

MINISTER'S LETTER

As I write, January is already drawing to a close. So by the time you read this, Christmas will no doubt seem little more than a distant memory and the New Year no longer that “new”. Already the year, though just a few weeks old, seems more than a little tired and jaded. What with the recent hostage crisis at a gas plant in Algeria and with news of further bloodshed in Syria and elsewhere, already this year the world seems to be aching and in pain. The hope that “things will be different this year” – a hope that comes with each New Year – appears to have already largely evaporated. In such circumstances it would, I think, be a mistake to move on too quickly from Christmas.



We live in a world that sometimes appears to be very dark indeed: we are often uncertain, sometimes afraid. Yet it is precisely into such places and times of darkness that Christ comes, the light of Christ shines, love is made present and hope is born. This is the message of Christmas and it is a message for us all, whoever we are and whatever we think of it. The trouble is, we cannot always hear the message or see the light.

That we cannot always hear this message of life and love and hope or see this light of Christ should come as no surprise. The Bible tells us that when people living in darkness are at their most despairing, this message, this light, it isn't always obvious. John tells us that Jesus is the revelation of God – but he also tells us that even this isn't that obvious to those who meet him: perhaps because Jesus isn't what they're expecting, perhaps because they're not expecting anything at all, perhaps because they're looking in the wrong places.

And yet, in the darkness of our world, our society, our lives, Christ's is still the light we need.

Christ's is the light we need because it offers us comfort. It is hard for us to imagine what it was like for the human beings who discovered flame. For the first time they could feel relatively safe and warm at night. But we know from childhood that a light on at night can dispel our fears of darkness, our fears of what we cannot see. The light is

reassuring and comforting. So Christ offers to walk with us, holding us and sustaining us.

Christ's is the light we need because it offers illumination. We associate illumination with light. In one sense the word 'illumination' means 'to light up' but in another sense, we use the word to mean 'enlightenment'. We have cartoons that have 'light-bulb moments' where a light bulb flashes above a character's head to indicate a moment of realisation, recognition and understanding. So Christ offers to help us make sense of what it means to be human: living in this world in relationship with ourselves, with one another and with God.

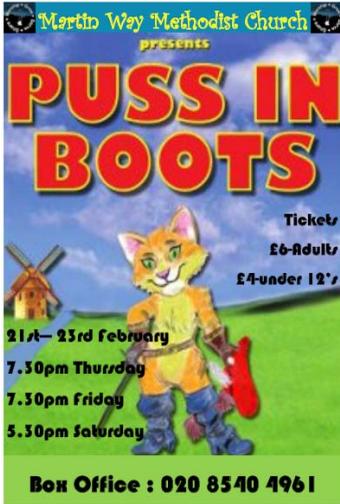
And Christ's is the light we need because it offers revelation. The light of Christ can search us out; identifying and revealing changes that we need to make if we are to leave darkness behind us. Like a torch or a searchlight that lights up a particular area previously clothed in darkness, revealing what is there, so the light of Christ searches us out and exposes those aspects of our lives shrouded in darkness. Once in the light, we can make changes that allow us to move forward.

In the darkness of our world; our society; our lives – the light of Christ offers comfort, illumination and revelation. So seek out this light we must. But if it isn't always obvious, we need to actively seek out this light. We cannot just expect it to appear before our eyes. We need to look, really look, for the light – even in the most unexpected of places.

The smile of a stranger, the hand offered in friendship, the lover's embrace. The robin's red breast, the fragility of a snowdrop, the majesty of the night sky. The business that puts people before profit, the politician who tells the truth, the leader that shows humility. Whenever something lifts our spirits and/or renews our faith in humanity or God. Wherever we find a message of life and love and hope, there we will find the light of Christ shining. At times it might be so difficult to see, but the light will always be there, somewhere, if only we look for it.

With every blessing,

Paul



PANTO TIME!

This years pantomime is Puss in Boots. The process started way back in October 2011, so its been a long time in the making. We started off with a meeting about what pantomime we would do. We all agreed on Puss In Boots and so a script was written by Bernard Doswell who has also directed with Anne Conquest's assistance.

In July we held a read through of the script and then auditions, come September we had our cast and we started rehearsals meeting on a Thursday and a Sunday.

Since then we've been meeting every week and slowly we've managed to learn our lines!! I've taken on the role of choreographer as well as Stress which is part of the comedy duo Storm and Stress. the full cast include.

Krunchbones- Jacob Passfield	Fairy Goodness- Lesedi Sepanya
Windy- Andy Smith	Pearl- Karen Smith
Lord Chancellor- Pete Boyd	Storm- Stephen Pallister
Stress- Jack Pallister	Corn- Emily Bacon
Cobb- Lizzie Chilcott	Queen- Abby Herring
Governess Strictly- Jo Passfield	Princess Selina- Rebecca Smith
Prince Louis- Phoebe Pallister	Ogre- Bernard Doswell

Chorus-

Anne Conquest	Caroline Budd	Karen Smith	Kutloano Sepanya
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It's been a long process but lots of fun however its coming to the end as the show is fast approaching. We hope you can all make it to at least one of the shows.

Performances will take place at Martin Way Church at:

7.30pm on Thursday, 21st February

7.30pm on Friday, 22nd February

5.30pm on Saturday, 23rd February.

The Box Office is now open at lesley@mortley.org.uk.

Ticket prices are Adult £6, 12 yrs & under £4.

Jack Pallister



CHRISTIAN SOLIDARITY WORLDWIDE

VOICE FOR THE VOICELESS

Please pray for:

Cuba- Leaders of the Apostolic Movement, a fast-growing unregistered network of protestant churches, have condemned threats by government officials to destroy church property in the central Cuban city of Camaguey. They are also calling on the government to cease its harassment of relatives of church members.

CSW calls on the Cuban government to uphold the religious freedom of all its citizens. The government must also halt its policy of targeting those who have committed no crime except to be related to someone affiliated with the church. They are specifically calling on the Housing Authority to rescind the order to demolish the church patio in Camaguey and to restore electricity to the home of Lieutenant Colonel Porfirio Perez and his wife.

North Korea is one of the world's worst human rights violators. There is no freedom of speech, assembly, movement, press, conscience or religion. No dissent is tolerated at all, and the regime controls the people through an extensive system of surveillance and propaganda. An estimated 200,000 people are detained in an extensive system of prison camps. Hundreds of thousands of prisoners have died due to starvation, inhumane living conditions or execution, and many more endure shocking torture and regular beatings. Whole families are jailed for the perceived political crimes of a relative, under a policy of 'guilt by association' that inflicts punishment on up to three generations.

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navanethem Pillay, on 25th January, called for an international inquiry into serious human rights violations in North Korea, stressing that concerns about the country's nuclear programme must not be allowed to overshadow the "deplorable" human rights situation of its people.

Lao Christians often face harassment from local officials and village shamans as their 'foreign' faith is believed to represent a threat to community homogeneity. Many Christians are removed from their

villages and forced to relocate to different communities, or face systemic discrimination from local authorities. Disappearances are not unusual in Laos despite protections enshrined in the country's constitution.

CSW has written a letter to the president of Laos requesting information about the disappearance of a Christian man who has been missing for eight years. On 21 January, the House of Lords will discuss the human rights and humanitarian situation in North Korea in a debate tabled by Lord Alton of Liverpool.

Burma- CSW is calling for prayer worldwide as the Burma Army's new offensive in Kachin State claims four lives, including a two-year-old boy and an elderly church leader. The aerial attacks and artillery fire mark the latest stage in a state military offensive against people from the Kachin ethnic nationality which started in mid-2011, breaking a 17-year ceasefire. Three children were reportedly buried alive on Tuesday 15 January, in a bunker they had dug for protection against the aerial bombardment. The boys, aged between eleven and thirteen, were already on the run from attacks by the Burma Army.

Egypt- A building in a village south west of Cairo housing a reception hall and nursery was destroyed on 17th January by a mob following a rumour that it was a church. According to Watani Newspaper, around 5,000 Islamist extremists armed with hammers axes and old electricity poles descended on the building in Fanous Village in Tamia District and razed the structure to the ground.

President Morsi's promise to be a president for all Egyptians is increasingly hard to believe for Egypt's religious minorities. CSW is keeping international decision-makers informed about this situation, but the Copts of Egypt need your prayer support too.

Kenya- Attacks on churches have increased since the Kenyan Army joined other African forces in the fight against Islamist militias in Somalia following the abduction of several foreign tourists on Kenyan soil. In March 2013, Kenyans will be voting for a new president, senators, county governors, members of parliament, civic wards and women county representatives. Pray for peaceful elections, and the emergence of competent leaders with integrity at every level.

Visit www.csw.org.uk for latest news and information

WOMEN'S WORLD DAY OF PRAYER



Friday 1st March 2013

'I WAS A STRANGER AND YOU WELCOMED ME'

On Friday March 1st 2013 women from around the world will celebrate the Women's World Day of Prayer. The service has been written by the women of France.

In France very often the job opportunities open to women depend on their family circumstances. Many qualified women have to put a career on hold while they look after children. Unqualified women often have to accept what jobs they can get. Foreign women are the least likely to get work or exercise their rights. Very often they have to accept jobs in the black economy, which then means that they have no access to social or unemployment benefits. The reality of gender equality in France is still a long way off.

For many centuries France has relied upon immigration to satisfy its labour needs. During the 19th and 20th centuries, industrialisation and the growth of urban centres attracted builders and miners from Italy and Poland. Spanish workers came to escape the Spanish Civil War. The former French colonies supplied whole battalions of soldiers, who then chose to stay in France. In the 1950's workers were brought in from Northern and Sub-Saharan Africa.

After the oil crisis of 1974, the Government decided to build nuclear power plants so as not to be oil dependent. This caused a surge in unemployment and some politicians blamed this on the number of immigrant workers. It was decided to phase out labour-oriented immigration.

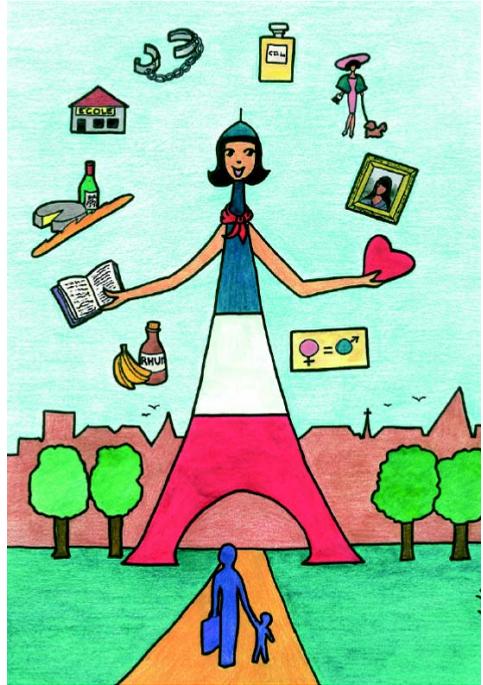
France has always accepted asylum seekers fleeing on political grounds – the Hungarians, the Chileans and the Vietnamese being some examples. Almost one quarter of the current population has at least one foreign grandparent.

Foreign workers are issued with a resident's card which used to be renewed every 10 years, but now has to be renewed yearly, fulfilling the new

conditions set out. They are tracked very carefully to ensure they are not entering into marriages of convenience to obtain a residence permit.

Even though foreigners have no legal papers, they are still entitled to medical assistance paid for by the State. Support for mothers and infants, social assistance, free education and legal aid are also provided.

In 2010, there were 6.7 million immigrants in France forming 11% of the population. Of these, 34% were from the European Union; 30% from North Africa; 14% from Asia; 11% from the rest of Africa and the remaining 11% from various countries. There is a vocal debate at the moment about the growth of the Muslim population, mostly entering through North Africa.



French demographic projections point to the fact that within one generation migration will become the sole growth factor for France, faced with its own ageing population. Many feel France has been made richer through the extensive contributions of foreign cultures.

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Although organised and led by women, this is essentially a day of prayer for everybody as we demonstrate our solidarity with our sisters and brothers in other countries and all are welcome to attend.



'I Was A Stranger
And You Welcomed Me'



Friday
1st March
Women's
World Day
of Prayer

www.wwdp-natcomm.org

Registered Charity Number 233242



Praying for France

10:30am service:

St John Fisher Church

207 Cannon Hill Lane SW20

Speaker: Mrs Christine Eitzen

8:00pm service:

Trinity United Reformed Church

Mansel Road, SW19

All are welcome - men, women and young people



Martin Way Methodist Church



presents

PUSS IN BOOTS

Tickets

£6-Adults

£4-under 12's



21st - 23rd February

7.30pm Thursday

7.30pm Friday

5.30pm Saturday

Box Office : 020 8540 4961

MY UNKNOWN SAINT STATUE

At Christmas when I was in Poland I noticed a painted statue that was enclosed in its own little building. Nothing unusual about that, as being a Catholic country Poland has many little shrines each having a painted statue of a saint. The most popular being the road side shrine to the Virgin Mary that populate nearly every country road and village. Others are the large statues of the saints outside the churches. What caught my eye about this one was it was of a Roman Soldier holding a bucket and it was in a prominent position outside a new shopping centre.

Later on I started to notice that this chap was in other places as well, I had never seen him before, but now he seemed to be on many a wall in bas-relief especially on certain buildings in nearly every town. These buildings turned out to be the Fire Stations, bakeries and meeting halls. He is even over the city gates in Krakow, a place I had walked through a number of times. This got me wondering, so I started to try and track this saint down when I got home.



After a bit of research I discovered he was Saint Florian, the patron saint of fire fighters. (I'm sure Tony Loft, as a retired Firefighter, would have been able to tell me who it was straight away had I asked!)



Florian was a Captain in the Roman army. He was a brave soldier and a tenacious fighter. Rome recognized the danger of fire and was the first to employ a fire department. This first fire department was made up of slaves. They had no real desire to risk their lives battling the flames of their captors. Rome desperately needed fire protection. They called on Captain Florian to organize and train an elite group of soldiers whose sole

duty was to fight fires. Captain Florian indeed organized such a group. They were highly trained and very successful at protecting Rome from fires. A brigade of firefighters followed the army and provided fire protection at their encampments. These firefighters were highly respected and easily recognized. They wore the traditional Roman soldier uniform except the skirt was green. The most famous picture of Saint Florian depicts him with a young boy pouring water from a pitcher onto a fire.

Rome was very impressed by this young Captain and all that he had accomplished. They decided to reward him by making him a general. Generals were often given large tracks of conquered land to govern. The only rules were that they had to enforce the laws of Rome and collect the taxes. Florian's area included almost all of Poland.

Rome began to hear some rumours about the way Florian was governing his land. It was reported that he was not enforcing Rome's law forbidding Christianity. Rome did not believe this, but they did send investigators to check. They reported back that it was true. Rome sent a group of soldiers to confront Florian. They warned and threatened him that he must enforce the laws of Rome and abolish Christianity. Florian not only refused he confessed that he had embraced the faith and become a Christian himself. Rome was furious. They tortured him and demanded he renounce his faith. Florian steadfastly refused. Rome ordered his execution.

Florian was to be burned at the stake. Soldiers marched him out and secured him to the post. Villagers gathered around to witness the execution. Florian begged his executioners to build the fire higher. He implored them to light the fire so his soul would rise up to heaven on the smoke from the blaze. The soldiers had never seen this kind of reaction from a person about to be burned alive. They were frightened. What if his soul did rise up, right in front of all the villagers? They could not afford a martyr. The fire was not lit. Florian was taken away by the soldiers who decided to drown him. He was placed in a boat and rowed out into the river. A millstone was tied around his neck and he was pushed over board and drowned. After his death, in 303 AD, people who were trapped by fire reported that they invoked Florians

name and his spirit delivered them from the flames.

His feast day is celebrated on 4th May and his relics reside in St. Florian's Church which was built between 1185 and 1216 and stands at northern end of Matejko Square in Krakow. Not only is he the patron saint of firefighters but also for chimney sweeps, bakers and steel workers.

It turned out the shopping centre that I originally saw him happened to have been built on the site of an old steel works, hence the statue that originally started my search.

It is amazing how much you see without really taking it in! I for one will start keeping my eyes open much more as I found the hunting for a chance viewing of an unusual statue very interesting.

Andrew Fox

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THANKS TO ALL WHO CONTRIBUTED

Martin Way made donations to Methodist Homes for the Aged and Action for Children this December as follows. Thank you to those who contributed their time and talent as well you who donated money.

We collected more this year for The Methodist Homes than last year, lets see if we can do even better next year.

Total of £1082.30 Donation to Action for Children

Carol Singing at Morden Station	£ 557.00
Carol Service with SIGMA	£ 157.60
Christingle Service	£ 170.80
Collection at Christmas Day Service	£ 196.90

Total of £170.95 Donation to Methodist Homes for the Aged

Christmas Post Box	£ 170.95
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Roy Ellis

Extreme Riches

Taken from: Extreme devotion, the voice of the martyrs from the co-authors of Jesus freaks. Serious followers of Jesus pay a price, and extreme followers often pay the ultimate price. Each story is true.

“They stabbed one believer through the mouth with a long knife and poured boiling water down the throat of another who was caught with a Bible. An entire family had been drowned.”

Believers in the Hmong tribe of Southeast Asia agreed to give their testimony on videotape. They wanted to encourage Christians in the West. One Hmong Christian shared: “The Communist authorities feel threatened because so many Hmong people become Christians. They beat the Christians to try to force them to return to their worship of evil spirits.”

“The local police forbade us to become Christians. They threatened to put us in jail and even kill us,” a woman added. “But if we have to die for Christ’s sake, we are willing.”

These believers are willing to put themselves in even greater danger to let the world know they are standing strong in the face of persecution. The Hmong tribe is the largest of Southeast Asia and is experiencing the greatest growth of Christianity. It is also one of the most persecuted people groups.

Another woman said, “I thank God that we have remained strong. I do believe that the persecution is just a test of our faith in Christ. It brings out the true riches. It brings out the silver and the gold. Just pray that we will be faithful to the end.”

Steel is strengthened through a tempering process – heated to extreme temperatures, pounded into form, and cooled. Then the process is repeated again and again, heating and pounding the impurities away and then cooling so that the metal can bond. A similar tempering process strengthens our faith. When we are heated by hatred from others, pounded upon by persecution, and then cooled by the gentle reassurance of God’s presence, our impurities are driven out and our faith strengthened. Have you recognised the tempering process in your life? Don’t resist any part of it. Learn from your brothers and sisters in the Hmong tribe. Your enemies don’t realise you will be stronger as a result of their hatred.

They have come so that your faith – of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire – may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed. (1 Pet 1: 7)

CHURCH DIARY



Sun	3	10.30am	All Age Worship led by Tony Loft
Tue	5	10.30am-noon	Coffee and Chat
		8.00pm	Time for Prayer
Thur	7	8pm-10pm	Church Council Meeting
Fri	8	12.30pm	Luncheon Club
Sun	10	10.30am	Morning Service led by Rev Martine Stemerick
		6.30pm	Communion Service led by Rev Paul Timmis
Tue	12	10.30am-noon	Coffee and Chat
		7.30pm-9.30pm	Circuit Meeting at Martin Way
		8.00 pm	Time for Prayer
Wed	13	7.30pm	Worship Leaders Course
Sat	16	10.00am	Big Brunch
Sun	17	10.30am	Morning Service led by Valerie Ashcroft
Tue	19	10-12noon	Coffee and Chat
		7.00pm	Men's Supper Club - <i>Rev Geoff Coyne</i> - Chaplin of The Royal Hospital of Neuro-disability
		8.00pm	Time for Prayer
Thur	21	7.30pm	Puss in Boots Pantomime
Fri	22	12.30pm	Luncheon Club
		7.30pm	Puss in Boots Pantomime
Sat	23	5.30pm	Puss in Boots Pantomime
Sun	24	10.30am	Communion Service led by Rev Paul Timmis
Tue	26	10.30am-noon	Coffee and Chat
		8.00pm	Time for Prayer

*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
in February a very

Happy Birthday
and especially to:



Martin Way Methodist Church
Men's Supper Club



The Men's Supper Club is celebrating 20 years in existence this year. It meets once a month on a Tuesday and not only offers great food but a speaker at each meeting. It is open to all men of any age, for more details keep an eye on the Newsletter Diary for the next meeting or chat with Derek Heaton or Mike Mortley for further details.

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TAIZE PRAYER AND PRAISE

Don't forget to put **Taize Prayer and Praise** in your diary. The next meeting is on the 11th February at St John Fisher church 8pm. All welcome.

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You don't have to be afraid of praising God too much: unlike humans He never gets a big head.

Paul Dribble

Prayer is conversation with God.

St. Clement of Alexandria

WORSHIP LEADERS COURSE

Is God calling you to play a part in the leading of worship? Or would you simply like to know more about how acts of worship are shaped? The Worship Leaders Course has started but people can still join.

The course has been designed:

- to train new worship leaders
- to help traditional preachers and worship leaders to lead contemporary worship
- to be of interest to those who'd like to think more deeply about worship

The dates of further sessions are:- 13th Feb 13th Mar 10th Apr 8th May 12th June 10th July, with a start time of 7.30pm for each session. The Venue of the 13th Feb session is Martin Way, the venue/s for the other sessions is/are yet to be announced.

Contact Paul Timmis for further details.

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CAROL SINGING - THANKS

Once again Thank you to all those who braved the elements and joined together to serenade the commuters of Morden with carols during two nights in December.

Tony surpassed himself with a wide range of headwear and this in itself managed to catch many a commuter's eye.

In all, over £550.00 was raised for Action for Children.



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