

A LETTER FROM BARRIE TABRAHAM

WIMBLEDON CIRCUIT SUPERINTENDENT



Dear Friends

Life in this Circuit - and in the Methodist Church as a whole - is never dull! A great deal has happened since I last wrote to you all.

At the **District Synod** on 8th September, a number of interesting themes were covered. Among them were the need to challenge young people and try to *understand* the context in which they live - something that Share Jesus International has been doing for a while!

Another interesting development, however, was "**EDEV**"- which stands for **Extending Discipleship, Exploring Vocation.**

Some of you will be aware that the present 'two-tier' system (first offering for vocational training to discern and clarify one's sense of call, then offering for various kinds of ministry) was not altogether satisfactory. It became very difficult for Circuits to know what to do with candidates whom they had already seen once, who were moving on to the second stage. It was also difficult to cater for candidates who were quite sure God was calling them to full-time ordained ministry. And the whole process seemed interminable!

Part of the pressure to adapt this system - and Methodists have always (like their founder) been good pragmatists! - has been the continued shortage of ordained ministers (both presbyters and deacons). This shortage is becoming increasingly worse.

Actually - if you forgive me for digressing (something I never do) - I do not, personally, think that there *is* a shortage of ministers. Certainly, the ratio of ministers to members is far greater now than it has been for a very, very long time. When I was ordained (in 1984), the ratio was one minister to about 240 members. Now it is barely 1 to 150. This suggests to me that either we have too many churches or (as I believe) too many small circuits, or that ministers are called upon to do more than they

used to - something with which my colleagues will undoubtedly agree!

It remains to be seen how **EDEV** will fare. The process of combining discernment (of oneself, one's spiritual growth and vocation) with learning (developing discipleship) is good *in theory*, provided it can combine flexibility with practical outcomes that can be achieved within clear, sensible structures. Too often in the past an idea has been embraced without the practical consequences being fully considered, which brings me back to . . .

. . . Local Preaching & 'Faith & Worship' - again!

The saga continues. I don't propose to bore you with the details, suffice it say that there seems to be a momentum for change developing, i.e.

- Arthur Miller has received a positive response to his letter to the President of Conference Dr Martyn Atkins
- My approach to the Local Preachers' Studies Board, which I promised to undertake, was greeted with some sympathy, though I felt we were being 'smoothed' again.
- I am proposing to put the system of exemptions to the test shortly, and will let you all know how I get on in due course!
- The London District will be shortly to pilot a new scheme which, I understand, will gradually supplant the *Faith & Worship* course.

The September Circuit Meeting

As many of you will know, a number of important decisions were made:

- ◆ Rev Margaret Adams will become the Superintendent
- ◆ Minister of the Wimbledon Circuit as from 1st September 2008.
- ◆ She will have properly financed lay support in this work, together with her ministry at Stoneleigh and Ruxley.
- ◆ A full-time presbyter will be appointed who will have pastoral oversight of Martin Way and to be the Methodist minister in the ecumenical team at Christ Church with St Philip, Worcester Park.
- ◆ Rev Faith Nyota has been given an 'open' extension to
- ◆ her ministry in the Circuit of three years from 2008.
- ◆ Rev John Nyota will be pursuing his doctoral studies full-time from next September.

All the above decisions were, I am glad to say, made unanimously. We were delighted that Margaret and Faith will be with us until at least 2011, and wish John every blessing in the future.

The net result will be a slight reduction in our ministerial (sorry - I should really say "presbyteral", for we are *all* ministers!) complement, from three and a half to three. However, in the current climate of cutbacks, when we *could* have been in great difficulty, I think our Circuit will be well served in the future. In all this, we owe our Circuit Stewards - David, Tony, Pat and Dawn - a huge debt of gratitude.

People in the news

- Congratulations to **Andy Frost and Jo Wells** who have become engaged to be married.
- Our deepest sympathy is offered to **Rev John Dakin**, whose younger brother Donald passed away quite suddenly recently.
- We're pleased to welcome another old friend to the Wimbledon Circuit. **Kojo Amoah-Ai'ko** - who is a member at Upper Tooting, now in the Wandle Valley Circuit - will be taking the evening service at Ruxley on 20 January.

Some important dates for your diaries:

- † Sunday 16th December 8.00 pm at Martin Way - the **Sigma** production of "**Topsy-Turvy Christmas**"
- † Saturday 16th February (early evening) - A District celebration event at Westminster Central Hall.
- † Thursday 21st February 7.00 for 7.30 pm **Circuit Meeting** at Worcester Park.
- † Tuesday 26th February 8.00 pm- **Preachers' Meeting** at Raynes Park.
- † Wednesday 6th March 10.30 am - Ministerial Session of **Synod** at Walworth.
- † Saturday 5th April 10.30 am - **Spring Synod** at Westminster Central Hall.

Peace be with you all,

Barrie

NEWS FROM KENYA

15th November 2007



Habari, Jambo, Cyfarchion, greetings to everyone,

Being the season of the short rains, November so far has been warm and sunny. It is good to be able to walk around in summer clothes during the day, and enjoy the African nights i.e. the sunsets, birds, insects, the background sounds of the crickets like the whirring of an electric fence. Unlike the city, it is quite safe here in Kijabe. Since this is Africa Inland Mission land, there is no alcohol or smoking allowed on the premises, but you can be sure there is plenty outside the perimeter. The seasons are also different i.e. this week we were eating and enjoying the sukuma-wiki (cabbage family), beans and spinach that we planted in mid October.

The Election date has now been set for 27th December so the hype continues. Most of the folks here in Central Province are PNU supporters and would like to see President Kibaki voted in again as he has accomplished a lot of good things for the country in the last five years. Have noted in Magina and surrounding areas that there is a lack of females who attend these political meetings (of which there are many), either because they are working in the fields or worse, think that it does not concern them or they are not interested.

The schools here will be in the throes of examinations as of next week, so I will have a break from the teaching sessions. That means that I will have more opportunity to visit the various young people, disabled, and women's fellowship groups. I have been meeting the HIV/Aids support group every week and we have had some special times of sharing with them. Some of these people have been shunned by their families because they have come out, and so are left to cope on their own, but they have formed their own ministry in that they support each other very well. Although the ARV drugs are free, there is a lack of counseling for those affected as there is such a high number that attend the hospitals and not enough staff to cope with the demand.

I have got to know more of the local people here in Magina through visiting their homes, some of whom are really caught in the poverty trap. Many are without shambas and have to go looking for whatever labour work they can find, earn as little as 100 KSh a day which is not enough to feed a large family and pay for school fees for the children attending Secondary Schools. It is little wonder that some get depressed and see no way out but they are daily giving thanks to God for his provisions and blessings.

One such family of 7 living in a 2-roomed shack has a 14 yr old disabled daughter who, when I visited, the family had not been able to afford her medication that freed her from muscle constriction so they were unable to get her up to her wheelchair and she developed pressure sores as a result. Together with one of the local church's help we were able to purchase food for the family as only the wife of the household was able to work, and also provide the necessary medication. I visited this young person this week and she is now able to manage her wheelchair and her pressure sore with thanks to those who donated (lest I sound like I'm advertising) the Allevyn dressings, is healing.

Until next month

Pob bendith

Gwen Wildman

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STAMP COLLECTING



Christmas will be a time when there will be a great increase of mail dropping through your door. Can you please remember to save the stamps as they can be put to great use through a number of Charities, including Bibleland and Hearing Dogs.

Any used stamps, both foreign and British, that you collect can be passed to Bill Cox, Maralyn Loft, or Derek and Mary Heaton.

THOUGHT OF THE MONTH - DECEMBER 2007



A good old-fashioned hymn we used to sing with great gusto was ‘Stand up, stand up for Jesus’. In recent weeks I’ve been hoping in vain for a church leader of any denomination to do just that. Why? Well firstly an obscure government body called the Institute for Public Policy Research came up with the statement that Christmas should be down graded in favour of festival of other religions. This, they claim, would improve race relations.

Then secondly, the head of the Muslim Council of Britain asserted that British society could benefit by adopting aspects of the Islamic culture including adopting stricter attitudes to drinking, sex, marriage, abortion and dress. The only response to either of these suggestions I found was a couple of letters in the correspondence page of a daily newspaper. As far as I know, not even the Archbishop of York, who seems to be the foremost champion of Christianity in Britain today, made any response.

Perhaps it was felt that the statements made were too ridiculous to warrant a response, but they could be the thin end of the wedge. Should our leaders not be calling loudly and clearly for a return to basic Christian values, which are the very foundations of our society? If some new quango proclaims that we should pull down our churches because they might offend someone of another faith passing by, will we comply without a murmur? No wonder congregations are diminishing. We must not allow Christianity to become regarded as an ethnic minority. We must stand up for Jesus and be proud to do so!

Bill Cox

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There is a time to keep silence, and a time to speak.

Ecclesiastes 3v7

CHRISTMAS POST BOX AND CARDS

As has been our tradition over the years we will again place our Christmas post box in the vestibule from the 2nd December into which you may post cards to friends within our Church family, with a donation in lieu of postage for Methodist Homes for the Aged.



In the past several people have chosen to place just one card in the post box addressed the "The Church Family". These have been displayed on the notice boards in the corridor together with those sent by past church members. We will again be offering this alternative - those of you who have difficulty writing several cards found this a very useful service.

Others of you may like to consider the option - perhaps the money saved from not buying cards could also be donated to MHA, or your own personal favourite charity.

The cards will be available for collection on **Sunday 16th December**.

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CHURCH BULLETINS

They're Back! Those wonderful Church Bulletins! These sentences actually appeared in church bulletins or were announced in church services:

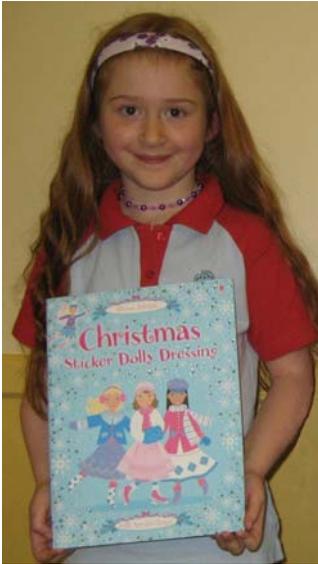
- ◆ The Fasting & Prayer Conference includes meals.
- ◆ The sermon this morning: "Jesus Walks on the water." The sermon tonight: "Searching for Jesus."
- ◆ Ladies, don't forget the rummage sale. It's a chance to get rid of those things not worth keeping around the house. Bring your husbands.

- ◆ Weight Watchers will meet at 7 PM at the First Presbyterian Church. Please use large double door at the side entrance.
- ◆ Remember in prayer the many who are sick of our community. Smile at someone who is hard to love. Say "Hell" to someone who doesn't care much about you.
- ◆ Don't let worry kill you off - let the Church help.
- ◆ Miss Charlene Mason sang "I will not pass this way again," giving obvious pleasure to the congregation.
- ◆ For those of you who have children and don't know it, we have a nursery downstairs.
- ◆ Next Thursday there will be tryouts for the choir. They need all the help they can get.
- ◆ Irving Benson and Jessie Carter were married on October 24 in the church. So ends a friendship that began in their school days.
- ◆ A bean supper will be held on Tuesday evening in the church hall. Music will follow.
- ◆ At the evening service tonight, the sermon topic will be "What Is Hell?" Come early and listen to our choir practice.
- ◆ Eight new choir robes are currently needed due to the addition of several new members and to the deterioration of some older ones.
- ◆ Scouts are saving aluminium cans, bottles and other items to be recycled. Proceeds will be used to cripple children.
- ◆ Please place your donation in the envelope along with the deceased person you want remembered.
- ◆ The church will host an evening of fine dining, super entertainment and gracious hostility.



CONGRATULATIONS

In 1987 the Guide Association formed the Rainbow section for girls aged between 5 and 7 years old. In preparation for their 21st birthday next year, Rainbows nationally were invited to design a birthday outfit for a Rainbow called Olivia.



Sheya McAllister



Emma Marsland and Charlotte Lee

The 1st Merton Park Rainbows are a thriving pack affiliated to the church and some of the girls entered the competition. We are delighted to announce that one of them, Sheya McAllister, won the Divisional competition and Charlotte Lee and Emma Marsland were runners up. Sheya's entry has now been selected to go forward from County to the Regional final. We wish her good luck.

Geraldine Ellis

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SAMARITAN'S PURSE OPERATION

The Samaritan's Purse Operation Christmas Child Shoe Box Appeal had 26 shoe boxes delivered to the collection point. Many thanks to all of those who supported this effort.

FIGGY PUDDING

In the Christmas carol ‘We wish you a Merry Christmas’, the second verse has a line ‘Now bring us some Figgy Pudding’. This dish is similar to the Christmas Pudding in that it originates from the early days of Christianity. It started life as a porridge that was eaten on Christmas Eve to line the stomach after the day’s fasting, gradually people added spices, dried fruits and honey to make it a special Christmas dish.



Figgy Pudding is also mentioned in Charles Dickens’ A Christmas Carol, it was the dessert that Mary Cratchit serves her family with their Christmas meal. In Victorian times Mrs Beaton, England’s famous traditional writer of cookery books, published a recipe for Figgy Pudding.

If you are feeling adventurous or just want an alternative to a Christmas Pudding why not try a Figgy Pudding! The below recipe is based on Mrs Beaton’s recipe but has been slightly adapted for 21st century tastes and ingredients.

125g dried figs, chopped	125g flour
125g apple sauce	200g breadcrumbs
1 teaspoon baking powder	200g sugar
1 teaspoon nutmeg	1 teaspoon cinnamon
1 teaspoon ginger	1 cup orange juice
1 cup of dried or canned cranberries	

Mix all the ingredients together thoroughly. Place in a closed container in a large pot of boiling water. Steam the pudding for at least two and a half hours, or until it is rather firm.

It can be served with custard or a vanilla or brandy sauce, but can also be eaten plain.

THE LEGEND OF ROBIN REDBREAST



On that first Christmas, it is said; the night was wrapped in a bitter chill. The small fire in the stable was nearly out, and the Mother Mary worried that her baby would be cold. She turned to the animals about her and asked them for help. ‘Could you blow on the embers,’ she asked the Ox, ‘so the fire might continue to keep my son warm?’

But the Ox lay sound asleep on the stable floor and did not hear her. Next, Mary asked the Donkey to breath life back into the fire, but the sleeping animal did not hear Mary either. Nor did the Horse or the Sheep. She wondered what to do.

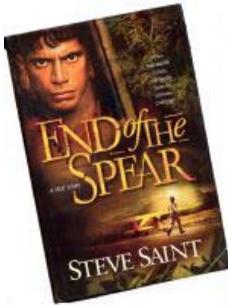
Suddenly, Mary heard a fluttering of little wings. Looking up, she saw a plain, brown-coloured little Robin fly into the stall. This Robin had heard Mary calling to the animals and had come to help her himself. He went over to the dying fire and flapped his wings hard. His wings were like little bellows, huffing and puffing air onto the embers, until they glowed bright red again. He continued to fan the fire, singing all the while, until the ashes began to kindle. With his beak, the Robin picked up some fresh, dry sticks and tossed them into the fire. As he did, a flame suddenly burst forth and burned the little bird’s breast a bright red. But the Robin simply continued to fan the fire until it crackled brightly and warmed the entire stable.

The baby Jesus slept happily. Mary then thanked and praised the Robin for all he had done. She looked tenderly at this red breast, burned by the flame, and said, ‘From now on, let your red breast be a blessed reminder of your noble deed. You will be known throughout the universe as the messenger of the Christ child, the true herald of Christmas. You are destined to travel the world telling the advent of the Saviour of mankind, and you will be a part of the message of Christmas until the end of time and will always be known as the Christmas Robin.’

Henry Livingston Jr, 1748-1828

BOOK REVIEW from RE:FRESH BOOKS

End of the Spear by *Steve Saint* - (Hardback) £8.99

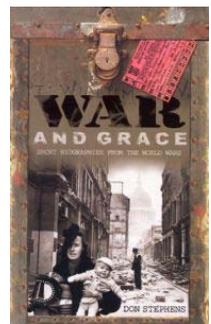


Fifty years ago the savage massacre of five missionaries in the Jungles of Equador made news headlines all over the world. Their deaths at the hands of the Waodani Indians, inspired hundreds of Christians to commit their lives to mission in the following decades. Meanwhile, within months, the sister of one of the missionaries went to live amongst the Waodani and teach them about ‘God’s carvings’ and how to ‘walk His trail’.

In 1994 Rachel Saint died and Steve Saint, returned to Equador for his aunt’s funeral. While there he learnt for the first time the background to the massacre, from one of his father’s killers. The Waodani asked him to return to Equador and help them deal with the challenges presented by modern “civilisation”. This is the story of how Steve Saint returned with his family to live in primitive conditions to help the Waodani develop basic health care, whilst retaining their independence and much of their traditional lifestyle. But the experienced also changed Steve Saint and the direction of his life.

War and Grace by *Don Stephens* £8.95

Short biographies of 13 Christian men and women who played a part in one or both of the World Wars. Some were Christians at the time, some became Christians during the war and some afterwards. They include Mitsuo Fuchida, the Japanese pilot who led the attack on Pearl Harbour, Charles Fraser-Smith, the inventor who inspired Ian Flemming’s Bond character ‘Q’ and Lt-Gen Sir William Dobbie who was instructed to ‘Defend Malta at all costs.’ Each biography includes information on sources of further information and there are notes and an index at the end.



*These books are available from Re:fresh Books & Christian Resources,
23 The Broadway, Tolworth, Surbiton KT6 7DJ*



BIBLELANDS

BibleLands is an independent UK based Christian charity serving the needs of the poor, vulnerable and disadvantaged in the Middle East, regardless of their faith or nationality. They work in partnership with local Christians, as inspired by Scripture.

Some members of Martin Way Church have been very active working and helping Biblelands and the charity wishes to thank all those who have supported them over the past year. This includes those who have purchased from their Easter and Christmas catalogues, collected stamps (see the earlier article in this Newsletter) or donated money to them.

A very big “thank-you” goes to Bill Cox for encouraging the Men’s Supper Club members to put money aside each month for the past year. This was done in the hope of purchasing an Egyptian House for the poor in conjunction with “Habitat for Humanity Egypt” with a target figure of £1,073. By their generosity the Club achieved this figure in half the time! Richard James, the Regional Office Representative, attended the Clubs November meeting where he was presented with their cheque. His official ‘Thank-you’ poster is pinned up on the notice board along with his own personal letter of thanks.

Bill had decided that should any money collected be greater than the cost of the house, it would be donated to the Rifiki Trust. So the Trust have now benefited by £510, so well, well done to everyone concerned, but especially to Bill for conceiving the original idea.

Finally Biblelands are looking for anyone who can help manning their stand at Spring Harvest between 5th - 20th April 2008. This is the first time Biblelands will be exhibiting there so perhaps you could take a turn on the stall even for some of the time. In addition they are looking for people to help in a like manner at Greenbelt between 22nd-25th August and also at New Wine, at Shepton Mallet, Somerset between 26th July-1st August (week one) or 3rd-9th August (week two). Please give this subject your prayerful thought.

Mary Heaton

WOMAN'S WORLD DAY OF PRAYER



The symbol of the Women's World Day of Prayer was designed by an Irish nun in 1982 and adapted as the international logo.

The design comprises arrows converging from the four points of the compass, four figures kneeling in prayer, the Celtic cross and a circle representing the world and our unity through all our diversity.

In 2008 the Woman's World Day of Prayer is on the 7th March. This year's theme is "God's Wisdom Provides New Understanding" which has been prepared by the Christian Women of Guyana.

Services will be held at 10.30am in Trinity United Reform Church, Mansell Road, Wimbledon and at 8.00pm in Wimbledon Methodist Church, Griffiths Road, Wimbledon. Please put the dates and service times in your diary now as you will be most welcome to either or both services. A third Service will be held at Alexander House at 3.00pm. Members of our congregation will be taking part at each service.

If you want to find out more about the Woman's World Day of Prayer there is website at www.wwdp-natcomm.org which is well worth a visit.

Mary Heaton

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*Life is not all roses
Nor is it all gloom,
So, as we travel
We can always make room
To pass on a kindness,
Gentle word, or a thought,
Milestones, for other travellers,
Joys that cannot be bought*

COLOURING TIME I



THOUGHT OF THE MONTH - JANUARY 2008



Once more we come to the point in where one year ends and the next one begins. We will be wishing each other a ‘Happy New Year’, but we cannot expect a year of unqualified happiness. As it’s leap year we would have three hundred and sixty-six happy days, one after the other. The French dramatist, Moliere said, ‘Unbroken happiness is a bore: it should have its ups and downs’. We all experience life’s ups and downs. They are what makes life interesting and challenging.

So may 2008 have its ups and downs for you - but with more ups than downs! And may God continue to bless you in all that you do for him in your dealings with your fellow beings.

Bill Cox

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FAREWELL TO TWO DEAR FRIENDS

We said farewell to two faithfully committed ‘Soldiers of Christ’ in the last week of November.

Eileen Nicolson, secretary of our local committee for the Woman’s World Day of Prayer, died following an operation in Epsom Hospital: she worked tirelessly for numerous local charities and will be sadly missed.

Also the untimely death at 57 of Rob Frost was commemorated in a packed Raynes Park Methodist Church which had folk present from all over the world. A sad , yet joyous farewell that had us lifting the roof with worship songs! There will be a celebration of Rob’s life at Central Hall, Westminster on 12th January 2008, 3-5pm for anyone interested.

Derek and Mary Heaton

CAROL SINGING



It's that time of the year that we serenade the commuters of Morden. Once again we will be raising money for the National Children's Home and would welcome as many people to come along and join in the singing of carols at Morden Underground Station. We will be meeting at the Station on Monday

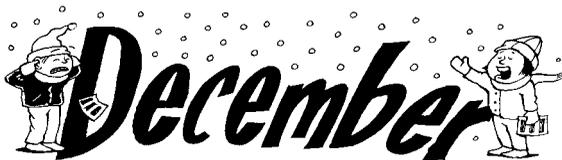
17th and Friday 21st December and plan to start singing at 5.00pm and finish about 7.00pm both of these days.

So if you can spare an hour please come and join us, or if you use the station and hear us singing please put a donation in the bucket!

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COLOURING TIME 2



CHURCH DIARY



Sun	2	10.30 am	All Age Worship and Parade Service led by Mr David Eagle incorporating Toy and Gift Service
		2.00-6.00pm	Christmas Tree Festival
		6.30 pm	Communion Service led by Rev Charlotte Elvey
Tue	4	10-12noon	Coffee and Chat
		8.00 pm	Time for Prayer
Weds	5	7.45 pm	Midways Group - <i>Doris's Decorations</i>
Thur	6	8.00pm	Church Council Meeting
Fri	7	12.30 pm	Luncheon Club - <i>Christmas Meal</i>
Sun	9	10.30 am	Communion Service led by Rev John Nyota
Tue	11	10-12noon	Coffee and Chat
		7.30pm	Men's Supper Club Christmas Meal
		8.00 pm	Time for Prayer
Sun	16	10.30 am	Praise Service led by Rev John Nyota
		8.00pm	SIGMA presents "TOPSY-TURVY CHRISTMAS" - A Special Christmas production
Mon	17	5.00pm	Carol Singing for NCH at Morden Station
Tue	18	10-12 noon	Coffee and Chat
		8.00 pm	Time for Prayer
Weds	19	7.45 pm	Midways Group - <i>Christmas Meal</i>
Fri	21	5.00pm	Carol Singing for NCH at Morden Station
Sun	23	10.30am	Carol Service led by Rev Michael Meech
		5.00pm	Carols by Candlelight
Mon	24	5.00pm	Christingle Service
		11.30pm	Midnight Communion at Wimbledon Church
Tues	25	10.30am	Christmas Day Service

Sun 30 10.30 am Morning Service led by Mr Bill Cox

CHURCH DIARY



Fri	4	12.30 pm	Luncheon Club
Sun	6	10.30 am	All Age Worship led by Rev John Nyota
		6.30 pm	Communion Service led by Rev John Nyota
Tue	8	10-12noon	Coffee and Chat
		8.00 pm	Time for Prayer
Weds	9	7.00 pm	Midways Group - Bill Cox's Reflections
Sun	13	10.30am	Communion Service led by Rev John Nyota
Tue	15	10-12noon	Coffee and Chat
		8.00 pm	Time for Prayer
Fri	18	12.30 pm	Luncheon Club
Sun	20	10.30am	Praise Service led by Tony Loft & Brenda Cannon
Tue	22	10-12noon	Coffee and Chat
		8.00 pm	Time for Prayer
Weds	23	7.00 pm	Midways Group - <i>The Holyland Revisited</i> - Derek & Mary Heaton
Sun	27	10.30am	Morning Service led by Rev Charlotte Elvey
		6.30pm	Bible Study led by Dr Arthur Miller
Tue	29	10-12noon	Coffee and Chat
		8.00 pm	Time for Prayer

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 either December or January a very

Happy Birthday

and especially to:

Natalie Johnson on 2nd December
Christopher Sweby on 23rd January



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**PUZZLE
CORNER
ANSWERS**

Solution to the
Firework themed
Wordsearch from
last month's
Newsletter

Items for the **February Newsletter** should be with Andrew Fox,
(email: roife@hotmail.co.uk) by **Sunday 20th January** at the latest