represents a **different letter of the alphabet** but not all letters of the alphabet are used. To help you get started in the puzzle below 7 = N, 12 = I and 19 = L

		17	18	8	8	23			15	12	7	14	19	24	
5		19		3		16			24		24		12		
24	11	1	19	26	24	14			18	24	12	17	7	24	14
16		26		12		8			9		26		24		24
19	24	26	14	8	4	7			21	6	25	7	16	3	21
8		8		7		7					24		17		15
26	24	7	26	21		16	26	26	8	18	7	24	20	21	
	26						16						8		
6	16	3	24	18	7	16	1	23			22	24	21	1	21
1		1		24					12		24		26		26
9	16	9	20	19	8	7			7	16	18	18	16	26	24
12		19		16		24			14		12		26		16
26	25	12	21	26	19	24			13	16	6	26	1	16	19
		21		24		14			1		25		18		21
	21	25	16	14	24	21			19	8	8	21	24		

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
						N					I	
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
					L							

The above puzzle is thanks to <http://biblewordgames.com>

CHURCH DIARY

OCTOBER



Fri	1	12.30 pm	Luncheon Club
Sun	3	10.30 am	All Age Worship led by David Eagle
		3.00 - 7.30pm	One Big Family with Tongues of Fire at 6pm
Tue	5	10.30am-noon	Coffee and Chat
		8.00 pm	Time for Prayer
Weds	6	7.45 pm	Midways Group - <i>Richard Polly</i> - The tablecloth
Sun	10	10.30 am	Holy Communion Service led by Rev Paul Timmis
Tue	12	10.30am-noon	Coffee and Chat
		8.00 pm	Time for Prayer
Fri	15	12.30 pm	Luncheon Club
Sun	17	10.30 am	Morning Service led by Brenda Cannon
		6.30 pm	Communion Service led by Rev Paul Timmis
Tue	19	10.30am-noon	Coffee and Chat
		8.00 pm	Time for Prayer
		7.30 pm	Men's Supper Club - <i>Rev Roger Hoath</i> - Dining with the famous
Weds	20	7.45 pm	Midways Group - <i>Bobby Watson</i> - My life in amateur dramatics
Sat	23	10am - 1 pm	Big Brunch
Sun	24	10.30am	Morning Service led by Rev Paul Timmis
Tue	26	10.30am-noon	Coffee and Chat
		8.00 pm	Time for Prayer
Fri	29	12.30 pm	Luncheon Club
Sun	31	10.30 am	Morning Service led by Tony Loft

Please refer to the Website (www.martinway.org.uk) or Weekly Notice Sheet for any additional information



We wish all of those who celebrate a birthday this month a very

Happy Birthday

and especially to:

Jennifer Smith on 13th October

Tyler Butland-Brooks on 26th October

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BIRTHDAY GREETINGS

We have many new additions to the church family recently.

If you wish to have your child's birthday mentioned in the Newsletter please pass the details to our Editor, Andrew Fox.

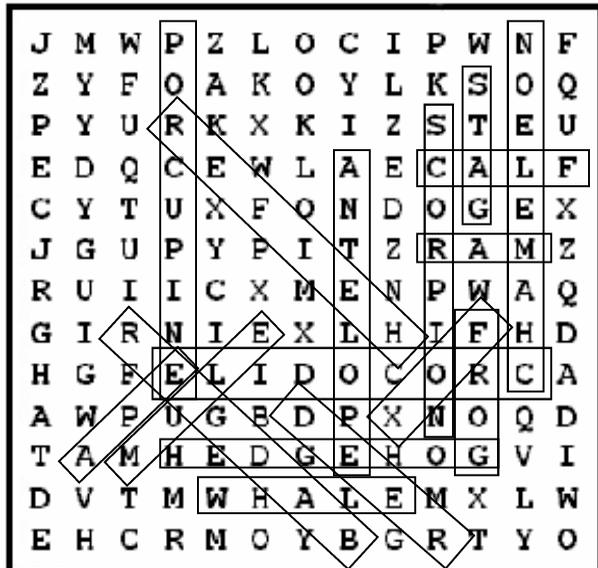
He can be contacted via email at roife@hotmail.co.uk or by phone on (020) 8330 7917

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PUZZLE CORNER

Answer for last month's Wordsearch

Did you find them all?



Coffee and Chat Help Wanted

Coffee and Chat needs two or three more people to share the pleasant task of staffing the Tuesday morning gatherings. At present John Butland and I share this, but volunteer work and increasing age make it more difficult to guarantee that we will always be available. Ideally we need a rota of three or four people.



Without this help we propose to close down at the end of October. Any volunteers please speak to John or me.

Rosemary Keen

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Bottle Top Thanks

Many thanks for those who were collecting bottle tops for The Diamond Riding Centre (for special needs children). They have now reached their target and so do not require any more and pass a great Thank You to all those who supported them

For more information about the Centre visit their website at www.diamondcentre.org.uk

Abby Herring

Items for the **November Newsletter** should be with Andrew Fox, (email: roife@hotmail.co.uk) by **Sunday 17th October** at the latest