

# Martin Way Methodist Church

Newsletter - April 2003

Minister - Rev Anne Rusbridge

Dear friends,

"Hakuna matata," exclaims Phumba in The Lion King. And who is it that calls Simba back to his senses? Rafiki the prophetic monkey! Well all this is in Swahili, the official Kenyan language as is English. "Hakuna matata" means there are no worries and "rafiki", a friend. What a wonderful way to introduce my country to the world - and this for free. For we are a popular tourist destination famous for our wildlife say The Big Five that include the Lions. Remember the Man Eaters of the Tsavo. Yet those who are privileged to stay with the people out there always testify to our rafikiness (friendliness). Karibu (welcome) is a word not just on the mouth of the business minded agents but from any person on the street.

To these may I now add Jambo! (Swahili for 'how are you'). I expect you to answer back Sijambo! (Swahili for 'fine'). And lest I forget may I hasten to say ahsante sana (thanks a lot) to all of you for a wonderful welcome. For, as most of you have now heard, we are finally here after many months expectantly preparing and waiting. It was delightful to put faces to the numerous e-mails received from this church and circuit and to come in to a superbly done parsonage at 9 Durrington Park Road. And what a lovely welcome service you put out for us. Everything had such a majestic flow. And what a wonderful song to sum it all! "God is here as we his people gather".

This was certainly the very message we all needed to hear as we begin our journey together. I read with interest Anne's last letter with you. She describes Martin Way as a church waiting to give birth. Brenda echoes the same message with a wonderful synchronicity in her betwixt letter. The prophetic message to us is "Await expectantly with anticipation for all the Lord will do with you." What a privilege for me to be part of the birth. Guess what, a prophet, Habakkuk (1:5), confronted a people that had bet their lives that "things will never get better." He said to them, "Look and watch and be utterly amazed! For I am going to do something in your days

that you would not believe even if you were told." This is the most exciting place for me to be at this time. Mmm!! There is something up in the air for those with sharp nostrils. Can you catch it rafikis? It is that sweet fragrance as the rains meet the ground. It is God making a dwelling among us so that his presence becomes the air we breathe and his word our daily bread. For you see when the supernatural meets the natural positive change is inevitable. It is not that all that went on naturally is abolished. Neither is it that all we have done before is replaced. By no means! Rather it is that a situation is birthed where everything we do or say henceforth is all about Jesus. He becomes the one and only motivation, and I love being, and promise to be the midwife.

Now a small caution from this self-appointed male midwife! There is a simple job for each one of us to do, PUSH. Yes all the parents know that very popular word in the maternity wards. When a woman is in labour everyone around has one word in their mouths - PuuuSH! The Kenyan word for this is Harambee. I was taught and later experienced that this is an extremely important part of the birth process without which the baby might never come out. And the time taken in labour is directly proportional to the amount of pushing. Well, we will explore this further in our next letter.

For now suffice it to say that these are exciting times. And this is not a simplistic cliché to make anyone feel better. God is certainly here and we are willing to go places with him. We need everyone in this journey. And we must all go together if possible. One thing is clear though: For us to go we must let go and let God.

*John*

## **Website**

In addition to having a new name, the website has had a makeover. There is now a 'News Desk' page which will be updated each week; a 'Thought for the Week', 'Weekly Readings' based on the Lectionary, and recommended sites to visit. Other changes will be forthcoming, as I would like to make more use of it as part of our community outreach. Therefore, please visit the site regularly, tell your 'internet friends' about it and let me have any feedback and contributions that you may have. Thanks.

*Mike Mortley*

## Churches Together In England Forum: July 18-20

Rev Stuart Thomas of Ruxley represented Churches Together in Surrey at this Forum and the Ruxley magazine for September included his report:

Over 350 Christians gathered at Swanwick, representing every major denomination in England, and many smaller ones too. It's the largest cross-denominational gathering in England and is attended by many of the country's Christian leaders. It was almost unanimously agreed that the most thought-provoking input came from the Archbishop of Canterbury, who spoke more or less unscripted for 45 minutes, basing his words on a small book he'd just been sent from New York. I felt it would be helpful to précis this so that we could all reflect on his insights.

The small book contained reflections written by two American priests about their experiences after the events of 9/11 in the small, tastefully decorated 'church of St Paul's Lower Manhattan. Reputedly where George Washington worshipped, St Paul's is situated directly opposite Ground Zero, and only survived the falling debris intact because trees protected it. In the terrible aftermath of that tragedy, St. Paul's found its ministry radically changed from providing careful liturgy and elegant worship to providing a base for the rescue workers to rest and find refreshment before resuming their wearying task.

Archbishop Rowan highlighted three areas for all churches to consider seriously in reviewing their activities and establishing ministry priorities:

1) 'Claim the Baptismal Covenant as your own' - this inevitably provoked a few questions, but he wasn't referring to any particular rites or practices. Rather he was talking about the commitment we make to God in response to his commitment to us. The congregation of St. Paul's, in the direst of circumstances found among their members all the gifts and resources needed for this totally unexpected ministry. Every member offered whatever they could of skill, energy and time, and surrounded by death on such a scale, they discovered a new role, new life even, in being fed by God so that they could feed others in turn. No time for meetings, surveys, questionnaires or disagreements

there! Everyone had to work together, giving for no other reason than giving 's sake, reflecting how God gives so freely to us.

2) 'Practice radical hospitality' - there was no time for gentility in the debris of the twin towers. The hospitality practised by St. Paul 's involved allowing emergency workers to rest and sleep in the pews, denting and gouging them with boots and heavy equipment. Among the objects left as a permanent reminder of the church 's role (alongside the scars) are badges, boots and cans of beans. Many churches have difficulty deciding the limits of hospitality, perhaps because they have a very limited sense of God 's hospitality. He is supremely giving, the supreme Giver, whose gift of life to us cost Jesus his life. Radical hospitality is uncomfortable, leaves places looking messy, and encourages people to leave things they can 't put anywhere else - if not boots and beans, then experiences and feelings. But surely that 's fundamental to mission.

3) 'Keep the door open' - in dealing with death and destruction on such a scale, St. Paul 's discovered a role beyond the world 's capacity to counsel and manage the uncomfortable aspects. The world is too small for such things, so that church has to bring people to the God who is big enough to hold the whole world in his embrace - to keep open the door to his love and grace so that all may enter. The healthy church is one that says in word, image, action and service, 'Death is swallowed up in victory'.

Archbishop Rowan concluded "St. Paul's was tastefully decorated by people, but tastelessly reordered by God!." He shared many other insights, but these seemed particularly relevant. It would be easy to keep the whole process of mission under our control and manage it efficiently without conflict, but at the same time never really draw people into God 's love and enable them to enter into the new life he offers. We must be willing to let him rewrite our agenda sometimes, even if it 's unlikely to be as drastically as at St Paul's Lower Manhattan. We must occasionally let him mess up our plans as we use our gifts in new ways, offer others the radical hospitality of God and open the door for them to come to him. Surely that has to be at the top of our mission priority list.

## **Break The Silence - the vital connection**

On a hot day in August in two towns thousands of miles apart, people were partying for peace to come to northern Uganda. More than 500 high-school students marched through Gulu town on what they insisted was 'Peace Day'. This is one of the northern Ugandan towns where thousands of children are still congregating to sleep on the streets because they fear the brutal attacks of the Lord's Resistance Army. Hundreds more local residents joined them for an event which featured songs and drama as the young people expressed their hopes for peace. Their sketches depicted what they dream of: young soldiers coming out of the bush, leaving their weapons, and being welcomed back into their communities.

A Roman Catholic priest described the situation of so many young people as "a form of modern slavery. When one person in Europe is abducted, the news is all over the world, but when hundreds of children in Acholi are kidnapped, it seems that nobody cares," he said.

But on the same day, in Cheltenham, England, people were showing that they did care. As the children sang and danced in Gulu, a shocked audience at Greenbelt Arts Festival listened to the Bishop of Kitgum, northern Uganda, tell his people's story.

CMS had invited Bishop Benjamin to the Christian festival, which attracted 15,000 people. At the CMS venue on site, people signed a petition asking Tony Blair to galvanise the international community into action, and decorated preaching scarves to be given to the pastors of northern Uganda as a sign of solidarity. Dancers and drummers from northern Uganda enhanced the sense of festival and young people identified with their Ugandan contemporaries through drama workshops.

All this has made a difference - the people of northern Uganda know they are not alone. A vital connection has been made between them and Christians in the UK - people have prayed and acted to break the silence that has surrounded their plight.

Please keep praying for the children of Kitgum and for peace in Northern Uganda.

*[© CMS e-short]*

## **Quote - Unquote**

If we insist that God can only act and bless when certain conditions are fulfilled, we show that we believe in God in a box. Some of the old Hebrews thought they had the covenant because they had God in a box. They needed to learn that the true God of covenant is free as air, always going ahead of them in shining cloud and fire. The box became so unimportant that it is not even recorded when they actually lost it. But the pillar of cloud and fire still marches on

*J V Taylor >Winchester Churchman ' 1982*

One of the greatest temptations of religion is to suppose that it can contain God. We try to reduce God to something we can handle, enclose, ritualise and claim.

*Gwen Cashmore*

My first conviction is that there are no outsiders. All our outsidersness is to be regarded as provisional, since God 's lively and inviting love is without bounds

*Elizabeth Templeton 1988*

## **Water Pots**

A water bearer in India had two large pots, each hung on the ends of a pole, which he carried across his shoulders. One of the pots had a crack in it, while the other pot was perfect and always delivered a full portion of water. At the end of the long walk from the stream to the house, the cracked pot arrived only half full.

For a full two years this went on daily, with the bearer delivering only one and a half pots full of water to his house. Of course, the perfect pot was perfect for the task for which it was made, and proud of its accomplishments. But the poor cracked pot was ashamed of its own imperfections, and miserable that it was able to accomplish only half of what it had been made to do.

After two years of what it perceived to be bitter failure, it spoke to the water bearer one day by the stream. "I am ashamed of myself, and I want to apologize to you. I have been able to deliver only half my load because this crack in my side causes water to leak out all the way back to your

house. Because of my flaws, you have to do all of this work, and you don't get full value from your efforts," the pot said.

The bearer said to the pot, "Did you notice that there were flowers only on your side of the path. But not on the other pot's side? That's because I have always known about your flaw, and I planted flower seeds on your side of the path, and every day while we walk back, you've watered them. For two years I have been able to pick these beautiful flowers to decorate the table. Without your being just the way you are, there would not be this beauty to grace the house."

Each of us has our unique flaws. We're all cracked pots. But it's the cracks and flaws we each have that make our lives together interesting and rewarding. You've just got to take people for what they are, and look for the good in them. Blessed are the flexible, for they shall not be bent out of shape, Remember to appreciate all the different people in your life.

I'm so thankful for all my crackpot friends.

*Anonymous [seen in Holy Trinity Stratford-on-Avon parish magazine]*

### **Quote - Unquote**

The Church, like the 'Abraham community', is always being called to leave where it is and to move on

*Archbishop Helder Camara*

### **Thank You**

Barbecue at Horton Park Sunday 14 September

This is just a brief note to say thank you to all those who provided all the excellent food at nominal cost. Not only were there sausages and burgers, meat free rolls, salad and many relishes, but there were fabulous sweets from strawberry flan to profiteroles and fruit salad, not to mention delicious cakes both for lunch and tea. It was a great way to meet John and Faith and the family and the open-air communion service was a fitting climax to a memorable afternoon. Look forward to the next time.

*Joyce Plant*

## **Not Just For Christmas**

You have no doubt seen the advert saying "A dog is not just for Christmas". The same thing applies to used stamps. They are not just needed at Christmas but all the year round. I collect used British stamps for 'Hearing Dogs for Deaf People' and I pass on used foreign stamps to Derek and Mary Heaton for Bible Lands. Please let me have any that come your way.

*Bill Cox*

## **Women's Anniversary Weekend 18-20<sup>th</sup> October**

The organisers would be most grateful to any kind people who would be willing to make cakes for the Saturday Coffee Morning and the Monday Rally.

### **October Events**

4 October: AMOS DAY: The Amos Trust 's open day at All Hallows on the Wall. The chief speaker will be Bishop Riah Abu el Assal who will bring us up to date news of the situation in Palestine. For more information phone 020 7588 2638

18 October: Book Sale at St. James ' : 10.30-12 noon

### **Book The Date Now**

Thursday 27 November: there will be a Network District Day at Martin Way. The subject is Racial Justice and Margaret Sawyer, Connexional Network Secretary, will lead the day.

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Items for the next issue of the Newsletter (November) should be with the editor, Rosemary Keen, by Sunday October 12 at the latest.

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## Church Diary

Wed	1	8.00 pm	Church Council
Thu	2	2.30-4pm	Seekers Group
Fri	3	12.30 pm	Lunch Club
Sun	5	10.30 am	Harvest Festival Service led by Rev John Nyota
Mon	6	2.45 pm	Fellowship (Annual General Meeting)
Tue	7	10-12 am	Coffee and Chat
		8.00 pm	Time for Prayer
Wed	8	7.45 pm	Midways (Sue Lavington - VASD - "Voluntary Association Surrey Disabled")
Sun	12	10.30 am	Morning Service led by David Eagle and Mark Williamson
		6.30 pm	Communion Service led by Rev Barrie Tabraham
Mon	13	2.45 pm	Fellowship (Mrs Christine Doll)
Tue	14	10-12 am	Coffee and Chat
		8.00 pm	Time for Prayer
Thu	16	2.30-4pm	Seekers Group
Fri	17	12.30 pm	Lunch Club

### Women 's Anniversary Weekend

Sat	18	10-12 am	Coffee Morning - proceeds to VASD
Sun	19	10.30 am	Communion Service led by Rev John Nyota
		8.00 pm	Service led by Janet and Bob Hamblin
Mon	20	2.45 pm	Rally and Tea: speaker: Rosemary Keen Soloist: Lesley Mortley

Tue	21	10-12 am	Coffee and Chat
		7.30 pm	Men 's Supper Club (Dr John Goddard - The Healing Ministry)
		8.00 pm	Time for Prayer
Wed	22	07.45 pm	Midways (Brian Goldsmith - Impressionism)
Sun	26	10.30 am	Morning Service led by Mr David Morgan
Mon	27	2.45 pm	Fellowship (Rev Geoffrey Owen (St James))
Tue	28	10-12 am	Coffee and Chat
		8.00 pm	Time for Prayer
Fri	31	12.30 pm	Lunch Club