

Martin Way Methodist Church

Newsletter – March 2004

Minister – Rev John Nyota

Dear Readers,

As you know our minister John has been on a visit back home to Nairobi, returning the day before your Editor would have demanded his message for this Newsletter. This would have been very unkind and so this month his letter is replaced by the letter from the other John (Swarbrick).

Letter from the Chair of the London South-West District

Dear Friends

My colleagues Harvey Richardson, Chair of the London South-East District, and Roberta Rominger, Moderator of the Thames North Synod of the United Reformed Church, and I have formed a piano trio called Parsons' Noyse. (We owe the dreadful pun to the inspiration of another Chair of District who shall remain nameless.) Harvey is the violinist, Roberta is the cellist, and I tinkle the ivories on the piano. Our first gig was held recently in the Chapel at Central Hall Westminster, and there are others to follow. It just happens to be one of those delightful coincidences that our collegueship has brought us together in this way.

There is a particular challenge for composers who write piano trios: the difficulty is to let the cello through the musical texture, so that it can be the equal partner of the piano and violin. One thing Harvey, Roberta and I have been conscious of is that our rehearsals are not just about getting the notes right (though that helps); they are about getting the balance right between the three instruments and allowing the musical lines to speak and interweave. Now you could take that observation as the equivalent of a sermon illustration about collaborative ministry within the life of the Church and how we seek to live it out. Perhaps I could push the illustration a bit further and invite you to think about a whole orchestra of instruments playing in partnership with one another. Martin Nicholls does this in his meditation *The Orchestra of Christ*, with its several limbs and organs, in a musical way:

Christ is like an Orchestra,
which has many musicians;
it is still one Orchestra, even though it is made up of
the different instruments.

In the same way, all of us,
whether black or white,
male or female,
wealthy or poor,
sharp or flat,
have been invited to play in concert.

The Orchestra is not made up of only one instrument,
but of many instruments:
if the drum was to say,
'Because I am not the violin, I don't belong to the Orchestra',
that would not keep it from playing its part in the music;
and if the guitar was to say,
'Because I am not a clarinet, I don't belong to the Orchestra',
that would not keep it from playing its part in the music.

If the whole Orchestra was made up of bagpipes,
how could it play rock and roll?
And if the whole Orchestra was made up of tambourines,
how could it play Beethoven's Ninth?
So, the conductor has put every instrument and musician
just where he wants them.

There would not be an Orchestra if it was all one harmonica.
As it is, there are many instruments, but one Orchestra.

So, the trombone cannot say to the triangle,
'I don't need you!'
Nor can the bassoon say to the banjo,
'I don't need you!'

On the contrary, we cannot do without
the parts of the Orchestra that seem weaker,
and those instruments which we think aren't worth very much
(Like the Grade Two recorders)
are the ones we treat with greater care.

God himself has put the Orchestra together so that
greater honour is given to those instruments that need it,
like the wash-board or Peruvian nose-flute.
And there is no discord in the Orchestra,
but all the musicians play sensitively,
listening to each other.

If one instrument is out of tune,
the whole Orchestra suffers.
If one instrument plays a beautiful solo,
the whole Orchestra shares in the ovation.

All of you are Christ's Orchestra,
and each of you has a part to play ... in harmony.

Harvey, Roberta and I decided that we would use our first Parsons' Noyse concert to raise funds for the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra. This was founded by the conductor and pianist Daniel Barenboim and the cultural critic and historian, Edward Said. Barenboim is a Jew born in Argentina; and Said, who died in the autumn of last year, was a Palestinian born into an Anglican family and brought up in Alexandria. It was through their friendship that young Israeli, Arab and German musicians were first brought together in Weimar in 1999 to play in a concert for the 250th anniversary of the birth of the German poet, Goethe. The orchestra took its name from a set of poems Goethe wrote influenced by his encounter with Islam, the West-östlicher Diwan.

The Orchestra played at the Proms in August last year and was the subject of a documentary on Melvyn Bragg's The South Bank Show broadcast just before Christmas. While the news headlines spoke about the collapse of the so-called road map to peace in the Middle East, and on a day when there had been yet another suicide bombing in Israel, two young pianists, Saleem Abboud-Ashkar, a Palestinian, and Shai Wosner, an Israeli, were taking their bows at the Royal Albert Hall with Barenboim after a performance of Mozart's Concerto for Three Pianos; they were holding hands as they acknowledged the enthusiastic applause of a capacity audience for an ovation that lasted for half an hour.

What the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra project has been able to achieve is to bring together young musicians who would not otherwise have encountered one another across the divisions of faith and politics in the Middle East. They have discovered a common humanity as well as the joy of what it means to make music together. As Barenboim wrote:

An Arab boy found himself sharing a desk with an Israeli cellist. They were trying to play the same note, to play with the same dynamic, with the same stroke of the bow, with the same sound, the same expression. They were trying to do something together, something about which they both cared, about which they were both passionate. Well, having achieved that one note, they already can't look at each other in the same way, because they have shared a common experience ... I believe if only we can foster this kind of contact, it can only help people feel nearer to each other, that is all.'

As Barenboim acknowledges, the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra is not by itself a solution to the intractable problems of the Middle East, but it is a small sign of what can be achieved with some vision and courage; and perhaps it can help us to reflect on our own performance within Christ's Orchestra and about what it means to be signs of hope and humanity in the world.

Best wishes, Yours ever
John

DEREK MASTERS : 1 June 1927 - 12 January 2004

Derek had been under the weather for some time since he had heart valve surgery, but he very seldom missed a service. His sudden death has saddened his many friends and we will long miss his familiar figure in the pew surrounded by Joan Baker, George Green, Jean Gear and Valerie Currie. He was always there to stand up and welcome those who sat at the front of the church and we shall all remember the warm handshake - and the twinkle in the eye as he greeted us!

Derek was a lovely man with lots of friends. He came to Martin Way Church when as a young boy he and his mother and father moved from Lancashire to London and lived in Park Way. He was a keen musician. His parents were both in the Church choir and Derek sang in the augmented choir for such things as performances of "The Messiah". He loved music

of all kinds - unless it was in the minor key - and was very keen on Musicals. He was a founder member of a group formed by Mr Sidney Mead, called "The Martinettes" which produced programmes called 'Songs from the Shows ' and performed at many churches in the circuit as well as other venues. He was also a beautiful pianist.

During the Second World War he was a Bevan Boy down in the mines - not one of his happiest times. Later he worked in London in the Civil Service and he was much involved with the Coronation of our present Queen. He was proud to be a guest (with his mother) at Her Majesty's Garden Party at Buckingham Palace.

Derek was open minded and always prepared to try innovations, for example in church services, even if he did not at first approve or enjoy them.

He said very little about his life 'up North', but was very proud of his Northern roots. He kept to a regular routine. He was a regular shopper at Marks and Spencer in both Kingston and Kensington where a lot of the lady assistants knew him well! He did so much for his neighbours - collecting prescriptions, visiting older people.

He was a very private person enjoying his own company. He always liked to spend the New Year on his own. He would go out of the front door which he closed. When it was twelve he entered and went to the back door to let out the Old Year. But he welcomed visitors. He would sit in his front room and passers by would wave to him and he would wave back. When working in his front garden people stopped to talk to him. He loved his garden knowing all the plants and always using the Latin names. If you needed information about a plant or shrub Derek was the person to ask. He was a regular visitor to Kew Gardens and Wisley where many people knew him. He also had an impressive collection of glass ornaments

He enjoyed "Coronation Street" and after his retirement, apart from when he was in hospital a few years ago, he saw every episode. He had always watched this programme with his mother and for him they were the extended family. He never opened the door or answered the telephone while it was on!

He had a lovely sense of humour and could always laugh at himself. An example - he loved chipolata sausages and once a week would buy half a

pound, eight in all, for his evening meal. Putting four on a small plate he put the rest on the plate with his vegetables and ate them. On going into the kitchen to wash up, seeing the four lonely sausages he would eat one. After drying the dishes he would eat another and by the time he cleared they would all have been eaten. When Jean Gear asked why he didn't leave four uncooked in the frig or if cooked eat them all his reply was "Oh no, I couldn't". To solve this problem he then stopped buying them, so one birthday Jean bought eight chipolatas and gave them to him wrapped in gift paper. When he opened the parcel he almost cried with laughter. He was a most devoted son, but when his mother died, life changed. It was then that Irene Goldsmith invited him to spend Christmas with her family and that had been his custom ever since. He had the capacity to care about each member of the family throughout that time. This last Christmas he said "was perfect, the best yet". He knew he was loved by them all, including the children, for whom he will always be recalled as their "Christmas Derek". He will be remembered by everyone with affection for his courtesy, his consideration and his friendship.

Please note that there will be a Memorial Service for Derek at Martin Way Methodist Church on Monday, 8th February at 7.30pm.

HETTY FINCHAM : 1909-2004

Christine and Ron Fincham and family would like to thank you all for your kind and comforting words of sympathy on the passing of their mother and grandmother Hetty, who enjoyed being a church member for 32 years. Hetty died in St. Helier Hospital on 8 January. On 1 April she would have been 95. Born in Fulham and christened Marietta, she was the fourth and last surviving child in a family of six, two boys and four girls. When she was young she attended Sunday School at St. James Church, Curtain Street EC2. She married in 1929 and set up home in Battersea where her two children, Christine and Ron were born. The family moved to various places, settling in Merton Park in 1959. In 1968 Ron married Jean at Martin Way and after the death of her husband the following year Hetty started to attend regularly, becoming a Church member in 1971. She was a member of the Fellowship and Lunch Club as well as the Wednesday Games Club for older members. She had two grandchildren, John and Susan, both of whom were baptised at Martin Way.

Hetty's hobbies included Old Tyme Sequence Dancing which made her many friends and also crochet work. She crocheted many blankets for a wide number of charities. We shall remember her as a dear gentle lady with a wonderful smile

Women's World Day of Prayer – Friday, 5th March

This year's Service comes from Panama and the theme is 'In Faith, Women Shape the Future'. Panama is a tropical country, about the size of Scotland, renowned for its wide variety of flora and fauna. After years of hardship and struggle it is now an independent nation, proud of the ethnic and racial diversity of its people and of its strong Christian heritage. As in many parts of the world, women are emerging as a major presence and force in public life and it is their faith and determination that the women of Panama celebrate in this Service.

10.30 am Christ Church Copse Hill Wimbledon :speaker Rev Jilly Pawson: crèche and coffee

8.00 pm Holy Trinity Church The Broadway Wimbledon: speaker Mrs Valerie Ashcroft: coffee afterwards

An Open Invitation

Tuesday 30 March is the day of the Men's Supper Club annual service. It was on 1 April last year that we started our fundraising for "Wheels for the World". That effort has raised over £3000 and to round the year off there will be a guest speaker from "Wheels" at our service. Please come along on the evening at 7.30pm if you possibly can. I'm sure you won't regret it!

Bill Cox

Seekers Lent Group

The Seekers Group becomes ecumenical during Lent and will be studying the course book used by the Churches Together in Merton Park. The theme this year is "Face to Face: growing into the image and likeness of God". We shall be meeting on Thursday afternoons for five weeks at Martin Way. We hope it will prove an excellent opportunity to get to know people from the other churches. Anyone who would like to join us would be most welcome.

NCH Says “Thank you”

NCH have sent a letter of thanks for our cheque for £943 which comprised:-

- Two nights singing at Morden station £610
- Christingle Carol Service £115
- Collections at the Christmas Eve Communion Service and on Christmas Day £93
- Donations at the Christmas Tree Festival £ 125

Something To Ponder [originally sent as email]

- If you woke up this morning with more health than illness .. you are more blessed than the million who will not survive this week.
- If you have never experienced the danger of battle, the loneliness of imprisonment, the agony of torture, or the pangs of starvation ... You are ahead of 500 million people in the world.
- If you can attend a church meeting without fear of harassment, arrest, torture or death ... you are more blessed than three billion people in the world.
- If you have food in the refrigerator, clothes on your back, a roof overhead and a place to sleep ...you are richer than 75% of this world.
- If you have money in the bank, in your wallet, and spare change in a dish somewhere ... you are among the top 8% of the world's wealthy.
- If your parents are still alive and still married ... you are very rare.
- If you hold up your head with a smile on your face and are truly thankful ... you are blessed because the majority can, but most do not.
- If you can hold someone's hand, hug them, or even touch them on the shoulder ... you are blessed because you can offer a healing touch.
- If you can read this message you have just received a double blessing in that someone was thinking of you, and furthermore, you are more blessed than over two billion people in the world that cannot read at all.

Quote - Unquote!

Coming to terms with silence is a necessary element in self-knowledge and in prayer. Pascal claimed that 'most of man's troubles come from his not being able to sit quietly in his room'. The purpose of silence is to allow the heart to be still and to listen to God. In a culture that has almost outlawed silence, it is a matter of urgency that Christians create oases, centres in which inner silence can be cultivated.

Kenneth Leech

The prayerful life is not one in which we say frequent prayers, but one in which nothing is done, said or listened to independently of God, so that all we are is permeated by him.

Anne Long

We come to God by love and not by navigation

St. Augustine

The best prayer is to rest in the goodness of God, knowing that that goodness can reach right down to our lowest depths of need.

Julian of Norwich

Churches Together In Merton Park

Working for Christian Unity

Churches Together in Merton Park consists of representatives of five local churches, St. Mary's, St. James', Martin Way Methodist, Merton Park Baptist and St. John Fisher. Previously known as the Merton Park Council of Churches, it has existed for approximately 40 years to promote church unity in the area. This article outlines the development of this ecumenical work and explains how the Churches Together group is considering how it can increase its effectiveness.

The Merton Park Council of Churches was established some time in the 1960s. It was formed along with many other such councils, at the time when there was a wave of enthusiasm for, and interest in church unity work, fuelled by such matters as the work of the World Council of Churches, discussions between individual churches such as Anglicans and Methodists and the commitment to ecumenism in the Catholic Church which emerged after the Second Vatican Council.

Progress, universally, nationally and locally, was relatively rapid at first and there is no doubt that significant change occurred. To give some

examples of the developments over the period through the 1970s and 1980s, shared services, particularly during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, became commonplace; ecumenical discussion groups sprang up at all levels of the churches; church leaders began to share platforms to speak out on issues of common concern; and, possibly the most important change, it became generally recognised that Baptism, in whatever Christian denomination, provided entry to Christ's universal Church and that re-baptism was unnecessary if a person switched denominations.

The same was true in Merton Park. Through the Council of Churches, united services took place not only during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity but also on other occasions; ecumenical discussion groups were held in Lent and sometimes beyond; various types of joint social events were organised; talks by invited speakers on a range of subjects were held and significantly, Christian Care was established as a joint witness to support the homeless and disadvantaged and, more prominently recently, asylum seekers in the area.

But by the end of the 1980s or early 1990s, development seemed to plateau, again at all levels. From being strangers, members of different churches had become friends, comfortable with each other. And, as often the way with friends, they became quite happy to be in each other's company, but further growing together ground to something of a halt. That remains the position. Churches Together in Merton Park (as Councils of Churches were re-named in the 1990s) still organises an annual unity service, Lent discussion groups and other events here and there but nothing new or different. Despite falling attendances, Christians now seem content in their own separate churches, lacking any impetus to want to ask themselves what next?

In view of this apparent stagnation, members of Churches Together in Merton Park have been asking themselves what its purpose and function should now be and what more it should be doing. They would be interested in hearing any views that members of the five churches may have. Some questions which may need to be asked are as follows:

- Do the churches really want to work closer together or are Christians satisfied with the partial unity that currently exists?

- If the latter, how does that address Christ's plea for unity 'that we all should be one'?"
- What more might the Churches Together in Merton Park group do?
- How can it encourage more of the congregations in the five churches to come together in the events already organised?
- Is there any real chance that the churches in Merton Park might be willing to enter a covenant as church leaders from the various denominations invite us to do? In brief terms, a covenant would mean our churches would agree formally to work together and that they would only do separately what they could not do together.

If you have any views, please pass them to either Gwen Wildman or Derek Heaton your Churches Together representatives.

*Tom Kavanagh, Secretary
Churches Together in Merton Park*

Thought for the Month

We used to say "March winds and April showers bring forth May flowers", but that does not seem to be the case any more. March winds come at any time of the year. April no longer has the monopoly of showers or longer periods of rain. As for May flowers - there were two daffodils in full bloom in my garden on 12th January, they seemed to have a race to see which would be the first to open - and it ended in a dead heat! They were still going strong three weeks later.

Yes, the weather pattern has changed dramatically. We live in rapidly changing times in many respects. It is very difficult for us to think of things not changing. Yet the Bible tells us that "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever." (Hebrews, Ch.13 verse 8). Everything else may change, but we can rely on God's eternal, unchanging love.

Come to my heart, O thou wonderful love,
Come and abide,
Lifting my life till it rises above
Envy and falsehood and pride,
Seeking to be
Lowly and humble - a learner of thee. *(Hymns & Psalms 691)*

Bill Cox

Aids in India - What can one person do?

AIDS in India could be spiralling out of control. The 35 state-level AIDS control societies and 735 NGOs working on the situation may still lack the resources to beat the disease, despite pouring in vast sums of donor money.

The director of India's National Aids Control Project talked of the need to integrate HIV/AIDS awareness and care throughout the community healthcare system. Christians have access to such a grassroots network that could be vitally important in helping communities with this.

A doctor working in India is convinced that the Church is essential to raising awareness and caring for people living with HIV/AIDS.

"My vision is to work through the Church because if any change is to come now in the AIDS scenario in India it has to be through the Church. And I have seen good results".

Lalita has trained church volunteers to train others in caring for people with HIV/AIDS in their communities as well as raising awareness. This is a powerful witness in a climate where people will refuse to use a hospital bed previously used by an AIDS patient; sometimes even the nurses are afraid to touch them.

She recalls a young boy with AIDS in hospital, being looked after by his father. He was deteriorating and had a particularly bad skin condition. The hospital called Lalita and asked her to come and see the boy. When he arrived, they said, "Please, will you just touch him?" She did so, asking "Why did you call me?" The answer came, "Because we knew no one else would touch him."

Now Lalita is calling on her fellow Christians to get more involved, "I think it is for the church to stand up in time of need," she says. "The crisis will reveal the Church's character"

Then she changes her mind: "Actually not the Church's but Jesus' character".

Pray for the 27 million people in India estimated to be infected with HIV; for all those who are crossing boundaries created by the ignorance and fear surrounding the disease, in an attempt to share the hope of Christ and bring dignity to the suffering.

CHURCH DIARY FOR MARCH

Mon	1	2.45 pm	Fellowship (Mr Shelton - Black Rod)
Tue	2	10-12 am	Coffee and Chat
		8.00 pm	Time for Prayer
Wed	3	7.45 pm	Midways (Cats Protection League)
Thu	4	2-3.00 pm	Seekers Lent Group
Fri	5	12.30 pm	Lunch Club
Sun	7	10.30 am	Family Service led by Rev John Nyota
Mon	8	2.45 pm	Fellowship (Mr Julian Hood - Climbing in Thailand)
Tue	9	10-12 am	Coffee and Chat
		8.00 pm	Time for Prayer
Thu	11	2-3.00 pm	Seekers Lent Group
Sun	14	10.30 am	Morning Service led by Mr Paul Tabraham
		6.30 pm	Communion Service led by Rev John Nyota
Mon	15	2.45 pm	Fellowship (Mr Harrison - Wimbledon Guild)
Tue	16	10-12 am	Coffee and Chat
		8.00 pm	Time for Prayer
Wed	17	7.45 pm	Midways (Joanna Bogle - Children's Authors)
Thu	18	2-3.00 pm	Seekers Lent Group
Fri	19	12.30 pm	Lunch Club
Sat	20	10-12 am	Fellowship Coffee Morning
Sun	21	10.30 am	Mothering Sunday/Sunday Club Anniversary
Mon	22	2.45 pm	Fellowship (Mr Moir - The Falklands)
Tue	23	10-12 am	Coffee and Chat
		8.00 pm	Time for Prayer
Thu	25	2-3.00 pm	Seekers Lent Group
Sun	28	10.30 am	Morning Service led by Mr Andrew Frost
		8.00 pm	Service led by Janet and Bob Hamblin
Mon	29	2.45 pm	Fellowship (Miss B Cuthbert - Star and Garter)
Tue	30	10-12 am	Coffee and Chat
		7.00 pm	Time for Prayer [note early start]
		7.30 pm	Men's Supper Club Annual Service
Wed	31	7.45 pm	Midways
		8.00 pm	General Church Meeting
