

Martin Way Methodist Church

Newsletter – March 2005

Minister – Rev John Nyota

MINISTER'S LETTER

Jambo rafiki

We have now entered the time of Lent. This means that we are invited to travel with Jesus to the very edge of life - through the Gates of Jerusalem, into the upper room and the garden of Gethsemane, through betrayal into jail, through humiliation, abuse, and mocking to death itself, and then, through death to new life. This is our Lenten journey.

We naturally resist, tighten up, find creative reasons for why we don't need to "go into the dark, negative things of life" again. Yet, Jesus says to us, "follow me." In Lent we are brought face to face with the fact that our healing and wholeness comes paradoxically through the painful times, times of loneliness and betrayal, times when we can feel no warmth, see no redeeming light. Lent brings us face to face with the character and reality of human suffering, and we resist.

There is a long tradition of resistance of the faithful who have gone before us. Moses said - "No - not me, Lord. I have a speech defect." Elijah said, "Lord, I can't go where you want me to go because I'm too unpopular." Jeremiah said, "Lord, I'm too young." Thomas said "Lord, we can't go where you're going because we don't know the way." When God told Jonah to go to Nineveh, he sold his donkey so he could honestly say, "Lord, I cannot get there". Then he hopped on a ship going in the opposite direction, Jonah's story teaches us that running away from the suffering before us seems to serve up suffering anyway, Far better to resist the impulse to resist - and listen to what God has in mind!

During Lent, the Church suggests we face our deepest fears, and that we do it together as a family. Jesus broke bread and shared wine in the upper room knowing that those who followed him would need endurance and comfort for the journey ahead of them. He gave them a way to remember, to have faith in him and the encouragement of each other.

And, friends, Jesus wants us to keep on the journey - to endure - because it will lead us to a new freedom and Life beyond our imagination.

We resist this journey with Jesus to the cross because we fear coming face to face with the edge of some darkness, some catastrophic loss, something too great to bear. Lent is hard, but we do not go the road alone... we go together and with Jesus. "Come on! You can make it. Just one step at a time. We're almost there. Here, take my hand. I know, I'm afraid too, but do you not remember...?" But what are the conditions? None; oops, perhaps one, this one: TURN, TURN, and TURN. If you are over 50, you probably remember a folk-rock hit of the '60s by the Byrds called "Turn, Turn, Turn". The lyrics say "To everything Turn, Turn, Turn. There is a season Turn, Turn, Turn and a time to every purpose, under Heaven, A time to build up, a time to break down, a time to dance, a time to mourn, a time to cast away stones, a time to gather stones together...", and much more. This song actually came from the Bible, the book of Ecclesiastes, Chapter 3 and Verses 1-8.

As we begin the journey of Lent, we are aware that this is the season for each of us to turn away from what separates us from our loving and merciful Lord. The Lord who loves us enough to become one of us, live among us and die for us. This is the season to "get back on good terms with God by leading us to repent for the times that we have sought to impose our terms on him or on others."

How do we do this? The traditional ways are prayer, fasting and meditation. These still are effective if used with a humble heart open to conversion. Our church offers opportunities to "turn, turn, turn" our ways in the direction that Jesus is calling us to. We have Lent studies every Thursday and various other extra services as advertised elsewhere. Could you also reflect on the pastor's covenant letter and drop a response to him. There is no lack of time to turn, to build up our relationship with Jesus, to cast away our sins, to dance with those who need us, or to mourn with those who grieve. In this we will be following our saviour towards the cross so we may be crucified with him and be raised with him again in glory. Will you come and follow him and never be the same?

John

KENYA 2005 UPDATE

In August this year 25 people from the circuit churches will be going to Baraimu, a village in the Meru District of Kenya, to visit and help with the work of the newly formed charity Methodist Church Wimbledon Rafiki [Friends] Trust.

Travel costs for each of us will be around £850 and we need to raise money for the charity as well - so we are holding a series of the popular

BIG BRUNCHES from 9am to 12 noon on the following Saturdays

- 16 April,
- 21 May,
- 18 June,
- 16 July

Please come; and if you could also help on the day it would be much appreciated

*Joyce Plant, Simon Ward, Gwen Wildman,
Tony Loft and John Nyota*

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH - MARCH

I am writing this early, before the end of January, the reason being - uncertainty. I am awaiting a hip replacement. Last August, when I was put on the waiting list, I was told that there would be a wait of six months, which would mean having the operation in February. Now I am told that I may have to wait another three months. On the other hand, I could receive a phone call one morning asking me to go in the afternoon. It makes planning ahead, giving firm dates for preaching appointments, or giving talks, an impossibility.

But isn't that true of all our lives? None of us knows what the future has in store for us. It is many years now since I have heard the abbreviation D.V. which stood for two Latin words meaning "God willing". We used to hear "The preacher next Sunday will be, D.V., Mr So-and-So." Now we don't feel the need to qualify our statements. We are more definite - but can we really be so certain? As we are reminded all too often, lives can come to an end very suddenly and very unexpectedly. We can only take each day as it comes, thank God for it, and do all that we can to live that day to the full. A good prayer with which to start each day is:-

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

Life may be uncertain but God's help is always at hand and , if only we have the faith to ask for it, that help will be given.

Bill Cox

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

- **Wednesday 13 April:** 2nd Merton Park Guides are holding an evening of entertainment 7.30-9pm. Please come and join us: donations to a local charity. Refreshments will be served
- **Saturday 16 April: 9am-12 noon: Big Brunch:** come and help raise funds for our Kenya Project while enjoying good food and company

*To each is given a bag of tools
A shapeless mass and a book of rules
And each must fashion e'er life be flown
A stumbling block or a stepping stone*

PASTORAL TRAINING WORKSHOP

The fifth workshop for pastoral visitors took place at Raynes Park church on Saturday November 6th. Originally started by Anne Rusbridge in September 2002, the workshops have been open to anyone from the Circuit churches who is a pastoral visitor or who is interested in pastoral work,

The training on November 6th had the general theme 'Could you be Loved?'. I chose this title for two main reasons, One is that it ties in with a key new work from Methodist Resources'. "His Presence makes the Feast", a report on church members' attitudes to the Eucharist. The communion aspect of pastoral work was one I felt to be worth addressing, along with all the implications of the Eucharist for a church that strongly desires to be 'mission-shaped'. The other reason I chose this title is because I am a big fan of the Bob Marley song of the same name.

The workshop was well attended and for the first time since the series started, we had representation from every church in the Circuit. This was most heartening. The content of the workshop drew upon concerns which pastoral visitors had generated in the previous workshop which took place last year. The topics included witnessing to users of the church buildings, different ways of being 'church' and how we can support each other. Once again, it was the pastoral visitors who generated the content of the training session. This made for a dynamic and well-focussed workshop, with time allocated for both whole and small group discussions.

The great strength of the pastoral training lies in the fact that pastoral visitors can share and contrast their different experiences and approaches from around the Circuit. Above all, pastoral visitors provide support for each other in an environment of implicit trust and confidentiality. This to me seems invaluable. I would like to thank everybody who came along on November 6th and made it such a worthwhile training, thanks also to everyone in the Circuit who helped to publicise it in the churches through the newsletters and notice boards.

There will be another pastoral training workshop just before or just after Easter.

John Vanek Lay Worker.

BE SILENT

Silence is the way to make solitude a reality. "I have often repented of having spoken", said Arsenius, "but never of having remained silent". Too often our words are shallow or even destructive. We are bombarded with words through the media.. In silence we hear God, in silence the inner fire of the Holy Spirit is kindled, in silence we find perspective, guidance, the right words, inner peace and wholeness.

[from the parish magazine of St. Nicholas Newbury]

LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE SW DISTRICT

January 2005

Dear Friends,

The New Year has begun on a tragic note with the news of the earthquake and tsunami in the Indian Ocean. Media pictures give us some idea of the

scope of the devastation in the affected countries of south and south-east Asia; such images have sparked a generous response from individuals around the world, and governments have breathlessly tried to keep up as they have announced increasing amounts of official aid to the region. Some of you reading this letter will have personal stories to tell of love and loss. I am aware of one: the Revd David Jebb, a minister in the Aldershot, Farnborough and Camberley circuit, lost his father, sister and nine other family members when the tidal wave struck his home town of Komari, on the eastern coast of Sri Lanka. Please pray for David, Jenet and the family, as you pray for so many others affected by the disaster, seeking, slowly, to rebuild their lives.

Not surprisingly, in the aftermath of such an event, people ask questions about the existence of a good God who can possibly allow such things to happen. For what I call the evangelical atheists and a host of secular commentators in the media, the tragedy is proof positive that 'God is dead'; there is almost a crow of triumph in their confident assertions, and a kind of pitying condescension towards people of faith. But such questions have been around for a long time: in the Old Testament, the Book of Job tests questions of faith, doubt and despair in the face of intense human suffering and yields no easy answers. (By way of an aside, if you want a contemporary novelist's own response to this most searching of Biblical texts, then may I recommend to you Muriel Spark's 'The Only Problem'.)

But for a moment, let us imagine a world in which there were not only no earthquakes, floods and storms, but no innocent human suffering either. In this utopia, every time a faulty gene was on its way to being transmitted to an unborn child, the hand of God, as it were, would intervene to correct the flaw. Every time a train thundered towards an obstruction on the track, every time a hospital computer system failed at a critical juncture, this God would again and always miraculously intervene to save the day.

Such a world is unrecognizable to us; such a God is unrecognizable to us. Beyond the events of Boxing Day 2004 are the anonymous stories of undeserved pain, disease and loss of life, which are daily facts for hundreds of millions of people on this planet we call our home.

For us as Christian people, this is the reality which forms the backdrop to the faith which we profess, the God in whom we dare to believe. In the beginning, according to the account in the Book of Genesis, we have the sense that God had to overcome the dark primal waters to initiate the process of creation. Water, as a symbol of chaos and disorder, flows through the story which the Bible tells of God's purposes in the world. Water floods and destroys the world; it is through water that God's people are brought from slavery to freedom; it is through a second exodus that they return from exile in Babylon - this exile which is like 'the days of Noah' (Isaiah 54:10) - a time of chaos and disorder; it is through water, in which we cannot breathe, that we are baptized into the death and resurrection of Jesus - his death like that of Jonah's being thrown into the sea, there to be swallowed by the monster called Death; it is at the foot of the cross where we discover the God who does not arbitrarily intervene to save his own Son - the God who absorbs not only human evil and sin but also innocent and undeserved suffering. What we know and understand of Easter is this powerful sense that chaos and disorder do not have the last word: love has the last word. The Resurrection of Jesus is for me an extraordinarily powerful metaphor for the transcendence of human suffering and a determination to give it meaning by the way we respond to it.

Isn't this what explains in part the amazingly generous response which people have made to the appeal for help in the aftermath of the earthquake? Many have given money; some have offered themselves and their skills to assist in the slow process of reconstruction in the affected countries. Whether God is acknowledged as the wellspring of such motivation or not doesn't bother me. What matters is that through such direct involvement in the sorrows of the world, we can become in our own small way the means by which the world can be healed. There is a hint of that right at the end of the Bible where the writer declares that in the new world, now already begun with the Resurrection of Jesus, 'there was no longer any sea' (Revelation 21:1)

Human altruism is not restricted to the religious; and if altruism is hardwired into the human brain, what evolutionary purpose does it serve? (This is the sort of question I should like answered more convincingly by Professor Richard Dawkins and all the other hard-nosed Darwinian

scientists.) The fact is that we do have instinctive responses to human need and suffering which suggest that we are not at ease with a doctrine of 'survival of the fittest'. Despite the evidence of what human beings can be and do at their worst, we also have evidence for what they can be and do at their best. Realistic, unsentimental compassion was at the heart of the ministry of Jesus and the message of the unconditional love of God which he embodied and proclaimed, May it be at the heart of our lives - in generous giving and self-giving.

*Best wishes,
Yours ever,
John*

QUOTES FROM OUR ARCHIVES - MARCH

24 & 28 March 1933 architect's plans considered; [requested] provision of recess for communion table, moveable pulpit, floor boarding instead of wooden blocks ...architect to submit views on location of choir and harmonium ...meeting of local residents to be on 24 May

6 March 1935 Mr A Southwell appointed caretaker

14 March 1940 The proposed public house at the corner of Martin Way and Westcroft Gardens had not received the necessary permission this year to be erected.

Stoneleigh Gift Day: one third of the proceeds of the Spring Sale on 16 March should be allocated to Stoneleigh...opportunity should be given for gifts to be made ...Miss Gadd had resigned from the office of Circuit magazine distributor and Miss Allen was elected in her place

16 March 1942 Holy Week arrangements. Mr Nodder reported that a United Procession of Witness and open air meetings had been suggested by the neighbouring churches for Good Friday ending with a Lantern Service at St. James Hall at 8pm. It was agreed to give the support of Martin Way

Mr Nodder reported that after due consideration by Mr Lawrence and the choir it was recommended that the 'Nunc Dimittis' be sung to a 'Wesley' tune and that the congregation be invited to remain behind one Sunday to get familiar with it

2 March 1945 Fellowship Meeting changed from Friday to Thursday and choir practice changed from Thursday to Friday ...names of Miss Maggs and Miss Reeve to go forward as applications to be given note to preach

8 March 1948 Six Sunday Campaign: Rev G R Gostelow said that new people had come to the church and several fresh contacts had been made. Mr Morling said that the campaign was mainly acting as a challenge to the people already in the Church life. Miss J Reeves said that she thought we should use the medium of Prayer far more than we do, and asked that a special sermon might be preached about Prayer. She felt there was a strong need for more Prayer Meetings to be held in the church

7 & 26 March 1955 Mr Highet [and] his colleague Mr Rose had agreed to act as architects. They had already been down to survey the site at Martin Way and had prepared plans ...these were similar to the church at Woking

7 March 1961 membership 172

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CHURCH DIARY FOR MARCH

Tue	1	10-12 pm	Coffee and Chat
		8.00pm	Time for Prayer
Thu	3	2-3pm	Lent Group
Fri	4	12.30pm	Lunch Club
Sun	6	10.30am	Morning Service led by Rev Charlotte Elvey
		6.30pm	Communion Service led by Rev Stuart Veitch
Mon	7	2.45pm	Fellowship
Tue	8	10-12pm	Coffee and Chat
		8.00pm	Time for Prayer
Wed	9	7.45pm	Midways (Susan Wells - TRAI DCRAFT)
Thu	10	2-3pm	Lent Group
Sun	13	10.30am	Morning Service led by Rev John Nyota
Mon	14	2.45pm	Fellowship
Tue	15	10-12pm	Coffee and Chat
		7.30pm	Men's Supper Club (Clive Tullett - Venture Scouts in Kenya)
		8.00pm	Time for Prayer
Thu	17	2-3pm	Lent Group
Fri	18	12.30 pm	Lunch Club
Sun	20	10.30am	Morning Service led by Mr Andrew Frost
Mon	21	2.45pm	Fellowship
		8.00pm	Easter Meditation
Tue	22	10-12pm	Coffee and Chat
		8.00pm	Easter Meditation
Wed	23	7.45pm	Midways (Easter Meeting - Priscilla Vivian)
		8.00pm	Easter Meditation
Thu	24	8.00pm	Maundy Thursday Communion Service
Fri	25	10.30am	United Service at Martin Way
Sun	27	6.00am	Sunrise Communion led by Rev John Nyota on Cannon Hill Common followed by Breakfast at Martin Way
		10.30am	Family Communion Service led by Rev John Nyota
Tue	29	10-12pm	Coffee and Chat
		8.00 pm	Time for Prayer