

MINISTER'S LETTER

I am currently reading the novel *The Versions Of Us* by Laura Barnett. I can't say too much about it here for risk of including plot spoilers but what I can share is the blurb on the back cover:



'What if you had said yes...?'

Eva and Jim are nineteen, and students at Cambridge, when their paths first cross in 1958. Jim is walking along a lane when a woman approaching him on a bicycle swerves to avoid a dog.

What happens next will determine the rest of their lives.

We follow three different versions of their future - together and apart - as their love story takes on different incarnations and twists and turns to the conclusion in the present day.

Being just over half way through the book, I still have no idea how these three different versions will play out, but, as clever the structure is - hopping as it does between the three versions, always resting at similar times chronologically - I keep forgetting where each version left off a few chapters earlier. I am therefore beginning to think that, should the story/stories hold my attention, I might re-read it, following one "version" at a time. We'll see.

I mention all of this here because the premise of the book is an interesting one, I think. As human beings we continually make choices and these determine not only how our lives play out but also how they impact upon the lives of others. All of us, I guess, looking back on our lives would change some of the things that we have said, done (or not said and not done) if only we could. Unlike in the world of the novel, what we cannot say with any degree of certainty is how things would have unfolded if we had acted differently and taken a different path.

To some degree, that is the case with Jesus too. He wasn't, I don't think, pre-programmed to behave in a particular way. He was a human being. Flesh of our flesh and bone of our bone. He had choices to make and decisions to take. He could have chosen and decided differently. So some questions for us all to ponder in the days and weeks ahead:

How would the world look now - what would our lives be like now - had the events of that first Easter unfolded differently? What if, when the Pharisees warned Jesus that Herod wanted to kill him, Jesus had thanked them for the tip off and returned to Nazareth to lie low? What if he hadn't overturned the tables of the moneychangers in the Temple? What if, at the last supper, he had called Judas out? What if, in Gethsemane, he had resisted arrest and fled for his life? What if, in the kangaroo court of the Sanhedrin or standing before Pilate or Herod for that matter, he'd done more to challenge the accusations being made against him? What if, on the cross, he had responded to the taunts of the criminals by saving himself? What if? What if? What if? So many "What ifs". But then all of our lives are full of 'What ifs.'

Each year Easter confronts us with the question, "What is your response to Jesus' act of love going to be?" What if, this year, our answer could be truly wholehearted?

With every blessing

Paul

————— < 0 > —————



The Versions of Us by Laura Barnett

Is available either as a Hardback

ISBN: 9781474600163

RRP £12.99

Or as a Paperback

ISBN: 9781474600897

RRP £7.99

It is also available to borrow through Merton libraries.

An Extreme Prayer

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.

CHINA : A SOLDIER IN THE RED GUARD

This interesting letter was smuggled out of Communist China:

"I am a teenager and a soldier in the Red Guard. I did not believe in any God, in any heaven, in any hell, in any Saviour, in anything at all. One day I accidentally tuned in to your transmission on the radio. At first I was tempted to turn it off. Good Communists do not believe in God. But I found the program interesting, so I tuned in again and again. Now I believe in God. But I have two questions.

"The first one: Does God accept anybody from Communist China? In your broadcast you speak about the church, but I am in China where we have almost no churches. Can God accept somebody without a church?"

This young soldier did not know how many unofficial churches existed in China or that all those who love Christ are the church. Then he asked his second question: "Would you please teach me to pray? You start every radio program with a prayer. I would like to pray, but I don't know how."

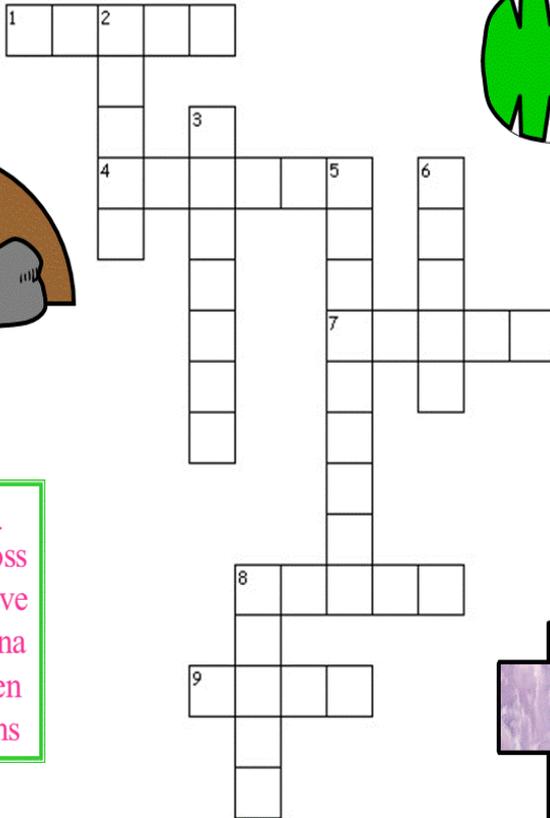
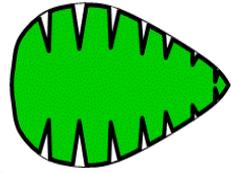
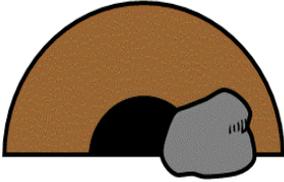
The soldier had never been in a church, but he said that he imagined prayer meant, "to speak the whole day so that after everything you say, you might be able to add 'Amen.' "

What a beautiful definition of prayer.

Prayer is not natural. In fact, it doesn't come to anyone naturally because it is a supernatural experience. God gives us a spiritual desire to communicate with him. Like mathematics or language, prayer is a learned skill. The more we practice prayer, the more natural it becomes. The young believer in this story defined prayer as affecting every aspect of life and, thus, making one's whole life a prayer to God. How are you growing in your own experience with prayer? Are you out of practice? Starting today, ask God to give you a supernatural desire to speak with him and make prayer a natural part of every day. Then start practicing. May your life be a prayer.

Therefore let everyone who is godly pray to you. (Psalm 32:6)

Easter Crossword



Word List:

bread cross
sacrifice love
stone hosanna
empty risen
slept thorns



Across

1. Taking this during the last supper symbolized Jesus' body.
4. Jesus was forced to wear a crown made of these instead of a crown meant for a real king.
7. The angel told the women, "Don't be afraid, Jesus isn't here; He has ____!"
8. Instead of praying the disciples did this when Jesus went off to pray by himself.
9. The main reason that God gave His only son, Jesus to die for each of us.

Down

2. On Sunday the two Mary's didn't find Jesus but a tomb that was ____.
3. The word people shouted to Jesus that means blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord
5. Jesus became the ____ for us, so we could be forgiven for our sins.
6. Jesus was meant to die on this.
8. This was put in front of the tomb so nobody could steal Jesus' body.



FAIRTRADE RECIPES

Hot Cross Buns Makes about 12 buns.



Ingredients

50g, plus 1 level tsp, caster sugar
1 level tbs dried yeast
450g plain flour
1 level tsp salt
1 rounded tsp mixed spice
125g Tropical Wholefoods
Fairtrade Raisins
40-55 ml warmed milk
1 egg, beaten
50 g butter, melted

For the glaze

2 tbs granulated sugar
2 tbs water

For the crosses

4 oz (110 g) plain flour and 3 tbs water
You will also need a greased baking sheet.

1. First stir the teaspoon of caster sugar into 150 ml hand-hot water, then sprinkle in the dried yeast and leave it until a good frothy 'beer' head forms.
2. Meanwhile sift the flour, salt and mixed spice into a mixing bowl and add the remaining 50 g of sugar, and the raisins.
3. Make a well in the centre, pour in the yeast mixture plus 40 ml of milk (again hand-hot), the beaten egg and the melted butter. Now mix it to a dough, starting with a wooden spoon and finishing with your hands (add a spot more milk if it needs it).
4. Transfer the dough on to a clean surface and knead it until it feels smooth and elastic – about 6 minutes.
5. Now pop it back into the bowl, cover the bowl with a lightly oiled plastic bag, and leave it in a warm place to rise – it will take about an hour to double its original size.
6. Turn it out and knead it again, back down to its original size.
7. Divide the mixture into 12 round portions, arrange them on the greased baking sheet (allowing plenty of room for expansion). Leave them to rise once more, covering again with the oiled plastic bag, for about 25 minutes. Meanwhile pre-heat the oven to 220C/425F/gas mark 7.
8. For the crosses, mix the flour and water, roll out very thinly and divide into small strips, dampen and place on top of the buns before baking.
9. Bake the buns for about 15 minutes. While they're cooking, make the glaze by melting the sugar and water over a gentle heat. Brush the buns with the glaze as soon as they come out of the oven, to make them nice and sticky.



**CHRISTIAN
SOLIDARITY
WORLDWIDE**
VOICE FOR THE VOICELESS

Prayer Alert Christian Solidarity Worldwide

If you've been following our #300toomany campaign, you'll know that we've been praying for over 300 lawyers and their associates who were arrested during the Chinese government's crackdown on human rights defenders – a far-reaching attempt to stamp out opposition.

On 25 February, human rights lawyer Zhang Kai will have been in detention for six months. According to Chinese law, once those six months are up he must either be formally arrested or released. Everyone expects Zhang to be arrested, and to disappear into the prison system like so many of his colleagues.

On 7-13 March we'll be holding a week of prayer for Burma.

I'm sure you remember the celebrations last autumn following the news that, after years of dedicated campaigning in the face of severe opposition, Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) party was elected to become the new government of Burma. However, winning was just the beginning and the NLD faces many challenges ahead as they form their new government.

We're using the 7-13 March to focus our prayers on Burma all week, as well as holding a special free prayer evening on Friday 11 March at the Emmanuel Centre in London, SW1P 3DW. We'll be inviting some speakers to give a detailed look at the post-election situation in Burma to help you pray for the country at this crucial time, and we'd love to see you there! It runs from 7-9pm (doors open at 6.30). You can find out more on our website.

Lent 3 - Latin America

In the third week of Lent, we're turning our focus to Latin America: Colombia, Cuba, Mexico and Peru. Next month will hopefully see a peace agreement between the Colombian government and the FARC, a leftist guerilla group, after decades of violent civil war. This is hugely encouraging news for Colombian Christians, who are often violently attacked by the FARC. The FARC have been responsible for atrociously violating the right of religious freedom in Colombia, regularly targeting churches and their leaders, and restricting people's right to worship freely. Government forces are also guilty of human rights violations and continue to forcibly recruit conscientious objectors, based on their religious convictions.

In Mexico, Christians are still being driven from their homes. For example, this

year in Oaxaca State, a Protestant and his family have been banned from their village and the children have been stopped from going to school.

In summary, please pray:

- For the Chinese authorities to release Zhang Kai;
- For Zhang to know the peace of God as he faces the potential prospect of further jail time;
- For the over 300 human rights defenders and their associates who remain a target for the Chinese government.
- For Protestant Christians in Mexico – that God would be their strength, as they live in communities who are often hostile towards them;
- That Christians who have been forced to leave their homes would find safe places to stay;
- For peace and harmony to reign in multi-religious communities in Mexico;
- Thank God for the peace agreement in Colombia;
- That the peace agreement would pave the way for true peace in Colombia;
- For safety for the young men in Colombia who are forced to fight despite their religious objections;
- For God to protect Christians in Colombia who are often targeted by guerrilla groups.

————— < 0 > —————



Churches Together in Merton Park invite you to a

Passover Seder

1st March 2016 | 7.15 - 9.00 PM
MARTIN WAY METHODIST CHURCH

Led by Judy Weleminsky & Sharon Coussins from Wimbledon Synagogue
Enter into the Passover as Jesus would have done.
Tickets £5 per person.

See weekly notices
for further details





RECEIVE CHILDREN. RECEIVE ME



Friday
4th March
Women's
World Day
of Prayer
All are welcome



Praying for Cuba

10:30am

Merton Park Baptist Church
Bushey Road, London SW20 8TE
(164 bus between Kingston Road & Chestnut Road)

and

8:00pm

Holy Trinity Church
The Broadway, London SW19 1SB
(Polka Theatre bus stop)

Refreshments are served after each service



Rock & Roll - Arthur's 2015 Fastnet Race

*Last year Simon Hardaker - the brother-in law of Keith Heaton (Derek and Mary Heaton's youngest son) took part in The Fastnet Race to raise money for Sail4Cancer. This is his story of the race that he, the team and **Arthur** took part in.*

Part Two

We get to Portland just as the tide is turning against us, and despite having headed offshore to get away from the worst of it, and once more as the wind dies yet again, we start 'sailing' in a circle at the whim of the tidal stream. The tide changes after a couple of frustrating, windless hours and we're once again making headway down to the west with a light following breeze.

Throughout Monday, the wind stays behind us and we're soon moving steadily, if not too quickly, along under spinnaker. Before we get too cocky about this turn of fortune, the spinnaker halyard shackle pops open and the sail gently floats down from the mast-head (so slowly on the breeze in fact that we catch it before it's had a proper rinse in the sea! Or maybe we're just getting better at recovery?). **Zus** is dispatched up the mast



on the only other halyards we have available. They only reach about three quarters of the way up the mast though, but with a 6ft boat hook, she snares, untangles and brings the guilty spinnaker halyard and shackle back to the deck. We hoist our sail again quickly and carry on.

Running downwind past Plymouth and on to Lands End for the outward leg, we changeover spinnakers. Imagine the forces needed to pull a 10-ton yacht through the water at 10 knots, much of these concentrated on the spinnaker guy controlling the end of the spinnaker pole and windward bottom end of the sail. Releasing it can be a tricky business and is done by pushing a marlin-spike through a quick release mechanism in the shackle. The release of these forces on this occasion causes **Zus** to lose her footing in the bow and go over the guard wires and over the side. She's still attached though and since she is also our chef, and hot food is important to us, **George** and **Anna** decide to bring her back on board and send her down below to dry off. In a reversal of roles from the last race, **Will** the Machine checks 'Florence' is fine to continue.

Overnight, we sail at speeds between about 2- 8 knots toward the Scilly Isles, and at dawn on Tuesday, in a complete windless state (again), and on a mirror-glass sea, we almost stop once more and wait; thankfully at least the tide is pushing us where we need to go this time. Slowly and almost imperceptibly, a thin wind reappears; it's a real lottery, as some boats get away and some not, including us on *Arthur* – very frustrating while we wait for our number to come up.

After what seems like an age, we are on our way again, slowly and then a little faster as the breeze builds to a gentle force 3. This is more like cruising in the Mediterranean than blasting around the Irish Sea; bright blue skies, flat



azure seas, and then pods of dolphins arrive. Guess they must think it's pretty quiet around this part of the coast, except for a few days every two years when 300 boats come crashing (or crawling in our case) by. They make the most of it and play for ages in the pressure wave created by the yacht's bow.

Listening to the forecast on Tuesday evening, we hear about a low-pressure system approaching from the west. More wind, but also rather limited visibility coming our way. The wind soon increases as promised and we're getting a lot more speed on; we put a reef in the main sail overnight and the visibility closes in with a combination of moonless night, mist and spray.

We make changes to the watch system overnight to ensure that we have as many people on deck and on the boat's windward side rail as possible, at all times, in an attempt to stay as upright and powerful as we can: two hours on steering/trimming duty, two hours stand-by (on deck, sat as a watch group together on the rail) and two hours off, eating when we can. Eat, sleep, sail, repeat... will be a recurring theme for the next 48 hours.

We press on overnight on Tuesday. Very quickly, our gear gets soaking wet as we take it in turns on our standby watch to sit at the front of the row of huddled figures ranging from level with the mast backwards, hunched and curled around the guardrails, heads down, harnesses hooked onto lifelines. Waves frequently break over the foredeck; the lead person on the rail taking the full brunt of the wave with anything from full immersion in the wave to more mercifully, just waist down. After a while we stop wiping the drips and spray away; just take it as it comes.

With almost zero visibility overnight and 300 yachts in the vicinity doing different speeds, steering is challenging too as inevitably you catch up with other slower boats, that being lighter, made better progress in light airs. As we ride over the top of one wave, in inky blackness, and into the trough before the next one, I realise I'm reading the lit instruments of the boat in front, not their stern light; this is way

too close for comfort; we bear away from them and go quickly around keeping a lookout for more.

The next sight is like something out of science-fiction: the dolphins are back, but at night, they are like green phosphorescing torpedoes, their long luminous wakes, trailing and snaking out behind them, as they randomly 'home' in from either side. Since **Richard, Will** and **Sue** were off-watch and squeezed like 'sardines' into the starboard aft cabin to keep the weight high on this side, this may have been the attraction to our 'attackers'. All too soon though, they are gone again, but will return repeatedly over the trip. Never seen so many dolphins, day and night!

Final Part next month.

————— < 0 > —————



After 15 years as Guider of 1st Merton Park Rainbows, Geraldine Ellis is retiring and we are looking for a new leader. **Can you help?**

Rainbows is the section of Girlguiding UK for girls aged 5-7 years. The 1st Merton Park Rainbows meet on Wednesdays during term time from 5.30 to 6.40pm here at Martin Way Methodist Church. It's a thriving unit with a waiting list but we need someone to take over.

We have an assistant leader but she is unable to take over although she will continue to help. We also have several enthusiastic Seniors who lend a hand – but **we need a leader**. Training can be provided and you have the freedom to offer a wide range of activities to suit your skills, aptitudes and interests. It is a rewarding role.

Sadly, if nobody is forthcoming the unit will have to close in the summer and we will be disappointing 20 Rainbows as well as those waiting to join.

If you or someone you know may be interested, please speak to Geraldine.

The logo for 'Quiz Night' features the words 'QUIZ' and 'NIGHT' stacked. Each letter is contained within a separate, brightly colored rectangular block. The colors for 'QUIZ' are red, blue, green, and yellow. The colors for 'NIGHT' are yellow, purple, pink, cyan, and orange. The blocks are slightly offset and overlap, creating a dynamic, 3D effect.

QUIZ NIGHT

This year to help raise money for Spring Harvest Phoebe and Emily are hosting a Quiz Night! It will be a fantastic evening filled with fun, food and questions.

Team Prizes will be available for 1st, 2nd and 3rd place, so bring along your whole family for a chance to win!

Date - Saturday 19th March 2016

Time - 5pm doors open, 5.30pm Quiz begins!

Place - Martin Way Methodist Church (in the hall)

At half time a ploughmans will be served and nibbles will be on all the tables. Tea, coffee, water and squash will also be served. If you want any other soft drink please feel free to bring your own. A range of desserts will be available too!

Tickets - £7 per adult, £4 per child

Please see Lesley Mortley to purchase tickets or email Emily at Emily_bacon@ymail.com

**CHURCH
DIARY**



| | | | |
|-------|----|--------------|---|
| Tue | 1 | 10.30am-noon | Coffee and Chat |
| | | 7.15pm | Seder Passover Meal |
| | | 8.00pm | Time for Prayer |
| Thurs | 3 | 8.00pm | Leadership Meeting |
| Fri | 4 | 11.00am | Women's Day of Prayer service at Merton Park Baptist Church, Bushey Road, SW20 8TE |
| | | 12.30pm | Luncheon Club |
| | | 8.00pm | Women's Day of Prayer service at Holy Trinity Wimbledon, The Broadway, SW19 1SB |
| Sun | 6 | 10.30am | Mothering Sunday Café Worship led by Rev Paul Timmis |
| Tue | 8 | 10.30am-noon | Coffee and Chat |
| | | 8.00pm | Time for Prayer |
| Sun | 13 | 10.30am | Morning Service led by Valerie Ashcroft |
| Tue | 15 | 10.30am-noon | Coffee and Chat |
| | | 7.30pm | Men's Supper Club - <i>Graham Currie</i> - Field Studies and fun on England's Jurassic Coast |
| | | 8.00pm | Time for Prayer |
| Fri | 18 | 12.30pm | Luncheon Club |
| Sat | 19 | 5.00pm | Quiz Night |
| Sun | 20 | 10.30am | Morning Service led by Tony Loft |
| | | 6.30pm | Communion Service led by Rev Paul Timmis |
| Mon | 21 | 8.00pm | Easter Meditation |
| Tues | 22 | 10.30am-noon | Coffee and Chat |
| | | 8.00pm | Easter Meditation |
| Weds | 23 | 8.00pm | Easter Meditation |

Thurs24 8.00pm Maundy Thursday Service led by
Rev Paul Timmis

Fri 25 10.30am Good Friday Service at
Merton Park Baptist Church, Bushey Road, SW20 8TE

Sat 26 10.30am Big Brunch

Sun 27 7.30am Communion Breakfast at Martin Way
10.30am Communion Service led by Rev Paul Timmis

Mon 28 Easter Monday

Spring Harvest (28th March to 2nd April)

Tue 29 10.30am-noon Coffee and Chat
8.00pm Time for Prayer

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

————— < 0 > —————

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



————— < 0 > —————

Flushed with success!

A great big thank you to everyone who supported the Valentine's Lunch. We raised a total of **£252.49** for the Flush Fund. Special thanks to Sylvia and all of her team for the hard work of shopping, preparation, cooking, serving (and of course the clearing up afterwards) to make this event the success it was.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

LAST CHANCE FOR A BIG BRUNCH!

The last Big Brunch of Winter is on **Saturday, 26th March**, not the 19th March as previously advertised, serving from 10.30am until 1pm.



Come along and enjoy a full English breakfast including coffee/tea, fruit juice and toast for £4. You'll also be supporting our youngsters for their trip to Spring Harvest 2016.

————— < 0 > —————

SATURDAY 28TH MAY 2016

10.30-----15.00

SPRING AND CRAFT FAIR

AT

**MARTIN WAY METHODIST
CHURCH**

In aid of our FLUSH FUND



All the fun of the fair Lunch's and Afternoon Teas will be Served

If you would like to book a stall for the fair

or just want more information

contact Sylvia Baxter at sylvia.baxter1@tiscali.co.uk

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