

# Martin Way Methodist Church

Newsletter – February 2004

Minister – Rev John Nyota

Dear friends,

Jambo rafiki! Yes it is 2004! And happy New Year to everyone. This comes right on the heels of a lovely Christmas. Thanks everyone for all the lovely carols in the church. I have never conducted as many events during Christmas. In total there were 7 events as build ups to Christmas with most of the groups that meet in the church doing something. The Climax, of course, were the many Christmas trees that were decorated by each group. On behalf of Janet and the team that worked so hard to make this a reality thank you everyone.

We have been speaking about this in the church! It is to do with resolutions we make as the year begins. This affords us an opportunity to look at resolutions on the church front. I admit that I have been extremely impressed by the level of commitment that people have towards activities in this church. Even if our resolution be that we will continue with the same that would be enough. But if we are to go places as we promised ourselves at the beginning of September then we have to do something extra.

We are talking of what Jesus calls an extra mile. The word extra is an adjective. And if a little English grammar I have is anything to go by extra indicates someone who is doing enough but who can do more. It is that itch that goes on internally “what more could I do for God this year?”. For some the answer could be I am doing enough! Amazingly there might be some, and that is rare but happens, who might discover they need to cut down on what they are doing. I wish I were in this category! I am not embarrassed that I am not but I am encouraged that I could do more. Yet for many they might discover there is much more that they can do with their energies and time.

But what could I really do? I am not a theologian like John or experienced with Church like so and so. Well it may begin looking at your spiritual life. How many times do you pick up the Bible to enrich yourself with God's

word? How much do you pray, only when afflicted? How often do you fellowship with others through Sunday services or other weekly activities? How quick am I to identify somebody new in the church and go beyond just saying how glad I am that they came today? Have I gone beyond the normal and taken a risk to open my home to such a person? Would Jesus do it? Have I ever picked up a phone and called a person who I see in the church and cried or rejoiced with them?

May our resolution this year be to go where we have not gone before! For this is what made Christianity, a two thousand old religion, come to where it is. If the disciples had just done enough then even Galilee alone was enough to consume all their energies their entire life. But as Paul said, "To this end they laboured". May we be encouraged by the fruits of what they did to expand our horizons however risky and however little that involves and see if God will not honour our vows. And remember he is not looking for ability but availability. For if we do his will as though it were ours, then he will do ours as though it were his.

Grace and Peace to you friends throughout the year 2004!

*John*

## **An Empty Stable - Sigma**

Mary Heaton writes: A very big "thank-you" to Janet for all the hard work she put into making the Christmas presentation of "An Empty Stable" such a success; and to all who took part, the band, the singers, actors and backroom boys. A bereaved friend who accompanied me said how uplifting the music was.

For those who would like to see and hear it again - good news! Ross Moore took a video and tape of the production and if you supply him with a blank video [1 hour] and/or audio tape [30 minutes] he will make you a copy. He is not asking for payment, but for you to give a donation to the charity of your choice. See Annemarie Pallister with your tapes etc. (Be sure to put your name on them!)

## **Quote - Unquote**

"A church is a hospital for sinners, not a museum for saints".

*Abigail van Buren*

## **The Kenya Nyota 'Help Simba' Project**

I leave for Kenya on the 19 January and will be there for about three weeks. I need to tie up some loose ends there as well as visit with the family! I wish to thank everyone of you for your generous contributions towards the Nyota Project back in Kenya. During my ministry there I was involved in rehabilitating the children who were about to go into the streets. I worked with a UK based charity known as Karibuni Trust in furthering this ministry at the third largest slum in the world known as Kibera. By the time I left we were helping over three hundred children. Then some of you will know that the former government had attempted ethnic cleansing, Bosnia style, in the Rift Valley area of Kenya. As a result thousands of people were displaced and children left school.

Through my initiative, Karibuni Trust began a project of providing education to these children. We thank God that over 100 children are now benefiting from this initiative. The aim is to start a similar project in a very rural town where we come from called MBEU. If anyone feels that this is an initiative you want to commit prayers, time and resources to please talk to me. We hope that in the year 2005 we will take a team back in Kenya to visit, go on safari and work in this and many other projects.

To the glory and honour of God

*Rev John Nyota*

## **World Day Of Prayer - Friday 5th March**

The services this year are at Christchurch Copse Hill SW20 at 10.30 am (speaker Rev J Pawson) and Holy Trinity, the Broadway, Wimbledon at 8pm

## **Spring Clean 2004!**

The church hall is being decorated during half-term week 16-21 February. Ted and Grace Ashwood are leading a working party that same week so that we can match the clean hall with clean chairs. More details from Ted. Come and join us. Coffee tea and biscuits provided!

## **Quote - Unquote**

There's no such thing as strangers, only friends we haven't met.

*J S O'Halloran*

## **Thought for the Month**

February 2004 brings an added gift - an extra day. In days gone by ladies were allowed to propose to their 'intended' on Leap Year Day, 29th February, but times have changed and neither ladies nor gentlemen bother to wait four years nowadays!

So the month has one more day than usual. What will you do with that day? As we advance in years, and especially when we get beyond our allotted span of three score years and ten, each day becomes more and more precious. These are our 'bonus' days and many of us, probably without realising it, echo John Wesley's simple prayer, 'Lord, let me not live to be useless'. May I suggest a prayer not just for Leap Year Day, but for every day....

Good morning, Lord. Thank you for this new day. Give me the wisdom to see its opportunities, the strength to face its challenges and the grace to be open to its promise. Give me your heart of love to do a favour, speak a kindness, offer a hand, soothe a hurt, celebrate a joy, share a sorrow or in some small way give of myself in love to another in your name. Amen

*Bill Cox*

## **More 'Wheels'**

Many thanks to all who supported the Men's Supper Club's efforts to raise £1500 by Christmas, thereby sending fifty wheelchairs to those in need. In the end we raised a total of £3,000 - one hundred wheelchairs! At our Supper Club Anniversary service last March we had a wheelchair in front of the communion rail. It was donated by Lesley and Mike Mortley. A week before Christmas, Richard Polley was sent a photograph of that same wheelchair with its new owner. It had been refurbished and is now being gratefully used in Ghana.

P.S. If you have any surplus Bibles or New Testaments, please let me have them. They will be sent out with the wheelchairs. Thank you. Bill Cox

## **Big Brothers**

One Household...Twelve Brothers...One Eviction

Would Reuben please come to the Diary Room?

Reuben slumped in the chair looking sulky. I want to nominate my half-brother Joseph for eviction. My brothers and I are fed up with his boasting about the dreams God gives him. Delusions of grandeur! And my father Jacob spoils him rotten – he's given Joseph a flashy new coat, just because he loved Joseph's mother, Rachel, more than my mother, Leah!

Eviction day came. No cheering crowds, no cameras, just cruel, ruthless brutality. The brothers would have killed Joseph, but Reuben had a conscience, so they ripped off his coat and threw him into a dry, waterless pit. Later on, some merchants came by, and they sold Joseph into slavery in Egypt.

So why is Joseph my favourite Bible character? Well, he could have been angry and bitter, but he remained faithful to God, through years of injustice and betrayal. God used his gift of interpreting dreams, so that he could save Egypt and his father and brothers from starvation when seven years of famine came. Joseph found favour with the Pharaoh, who recognised that he was a man of God. God raised him up to be Pharaoh's chief minister - the second highest in the land.

As a young boy, Joseph certainly had his faults, bragging about the dreams and spiritual gifts that God had given him. But as he grew up he became wiser, learning to use his gifts with discernment and humility. Lots of us have raw gifts, but God needs to refine us as he refined Joseph.

And ultimately ... Joseph forgave the brothers who had rejected him. They had meant to harm him, but God had eventually used the situation for good, to bring Joseph and his family to a place of safety. Forgiveness is a tough choice and Joseph probably found it no easier than we would.

*Lesley Jones [from Holy Trinity Sydenham Park magazine: Autumn 2003]*

## **Iraq - Good Neighbours!**

One of the more unusual Christian relief projects in Iraq is Shevet Achim, a group of Israeli doctors who perform life-saving heart surgery for Palestinian babies. When war in Iraq came, they decided they should reach out to their neighbours there too.

On the first exploratory visit Iraqi doctors had 150 children who needed operations. Shevet Achim's team met baby Bayan, from the Kurdish north of the country.

What followed was an extraordinary story of co-operation between Jews, Muslims and Christians, between American army officers, Iraqi and Israeli doctors and Jordanian bureaucrats, just to get Bayan from her home for specialist checks in Baghdad and then to Israel for the operation.

Jonathan Miles, Shevet Achim's Co-ordinator, was amazed to see people working together when their countries are meant to be enemies. "What a sight to see the Iraqi and Israeli doctors having a friendly conversation together about how to save Bayan" says Jonathan. "I couldn't have dreamed of it."

Bayan needed a 21-hour operation and there were many complications. Sadly, after three weeks of worry, prayers and fluctuation in her condition, Bayan died. This December her parents arrived back in their home village to bury Bayan. As the relatives came to visit, they were full of praise for all the Israelis they had met, and grateful for the prayers of many Christians around the world.

It is hard to understand how so much effort and so many 'small miracles' could seemingly go to waste. But Jonathan won't be disheartened. "By God's grace we stand in an exciting place as 2003 draws to a close. To think of the opportunity to proclaim life to the families of many children in Iraq dying of heart defects. Perhaps even to have a role as representatives of Jesus in helping bring peaceful relations between Iraq and Israel. The only thing limiting God's work is us. Dare we believe the new things he can do?"

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## **Looking Back At Martin Way**

I was baptised in Martin Way four years after the church was established. I still have the baptismal certificate to prove it, signed by the Revd G Maskell. Of course, when I say the church, all that existed at that time was the church hall which had to serve all purposes and which meant a lot of constant moving around of chairs.

I came to know the church hall quite well over the years, what with Sunday School - then on Sunday afternoons - and the 13th Morden Cubs. The Sunday School beginners were in the smaller room behind the stage,

with that famous picture of children of different races gathered round Jesus looking down on us. Then we graduated to the main hall, where lots of semicircles of small chairs, each for a class, faced the long wall, the boys' classes at the stage end and the girls towards the road. My most memorable teacher was Mr Maggs, whom I last saw on my mother's funeral in Martin Way in 1969 and whose look of eloquent sympathy as I followed the coffin out of church is almost the only thing I remember of that day.

I was in the Tawny Six of the Cubs, whose position when we lined up for inspection (the nail brush having had its weekly outing) was with our backs to the stage. It's strange, isn't it (or is it only me?), how it is always those small - or bigger - embarrassments which stay in the memory, and I still remember, during one of those games which involved naming railway stations, confidently coming out with Seven Bridges. Akela gently suggested that I meant either Seven Kings or Three Bridges, but in the face of my stubborn assertions accepted my first answer. Thank you, Akela (none less than Jean Butland, though that was before she married John).

When I returned to Martin Way a few years ago, and was invited into the church hall for coffee, I was amazed at how small it was - I had enormous difficulty in associating it with the large hall of my childhood memories. In those far-off days the rest of the site was given over to allotments (these were the Dig for Victory years, after all, and no one had much use for a car park at that time), and I remember plucking the large white convolvulus flowers off the chain link fencing as we hung around waiting to go into Sunday School.

By the time I was received into membership, the new church had been built and the Revd George Baugh was the Minister. I was pleased not so long ago to be able to return to Martin Way to hear George preach at an Anniversary service and to find him as vigorous in the pulpit (why isn't it used more?) as ever. I have another memory of George. One Sunday evening he was off duty and joined us in the congregation, where he knelt to pray. I think it was the only time, before or since, that I have seen anyone kneeling for prayer in a Methodist church.

If kneeling has remained strange, Methodist practice has changed in other respects. For example, when I was young at Martin Way, Communion was treated as something for only a pious elite. It was occasionally tacked on the end of a service, starting only after a decent interval during which most of the congregation departed, with the chat that always involves. When I married Ann, and moved elsewhere, it caused some consternation in our new church when we got up and walked out between the end of the normal service and the start of the communion service. They weren't used to that happening. And nowadays, of course, there is no question of Communion being separated from the main service. With 30 years as Communion steward behind me, and a deep appreciation of its significance, I regard that as a positive development.

*Jon Davey*

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## CHURCH DIARY FOR FEBRUARY

Sun	1	10.30 am	Family Service led by Mrs Valerie Ashcroft
Mon	2	2.45 pm	Fellowship (Mr Bancroft - The Blue Cross)
Tue	3	10-12 am	Coffee and Chat
		8.00 pm	Time for Prayer
Wed	4	7.45 pm	Midways
Thu	5	2-3.00 pm	Seekers Group
Fri	6	12.30 pm	Lunch Club
Sun	8	10.30 am	Morning Service led by Mr David Morgan
		6.30 pm	Communion Service led by Rev Charlotte Elvey
Mon	9	2.45 pm	Fellowship (Mr Barrington Johnson (The Zoo Man)
Tue	10	10-12 am	Coffee and Chat
		8.00 pm	Time for Prayer
Sun	15	10.30 am	Communion Service led by Rev John Nyota
Mon	16	2.45 pm	Fellowship (Mrs Hibbert - Eyesight)
		8.00 pm	Church Council
Tue	17	10-12 am	Coffee and Chat
		7.30 pm	Men's Supper Club (Members' Evening)
		8.00 pm	Time for Prayer
Wed	18	7.45 pm	Midways (Fr. Geoffrey Owen - Pilgrimages)
Thu	19	2-3.00 pm	Seekers Group
Fri	20	12.30 pm	Lunch Club
Sun	22	10.30 am	Morning Service led by Mr David Eagle and Mr Mark Williamson
		8.00 pm	Service led by Janet and Bob Hamblin
Mon	23	2.45 pm	Fellowship (Mr John Sephton - City of London)
Tue	24	10-12 am	Coffee and Chat
		8.00 pm	Time for Prayer
Wed	25	8.00 pm	Finance and Property Committee
Sun	29	10.30 am	Morning Service led by Mr David Eagle

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