

MINISTER'S LETTER



‘So what are you giving up for Lent?’ is a question that’s frequently asked at this time of year. Answers to this question can be many and varied, of course. Alcohol. Coffee. Facebook. Mobile phones. Tablets (by which I mean those hand-held computer devices but I guess some people might wish to give up the other sort). Swearing. Television. These are all things that we hear people say from time to time although, in my experience, the answer that most people usually come back to is ‘chocolate’.

In truth, I never give up anything. This could be an act of laziness on my part but really I think it is because I have never seen the point.

The idea behind giving something up for Lent is that it is supposed to help us to identify with Jesus’ time of fasting and testing in the wilderness. But if I see this as being a time in which Jesus is wrestling with himself, trying to work out who he is and what he must do, whilst having to rely entirely on God (and this is how I make sense of this episode in Jesus’ life), how does giving up beer, coffee or chocolate help me to get in touch with such a person, such questions, such an approach to life? So I have never bothered.

In recent years, people have been suggesting that, rather than give something up, we might take something on for Lent instead. Christian Aid has been taking people on its *Count Your Blessings* journey for a number of years of course and this is something you may wish to consider. Beyond this, there are several online blog suggestions as to what sort of thing we might take on. For example, one might commit oneself to:

- get outdoors each day (to remind ourselves of God’s omnipresence and creative powers)
- turn worry into prayer (to become less self-absorbed and more aware of God’s presence)
- spend time with other people - and not necessarily just those

whom we know and love (revealing God's love through acts of generosity and kindness)

- write and post a card/letter to or phone someone every day (to remind people that they are cherished and loved)
- lighten a load for someone and/or to help a stranger (for this is the work of Christ)
- serve a servant (to show someone who serves you in some way that they and what they do are/is valued)
- offer to become your local church's Bookings Secretary or Worship Co-ordinator (to enable your church to continue to operate effectively)*

Whether you traditionally give something up for Lent or not, I encourage everyone to try something different this year. Who knows? Maybe this will be just the start of something. And maybe an alternative approach may draw us all closer to the God revealed to us in Jesus and bring us even more alive to the life of the world.

With every blessing

Paul

*OK, I admit it. I added the last one. But these are vacancies that we currently have within our church and we desperately need to fill them, so please consider offering your services for one of them and feel free to ask me what either of these roles involves.

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Lent comes providentially to reawaken us,
to shake us from our lethargy.

Fasting makes sense if it really chips away at our security and, as a consequence, benefits someone else, if it helps us cultivate the style of the good Samaritan, who bent down to his brother in need and took care of him.

Pope Francis

Extreme Letters

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.

THE UKRAINE

The Soviet newspaper, *Molodij Gruzii*, reported the imprisonment of three Christians. Their crime was starting an organised chain letter to help people all across the Soviet Union understand the teachings of Jesus Christ.

Unable to publish Bibles or Christian books, they began sending out multiple copies of these letters and asking recipients to make copies and pass them on. Through this creative method of spreading the gospel, thousands of letters had reached into many areas of the Soviet Union. The children especially like them because they were not allowed to attend church, and the letters became an integral part of their Christian teaching.

In addition, these letters helped to bolster the faith of Christians throughout the country during that time. After years of government repression and interference in their churches, they were ready to try something bold and new. They sincerely wanted everyone to know about the love of God, and despite the restrictions placed upon them, their brilliant simplicity allowed the message to spread throughout the town of Tbilisi and even into some areas of the Ukraine! Another newspaper article stated, "The Christians have flooded our town with their writings." It described this coordinated effort as "an offensive on the part of the believers."

Who could predict the far-reaching effects of a mere chain letter!

After fifty years of tyranny against Christianity, Soviet officials felt threatened by a chain letter. Their cowardly response demonstrates the power contained in God's Word. Oppression does not yield to human effort. It does not soften with feelings of sympathy. It only resists the powerful Word of God -- active and alive in the lives of believers. Satan trembles at the power contained in God's Word. Are we as aware of its power as its adversaries are? If it has been a long time since you experienced awe when reading Scripture, ask God for a second chance. Ask him to show you his power and experience the Word's effect on your life today.

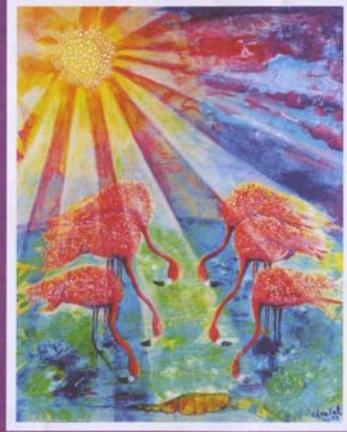
Your word, O Lord, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens. (Psalm 119:89)



JESUS SAID TO THEM:
DO YOU KNOW WHAT I HAVE DONE TO YOU?



Friday
6th March
Women's
World Day
of Prayer



All are welcome

Praying for The Bahamas

10:30am

**Christ Church, 16 Copse Hill,
SW20 0HG**

8:00pm

**Martin Way Methodist Church,
SW20 9JZ**

Although organised and led by women,
this is essentially a day of prayer for everybody
as we demonstrate our solidarity with our sisters
and brothers in other countries.

All are welcome to attend.

My Prison Visit

My morning reading from Amos initially challenged me on my comfortable lifestyle and getting out of my comfort zone but, I did not dwell too much on this since I was waking up on Thursday January 22nd at 5.30 to a freezing, cold and, still dark morning to meet my friends at the Highdown prison in Banstead.



A group of 25 of us was to meet at the Conference Centre arranged by Rev. Mark Tomlinson, a local Sutton Minister and Projects Director of Sutton Community works. Catrin Hubbard, who is a Christian worker with Sutton Schoolwork had previously informed us that this prison visit and breakfast at the Clink restaurant would be a very worthwhile experience. Also as part of our outreach to the community, we, at the Welsh Presbyterian church in Lind Road, Sutton were encouraged by our minister the Rev. Richard Brunt to avail ourselves and venture out of our comfort zones.

Sutton Community Works (www.suttoncommunityworks.org) is a charity formed of over 12 local Sutton churches and Mark oversees the Sutton Street Pastors, School Pastors, Sutton Foodbank, Sutton Seniors and Prayer for Sutton. The Sutton Schoolworks (www.suttonschoolwork.co.uk) was founded in 1995 to support the provision of collective worship across the London Borough of Merton and to increase the knowledge and understanding of the Christian faith among children and young people. The Welsh church in Lind Road has benefited greatly when Catrin has shared her expertise and taken part in our Welsh services and in her native language.



HM Prison Highdown, built in 1992, houses 1,200 category B and category C male prisoners. After being subjected to the usual strict security protocol, we were led to the warmth and the welcomed

atmosphere of the Clink restaurant which operates as a mess for prison staff and training workshop for prisoners. Hard to believe we were on the site of the former Banstead lunatic asylum. The restaurant can be compared to any other West end Eco-friendly eating place. The food and service was of the highest quality and the fellowship sweet in a relaxed atmosphere.



The purpose of the visit as well as meeting together as church leaders was to hear about and pray for the local prison's work. After breakfast there was an opportunity to hear about the various services of the prison i.e. healthcare, drug counselling, detox, literacy and other rehabilitation programs especially for the re-offenders. The re-offending rate was particularly high in Highdown (40-50%) in 2010 and the establishment of the Clink restaurant has helped and continues to give hope to many prisoners and achieved a verified re-offending rate of 12.5% in 2014. It was refreshing to hear about the positive work that is being done as opposed to what we hear in the media regarding the low morale of the prison staff.

Before we got down to praying in groups for the prison work and for each other, there was an opportunity to introduce ourselves. When it became obvious that the Welsh contingent was well represented, a friendly banter followed where most in the group purported to have a Welsh relative or a connection!

The visit proved to be a worthwhile and challenging experience. On my way home I was able to reflect on those accusing words of Amos aimed at those living in complacency and luxury. The prisoners in Highdown do not live in luxury and their needs are great. God wants us to care for others as he cares for us and we must put the needs of others before our wants. Let's get out of our comfortable pews and chairs!

Gwen Wildman

"Having food and raiment, with these we shall suffice ourselves"

(1 Tim 6:8 Young's Literal Translation)

Love One Another

In Merton and across Great Britain on Sunday 1st February many Mosques opened their doors welcoming people in so they could see and learn that they are not the headquarters for extremists; they wanted to share understandings with others in friendship and caring away from all the horrible happenings of these many groups of extremists in many countries today. On that day after our church service, over coffee, I asked generally “Is anyone visiting the open invitation to a Mosque today?” I received a few smiles, a few looks of surprise and a few of shock!

These reactions reminded me of an article in the 6th December edition of Radio Times by a Christian Commentator, where after commenting on the hit single “Do they know it’s Christmas?” he said if the sale of this single had just been for children the better song title would have been “Do they know what Christmas is?” He stated that the Bible Society survey in 2012/4 indicated 25% of our children had never heard of Noah’s Ark, similar numbers had not heard of the Nativity, 43% not heard of the Crucifixion and 53% had never read, seen or heard of Joseph and his coat of many colours. He commented that, without the knowledge of Christianity, what would our kids make of some literature – drama- Christian imagery? He then goes on to say about integration, if we do not know about our own faith, how can we integrate? It works both ways, do other faiths know about Christmas, and what efforts do us Christians know about other faiths; their times of celebrations (ie Eid al-Adha, Hanukkah, etc) How are we supposed to grow nearer to each other without a broader understanding? We are not looking for conversion but understanding and friendship with the “over the garden wall” cup of tea. At the ordinary level of folk I think there is that neighbourliness and friendship with respect. Like most religions there are differences in ranks and systems as seen through the different denominations in Christianity, often not a good example of getting on as one, so we cannot criticise other faiths.

If we go back hundreds of years Christianity was as savage and brutal as is now instantly seen in the Middle East on our 24 hour TV screens,

we are now allegedly more educated than the unschooled tribes of the world trying to fire their types of beliefs. Are we any better? TV recently showed the Holocaust happenings and the First World War savagery. Yes we are all capable of these horrors.

Forgive me, I've been rambling! What I'm trying to say is, we have to learn more about one another in Peace, at street level it can be done, but then we have the critics who are always ready for a fight. Faith leaders often cause distrust with actions and words and TV reporting can be very one sided or a scene plainly fixed.

Where we live we have Muslim and Hindi neighbours, some stay at home Christians, some we don't know. But we all are good neighbours, respecting each others faiths or thoughts, each helping one another at times of need.

When we have a chance to learn about each other and respect one's beliefs we need to speak up, we are all what we are because of where we were born and how we were brought up. THINK ABOUT THAT!

Surely our young people are being let down because of a lack of understanding and education, it will take a lot of time and bad happenings because of extremism near our own doorsteps. We really do need to share and mix.

In our travels, Mary and I, have met many faiths, at our level where love and kindness have been shared, especially in the Middle East, the natives of Canada and Alaska, and elsewhere. Throughout their history and beliefs, the tribes of the world have always had a Supreme Being with prophets and messengers and many different names. Let's share these beliefs in peace and togetherness with our 'Supreme' being and as our minister Paul said in his letter in our February Newsletter, "Love one another". Let us work at that!

Derek Heaton

PS

Why not read Genesis 11 verses 5-9

Was this a test our Lord gave us? Could we live peacefully together in this "mumbo-jumbo" world? What a test!!

We believe every
Human being
Has worth seeing
Every name
Is a sound worth saying
Your potential
A prayer worth praying
You see coal - God sees diamonds

We believe in the grace
Of the gifts Gods gives
His breath
In everything that lives
Greater gifts to be discovered
Deep in you, disguised, dust covered
You see coal - God sees diamonds

We see God seeking
A servant generation
Kindness a the kindling
To kick start transformation
Love as liberation
Of a captive creation
We are digging for diamonds God sees.

Gerald Kelly 2011
www.blessnet.eu

What are your gifts?

Sometimes it is hard to identify the gifts that God has given us.

Are you any of these?

Artistic

Organised

Problem Solver

**Sociable and
Outgoing**

A good listener

Do You?

Help others in need

**Empathise and
Understand**

Share your knowledge

Like practical things, like baking, making & fixing

Can You?

Cheer people up

**Lead and
Organise**

Motivate others

Teach Others

If you are still struggling, why not ask someone who knows you well what they think your gifts are.

Now that you have some idea about your gifts, how are you going to use them to do God's work? Remember, this can be at Church, at school, at work or with your family and friend.

**We can perform God's work at any time and at any place,
not just on a Sunday in church.**

Saturday 25 April 2015

11:00am - 4:00pm,

doors open at 10am for registration

Venue:

Emmanuel Centre, Marsham Street
Westminster, SW1P 3DW



**SPEAKING OUT FOR
RELIGIOUS FREEDOM**
HEAR THE STORIES,
BE ENCOURAGED
AND INSPIRED TO
**ACT, PRAY,
CHALLENGE**

Join hundreds of CSW supporters for an inspiring day of expert speakers, real life testimonies, latest news from the front lines. The whole event is designed to equip you and other Christians in your role of encouraging the persecuted Church and speaking up for religious freedom.

The Religious Liberty Commission (RLC), was launched at Westminster on February 4th and called on the British government to intervene to prevent religious cleansing and violent persecution.

The Most Reverend and Rt Hon Justin Welby gave the keynote address at the launch of the RLC at the Palace of Westminster. Highlighting the persecution of Christians in the Middle East, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, attacks against Jews in Europe and the firebombing of mosques, he told an audience of parliamentarians and church leaders:



‘That quiet creeping removals of freedom that create a climate of fear and animosity is why we must speak out. We must speak out in solidarity. Silence is not an option. Treasuring the dignity of each and

every human must mean that we treasure their right to religious belief – even when we profoundly disagree with them.’

‘A staggering 76 per cent of the world’s population live in countries with high restrictions on religious freedom,’ said Mervyn Thomas, the CEO of Christian Solidarity Worldwide. *‘The vast majority of those facing persecution are Christians. The situation is simply too important for the world to ignore.’* Launching the RLC, he added: *‘Our purpose is to amplify the cries of the persecuted so the world can no longer ignore them.’*

According to the RLC, Christians are subject to violence, intimidation and discrimination in more than 50 countries. Some are murdered because of their faith. *'In the very birthplace of Christianity, the Middle East, the Christian faith is in danger of extinction,'* said Mervyn Thomas.

Evangelical Alliance General Director Steve Clifford called on Christian leaders from all denominations to adopt the International Day of Prayer for Persecuted Christians (IDOP) as an annual event in the church calendar. *'We must make sure that the plight of the persecuted church is heard,'* he said.

And the RLC urged the media to give greater importance to persecution issues – especially where there was evidence of religious cleansing.

A victim of persecution in Eritrea, one of the world's most repressive regimes, described the attacks there against Christians.

The Rev Dr Berhane Ashmelash said:

'Today in Eritrea, Christians are being persecuted. Many are imprisoned and regularly subjected to starvation, heavy labour and solitary confinement.

'Prison could be an underground pit or a metal shipping container. Torture is frequent. People are tied by both hands and legs and hanged on trees for hours or days. One form of hanging is the "Jesus Christ" which looks like a crucifix.

'I was arrested and tortured with 'Number 8': they tie your arms and put a log under your knees. Many years later, I still feel a numbness on the back of my hand.

'We strongly call for the international community to put pressure on Eritrea for the immediate release of all prisoners of conscience.'

The Archbishop of Canterbury said he welcomed the coordination of voices speaking out against persecution under the one banner of the RLC, adding: *'I echo warmly the RLC's encouragement for religious and political leaders to speak out in unison against any violation of freedom of religion.'*

For more details and information visit www.csw.org.uk



Inside St Raphael's Hospice

Illness puts a huge strain on individuals and families and, at St Raphael's, we are concerned not just for the patients under our care but also for those who are important to them.

Our counselling service, based at the Hospice, provides a safe haven for patients and families where they can explore issues and emotions they feel unable to share with family or friends. This might be something within a family relationship or feelings of anger or guilt about the illness. Our counsellors will help them to resolve these difficulties so they are able to say 'goodbye'. For a child to lose a parent or grandparent is always difficult and our social worker aims to give parents the skills they need to talk to their children about what is happening and to normalise the whole process of being seriously ill and dying.

As well as providing support during a patient's life part of our Bereavement Service is a team of specially trained volunteers who telephone relatives after a loved one has died. One of these volunteers is Sister Lucy (a member of the Daughters of the Cross): *"Sometimes when you phone people they are alone or, if they are in a family, they don't want to share how they are feeling and upset everyone else. They feel they have to keep strong for others but we let them talk. We send a letter first saying that someone will telephone and then we call and mention the person's name and when they died so that they know we are genuine. We give them a space and time to explore their experience of grief and are able to help validate what they are experiencing."*



If you would like to find out more about St Raphael's Hospice visit our website www.straphaels.org.uk or email rosej.johnson@straphaels.org.uk

**CHURCH
DIARY**



Sun	1	10.30am	All Age Worship led by Valerie Ashcroft
		6.30pm	Communion Service led by Rev Paul Timmis
Tue	3	10.30am-noon	Coffee and Chat
		8.00 pm	Time for Prayer
Fri	6	10.30am	Women's Day of Prayer service at Christ Church, 16 Copse Hill
		8.00pm	Women's Day of Prayer service at Martin Way Methodist Church
Sun	8	10.30am	Communion Service led by Rev Paul Timmis
Tue	10	10.30am-noon	Coffee and Chat
		8.00 pm	Time for Prayer
Wed	11	7.30pm	Leadership Meeting
Fri	13	12.30pm	Luncheon Club
Sun	15	10.30am	Mothering Sunday Service led by David Eagle
Tue	17	10.30am-noon	Coffee and Chat
		7.30pm	Men's Supper Club - <i>Hugh Proctor</i> - Fun with numbers 2
		8.00pm	Time for Prayer
Sun	22	10.30am	Morning Service led by Rev Paul Timmis
Tue	24	10.30am-noon	Coffee and Chat
		8.00 pm	Time for Prayer
Fri	13	12.30pm	Luncheon Club
Sat	28	10.00am	Big Brunch
Sun	29	10.30am	Morning Service led by Rev Paul Timmis
Mon	30	8.00pm	Easter Meditation
Tue	31	10.30am-noon	Coffee and Chat
		8.00pm	Easter Meditation

*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 March a very

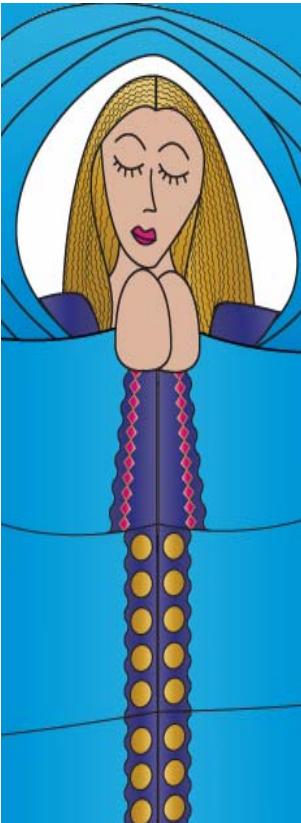
Happy Birthday
and especially to:

Ruby Day on 3rd March
Matthew Loft on 9th March



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Prayer for Mother's day



Now I lay me down to sleep
I pray my sanity to keep
For if some peace I do not find
I'm pretty sure I'll lose my mind.
I pray I find a little quiet
Far away from my family's riot
May I lay back and not have to think
about what they're stuffing down the sink,
or who they're with, or where they're at,
or what they're doing to the cat.

I pray for time all to myself
(did I hear something fall off the shelf?
A silent moment for Goodness sake
(was that the window I just heard break!)
Yes now I lay me down to sleep
I pray my wits about me keep
But as I look around I know,
I must've lost them long ago.

GARDENING and RECYCLING

Would you like your garden tidied and cleared without having done the hard work yourself? A local gardener, established since 1999, is available for grass and hedge cutting, planting, weeding, pruning, turfing, general maintenance and garden design.

Free estimates. Reasonable rates. All garden rubbish cleared. References available. Fully insured.

Also, do you have any electrical items you no longer need? Would you like them taken away free of charge and recycled? Any size item taken including cookers and washing machines but not fridges.

For further information on gardening or recycling please contact

Terry Austen on 020 8254 9415 or 07450 737827

Email: trausten@aol.co.uk

The Marsden March

Each year, thousands of people walk 14 or 5 miles between our Chelsea and Sutton hospitals to support The Royal Marsden and help build a future beyond cancer.



Tony Loft is taking part in this year's sponsored 14 mile walk on Sunday 22nd March for the Royal Marsden Cancer Charity. He is looking for sponsors.

Please speak with him if you would like to give to a very worthy cause.

Items for the **April Newsletter** should be with Andrew Fox, (email: roife@hotmail.co.uk) by **Sunday 22nd March** at the latest