

## MINISTER'S LETTER

Dear friends,

As human beings we believe all kinds of things. And some things we believe so passionately that it seems highly improbable to us that we'll ever do anything other than hold on to these beliefs forever. Yet what we believe can and does change.



People used to believe that the earth was flat and that it was possible to fall off the edge. Now we know that the earth is spherical in shape and we know about gravity. People used to believe that epidemics such as flu were caused by the influence of the stars. Now we know about viruses. People used to believe in a three-tiered universe: with the heavens above the earth and hell below it. Now science can tell us about the infinity of space and geology can take us to the earth's core. People used to believe that a black person had a smaller brain capacity than a white person. Now we know that that was just a lie – invented to oppress. People used to believe that the Pot-Noodle was a wonderful discovery. Now we know...well, I'll let you complete the sentence.

Times change. Our understanding moves on and we learn to see things in new and different ways. However central our beliefs are to us and to our lives at any given point in time, they can and do change. And, as we can see from the examples already given, it can be a very good thing that they do.

When what we believe is something that we can neither see, touch, hear, taste or smell - when what we believe is something that we can't prove - we move into the realm of faith. But here again, our beliefs change - and again it can be good that they do. If our beliefs remain unaltered throughout our lives, it would suggest either that those beliefs have gone untested or that we've shied away from allowing them to be tested. Either way, it would perhaps point to a lack of growth. Change can lead to growth. A change in what we believe can lead to growth. But with growth come growing pains.

There are times in our lives when God seems so real to us that belief in God comes easily, so easily in fact that we struggle to see why others find it all so improbable. But then there are other times when God doesn't seem real at all - times when, in the face of life experience, the very idea of God, becomes more preposterous, fantastical and far-fetched by the minute. At such times we might well begin to doubt those beliefs we've previously held dear and ask ourselves, 'Have I been a fool to believe this stuff?'

In these days after Easter, we return to the accounts of Jesus' resurrection appearances and to the story of Thomas. It wasn't long ago when we were hearing the story of Lazarus. Then, when Jesus announced that Lazarus had died and signalled his intention to go to him, it was Thomas who'd boldly proclaimed, 'Let us also go, that we may die with him' (John 11.16) when all the other disciples were fearful of returning to Judea. Thomas believed in Jesus so much that he was prepared to follow him even if it led to death. And to death the journey ultimately did lead, of course, though not his own.

But in these early days after Jesus' death, Thomas' belief appears crushed. And when the disciples tell him that they've seen the Lord, Thomas will have none of it, famously saying, 'Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.'

The Thomas who believed in Jesus absolutely a matter of days earlier - and who'd seen Jesus raise Lazarus from the tomb - finds it impossible to accept the testimony of others when they tell him that Jesus is alive. How come? When Thomas had last seen the disciples they were all hiding behind locked doors so afraid were they of being caught by those who'd killed Jesus. Now, having seen Jesus, been commissioned by him and given the Holy Spirit, they were rejoicing. Could he not see the change in them? Was it so improbable and unbelievable, given all that he'd previously experienced and believed, that they were telling the truth? At that moment in time, in the place where Thomas was at mentally, the answer was 'yes'.

*'Doubt. It's like a spiritual drought, a starless night of the soul, a*

*low tide when faith*

*seems to have retreated forever' writes pastor, author and activist, Brian McLaren, before continuing, 'Nearly all of us experience these dry, dark, difficult times when God doesn't seem real and it's hard to keep going, much less growing. Sometimes these low tides of faith are connected with events ... the death of a loved one, a broken relationship, the loss of a job, a prolonged illness, questions raised by a book or professor. But sometimes they seem to come out of nowhere; it's sunny and bright outside, but inside you feel dark, cloudy, gray [sic], empty.'*

(<http://www.brianmclaren.net/emc/archives/resources/doubt-the-tides-of-faith-written.html>)

Life may well have become sunny and bright again for the other disciples. For Thomas, life following Jesus' death felt dark, cloudy, grey and empty indeed. It is harsh then that tradition should single him out and forever saddle him with that 'Doubting Thomas' label.

Brian McLaren goes on to speak of doubt sometimes being 'a call for attention and action'. He suggests that it 'tells us that something in us...a concept, an idea, a framework of thinking...deserves further attention because it may be harmful, or false, or imbalanced.' Having given that "something" further attention, having examined that belief, we can then 'either call it a keeper because it passed the test, discard it, or adjust it.'

Thomas needed to work things out in his own time, in his own way - he needed to work things through until he experienced a moment of revelation for himself, just as the other disciples had done. And when it did, he very quickly realised that he didn't need the physical proofs that he'd previously thought he would. Which is good news for the rest of us, who have none of those physical proofs but who believe in Jesus - or try to - nonetheless. From that moment when Thomas responded, 'My Lord and my God!', tradition assures us, there was no holding Thomas back as he travelled beyond the Roman Empire to preach the gospel, eventually establishing the church in India. If this is true then doubt had helped Thomas to find a belief that was truly life-changing and life-enhancing.

I'm drawn to Brian McLaren's language of the tides when talking of unbelief and belief, of doubt and faith. I like it because of the promise that it holds before us that, 'At the point where the tide of faith seems the lowest, if we hang on and don't give up, we'll see it come in again.'

That's the story of Thomas. Why shouldn't it be our story too?

With every blessing

*Paul*

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**CHRISTIAN  
SOLIDARITY  
WORLDWIDE**  
VOICE FOR THE VOICELESS

**April Press Releases  
from CSW**

What's been happening around the world...

Please stand with us in prayer for:

**IRAN:** Despite President Rouhani's speeches, the reality is that little has changed for religious minorities in Iran. Christmas was a tense time, marked by a continuation of the yearly ritual of arrests and harassment nicknamed the government's "Christmas present", designed to intimidate the Christian community. Five Christian converts were arrested as they celebrated Christmas in a house in Tehran, the capital, according to Mohabat News; and another convert in the city of Karaj was sentenced to one year in prison on evangelism-related charges, and another four were arrested while celebrating new year.

**SUDAN:** Sudanese authorities demolished and confiscated a Sudanese Church of Christ building in Omdurman, Sudan's largest city, on 17th February. The building housed a congregation of 300 and was demolished without prior notice to church authorities.

**NIGERIA:** Attacks on rural areas in Ademawa and Borno State by Boko Haram are occurring almost daily. According to the UN, so far nearly 300,000 people have been displaced by this violence. Assaults by armed Fulani herders in Plateau, Kaduna and Benue States are also increasing in frequency.

**NORTH KOREA:** On 17th February, CSW welcomed the report of the United Nations Commission of Inquiry on human rights in North Korea, which concluded that the regime in North Korea is committing crimes against humanity and recommended its referral to the International Criminal Court.

**PAKISTAN:** Several key people involved in the case against four militants accused of assassinating Shahbaz Bhatti, Pakistan's Federal Minister for Minorities Affairs, have received death threats from militant Islamist groups. Paul Bhatti, Shahbaz Bhatti's brother, received a letter warning him that he would suffer the same fate as his brother if he did not stop pursuing justice. Other lawyers and eyewitnesses involved in the case have also received death threats.

**CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC:** Pastor Kongbo, treasurer of the Union des Eglises Baptistes (UFB), was killed on 28th January along with his son at their home by Seleka forces as violence erupted in the northern suburbs of the Central African Republic's capital city Bangui. The day before, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights called for greater peacemaking efforts in the country as a matter of urgency.

Visit [www.csw.org.uk/prayerdiary](http://www.csw.org.uk/prayerdiary) for more information.

As we pray for people around the world who suffer for their faith, let's remember the hope of Easter, and that with God, nothing is impossible. (Luke 1:37)

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Do not let us fail one another in interest, care and practical help;  
but supremely we must not fail one another in prayer.

*Michael Baughen*



## *Could you join the team?*

*We are looking for 10 more volunteers.....*

**Family Support Coordinator[s] who would head up one of the 4 main aspects of the charity's work which is a lifesaver for so many families**

- to make appeals and manage collection /storage of food supplies
- to deploy and support the shoppers and cope with emergencies
- to keep records and liaise with committee
- flexible times but must be a car-driver and free to visit the office one morning a week

**Littlehampton Outing Organiser**

- to shadow the current organiser in Summer 2014 and take over in 2015
- involves working in the office in occasionally on mornings in April/May and regularly in June and until the outing on Saturday 5 July

**Falcon Camps Organiser**

- to shadow the current organiser in Summer 2014 and take over in 2015
- involves liaising with the 3 activity camps leaders, visiting some families – car needed, dealing with travel arrangements in August
- work could be done from home between February and August

**Relief Office Support**

- one morning weekly or fortnightly at the office

**Trustee**

- ideally someone with experience in Social Services
- to attend 10 evening committee meetings a year [not in August or December]
- to be actively involved and take on some responsibilities

## **2 Volunteers for the Furniture Project**

- to go out twice a month, one on a weekday morning and one on a Saturday morning for 3-4 hours
- the weekday volunteer must be willing to drive the transit van
- the Saturday volunteer could be the 'mate' accompanying a driver who does not have good English

## **Befrienders and Shoppers**

- fortnightly visits to a family either to offer support and /or deliver food parcels
- ideally a car-driver and available during the daytime

If you can help with any of the above or want more information contact:

Gillian Thick, Chair, Christian Care Association Office  
Martin Way Methodist Church, Buckleigh Avenue, London SW20 9JZ  
Phone: 0203 302 0181 Mobile: 07932 628840  
Email: christiancaremerton @gmail.com  
Website: christiancaremerton.org.uk

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# **Wimbledon Circuit Open Meeting**

## **June 10th**

### **7pm for 7.30pm**

## **Exploring Methodist Diaconal Ministry**

### **Speaker - Deacon Jane Rice**

**Venue: Ruxley Church**  
***everyone is invited***

The circuit is looking at different types of ministry and has invited a deacon to the next circuit meeting. The meeting is open to everyone and there will be time for questions and answers during the evening.

*Margaret Adams*

St Mary the Virgin, Merton Park Baptist, St James,  
Martin Way Methodist and St John Fisher being the  
**Churches Together in Merton Park**

invite you to our annual  
United Service



# **KING OF KINGS**

Merton Park Baptist Church  
Sunday 18 May 2014  
6.30pm



# Forever Living Products

The Aloe Vera Company

**BRING ALOE  
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**Beneficial for:**

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- \* Diabetes
- \* High Blood Pressure  
and many more.



**Young, Old or Middle-aged  
Pure Aloe Gel will do you *good***



**You can't change your life if  
you don't change your thinking**

**FOREVER** 

**For further information contact:  
Mike Fuwa  
Tel: 07956 369579  
Email: [mfuwa@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:mfuwa@blueyonder.co.uk)**

## **Aloe Vera**

About three years ago shortly after I had been diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes, I was introduced to a drink made from a cactus looking plant called Aloe Vera and was told this was a fantastic medicinal drink and was great for diabetics. Having seen what the side effects of long term use of medication can do to you through family members, I was determined not to go on medication and manage it through a combination of diet and trying the homeopathic route. I decided to go on the internet and find out more about what I was being told (as you do nowadays) as I had never heard of Aloe Vera. My research on the internet did actually show that yes, Aloe Vera gel has been known to regulate blood sugar levels and there had been successful clinical trials in Japan. I decided to try it out for 3 months as my GP had given me 3 months to see if I could manage my condition without the need for medication. I actually drank the Aloe Vera gel every day for a period of 6 months before going to see the nurse at the surgery. After taking my blood test (which was taken twice by the way to be sure!) I was given the all clear to carry on with what I was doing because my blood sugar level was down and within the limits of diet control .... for me this was a miracle!! This was the start of my Aloe Vera journey and in particular a journey with Forever Living, the company that makes a fantastic range of products from Aloe Vera



Aloe Vera, a plant known as ‘medicinal’, ‘miracle’, or ‘silent healer’ has many medicinal properties. It has been around for over two thousand years. It’s reported that Cleopatra used the plant, Alexander the great was known to have used it to heal the wounds of his soldiers. It is mentioned in the Bible in 5 different locations; Number 24:6, Psalm45:8, Proverbs 7:17, Songs of Solomon 4:14 and in John 19:39 aloes was mixed with myrrh to embalm Jesus.



Ghandi said “*You ask me what were the secret forces which sustained me during my long fasts. Well, it was my unshakeable faith in God, my simple and frugal lifestyle and the Aloe, whose benefits I discovered upon my arrival in South Africa at the end of the nineteenth century.*”

*Mahatma Ghandi (1869-1948)*

Aloe Vera is considered to be a miracle plant because of its too many curative and healing benefits. The leaf of the Aloe Vera is filled with a gel containing vitamins like A, B1, B2, B6, B12, C and E, Folic Acid and Niacin. Minerals found in Aloe Vera plant juice are copper, iron, sodium, calcium, zinc, potassium, chromium and magnesium. All these nutrients have tremendous health benefits when used externally and internally.

### **The 10 main benefits of Aloe Vera:**

1. Immune System booster
2. Helps in the control of blood glucose levels
3. High in vitamins: B1, B2, B3, B6 & B12
4. Helps with digestion
5. Helps in detoxification
6. Cardiovascular health
7. Great for the skin
8. Acts as a disinfectant, antibiotic, antiseptic, anti-fungal & anti-viral
9. Reduces inflammation
10. Heals cuts, burns, spots etc.

### **The 10 reasons to take Aloe Vera as a daily tonic:**

A Wonderful drink for good health: Aloe Vera Gel with all its important ingredients includes 19 of the 20 amino acid needed by the human body allowing the body to function at 100%.

A useful source of natural vitamins: It contains a large range of vitamins - even traces of B12 which is rarely found in plants. Apart from vitamin A, it contains B-Group vitamins, vitamin C, vitamin E and folic acid. Many of these vitamins cannot be stored by the body so we need to constantly top them up.

A useful source of minerals like calcium, magnesium, manganese, copper and zinc.

Aloe Vera is a natural “balancer” in many areas and nowhere more so that inside the gut, where it tends to regulate the various

bacteria and yeast that inhabit it.

Effects on the Musculoskeletal System: certain substances in the aloe, such as the salicylic acid and the plant sterols are able to soothe muscles and maintain healthy joints, mobility and flexibility.

Increases the activity of fibroblasts: fibroblasts are specialised cells found in the skin. Their job is to produce fibre such as collagen and elastin. These fibres give the skin its structure and of course, make it look plump and elastic. The more you have the younger your skin looks.

Effects on the Skin: Aloe Vera gel provides the essential nutrition to feed the skin's 'basal cells'. Allowing the skin to remain healthy and is able to perform the vital function more efficiently – as well as looking much better!

Balances the Immune System: among the substances identified in Aloe Vera is a long chain sugar (polysaccharide) that is known to have an effect on the cytokine system- the chemical messenger of the immune system. A strong immune system allows the body to naturally fight illness on its own.

Assists in healthy digestion: a healthy digestive tract ensures that nutrients from food we eat are absorbed into the bloodstream. There is clear, clinical evidence that by drinking the Aloe Vera gel the bowel is able to absorb these nutrients more efficiently especially protein.

Effect on the gut: Aloe Vera has a wonderfully beneficial action on the bowel function which results in smooth and efficient transit of contents resulting in a softer, bulkier stool, making it easier to pass, eliminating constipation.

Forever's Aloe Vera Gel is as close to the real thing as you can get and was the first of its kind to receive certification by the International Aloe Science Council. This rich blend of pulp and liquid gives us a product as near to nature as possible.

For further information please chat to me or you can contact me on:

Tel: 07956 369579

Email: [mfuwa@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:mfuwa@blueyonder.co.uk)

*Mike Fuwa*

## **Extreme Parable**

*Taken from: Extreme devotion, the voice of the martyrs from the co-authors of Jesus freaks. Serious followers of Jesus pay a price, and extreme followers often pay the ultimate price. Each story is true.*

### **EASTERN EUROPE: The parable of the three young trees**

In a forest one day, three young trees all agreed to pray that they would be used for some noble purposes rather than decay from old age.

The first tree wanted to become a manger where tired cattle could feed after a long day's work. God rewarded the tree for having such modesty. It became a very special manger -- the one in which the Son of God was laid.

The second tree prayed that it might become a boat. The prayer was answered, and soon its fine wood sheltered a very special passenger -- the Son of God. It heard Jesus calm a fierce storm by saying, "Peace, be still." The tree counted its life as worthwhile in order to witness such a scene.

The third tree, however was made into a large cross to serve as an instrument of suffering. The tree was initially deeply disappointed in its fate. However, one day Jesus of Nazareth was nailed to its limbs. Strange, but the cross did not hear groaning and cursing as on other crosses. Instead it heard the Son of God offer words of love and divine forgiveness -- words that opened paradise to a repentant thief.

The tree then understood that its part in the crucifixion of Jesus provided for the salvation of humankind.

*In underground churches across eastern Europe, the parable of the three trees was often told as an encouragement to those suffering for their faith. These believers needed to see purpose in what they endured. They must have had such high hopes and inspirations in when they originally said they wanted to be used by God for his glory. How could unjust suffering play into such a plan? Like the tree that formed the cross, they realised they were also being shaped into God's ultimate purpose for their lives. From this perspective, suffering is not seen as an interruption of God's plans for your life, but an integral part of the process.*

Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

(Romans 5:3-5)

# CHURCH DIARY



Sun	4	10.30 am	All Age Worship led by Valerie Ashcroft
Tue	6	10.30am-noon	Coffee and Chat
		8.00 pm	Time for Prayer
Fri	9	12.30 pm	Luncheon Club
Sat	10	10.30am-2.30pm	May Fair
Sun	11	10.30 am	Communion Service led by Rev Paul Timmis <i>Start of Christian Aid Week</i>
Tue	13	10.30am-noon	Coffee and Chat
		8.00 pm	Time for Prayer
			<i>Start of Christian Resources Exhibition</i>
Weds	15	8.00 pm	Leadership Meeting
Sun	18	10.30 am	Morning Worship led by Brenda Cannon <i>Christian Aid Sponsored Walk - all welcome to join Tony, Mike, and others</i>
		6.30 pm	Communion Service led by Rev Paul Timmis
		6.30 pm	United Service at Merton Park Baptist Church
Tue	20	10.30am-noon	Coffee and Chat
		7.00 pm	Men's Supper Club - <i>Anne Conquest</i> - A charitable walk in Peru
		8.00 pm	Time for Prayer
Fri	23	12.30 pm	Luncheon Club
Sun	25	10.30 am	Morning Worship led by Tony Loft
Tue	27	10.30am-noon	Coffee and Chat
		8.00 pm	Time for Prayer

*Please refer to the Website ([www.martinway.org.uk](http://www.martinway.org.uk))  
or Weekly Notice Sheet for any additional information*

We wish all of those who celebrate a birthday  
in May a very

*Happy Birthday*

and especially to:



**Seleso Sepanya on 3rd May**

**Lesedi Sepanya on 17th May**

**James Smith on 18th May**

**Alex Pallister on 19th May**

**Elizabeth Turnbull on 22nd May**

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**30th Christian Resources Exhibition  
Tuesday 13th - Friday 16th May**

**Equipping and empowering the Church  
for the next generation**



Church leaders, youth and children's workers, in fact anyone involved in leadership continually need to discover new and fresh ways to communicate God's unchanging message. That's why there is no better place to equip yourself and your church than CRE International at Sandown Park in Esher.

With an anticipated 350 exhibitors from puppet suppliers to clerical vestments, church furniture to mission organisations we guarantee you won't be disappointed.

CRE is more than just an exhibition; it's an event with seminars and workshops led by gifted communicators in their field of expertise with presentations ranging from how to lead worship to young people and the Bible. There is also an opportunity for you to enjoy time in the arts theatre with performances from theatre companies, worship leaders, comedians and many more.

Visit the website for more information at: [www.creonline.co.uk](http://www.creonline.co.uk)

## **MARTIN WAY MAY FAIR**

**Come along and join in the fun from children's games to browsing the stalls and enjoying the refreshments at the Martin Way May Fair on Saturday 10th May ~ 10.30am-2.30pm**

- Jane Bryan is organising a Jar Tombola. Please give any filled jars to Jane.
- Save you old books for the Book Stall - Anyone with books to donate to the who cannot bring them to the church can ring Bas Knight on 02085403629 or Doug Neale on 02085422747 and we will pick them up from you.
- We also need helpers on the day.

Please speak to Abby Herring if you can help or just want more information.

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### **Raynes Park Methodist Church celebrates 100 years**

On **SATURDAY 17th MAY**, Raynes Park Methodist Church buildings will be open to everyone from 10.30am to 3.30pm. There will be a Flower Festival, an exhibition of historical artefacts and a presentation of the Church's history.

On **SUNDAY 18th MAY**, worship at 10.30am will be led by Revd Margaret Adams, and the guest preacher will be Dr Daleep Mukarji, Vice President of the Methodist Conference.

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### **Christian Care Food Collection**

Please note that the Food Collection for Christian Care that was scheduled for April has been delayed until June.

A revised list will be made available nearer the time.

Items for the **June Newsletter** should be with Andrew Fox, (email: roife@hotmail.co.uk) by **Sunday 18th May** at the latest