

## MINISTER'S LETTER



For the past couple of years or so the Leadership Team has been thinking about the worship life of our church. More specifically, it has been thinking about the worship space - about what it looks and feels like and the impact that this might have upon our worship. And because first and foremost we are called to be a worshipping community - but also because the Leadership Team felt that the time was now right and the way in which we spend our money says a great deal about our priorities - we dedicated our recent General Church Meeting to beginning a conversation with the wider church community of which you dear reader are a part.

We began by reminding ourselves of some fundamentals:

*“Liturgy means ‘the people’s work’. That’s what worship should be. It is our gift to God, an expression of the people’s love, hope, joy, faith and gratitude to the creator and healer. It’s not a performance, put on by an individual or small group for the benefit of others. It’s not a play or an opera. There may be common elements: excitement, suspense, yearning, entertainment and joy, but worship is different. It’s about who we are as a living, changing community, celebrating and enjoying a God who seeks and longs for our healing, happiness and freedom.*

*Worship should be beautiful, moving and awe-inspiring, allowing us to express our love for God and one another in new ways. It should move us forward in our spiritual journey; empower us to think new thoughts and to feel new feelings; to take prophetic action in our local community and as citizens of the world. It should challenge us to live with doubt and uncertainty in new ways and to turn that tension into creativity.*

*Finally, worship should be a celebration of the diverse nature of our community. We are not all the same and this matters; it is good.”*

(Source: The Risk Kit – Action Unit 3: Radical, creative and relevant worship (MPH))

### **Uplifting?**

With such an understanding in mind, we have been asking ourselves what our worship space says about our life as a worshipping

community. We have been asking ourselves whether the space helps or hinders us as we seek to be a worshipping community. After all, how a place looks makes a difference to how we feel in it; how a place looks says something about those who dwell in it. We know this from our own homes.

We're more likely to be uplifted if the surroundings are uplifting. But what impact does it have on us if a place looks and feels tired? How easy is it to feel uplifted in a place that feels tired. And though our church can look and feel wonderful sometimes - when the lighting is low for evening worship evening, for example - it does, mostly we think, look and feel tired.

We have explored the possibility of having the walls painted (we can't - the bricks need to breathe) and cleaned (receiving a quotation of £24,000 from the firm recommended by the Methodist Church) but even if we did this we would still be left with bare walls. So we began to consider artwork on a large scale - panels between windows and either side of the cross. We discovered that we wouldn't get much change out of the money we would have spent cleaning the walls - but the result, of course, would be altogether brighter and more uplifting. Art can provide a sense of beauty and can lift us to a higher place just as music can. As a Leadership Team we remain undecided as to the best way forward. But, recognising that this would be one option amongst many, we will make the designs available for you to look at. We would welcome your thoughts/comments/opinions.

## **Flexible?**

We have also been considering the need for a more flexible worship space.

This is not an argument about the relative comfort of pews vs chairs - which (as we all know) can be equally excruciating - it is a question about how we worship and how we are limiting how we worship by having fixed pews.

With fixed pews we are constrained - physically but also mentally. We don't like to feel trapped, so, when we have a choice where to sit, invariably we move to the edges - to the back or to the end of rows.

But, as John Drane writes in *The McDonaldization of the Church*, 'we will never create community in a place where we spend most of the time looking at the backs of other people's heads'. Straight lines of seats (pews or chairs) discourage interaction - yet liturgy is 'the work of the people'.

With people in rows facing the front it's very difficult to move away from of the idea that the congregation is the audience - even though we must.

Stephen Burns, in his book entitled, *Liturgy*, writes:

*'Among the first words of the Methodist Worship Book we find the claim that 'worship is the work of the whole people of God: a congregation is not an audience or a group of spectators.' ...*

*'The Methodist Worship Book's stress that the congregation is not an audience resonates with a comparison made by the eighteenth-century Danish Lutheran philosopher Soren Kierkegaard, who in his writings compared worship to the theatre.*

*The staging of a play, he suggested, involves three groups of people: the actors, who perform; prompters, who enable the actors to perform well; and the audience, who listen and observe.*

*Kierkegaard made the point that many of his Christian contemporaries might make the analogy between worship and theatre like this: the clergy or leaders are the actors, God is the clergy's prompter, and the congregation is the audience, watching - and judging - the clergy's performance.*

*Kierkegaard argued that such an understanding is profoundly mistaken and, rather, the whole congregation are the 'actors' in worship, the clergy role is analogous to the actors' prompters, helping them to perform as best [sic] as possible, and the audience is God! God is the one before whom the whole congregation enacts worship.'*

This is not necessarily an argument against pews - a pew is, by definition, a seat where we sit alongside other people, whereas an

individual chair is just that, an individual space - but it is an argument against fixed pews and straight lines. Chairs will always be more flexible than pews but it is possible to buy moveable, stackable pews of varied lengths. And there is no point replacing lines of pews with lines of chairs that never move.

Again, John Drane writes: 'Imagine the difference for a wedding, a funeral, and a baptism if people are able to gather round the central players, the wedding couple surrounded by their friends, the body of a loved one literally embraced by the circle of mourners, the person being baptised encircled by those already in the community of faith'.

If we replaced our fixed pews with either moveable pews or chairs, we could change how worship feels at different times in different ways. Imagine what it would feel like to be looking others in the eye rather than staring at the back of their heads.

When everything is nailed to the floor the use of (what could be) a beautiful, sacred space is limited to an hour or two on Sunday mornings.

With a more flexible space we could make more and more creative use of the space at other times. We make the best of things when we have Christmas Tree festivals and Anniversaries - balancing trees and photographic displays on boards at the end of a row of pews - but the current layout is working against us. Imagine how creative we could be if it wasn't. (And, as Roy Ellis likes to remind us, a more flexible space would allow us to use our scaffolding to change the light bulbs more safely!)

But this isn't just about us and our own preferences. It's about being a welcoming community and, here again, it would help if the worship space worked with us rather than against us. As Nadia Bolz-Weber writes, 'In today's world people are increasingly wary of organised religion and it's attendant obsession with hierarchy. We have peeked behind the curtain and seen only scared little men. So a shared, communitarian experience of liturgy in which we live as the

Priesthood of all Believers is inviting in a way that the formality of the traditional church is not.'

The General Church Meeting did not - and was never intended to - make any kind of decisions. Such responsibility ultimately lies with our Church Council. But it would be good to have a wider conversation and hear people's thoughts, comments and opinions to inform our thinking.

Discuss. Please.

With every blessing

*Paul*

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## **PUZZLE CORNER**

### **Bible Trees- Answers**

The answers from last month's puzzle were not as straight forward as you might think. It depends on the translation of the Bible you might refer to.

Below are the answers you could have had and their bible reference.



1. Sycamore-Fig Tree (Luke 19:4)
2. Olive (Mount of Olives)
3. Oak Tree (2 Samuel 18:9)
4. Broom Tree, which is a type of Juniper (1 Kings 19:4)
5. Gophar or Cypress (Genesis 6:14)
6. Fig Tree (Matthew 21:19)
7. Poplar or Willow Trees (Psalm 137:2)
8. Palm (John 12:13)
9. Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge (Genesis 2:8)
10. The Cross

## Knitted Bag with Flowers

### Pattern

**You will need:** 2 balls of double knitting wool in complimentary colours.

1 pair UK size 7 needles

Cast on 25 stitches using both balls of wool (double thickness). Continue in garter stitch (every row plain) until work measures approximately 13" (33cm). Cast off.

Sew up both long sides, right side out.



For the strap — cut 18 strands of wool 60" (152cm) long. Tie a knot in one end approximately 1½" (3cm) from the end. Dividing the strands into 3 groups and knit to 1½" (3cm) from the end and tie another knot. Sew the strap onto the bag securely, along the two seam lines, letting the knots

hang from the ends. Trim the ends to the same length.

Decorate the front of the bag with beads, buttons or knitted flowers as follows:

With one colour and number UK 8 needles, cast on 31 stitches. Knit one cast off 5, repeat this to the end. Pull wool through the 5 remaining stitches, using a sewing needle and sew the two ends together to make up a flower. Sew into place using the contrasting colour.





Queen Elizabeth II has reigned over the United Kingdom and her Commonwealth countries for 60 years. 2012 and the Diamond Jubilee brings about many opportunities to celebrate, focus and give thanks for her Majesty's faithful, gracious and devoted service to the nations.

The Queen reached her 60th anniversary on the throne on 6th February 2012. On 12th March the Queen attended Westminster Abbey to celebrate Commonwealth Day. Main celebrations will take place during an extended Bank Holiday weekend from 2nd to 5th June.

The origin of royal jubilees goes back thousands of years, with the first historical records of a Royal Jubilee taking place 3000 years before Christ in Egypt. The early Pharaohs of Egypt held national celebrations every 30 years of rulership.

Jubilee is also a constant theme throughout the Bible. The word 'jubilee' stems from the Hebrew word 'Yobel', which refers to the ram or ram's horn with which jubilee years were proclaimed. In Leviticus it states that such a horn or trumpet is to be blown on the tenth day of the seventh month after the lapse of 'seven Sabbaths of years' (49 years) as a proclamation of liberty throughout the land of the tribes of Israel. The year of jubilee was a consecrated year of 'Sabbath-rest' and liberty. During this year all debts were cancelled, lands were restored to their original owners and family members were restored to one another.

The year of jubilee was also central to the ministry of Jesus. In the Gospel of Luke Jesus makes the claim to the fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy in Isaiah 61:1-2. Jesus states that he has come to 'proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour' (Luke 4:18-19 TNIV). This is the year of jubilee.

Have times changed this last 60 years? The Queen has seen changes in technology, populations, family life and culture to name but a few. But God is still God. God is still our Ruler. Kingdoms rise and fall, empires come and go but our God goes on forever and ever.

## God's Pharmacy!

In the bible God first separated the salt water from the fresh, made dry land, planted a garden, made animals and fish... All before making a human. He made and provided what we'd need before we were born. These are best & more powerful when eaten raw. We're such slow learners...

God left us a great clue as to what foods help what part of our body!



A sliced Carrot looks like the human eye. The pupil, iris and radiating lines look just like the human eye... And YES, science now shows carrots greatly enhance blood flow to and function of the eyes.

A Tomato has four chambers and is red.. The heart has four chambers and is red. All of the research shows tomatoes are loaded with lycopine and are indeed pure heart and blood food.



Grapes hang in a cluster that has the shape of the heart. Each grape looks like a blood cell and all of the research today shows grapes are also profound heart and blood vitalizing food.



A Walnut looks like a little brain, a left and right hemisphere, upper cerebrums and lower cerebellums. Even the wrinkles or folds on the nut are just like the neo-cortex. We now know walnuts help develop more than three dozen neuron-transmitters for brain function.



Kidney Beans actually heal and help maintain kidney function and yes, they look exactly like the human kidneys.

Celery, Bok Choy, Rhubarb and many more look just like bones. These foods specifically target bone strength. Bones are 23% sodium and these foods are 23% sodium. If you don't



have enough sodium in your diet, the body pulls it from the bones, thus making them weak. These foods replenish the skeletal needs of the body.



Avocados, Eggplant and Pears target the health and function of the womb and cervix of the female - they look just like these organs. Today's research shows that when a woman eats one avocado a week, it balances hormones, sheds unwanted birth weight, and prevents cervical cancers. And how profound is this? It takes exactly nine months to grow an avocado from blossom to ripened fruit. There are over 14,000 photolytic chemical constituents of nutrition in each one of these foods (modern science has only studied and named about 141 of them).

Figs are full of seeds and hang in twos when they grow. Figs increase the mobility of male sperm and increase the numbers of Sperm as well to overcome male sterility.



Sweet Potatoes look like the pancreas and actually balance the glycemic index of diabetics.

Olives assist the health and function of the ovaries



Oranges, Grapefruits, and other Citrus fruits look just like the mammary glands of the female and actually assist the health of the breasts and the movement of lymph in and out of the breasts.

Onions look like the body's cells. Today's research shows onions help clear waste materials from all of the body cells. They even produce tears which wash the epithelial layers of the eyes. A working companion, Garlic, also helps eliminate waste materials and dangerous free radicals from the body.



# CHURCH DIARY



Sun	3	10.30 am	All Age Worship led by Valerie Ashcroft
Tue	5	10.30am-noon	Coffee and Chat
Fri	8	12.30 pm	Luncheon Club
Sun	10	10.30 am	Morning Service led by Rev Charlotte Elvey
Tue	12	10.30am-noon	Coffee and Chat
		7.00 pm	Circuit Meeting at Ruxley
		8.00 pm	Time for Prayer
Thur	14	8.00 pm	Church Council Meeting
Sun	17	10.30 am	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>Janet Gilbert</i> - RSPB
Fri	22	12.30 pm	Luncheon Club
Sat	23	9.00 am	Fix'n' chips
Sun	24	10.30 am	Morning Service led by Rev Paul Timmis
		6.30 pm	Communion Service led by Rev Paul Timmis
Tue	26	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*



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

*Happy Birthday*

and especially to:

**Simon Ward on 3rd June**

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### **Fix n Chips Day**



On Saturday 23rd June we are having a  
maintenance day, starting at 9am.

The aim of the day is to fix up, paint and generally  
clean the key areas of the church premises. We are  
looking for anyone who is willing to volunteer their  
precious time that day and wield a paintbrush, scraper, screwdriver or  
even a duster! Not only is there a promise of sandwiches during the day,  
but there is a Sausage & Chip supper to round off the day - as we all  
know that this will be hungry work!

If you think you can help, please let me know by either phoning 07847  
004668 or send me an email at [mwcomms@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:mwcomms@hotmail.co.uk).

Alternatively there will be a form appearing in the welcome area for you  
to put your name and details of any particular help you could offer.

*Colin Smith*

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### **Quick Brain Teasers (answers over the page)**

- 1) Name three consecutive days without using the words Wednesday, Friday or Sunday.
- 2) What is black when you buy it, red when you use it and grey when you throw it away?
- 3) A man is condemned to death. He has to choose between three rooms. The first is full of raging fires. The second is full of venomous snakes. The third is full of lions that have not eaten in three years. Which room is the safest?

## Midways Group

On Wednesday 9th May, MIDWAYS met for the last time.

We had our usual fish & chip supper and a shortened AGM which noted that, despite meeting monthly in the last year our numbers had not increased [one meeting there were only 4 of us]. It was not now possible to get paid speakers to come for such small numbers and it was decided that MIDWAYS should cease to meet.

We had a lovely evening thinking back over the years to special meetings and all the members that have now died. MIDWAYS served a purpose for 44 years but it was now at an end.

We have agreed that we will meet up twice a year if possible for a meal before Christmas and in the summer, using the church patio area if available.

Thank you to everyone who have supported us or have been our guests and speakers over all these years.

*Maralyn Loft*

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In ordinary life we hardly realise that we receive a great deal more than we give, and that it is only with gratitude that life becomes rich. It is very easy to overestimate the importance of our own achievements in comparison with what we owe others.

*Dietrich Bonhoeffer*

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### **Brain Teaser answers**

- 1) Yesterday, Today and tomorrow
- 2) BBQ Charcoal
- 3) The third room. (The lions that have not eaten in three years would be dead!)

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