



MINISTER'S LETTER

As strange as it may seem, given that my last newsletter article was dedicated to us preparing ourselves for Christmas, this month will see us enter the season of Lent once again. Time moves on a pace it seems.

Beginning on Ash Wednesday (10th Feb), this Lenten period of 40 days (not including Sundays) will end on Saturday 26th March, the day before Easter Sunday.

As we move into and through this season, remembering and reflecting upon the 40 days and nights that Jesus spent alone in the wilderness preparing himself (through prayer and fasting) for ministry, Lent offers each of us the opportunity to prepare ourselves for Easter.

As I mentioned in this newsletter at this time last year, some will prepare through prayer and fasting. Others will choose to give something up - e.g. certain foods or luxuries - in order to help them to focus on God. Last year I invited you to think about *taking something on* for Lent instead of, or as well as, giving something up.

In Lent we are preparing ourselves for Easter, that time when we remember Jesus' suffering, death and resurrection. However we make sense of these events and their meaning, it would be difficult, if not impossible, I would think, not to see Jesus' self-giving act of love as also being an act of generosity - perhaps the ultimate act of generosity at that, if Jesus' words in John 15: 13 are to be believed: 'No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends.'

I have recently been introduced to something called *40 Acts*. Whilst I thus far have no personal experience of it, it seems that this is a

campaign that has now run for several years. The idea is a simple one: rather than give something up for Lent – chocolate, coffee, TV, etc. – people are encouraged to use the period of Lent to live generously, to *give something back*, to spend the time being thankful for what they have and then to share some of that with others.

Using tools such as emails, tweets and blogs (or a booklet for those who do not use such things!) a daily reflection is offered and a daily challenge set throughout Lent to those who sign up/commit to *40 Acts*.

Participants have a choice as to which level of challenge to respond to. On each day, three colour-coded levels of challenge are offered. Depending on a number of factors - such as the amount of time participants have at their disposal and/or the level to which they want to engage/be challenged - people can opt for **Green** (I've got 5 minutes), **Yellow** (I've got 15 minutes) or **Red** (I've got an hour).

So, for example, on one day, when the reflection is about gratitude and saying 'thank you', the challenges are: **G**: send someone a tweet or text message to let them know why you're thankful for them [others could read this as, 'Pick up the phone...'], **Y**: write a good old-fashioned thank you note and post it and **R**: write to a different person every day throughout Lent.

Throughout Lent, people who commit themselves to *40 Acts* are encouraged to share their pictures and stories - including via social media if used - as a way of inspiring others to acts of generosity.

So how about it? Remembering Jesus' act of generosity, his act of love, that we will celebrate at Easter, how about we use this to inspire us during Lent? Let's do Lent generously.

For those who want to sign up online, please visit <http://www.40acts.org.uk>. If you do not have access to a computer and/or would prefer a printed booklet, please contact me.

With every blessing,

Paul



SUNDAY 14TH FEBRUARY

Join us for our Valentines Lunch to raise money for the Flush Fund.

3 delicious courses, with Vegetarian Option.

Adults £7.00

Children under 12 £3.00

Tickets now on sale

Please see Sylvia Baxter or call 07803724989.

Lunch will be served from 12.30 onwards.

Hurry to get your tickets so you will not be disappointed.



Shrove Tuesday (Pancake Day) 9th February

It's odd, really, that confessing one's sins to God should ever have involved making pancakes. And yet the beginning of Lent brings us both – Shrove Tuesday is Pancake Day, and is followed by Ash Wednesday, and so Lent begins.

In centuries gone by, the pancakes were made to use up the milk and eggs before the fasting of Lent. More recently, many readers will have childhood memories of the wonder of watching our mothers break an egg, mix it with milk and flour – and out of that gooey mess, to produce a light and delicious pancake. These days more and more of us buy pancake mix, or even ready-made pancakes. It seems we prefer the certainty of ending up with pancakes - to the risk of having made nothing BUT a mess of the kitchen.

In many parishes they used to hold pancake races on the day. Why anyone would want to run around a field while holding a pancake is not clear, but in Olney, Bucks, they have held a pancake race almost every year since 1445.

Taken from St.Mary's Church, Merton Park, Newsletter

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Buttons (Jacob Passfield) and Cinderella (Abigail Payne) in Parish Players' 2016 pantomime
(Photo: Hazel Abbott)

Another budding actor from Martin Way

This January our very own Jacob Passfield took a well known part in the 2016 Parish Players pantomime - Cinderella.

No he was not Cinderella, that part was ably played by Abigail Payne, but Jacob was a great Buttons.

For all those who missed the play we are lucky to have a photo of Buttons in action.

An Extreme Step

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.

NAZI CONCENTRATION CAMP : MARY SKOTSBAUGH

"....seven, eight, nine --- you! Step out!" The Nazi guard yelled at the woman. The commandant had ordered every tenth prisoner executed as punishment for two women's escape the previous night.

"Please have mercy on me! I have a child," the tenth woman pleaded. Mary Skotobaugh stood next in line. In her heart Mary heard, *"Step forward and say you wish to die in her place."* She replied to the inner voice, "Why? She is not a Christian. She is a Jewish Communist. When the Nazis are overthrown and the Communists come to power, they will be as bad as the Nazis."

Then Mary remembered that it was Good Friday. The voice said, *"On this day I died not for the good ones but for the bad ones, for sinners."* Mary then stepped forward. "I wish to die."

The officer laughed. "If you are stupid enough to die in her place, all right, you come forward. Her turn will come soon enough."

As Mary went to be executed and burned in the ovens, she told them, "When God took his people out of slavery in Egypt, it is written in our Bible that he walked before them in a column of fire. I pray when my body burns it will be a column of fire that will show you the way to God."

One step forward can make all the difference. Christians often live their lives precariously balanced on the edge between safety and the unknown. Those who have taken the small step forward into the unknown have always found the faithfulness of God. Noah. Moses. Abraham. Deborah. Ruth. Mary. Paul. The list of biblical examples goes on and on, not to mention a host of history's hall of fame. One step of faith changed their lives from ordinary to extraordinary. Is God calling you to step forward in faith today? Do you hear his voice in your heart? Listen up. Prepare to move. Your small step of obedience could show others the way to God.

A man's steps are directed by the Lord. How then can anyone understand his own way? (Proverbs 20:24)

Mens Supper Club Social

Prawn Crackers,
Sweet and Sour
Chicken with Rice
Crumble and custard!

Now that's what I call a good start to an evening of entertainment! This was the meal placed before me and my fellow band members on Tuesday 19th January at the beginning of the Mens Supper Club's annual social evening. Did it fill a space? Not half!

We then adjourned full of pud to the main church in order to provide some light after dinner musical 'entertainment'. We were the band with no name, gathered together from various other outposts to form a small 'super group' just for this one off performance.

I guess you'd call it 'acoustic folk and country' such was the direction that we 'the band' took. Two vocalists, two acoustic guitars, one electric guitar, one drum kit, oh and a couple of harmonicas (only one at a time though!). It all led quite naturally to the music of American songwriters from a certain era to hopefully satisfy and the presumed taste in music, and to allow for perhaps just a little bit of sing-a-long.

In case you're wondering which songwriters were featured they were: Bacharach, Simon & Garfunkel, Bob Dylan, James Taylor and John Denver. But in the middle of all this Jason Lake, a friend of mine performed his own mini gig of five songs with songs from Johnny Cash and Jack Savoretti (not American) as well as three of his very own original and unique songs – which was a treat.

At the end of each song the audience clapped and when we finished they really clapped – I think and hope that this was in appreciation, praise and thanks rather than relief for the end of it!



Thank you to the Mens Supper Club for asking us to do this and thank you for the super supper too!

The Band were:

Colin Smith – Acoustic
Guitar/Harmonicas/Vocal

Jason Lake – Acoustic
Guitar/ Vocal

Andrew Harris –
Electric Guitar

Fred Dicks – Drums



Simon Conquest – Sound
(making us sound good!)

Colin Smith

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After 15 years as Guider of 1st Merton Park Rainbows, Geraldine Ellis is retiring and we are looking for a new leader. **Can you help?**

Rainbows is the section of Girlguiding UK for girls aged 5-7 years. The 1st Merton Park Rainbows meet on Wednesdays during term time from 5.30 to 6.40pm here at Martin Way Methodist Church. It's a thriving unit with a waiting list but we need someone to take over.

We have an assistant leader but she is unable to take over although she will continue to help. We also have several enthusiastic Seniors who lend a hand – but **we need a leader**. Training can be provided and you have the freedom to offer a wide range of activities to suit your skills, aptitudes and interests. It is a rewarding role.

Sadly, if nobody is forthcoming the unit will have to close in the summer and we will be disappointing 20 Rainbows as well as those waiting to join.

If you or someone you know may be interested, please speak to Geraldine.

THANKS TO ALL WHO CONTRIBUTED

The church collections over the Christmas period resulted in £1,247.93 being sent to Action for Children, an increase of £6 over last year. Within this total, the amount collected carol singing at Morden Station (£743) was a record!

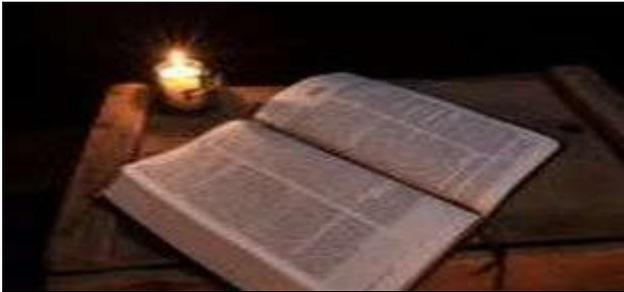
A further £200.20 was raised through the Christmas post box for Methodist Homes for the Aged, an increase of £34.39 over last year.

A big thank you to everyone who contributed through singing, collecting and/or giving.

Roy Ellis

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A WORD IN TIME



Would you like to follow a Bible Study, but don't know where to start?

Then why not go to A Word in Time on the Methodist Church web site and follow their week's Bible Study. It can be found at:

www.methodist.org.uk/prayer-and-worship/a-word-in-time/2016

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England has two books, the Bible and Shakespeare.
England made Shakespeare but the Bible made England.

Victor Hugo



Rock & Roll - Arthur's 2015 Fastnet Race

*Last year Simon Hardaker - the brother-in law of Keith Heaton (Derek and Mary Heaton's youngest son) took part in The Fastnet Race to raise money for Sail4Cancer. This is his story of the race that he, the team and **Arthur** took part in.*

August, 2015

The Fastnet Race fleet departs from Cowes on the Isle of Wight, before heading out southwest through the Solent and down the south of England, passed Lands End, before turning up northwest across the Irish sea to the very southern tip



of Ireland and Fastnet Rock Lighthouse. Turning around the Rock, the yachts then head back down across the Irish Sea again where they came from, around the outside of the Scilly Isles this time, and back in to finish at Plymouth – a race course distance of over 603 nautical miles. The record for the race is 30 hours; most of us will take rather longer; 3-5 days depending on wind strength and direction.

The dock at Hamble marina on Saturday afternoon ahead the race start is loaded to overflowing with sailors, sails and provisions; more like a giant boat jumble than race preparations. Where's it all going to go? Somehow we stow all our gear below in **Arthur Logic** and later enjoy a crew dinner together with families ahead of the big race in the morning.

The forecast for Sunday and the race start does not look great if you're an offshore sailor: light and variable winds are going to come from anywhere and without enough pressure to make us move. Could be a frustrating race. We motor out to the start



line around 11 and decide a brew of tea is required before the race starts! A near-riot occurs when the choices are: mint, (some other) herbal and Earl Grey tea. No Builders' Tea!! While **Ronan** is physically restrained below, an SOS call is broadcast to shore and one of the 'family' boats restocks us about 15 minutes later. Catastrophe averted...

Food is clearly important and the crew's physical condition is sustained over the days of racing, through a carefully constructed diet, designed to keep us at peak performance throughout. Our Dr, now thankfully over his tea crisis, provides the first 'injection' through a box of Krispy Kreme doughnuts. Packed with nutritious ingredients, we're soon ready to go racing.



Watching the first boats in the starts ahead of us get under way, it's not the pretty sight that it should be. Sails are simply hanging limp and lifeless from their masts, and with the tide still flowing against them, most are moving backwards away from the start line. Not a good start, and worse still for those unlucky enough to be over the line ahead of the start gun, as they have to sail back with no wind, and as the tide turns against them they are in double jeopardy.

At our own start time, a short time after, things are only marginally better; the tide has at least turned and a faint zephyr of wind is crawling around

our sails. Not sure whether it is that or the tide, but we are at least moving over the start line in the right direction, but even Lands End seems like miles away. The on-board GPS prediction software says we'll reach Lands End in October based on current speed!

Family and friends have come out on various fast Rigid Inflatable Boats (RIBs) and follow us as we slowly patrol down the Solent at walking pace; the whole crew are on the low (leeward) side of the boat to 'hang' the sails out to catch any faint breeze. There are shouts and waves of encouragement from our families and hundreds of photos taken. We implore them all to blow hard on our sails, risking the race committee's penalty for accepting 'outside assistance'.



We approach the Needles at the end of the western end of the Isle of Wight picking up a little more wind and boat speed. Before we get there, the first of the bigger mono-hulls catch us up. **Comanche** is 100ft long and the largest in the Fastnet fleet, but she has to obey the sailing rules like any other racing yacht. We are on starboard tack (wind on our right side as we're sailing) and on a collision course with her; she is on port tack and has to give way to us. The 100ft of ocean-going thoroughbred gives way to our 40ft upstart! The bowman on **Comanche**, looking 'way too-cool-for-school', talks to the helmsman, some 80ft behind him through one of those Secret Service radio and ear mic sets; they guide the giant yacht safely behind us. She is soon out of sight ahead though as her massive sails power her away to eventual line honours for the mono-hulls in Plymouth.

We get to Portland just as the tide is turning against us, and despite having headed offshore to get away from the worst of it, and once more as the wind dies yet again, we start 'sailing' in a circle at the whim of the tidal stream....

Part Two next month.

WOMEN'S WORLD DAY OF PRAYER



Friday 4th March 2016

'Receive children. Receive me.'

Cuba

Women's World Day of Prayer is an international, ecumenical, prayer movement that invites women, from a different part of the world each year, to prepare a worship service through which their hopes and fears for their country may be brought before the whole world in prayer.



On Friday 4 March an estimated 3 million people in over 170 countries and islands will gather to observe the day of prayer, using an order of service written by Christian women in Cuba and translated into over 60 languages and 1000 dialects. In the British Isles alone over 6,000 services will be held. The day begins as the sun rises over the island of Samoa and continues until it sets off the coast of American Samoa, some 35 hours later.

The theme 'Receive children. Receive me' reflects St Mark's Gospel, chapter 10 verses 13-16, which is the focus of the service and a reminder that everyone is a child of God and equally worthy of our love and respect.

The Republic of Cuba is the largest Caribbean island, located at the entrance of the Gulf of Mexico and called 'the Key to the Gulf'. Politically at odds with the USA, Cuba suffered greatly due to the economic embargo imposed upon it in 1960 but has found strength within itself to move on and overcome many of its problems.

Here in Merton a time of prayer and meditation will take place at Merton

Park Baptist Church, Bushey Road, London SW20 8TE, starting at 11.00am, with an evening service at Holy Trinity Wimbledon, The Broadway, Wimbledon SW19 1SB starting at 8.00pm.

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. Further information and resources, can be found on the WWDP website at www.wwdp.org.uk

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CHRISTMAS CARDS

Thank you to every one who used the 'Christmas Post box ' this year. Also a great thanks to the 'post people' who between them sorted all the cards. In all £200.20. was raised through this to help the Methodist Homes for the Aged.



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CAROL SINGING - THANKS



Once again Thank you to all those who joined together to serenade the commuters of Morden with carols during two nights in December. The £743.00 that was raised this year was a new record.

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BIG BRUNCH HAS RETURNED!

The next Big Brunch is on **Saturday, 20th February**, serving from 10.30am until 1pm. The last one of the winter will be on **Saturday, 26th March** not the 19th March as previously advertised.



Come along and enjoy a full English breakfast including coffee/tea, fruit juice and toast for £4. You'll also be supporting our youngsters for their trip to Spring Harvest 2016.



**CHRISTIAN
SOLIDARITY
WORLDWIDE**

VOICE FOR THE VOICELESS

Prayer Alert

Christian Solidarity Worldwide

The eyes of the Lord are on those who fear him, on those whose hope is in his unfailing love.

Psalm 33:18

We start the prayer email with some good news from Egypt. For the second year in a row President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi attended the Christmas Eve mass at St. Mark's Coptic Orthodox Cathedral. During his speech he promised that every church and home that was destroyed during the violence in 2013 would be rebuilt and renovated this year and apologised for the delay. Let's thank God for these developments!

However, elsewhere in the world churches still face daily opposition and harassment. Just this past week, in Cuba, two churches were demolished and a country-wide security operation was put in place to keep people in their houses while the destruction happened so that they couldn't go to the sites of the demolitions to protest. This is part of a pattern of escalating harassment in Cuba - check out our recent timeline for details (http://www.csw.org.uk/our_work_country_cuba.htm).

If you've been following us on social media this week, you won't be surprised that this week we're focusing our prayer on Cuba. We were shocked with the findings of our 2015 report -although violations of freedom of religion or belief had been rising in past years, in 2015 they seemed to spike, with 2,300 separate violations recorded (compared to 220 in 2014).

There were two things that caught our attention in particular: Firstly, the government is now targeting church properties across the country for expropriation in an effort to bring churches and even entire denominations under their control. They also recently issued a 'reminder' to all religious group in one major city instructing them to submit all activities in advance for review and approval.

Secondly, churches are increasingly standing up to the government – something which we haven't seen on this scale before. 2015 saw many peaceful protests across the island and even a sleep-in aimed at halting the demolition of a church in Santiago de Cuba. We're encouraged that churches are trying to defend their rights - but we also want to pray for their safety.

In summary:

- Give thanks for the announcement of President Al-Sisi and for peaceful Christmas celebrations
- Continue to lift Egypt as the country faces a terrorist threat
- Please pray for the congregations of the two destroyed Cuban churches, that the government would respect their right to worship
- Pray for the safety of church leaders, human rights activists and religious freedom defenders, who are increasingly under threat, especially those who speak up for religious freedom in Cuba, for example Reverend Mario Felix Leonart Barroso and his wife Yoaxis Marcheco.
- Thank God for the bravery and strength of churches who are standing up against the crackdown.
- Please pray that the Cuban government would no longer see the church as a threat and for the reversal of this intensified campaign against the Cuban Church
- Pray for reconciliation between churches and local authorities.
- Pray that the government would respect the property rights of religious groups and make it easier for growing denominations to purchase properties for new churches.

Chinese Human Rights Defenders

This week marks 200 days since the crackdown on lawyers and other human rights defenders began in China. Over 280 lawyers and human rights activists, as well as those connected to them such as friends and family members, have been detained by the Chinese government since 10 July 2015. This is roughly half of all human rights defenders in China.

One of the people arrested is Zhang Kai, a human rights lawyer and Christian who is currently in prison in an unknown location. Zhang Kai has been defending the rights of religious minorities since 2004, and has been subject to harassment and intimidation many times.

This month, please pray:

- That Zhang would be quickly released, and in the meantime would be protected from harm;
- For God’s comfort for Zhang’s wife and children, as they wait to hear news of Zhang;
- For other lawyers who are in jail (for example, Wang Yu, Li Heping, and Tang Jingling), that God would keep them safe and that they would know his presence;
- For peace and safety for other human rights defenders in China who are being targeted by the authorities;
- That God would effect powerful change in China’s policy toward religious minorities;
- That God would support all those in China who face harassment for their beliefs;
- That those human rights defenders who remain free would be able to carry out their vital work fearlessly, and that God will protect them.

2015 saw a continued crackdown on human rights defenders around the world. In many places, to become an advocate for human rights means facing discrimination, harassment, torture and even death. To make matters worse, we’ve seen indications that this kind of abuse may be becoming more common. Yet these brave men and women play an absolutely vital role in promoting human rights around the world.

Many of them are also religious leaders – a role that places them in a unique position that allows them to bridge the gap between public and religious life. It’s also a position that puts them in a lot of danger.

Mervyn Thomas
Chief Executive, Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW)

Celebrating the Church's Song

Singing workshops and worship

led by John Bell

John Bell of the Iona Community is a Church of Scotland minister, hymn writer and broadcaster who travels the world teaching on worship, spirituality and social justice



Saturday 13 February 2016

Songs for Lent and Easter
Rediscovering the Psalms
10:00 til 4:00 Ruxley Church
Epsom KT19 0JG
Reservations Required

£15 includes ploughman's lunch
Ruxley church office: 020 8394 1081
<http://www.ruxley-church.org.uk> (Tues - Fri 9.00 - 11.30 a.m.)
or through Anne and Brian Cockram (020 8397 5809)
Parking on Sat and Sun is at Riverview School, KT190JP

Sunday 14 February 2016

10:00 morning worship at Ruxley Church

Big Sing!

Sun 14 Feb 14:00 - 16:00
Stoneleigh Methodist Church KT19 0RT
For more information contact
Denise Gould 020 8393 2155

**CHURCH
DIARY**



Tue	2	10.30am-noon	Coffee and Chat
		8.00pm	Time for Prayer
Fri	5	12.30pm	Luncheon Club
Sun	7	10.30am	Morning Service led by Valerie Ashcroft
		6.30pm	Communion Service led by Rev Paul Timmis
Mon	8	8.00pm	F&P Committee Meeting
Tue	9	10-12noon	Coffee and Chat
		8.00pm	Time for Prayer
Sun	14	10.30am	Morning Service led by Brenda Cannon
		12.30pm	Valentine's Day Lunch
Tue	16	10.30am-noon	Coffee and Chat
		7.00pm	Men's Supper Club - <i>The work of Mercy Ships</i> - Charity talk given by Dorothy Baker
		8.00pm	Time for Prayer
Fri	19	12.30pm	Luncheon Club
Sat	20	10.30am	Big Brunch
Sun	21	10.30am	Communion Service led by Rev Paul Timmis
Tue	24	10-12noon	Coffee and Chat
		8.00pm	Time for Prayer
Thu	25	8.00pm	Church Council Meeting
Sun	7	10.30am	Morning Service led by Rev Paul Timmis

*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:



Ashleigh Hillhouse on 1st February

Joshua Fuwa on 20th February

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How observant are you?

Over the last ten years in this Newsletter we have been celebrating birthdays of the young (and in some cases the not so young!) members of the church family. It has been a personal challenge that I set myself to find different pictures of birthday cakes for each issue of the Newsletter that I have been the editor of. Have I ever used the same picture twice? If I have done, would you have noticed?

It is amazing how many things we miss in this hectic life we have nowadays. Sometimes it would be good to be able to go back and have another look at something we may have missed.

The nice thing about our Newsletters is that we have a good collection of old issues in the Archive section on the Martin Way website (<http://www.martinway.org.uk>). We have some amazing memories stored up of the life of the church there.

I encourage you to visit and re-read some of those memories and enjoy the wisdom of some of our friends who are no longer with us. For those who prefer to read the real thing and not an electronic copy, the Heritage Centre at Morden Library has copies going back to 1969 that you can ask to see. You never know, you might discover that I have used the same cake more than once (no prizes if you do though!)

Andrew Fox (editor)

3 FUTURE DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

QUIZ NIGHT

SATURDAY 19TH MARCH AT 5PM

more details to follow soon!



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SATURDAY 28TH MAY 2016

10.30-----15.00

SPRING AND CRAFT FAIR

AT

MARTIN WAY METHODIST CHURCH

In aid of our FLUSH FUND

All the fun of the fair Lunch's and Afternoon Teas will be Served

Contact Sylvia Baxter at sylvia.baxter1@tiscali.co.uk

for more information or if you would like to book a stall

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A poster for a Passover Seder. The background is a close-up of a Seder plate with various symbolic items like a shank of lamb, bitter herbs, and a cup of wine. The text is overlaid on the image.

Churches Together in Merton Park invite you to a

Passover Seder

1st March 2016 | 7.15 - 9.00 PM
MARTIN WAY METHODIST CHURCH

Led by Judy Weleminsky & Sharon Coussins from Wimbledon Synagogue
Enter into the Passover as Jesus would have done.
Tickets £5 per person.

See weekly notices
for further details

A small logo in the bottom right corner of the poster, featuring a cross and the text 'CHURCHES TOGETHER'.

Items for the **March Newsletter** should be with Andrew Fox,
(email: roife@hotmail.co.uk) by **Sunday 21st February** at the latest