

Witney Congregational Church

CORNERSTONE

June 2008



*Christ Jesus is the chief cornerstone. In Him the whole fabric is bound together,
as it grows into a temple, dedicated to the Lord – Ephesians 2:21*

4 Welch Way Witney Oxon OX28 6JF
Tel 01993 709992

www.witneycongregational.org.uk
witneycongregational@tiscali.co.uk

WHAT'S ON GUIDE

Witney Congregational Church offer a whole range of activities through which we seek to Worship, Work and Witness to the Lord Jesus Christ in this community today.

Further information can be obtained from the Church Administrator, Minister, Church Secretary or the leaders of the particular activities who are listed at the back of this magazine.

WORSHIP

Daily Worship	9.30 am	Mon-Fri	Short time of Prayer and Reading
	10.30 am	Saturday	Short time of Prayer and Reading
Noah's Ark Service	2.00 pm	Tuesday	For under 5's parents and carers
Saturday Praise	11.00am	1 st Saturday of the month	
Sunday Services	10.30 am		
	6.00 pm		There is a crèche facility at both services

Communion is normally held twice during the month at the first Sunday evening and third Sunday morning services

PRAYER

The Church is open each morning for Prayer; also in the Garden Room on Sunday morning and evening prior to, and after, Worship - All welcome

STUDY & FELLOWSHIP

Wednesday	7.30 pm	Church
Friday	10.00 am	Church

YOUTH ACTIVITIES

Sunday	10.30 am	Crèche, Noah's Ark & The K.I.C.K. on Sundays
Monday	10.00 am	Noah's Ark - Infant Group for babies and pre-school children

OTHER ACTIVITIES

	Monthly	Hi 5's
Tuesday	Monthly	Deacon's Meeting
	Bi-Monthly	Church Meeting
Thursday	10.00 am	Rest & Chat (Coffee/Tea available)
Saturday	10.30 am	Coffee Morning

SUNDAY LINK

Weekly bulletin for all Christians providing stimulating thought along with news and notices concerning our Church

WITNEY ECUMENICAL YOUTH TRUST (BASE 33)

4 Welch Way (Entrance - High Street) ☎ 01993 777870 Jude Levermore

St ANDREW'S BOOKSHOP

☎ 01993 709429

Opening Hours: Monday - Saturday 09.00 am - 5.00 pm



Talk about time flying - Nearly halfway through the year already!! Over the past months the days have been getting longer, and I suspect this has been more pleasurable for the majority of people. However, the longer days inevitably mean that we tend to try and fit more into what is already a hectic schedule; and because it is still light into the later hours, there is a tendency to forget what time it is. Also during this month on Saturday 21st, there is the Summer Solstice (longest day) - and the days will then start to shorten, so let's all make the most of this! And Don't forget the 15th - Father's day.

Turning to the contents, alongside the 'Standard' features, here is a glimpse of what has been submitted: Finn Obriain gives us a final update on her 'down under' experience; for some reason Elaine Gundem is on about a Senior Moment; and there is an article on Iona to name but a few.

Many thanks for those who have contributed for this edition, but would also encourage anyone to consider submitting articles for the remainder of the year, by either:

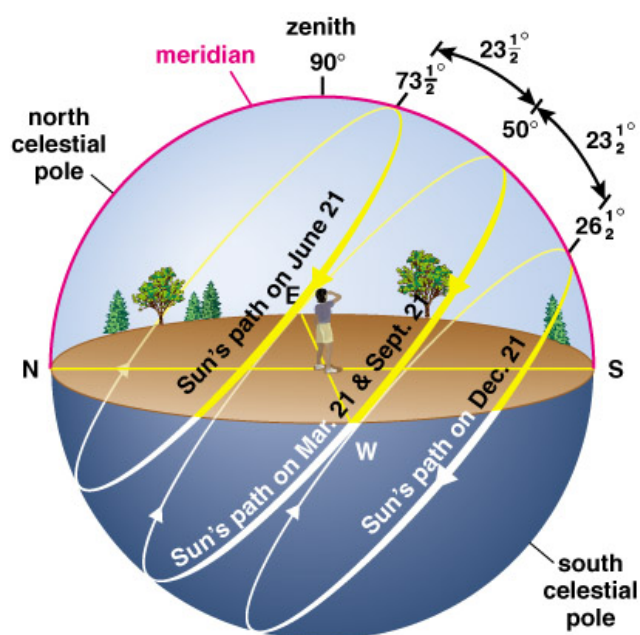
- Floppy Disk/CD
- E-mail: terrypowlesland@hotmail.com or jacquipowlesland@uwclub.net
- Or, if you haven't got a PC, just plainly written on paper which can be typed up

For your information, the magazine for the remainder of the year is due on:

29th June; 31st Aug; 5th Oct; 2nd Nov & 30th Nov

ESSENTIAL NOTE: In order to meet these deadlines, all contributions should be submitted ***NO LATER THAN the WEDNESDAY*** of the week in which the magazine will be published.

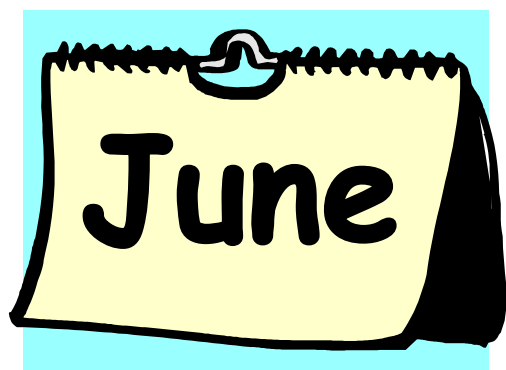
Your Editor



Contents

1. Editorial
2. Diary
4. Minister's Letter
6. Bible Study
11. CWM News
14. Open Doors
15. A senior moment
16. Finn in Fiji
17. Prayer Letter No 123
18. The thread of God's love
27. Church Family
28. Rotas

Worship Theme for 2008: Walk Through The Lectionary



Introduction

A Lectionary is a list of Scripture readings assigned to the various days in the Church Calendar. These readings are set according to the major events in the life of Christ and his Church (known as liturgical seasons), which are retold each year by the Church Calendar. As the year progresses, worshippers get the opportunity to celebrate the Advent of Christ, relive his transfiguration, his temptation in the wilderness, and his passion, triumphant resurrection and glorious ascension; they're also able to relive the dramatic events that accompanied the pouring out of the Holy Spirit at the formation of the Church, as well as to honour the memory of saints who have died, and so forth.

When our worship is shaped by the use of a lectionary, it allows us to journey through the Scriptures in a systematic way, and to become a part of a tradition that has shaped the life and witness of the Christian Church for centuries. This year, as we walk through the pages of the lectionary, it is my prayer that we will encounter the Word of God in new and challenging ways; that the Scriptures will come alive, transforming us by its life-giving power; and that, importantly, we'll see the continued relevance of the Bible to the issues we all face today as citizens of the 21st Century.

Daily Prayer Time

Mon-Fri 9.30 am

Sat 10.30am

Services (10.30 am & 6.00pm and will be led by Rev Norman Francis unless otherwise stated)

June

1 st	am	Building according to code
	pm	Communion
7 th	am	11.00am Saturday Praise (Praise, Prayer & Reflection)
8 th	am	Congregational Sunday Liz Hudson (Stroud)
	pm	Beryl Cartwright Greater than gold
15 th	am	Where are the labourers? Communion
	pm	Joint Service at St John, Hailey
22 nd	am	What are you afraid of?
	pm	Karen Francis
29 th	8.00am	Baptism of George (GT) Svanikier in River Windrush
	am	Karen Bruschi Open your eyes, listen & respond
	pm	Madley Park Residential Home - Rev Francis

July

5 th	am	11.00am Saturday Praise (Praise, Prayer & Reflection)
6 th	am	Ask the average person
	pm	Communion

The following events in June are given for your particular attention:

3 rd	Elms Day Centre service	1.30pm
	Deacons Meeting	7.45pm

7 th	Great Big Tea Party	3.00pm	
14 th	Prayer Chain meeting	9.15am	
15 th	Ordination of Sarah Iles at Trudoxhill	3.00pm	
	Meditation Group	7.30pm	
19 th	Fellowship Group	2.30pm	Church garden
	Pins & Needles	7.30pm	
21 st	SWMA Executive meeting	10.30am	Cheltenham
27 th	Christian Aid Concert	7.30pm	
28 th	Hi5's Cream Tea	3.00pm	
29 th	Sunday Diners	1.00pm	

**Hi 5's
Cream Teas**
Saturday 28 June
in the garden
(weather permitting)



**Strawberries and a
Chocolate Fountain**



Or in the lounge

From 3.00pm

Cost £2.50

**CHRISTIAN
VIEWPOINT**



COFFEE

MORNING Plus

*for both Men and Ladies
10.30-11.30 (2nd THURSDAY)
at Welcome Evangelical Church
HIGH ST WITNEY*

Date :- Thursday 12th June 2008

Speaker :- Anna Nichols of Love in
Action

Topic:- "Working with families
against Drug & Alcohol abuse."



The KENNINGTON & DISTRICT
UNITED CHURCH CHOIRS

Present a Concert Version, in Costume, of
Gilbert & Sullivan's

H.M.S. PINAFORE
or The Lass that Loved a Sailor



on **FRIDAY**
27th JUNE 2008

in Witney

Congregational Church

at 7.30pm

Entrance **FREE!**

Collection for
CHRISTIAN AID

An Evening of Music, Spectacle & Fun for the whole family!

Minister's Letter

Does Power Corrupt?

Dear Friends,

At last! On Friday, May 23, Burma's junta finally indicated that it will grant unrestricted access to international aid workers entering that country. This move makes it possible for realistic levels of disaster relief to start reaching the 2.5 million survivors who are now facing disease and starvation. According to the United Nations, of this number, only *a quarter* has received any aid at all *three weeks* after the disaster struck!

While I welcome the announcement of this long-awaited breakthrough, as I write this letter I am still bothered by the news that no military vessels are being allowed into Burmese waters. And so, naval vessels from Britain, France and the United States which have been waiting off the Burmese coast, loaded with desperately needed relief supplies, are denied permission to unload their supplies in Burma.

And so, despite the junta's relaxation of some of its restrictions, there are still many questions which are as yet unanswered. For example: What is taking the Burmese government so long to accept the aid which the international community is only too willing to offer? Does this regime have something to hide from the eyes of the world? And why has the Burmese government turned a blind eye to the desperate plight of its own people, choosing instead to press ahead with its planned constitutional referendum,

which some say is nothing more than "a sham document which will entrench the military's grip on power"? In fact, we are told that survivors of the cyclone who were temporarily sheltered in a school were thrown out to make room for polling activities. Unbelievable, is it not?

The perpetration of such extremely inhumane treatment against the vulnerable and helpless, especially on so large a scale, cries out so loudly for denunciation that any further comment seems unnecessary. This is a classic example of what John Dalberg, 1st Baron Acton, spoke about 200 years ago when he wrote: "Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely." What is it about power that, when placed in the hands of ordinary humans, transforms them into brutal, self-serving, self-justifying tyrants? We've seen other examples of such persons in history - Nazi ruler Adolph Hitler and Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe readily spring to mind.

The issue here is how do we, as citizens of the world hold our leaders accountable for their actions, and so prevent them from becoming self-seeking despots. But just as important is how we ensure that, in our own sphere of influence, we do not replicate these destructive patterns of leadership we see at work in the world. In resolving a conflict among his disciples over the matter of authority, Jesus provides us with a bit of guidance. He said, "*You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to*

become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:42-45).

The popular idea of success is to "lord it over" others, but Jesus' way is the reverse - namely, servanthood - which is actually the way to true greatness. In a world in which so many subscribe to the belief that "might is right," those of us who are committed to Jesus' pattern of servant-leadership may appear to be anachronistic, laughable and terribly naïve in the eyes of the world. Thus every time we're tempted to yield to the pressures of conforming to leadership styles that are inconsistent with that seen in our Lord, let's remember the atrocities of Burma, and be resolved to do all that's possible to show a skeptical world that there is a better way - the way of service, not domination!

Yours in Christ,

Norman O. Francis

POUR OUT
YOUR SUPPORT

FOR CHINA'S
PERSECUTED
CHRISTIANS

GREAT
BIG
TEA
PARTY

www.opendoorsuk.org

7th June
Witney Congregational Church
from 3.00pm

Wesley's Rules for the singing of hymns

1. Learn the tune
2. Sing them as they are printed
3. Sing all
4. Sing lustily and with good courage
5. Sing modestly. Do not bawl
6. Sing in time. Do not run before or stay behind
7. Above all, sing spiritually. Have an eye to God in every word you sing. Aim at pleasing Him more than yourself, or any other creature. In order to do this, attend strictly to the sense of what you sing, and see that your heart is not carried away with the sound, but offered to God continually

(Extracted from 'Once More With Feeling', a book of classic hymns and carols selected by Rupert Christiansen)

The following Bible Study series has been submitted by Rev Norman Francis, and is entitled:

Dangerous Praying

Part 10: Pray Always *Ephesians 6:10-22*

Review

In our last session, we said that there are always two aspects of reality in the world of human experience - the surface, or physical, picture and the hidden, or spiritual, one. There is the more obvious physical aspect, the world of talking, relating, working, eating and drinking. But interwoven with this is the spiritual realm, where spiritual forces are at work. Both realities - the physical and the spiritual - are at work in human affairs. Our thoughts, actions and emotions all have a spiritual dimension as well as a physical one.

Introduction (6:18)

Some time ago, I stumbled upon one man's assessment of the effects of today's secularized culture, in which God is relegated to the periphery of everyday life, with the result that, amidst the incessant demands on our time, many persons become trapped in "the tyranny of the urgent." As a result, our lives are driven, our souls empty, our relationships are shallow...and we feel helpless.

"I struggle with prayer" he confesses. "It always slips away in the midst of my schedule, despite my best intentions. There is no room for prayer in modern life. We are a culture of competence and action. We approach every task with

the belief that hard work and a good method will definitely get good results. If the (desired) results don't come, then either we haven't worked hard enough, or we need to get another method. Where is there room for prayer with such a mindset?"

Against the reality of this background, how does Paul's admonition, "*always keep on praying*," come across to you? When he uses these words, what do you think he means?

The phrase "*always keep on praying*" can have several meanings. It can mean "pray regularly" at specific times. It can mean "pray in every kind of situation or context." And it can literally mean "pray without ceasing." Let's take a look at each of these meanings.

Pray Regularly

First, "*always keep on praying*" can mean that we should pray regularly. This means that we shouldn't allow anything or anyone to lull us into a false sense of security or to pressurise prayer out of our lives. Whether relaxing on holiday or struggling to cope with the pressures of life, prayer is such a priority we should never allow ourselves to be deprived of it.

Anna provides a prime example of the kind of prayer life that we are all exhorted to practice. She was the kind of person you would probably hardly notice at all, and if you did, it is likely that you would do so with a sense of pity! To begin with, she was very old - 84 years to be exact. Her face was deeply furrowed by her hard life. She did not get out and about at all. Indeed, she was no more noticeable to people

than a lamp-post or piece of furniture - a familiar figure, always in the same place. We are told in Luke 2:37 that "*She never left the temple.*" But to God, she was very special. She was chosen to be one of two people who would confirm to Mary and Joseph the significance of the child entrusted to them by God.

What was it that prepared her for this sacred task? Luke tells us that she "*worshiped night and day, fasting and praying*" (Luke 2:37b). Anna lived a life of disciplined devotion and consistent prayer. Undoubtedly, both she and her prayer life were pleasing to God.

Now, I'm not arguing here for some kind of legalistic ritual, which says that we must pray at a fixed time every morning or every evening, and if you miss one such time, then your whole world is going to come crashing down! However, establishing some kind of regular pattern for our prayer life can be of real help. Indeed, for most of us, the benefits of a regular time of prayer probably outweigh the dangers of turning prayer into ritual. What do you think are some of the advantages of having a regular prayer time?

It is likely that Jesus himself followed the Jewish pattern of praying, which involved prayer at 9:00 in the morning, 12:00 midday, and 3:00 in the evening. The depth of Jesus' prayer life strongly suggests that there is tremendous value in having some kind of routine. We can see for ourselves why this is. If we eat at regular times; if we establish a pattern for the intake of food, our bodies soon learn to let us know if, for any reason, we forget to eat. The normal routine acts as an in-built

warning system. Similarly, if we establish a regular pattern for prayer, the spiritual part of us will let us know when it senses that we are neglecting to feed ourselves with prayer.

Many people find that having a special room or a special posture can help them enter more quickly into the right attitude for prayer. Similarly, regular times for prayer can act as a "trigger" to call us to prayer. The practice of regular times of prayer will alert us to Satan's attempts to get us not to pray. You see, we need to realize who it is that whispers to you to have a "lie-in" instead of rising early to pray, or who whispers to you that you don't have time to pray. When you hear these whispers, remember the words of Martin Luther who once said, "I have so much to do today that I must set apart more time than usual to pray."

Pray On Every Occasion

The second meaning conveyed by the admonition to "*always keep on praying*," is to pray in every kind of situation or context.

When we are going through a difficult time; when every situation seems bad and without any possibility of improvement, it is usually obvious that at such times we need to pray. Isn't it? But when everything is going well and life seems to be without pressure; when all seems under control and progressing smoothly, or; when life is one long, ordinary routine, when nothing spectacular is happening, there is always the temptation to think that we can manage without God, but we need to pray at such times as well.

But if all is well and we are able to manage on our own, then why do we need to pray? Difficult times nearly always make us look to God; it is when the going is good that we are likely to be most vulnerable and in the greatest danger of drifting from God. Thus, it is in our times of triumph or in those times when nothing spectacular seems to be happening that we require an ever-flowing stream of God's grace to be able to live twenty-four hours in every day as a Christian; to go through drudgery as a disciple; to live in ordinary, unobserved, ignored existence as a child of God (Oswald Chambers).

And so, it is not only when life-changing decisions need to be made, or when we are caught in the throes of hard times that we need to pray, but also in the mundane details of daily life. Prayer is a gift from God at all times. There is no situation that will not benefit from prayer.

Never Give Up

The third sense of the phrase "*always keep on praying*," can mean literally "pray without ceasing," "never give up," or "persevere in prayer"!

Often in Scriptures we are encouraged to "be alert" (v. 18), or to "watch and pray" (Matt 26:41; Mk 14:38; Lk 21:36). These phrases present two distinct but complimentary pictures. The first is a military one, the obvious background to the Ephesians passage here. We all know that it is imperative for soldiers to be alert. Frequently, the safety of colleagues as well as their own depends on the alertness of the sentries. The enemy will always seek to penetrate and destroy by attacking when we least

expect, thus making a constant state of watchfulness an absolute necessity for any soldier on duty.

The other picture is that of the servant. Waiters at a banquet may appear to be standing around doing nothing for much of the time, but in fact, if they are doing their job properly, they are constantly vigilant so as to anticipate the needs of the guests or respond to any emergency that arises.

Both these images help us to grasp more clearly the kinds of alertness required for prayer. Like the soldier, we need maximum awareness and sensitivity if we are to keep the enemy at bay and indeed penetrate its defences. We also need an attitude of love and a servant-heart if we are to know what our Lord desires and when it is the right time to act.

But why is it so difficult to persevere in prayer? Because prayer is hard work. When is Satan most likely to make prayer seem hard and unrewarding? Isn't it when we have almost reached the breakthrough point! For at that point he will have his last fling to stop us. When we are thinking, "This is going nowhere," "It doesn't make any difference," "I'll do something else," it is then that we need to keep going and not give up.

But persevering in prayer does not mean that we are trying to twist God's arm or insist that our will be done. Rather, to persevere means that we are so deeply concerned to see God's kingdom come and his honour restored, that we cannot rest until we see his answer come about.

"Prayer is not for getting (our) will done in heaven; but for getting God's will done on earth" (Robert Law). This sometimes takes time, so we can and should go on praying until either God answers or stops us. This is hard.

Anna prayed in the Temple "night and day." This is a Hebrew saying, which means she was there all the time, praying constantly. Prayer may take time and endurance, but it is never wasted. The encouragement to "be alert," to stand firm and hold your ground, is a constant refrain in Paul's message to the churches to which he wrote. In Rom 12:12 he says, "*Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.*" In Eph 1:16-17, he says, "*I have not stopped giving thanks for you...I keep asking that...God...may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.*" In Phil 1:3-4: "*I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy.*" Col 1:3: "*We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you,*" 4:2: "*Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.*" 1Thess 3:10: "*Night and day we pray most earnestly,*" 5:17: "*pray continually.*" And in 2Thess 1:11 Paul says; "*With this in mind, we constantly pray for you.*"

You see, for Paul, prayer is "the Christian's vital breath." Just as we do not stop breathing when we go to sleep, neither do we need to stop praying because we are asleep - or because we are driving or writing or cooking or doing the housework. Prayer is a matter of our spirit crying to God or of God's Spirit crying through us. Such prayer without ceasing will not happen

automatically. It is something we must cultivate, as when a newborn baby first has to remember to breathe but then it quickly becomes an automatic response. There is an example of one man who woke up to discover that he was actually in the process of praying. "How is this possible?" you ask. You see, he allowed God access to his subconscious so that even when his body and his mind were asleep, his spirit was in prayer. He has learned to "breathe prayer."

How can this experience become a reality for each of us? To begin with, it is important to tell God that this is what you want, then invite him to bring it about. It is said that the journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step, so it helps to spend as much time in conscious prayer as you can. It is frightening how many hours most people spend watching TV. For a week, why not have a "fast" from TV and give the extra time to God? Alternatively, you may spend a day with God on a retreat.

We need to do what Paul in Col 4:5 calls "*redeeming the time,*" or, as translated in the NIV, "*make the most of every opportunity.*" This involves finding opportunities to pray in all kinds of spare moments - the lost minutes waiting in queues, at the supermarket check-out or in the doctor's surgery. Instead of getting frustrated at having to wait, why not spend the time praying for others who are also waiting, or for those who are keeping you waiting? So the restless and irritating child, whose parents seem unable to control him, can become the focus of quiet prayer. When you lie awake at night, instead of being anxious that you cannot fall asleep, you can pray for others who cannot sleep -

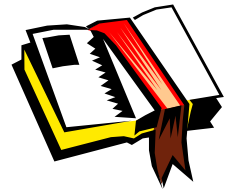
because of pain, or anxiety, or because of the cold because they are homeless; because they are looking after aged parents, or even because they are at work on our behalf. Or pray for those in other lands for whom it is now day. A thousand possibilities soon emerge once you give this time to God.

Can you think of some other ways of "redeeming the time"? When you watch TV, during the commercial break, instead of letting yourself be drip-fed consumerism gone mad, you could use the time to pray. Turn down the volume, close your eyes and pray, perhaps using the programme you are watching to give you direction. When you read the papers or listen to the news on the radio, turn each topic into prayer. Walking also offers other opportunities. One way to grow into this kind of "praying on the move" is to take part in a prayer walk. Christians who have not been considered to be especially prayerful have taken part in this kind of prayer and have grown in faith as a result.

What you are doing as you develop this God-ward tendency in all your life is increasing your capacity to "pray without ceasing." You will soon find that your subconscious becomes God's territory, with all the tremendous benefits that flow out of this. One way to build up perseverance in prayer is to join with others in making a kind of covenant. When we are discouraged, they will help us to continue or even keep prayer going when we give up for a time. Then we can return to the battlefield refreshed.

Sometimes life is so hectic we don't have a moment to spare. Sometimes it seems as though there is nothing going on at all. But at all times prayer has a real place. If we are too busy to pray, then we are too busy. If we have nothing to do, we can soon be busy doing nothing but pray. If occasionally we start to think, "This is no time for prayer," then we can remind ourselves of Jesus who, having emptied himself and endured the cross, now commits his life in eternity to one thing - prayer for us. It says so in Hebrews 7:25:

"Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them."



Wait & See

If you've done your duty and have played your part
Walk into the future with a carefree heart
You can face tomorrow with a conscience clear
Take what life now offers, what is there to fear
Never let your crosses crush you to the ground
Bear them uncomplaining and as time rolls round
It will bring its blessing just you wait and see
Something good is coming, the best is yet to be

(Written by Patience Strong & submitted by Maureen Miles)



News around the world

The following information has been taken from CWM Website dated 30th May, so is up to date at the editing of this month's magazine

New CSI leader promotes pastoral leadership

"Strong pastoral leadership is the backbone of the church," asserts Rev Moses Jayakumar, the new general secretary of the CWM-member Church of South India (CSI), who took up office in January. Anto Akkara reports. "I would like to focus on improving the pastoral relations at all levels in the church starting with the congregations," said Jayakumar, a pastor with 34 years experience serving congregations in CSI Karnataka Central Diocese.

"If the local congregation is not mission oriented, it reflects poorly on the pastoral leadership," he said. "Without proper pastoral leadership, the church is reduced to a mere institution. Consequently, one gets caught up in politics and loses sight of the vision and mission," added the 58-year old pastor.

Pastorates in rural areas, he noted, tend to have strong bonds between the pastor and flock. However, due to the hectic lifestyle in urban areas, more and more congregation members are becoming indifferent to church concerns. "Such a response frustrates the pastor," he added. In such situations, Jayakumar said the pastors need to take extra steps to bring the members closer to the church

expressing "genuine concern for them". The lack of adequate pastoral relationship with the church members, he said, lies at the root of thousands of members of mainline churches being drawn to evangelical and Pentecostal groups where every member and their concerns get attention from the group.

With this objective, the new CSI general secretary appointed for a two year term said he would make every effort to make the CSI Synod and its structures more open to all especially those from the grassroots and make the Synod functioning more transparent.

'The Synod will try to have more programmes that would involve and benefit the local congregations through our diocesan network," Jayakumar said. Spread over 22 dioceses including the Jaffna diocese in Sri Lanka, the CSI has over 5,000 pastors to serve its 3.8 million members.

Churches in China assess earthquake damage

The Church of Christ in China is beginning to assess the damage to churches by the Sichuan earthquake. Amity Foundation coordinator Theresa Carino, in the Hong Kong office said it may be some time before the full impact of the earthquake is known.

"Many churches in Sichuan Province have been badly affected and it will take some time before the Sichuan Provincial Council can make a final assessment given the massive destruction of transport and communication lines in the region," she said.

Meanwhile, Christians all over China are doing all they can to help the victims and their families.

Sichuan Christian Council president Rev Wen Weikang said Chinese churches have donated close to two million RMB to the Council for relief work. Members of the Sichuan Christian Council have been going to some of the hardest hit counties to distribute relief goods and to help churches and congregations wherever possible.

The region is home to more than 250,000 Christians. So far the church has confirmed 21 church members were killed, with dozens injured and hundreds still missing. Fourteen churches in the province have reportedly been destroyed or damaged.

The worst affected is the Mianzhu City Church. The front of the church has collapsed and the church walls are shattered. The homes of many church members surrounding the building have also been destroyed. Almost all of the 14 churches have been declared structurally unsafe. They will have to be bulldozed and rebuilt. Carino said support from outside China has helped the church.

Taiwan & China hold first talks in 59 years

The head of Taiwan's ruling party, Wu Poh Hsiung, has held talks with Chinese President Hu Jintao in Beijing. It is the highest-level meeting between the two states since Taiwan and China split almost 60 years ago.

The new Taiwanese president, Ma Ying-jeou, has pledged to improve relations with China and is pushing for the creation of a peace treaty. Ma has distanced himself from the confrontational policy toward the mainland by former president Chen

Shui-bian of the independence-leaning Democratic Progressive Party. The new leader will have a difficult task convincing many Taiwanese a friendlier relationship is the best way to assert Taiwan's identity.

In December 2007 the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan joined the campaign to have Taiwan recognised by the United Nations. In a declaration the church blamed China for Taiwan's exclusion.

"China, the superpower to the west of Taiwan, has repeatedly exerted its emerging influence on the international community to violate, suppress, and isolate Taiwan in a way that has brutally oppressed the Taiwanese people and their fundamental rights," the declaration said.

China maintains that Taiwan is part of its territory, although the two have been governed separately since 1949.

London mayor acknowledges good work by Christian charities

London mayor Boris Johnson has said more credit should be given to the work of Christian and evangelical groups. In an interview with the Church of England Newspaper, Johnson said the work of these groups are often shunned and derided.

"I think there is a culture now in our society where if something is even vaguely Christian, if there is even a whiff of evangelical fervour about it then it's almost verboten to fund it," he said.

"I think that is quite wrong because if you look at the good these groups do ...they are essential."

Johnson said he'd supported the good work done by the faith-based voluntary sector in London, but was not strongly religious.

"I suppose my own faith is a bit like trying to get Virgin Radio when you're driving through the Chilterns. It sort of comes and goes. Sometimes the signal is strong and then sometimes, I'm afraid it just vanishes and then it comes back again. That's where I am I suppose."

India: Interfaith meet urges church to play greater advocacy role in building peace

An interfaith workshop on peace building has urged the church to take up the challenge of 'building communities of peace' in India's troubled north-east, Anto Akkara writes from Shillong.

"We need to build communities of peace irrespective of faith, language, race and culture," said Rev P B M Basaiawmoit, chairman of the Peace and Justice Committee of the CWM-member Presbyterian Church of India (PCI) inaugurating the 7 to 8 May seminar.

More than 70 delegates including Tibetan and Muslim leaders and NGO activists joined Presbyterians at the conference on the theme of "Building Communities of Peace for All" held at Shillong, capital of Meghalaya state.

"We blow up our little differences so much that we fail to see the common humanity that unites us," said Yangchen Dolcar, representative of the Tibetan community based in Shillong, the cultural capital of north-east India. North-east India is connected to the Indian mainland by a

narrow passage surrounded by Bangladesh, Bhutan, Myanmar and China

"Majoritarianism based on ethnic affinities leads to discrimination against minorities. There can be no peace when we fail to respect each other," added the Tibetan activist.

"The challenge before us is to see everyone as children of God. But, we see only Khasis, Garos, Kukis and Nagas," Rev Pyniaidlang Pakma, Presbyterian pastor based in the Jaintia Hills of Meghalaya, told CWM during the conference.

Three of the seven states in north-east India are Christian majority with some of the churches having members exclusively from ethnic communities based on tribal identity. Consequently, there have been even militant movements among Christian dominated tribals in states like Nagaland.

B L Buam, chief of police training department in Shillong, said police force is being trained 'to involve the local community in building peace' among diverse ethnic groups.

"On our own, we can do only fire fighting. We need the community support to build harmony and peace," the police official told CWM during the conference.

Rev Griffith S Umwi, convener of the seminar said the PCI will follow up the seminar with a 'Peace Campaign Cum Procession' in Shillong on 5th June on 'World Environment Day' with the participation of other churches, Christian institutions and social action groups.



The following article has been extracted from Church News Service, and is entitled:

The 50 most dangerous places on earth to be a Christian

For the sixth year running North Korea has again been revealed as the most dangerous place on earth in which to be a Christian, easily keeping its top spot due to the relentless way it represses Christians.

This is the key finding of the 2008 World Watch List of the worst 50 nations for persecuting Christians, recently published by Open Doors, the international charity serving persecuted Christians worldwide.

Open Doors' major new report, which is now in its sixth year, places the Wahhabi kingdom of Saudi Arabia in second place, followed closely by another country ruled by Sharia law: Iran.

The Bishop of Shrewsbury, Alan Smith said, "We need to support our fellow Christians in other countries, many of whom are suffering or whose lives are under threat."

At best, Christians living in countries featuring on the World Watch List 2008 can expect discrimination in the workplace, in education, physical and emotional abuse or a ban on holding church services. At worst, and this is a regular occurrence for Christians living in any of the worst ten nations, they may be thrown into jail and - all too often - are murdered.

Islam is the majority religion in six of the top 10 countries: Saudi Arabia, Iran, Maldives, Afghanistan, Yemen and Uzbekistan. Three countries have communist governments: North

Korea, Laos and China. Bhutan, which has just ceased being an absolute monarchy, is the only Buddhist country in the top ten.

Many of the nations which feature on the World Watch List are signatories to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which guarantees freedom of conscience and religious expression.

In many countries, such as North Korea, Libya, Jordan and Belarus, persecution has grown significantly worse over the past 12 months. In Pakistan, which has a sizeable Christian minority, believers are more closely monitored than before as radical Muslim influence grows.

In the Palestinian Territories, Rami Ayyad, the manager of a Bible Society bookshop, was tortured and murdered by extremists in October last year. In Turkey last April, three Christians, Tilmann Geske, Necati Aydin and Ugur Yuksel were bound, tortured and their throats slit.



OpenDoors

Serving persecuted Christians worldwide



The following article, extracted from the Times (Letter of the Year), has been submitted by Elaine Gudem, and is entitled:

A Senior Moment

An elderly lady actually wrote this letter to her bank. The bank manager thought it amusing enough to have it published in the Times

Dear Sir,

I am writing to thank you for bouncing my cheque with which I endeavoured to pay my plumber last month. By my calculations, three nanoseconds must have elapsed between his presenting the cheque and the arrival in my account of the funds needed to honour it. I refer, of course, to the automatic monthly deposit of my pension, an arrangement which, I admit, has been in place for only eight years. You are to be commended for seizing that brief 'window of opportunity', and also for debiting my account £30 by way of penalty for the inconvenience caused to your bank

My thankfulness springs from the manner in which this incident has caused me to rethink my errant financial ways. I noticed that whereas I personally attend to your telephone calls and letters, when I try to contact you I am confronted by the impersonal, overcharging, re-recorded, faceless entity which your bank has become. From now on I, like you, choose only to deal with a flesh-and-blood person. My mortgage and loan payments will therefore, and hereafter, no longer be automatic, but will arrive at your bank by cheque, addressed personally and

confidentially to an employee at your bank whom you must nominate. Be aware that it is an offence under the Postal Act for any other person to open such an envelope.

Please find attached an Application Contact Status which I require your chosen employee to complete. I am sorry it runs to eight pages, but in order that I know as much about him, or her, as your bank knows about me, there is no alternative. Please note that all copies of his, or her, medical history must be countersigned by a solicitor, and the mandatory details of his/her financial situation (income, debts, assets & liabilities) must be accompanied by documented proof. In due course, I will issue your employee with a PIN number which he/she must quote in dealings with me. I regret that it cannot be shorter than 28 digits but, again, I have modelled it on the number of button presses required of me to access my account balance on your phone banking service. As they say, imitation is the sincerest form of flattery.

Let me level the playing field even further. When you call me, press buttons as follows:

1. To make an appointment to see me
2. To query a missed payment
3. To transfer the call to my living room in case I am there
4. To transfer the call to my bedroom in case I am sleeping
5. To transfer the call to my toilet in case I am attending to nature
6. To transfer the call to my mobile phone if I am not at home

7. To leave a message to my computer (A password is required which will be communicated to you at a later date to the authorised contact)
8. To return to the main menu and to listen to options 1 through 8
9. To make a general complaint or inquiry, the contact will then be put on hold, pending the attention of my automated answering service

Whilst this may, on occasion, involve a lengthy wait, uplifting music will play for the duration of the call. Regrettably, but again following your example, I must levy an establishment fee to cover the setting up of this new arrangement.

May I wish you a happy, if ever so slightly less prosperous, New Year

Your humble client

Addendum from the Times Editor:
IMPORTANT to remember that this letter was written by a lady who is 98 years old. Doesn't she make you proud!!

Another miracle

A priest was speeding down a motorway when he was stopped by the police. The officer smelled alcohol on his breath, and then saw the empty wine bottle on the floor of the car.

"Sir," he demanded, "Have you been drinking?"

"Just water," says the priest.

"Then why," said the officer, "do I smell wine?"

The priest thought rapidly. "Good Lord!" he cried. "He's done it again!"

As most of you are now aware, Finn is now home, but she just wanted to share some of her last days' experiences:

Fiji Update

Our last few weeks in Fiji were awesome!!

We did a lot of snorkelling just off the coast and even went to a Fijian church service which was wicked. They didn't use any instruments, yet everyone's voices were so in tune and passionate and it was really good! Even the service was in Fijian so we didn't really understand it!!

The island we stayed on for the last 9 days was some way from the mainland this meant it had clearer seas and much better views. Unfortunately, it didn't stop the tropical storms, which meant a lot of rain in our last few days!

We eventually arrived home after a 25-hour journey, and having completed the USA's very strict immigration policy. The journey was long but not too bad and we arrived in to terminal 5, which was cool, and managed not to lose our luggage!!! Missing the sun though.





PRAYER LETTER No 123

God gives us the power

Last month in our services we celebrated Pentecost and were reminded of the Trinity and the work of the Holy Spirit.

I came across this poem by Iris Perez in a book 'Just one year' of prayers and worship compiled by Timothy Radcliffe and wanted to share it with you.

'God has given us the power

to create beauty
to make another smile
to be a healing presence in someone's sorrow
to bring justice to the oppressed
to console those in difficulty
to bring peace and joy to others
to help those in need
to laugh and enjoy life
to do good and turn from evil
to forgive those who have hurt us
and most of all, to love'

In the Bible study series 'An ordinary day with Jesus' we have been looking at experiencing the reality of God in our everyday lives.

I thought these words from the above poem/prayer emphasize how small things can make a difference to others around us. It also makes us aware of the need to pray for the oppressed and persecuted, of what we can do to bring about justice and helping those in need, both locally and internationally. Read the piece again, **think about each line separately** and be aware of what **you can do** with the help of the Holy Spirit. Indeed each phrase of this poem can in itself be a prayer.

Perhaps in reading this poem again you will realise just how much the power of the Holy Spirit is working in our lives.

May we continue to ask God to give us his power through the Holy Spirit as we face each day in our journey of the Christian faith.

Keep on praying. (Philippians 4 v 6)

God Bless you all,
Beryl

Please note that for up-to-date prayer requests contact Beryl Cartwright (703717)

The following article has been extracted from Church News Service, and is entitled:

THE THREAD OF GOD'S LOVE

In 563, Columba, an Irish monk, was forced to leave his homeland because of a conflict that had led to a misuse of power and even bloodshed. On Pentecost Sunday he arrived on the island of Iona off the north-west coast of Scotland with twelve companions. There he began a new way of life founded on Christ's mercy and forgiveness of the past, and so created one of the great centres of faith and mission in the Christian Church.

His monastery on Iona started as a small cluster of wooden buildings with a church and a guesthouse. Around were fields of crops and cattle and bees. But under Columba's guidance, it grew, and from Iona monks were sent into Scotland as one arm of a missionary advance that reached down through England to France and across Europe. That outreach was an amazing achievement. But just as amazing was the consolidation of monastic life on Iona that resulted two centuries later in the Book of Kells. This text of the four Gospels was begun by scribes and artists in the library of Iona. It grew into one of the masterpieces of Celtic art that was taken to Kells in Ireland to escape the Viking invaders who ravaged the island.

Along with the text of the Gospels, there are illustrations of Jesus, Mary and the four evangelists, together with decorations at once intricate and fantastic: patterns that interweave and

interlace across the page with an odd face here and a weird creature there. The design is in brilliant detail, and you can follow the lines as they weave in and out. This delight in patterns is evident in lots of Celtic art.

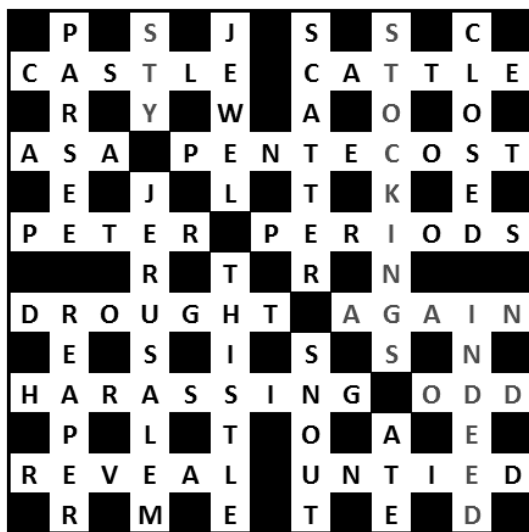
It is good to imagine Columba on Iona meditating on the thread of God's grace woven into his life as he looked back to his years in Ireland and his pilgrimage to Iona. It might have seemed at one glance a complicated interweaving of events and experiences, and then perhaps as he looked again, he would see God's love threading its way through that history and redeeming both it and him.

It is the same for us. As we look at our lives, they may seem complex and involved patterns of events and circumstances taking us here and there. As we ponder those patterns, then we can begin to see a thread woven into the patterns that guides and leads us on. And as we stand back, all the patterns and threads seem to make sense as we spot that guiding thread. Just as we can stand back from the designs of this page and see God's love spelling out the name of Christ, our Lord.





- June** 1st Marjorie Lee
 3rd Grant Stanley
 7th Matthew Bruschi
 8th James Hayes
 10th Finnguala Obriain
 11th Jamie Holloway
 14th Norline Martin
 16th Hayley St Clair
 19th Neil St Clair
 Jonathan Bruschi
 23rd June Woodley
 25th Gerald Hayes
 26th Val Obriain
 28th Maureen Miles
 30th Jacqui Powlesland
- July** 3rd Irene Jephcott



May crossword answers

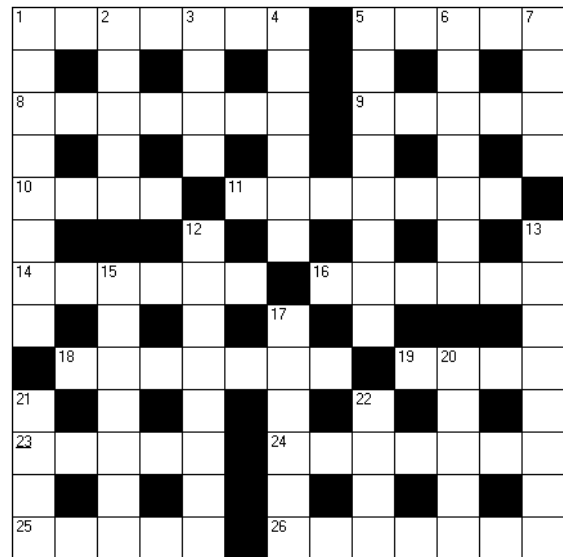
Thank You

Thank you to everyone who helped support Springfield School by sponsoring me to run this year's Flora London Marathon.

I completed the marathon in 4 hours 40 minutes, and together we raised over £800 for the children of Springfield.

Both the school, and I, are extremely grateful

Laura Jones



Across

- 1 ..who has died a _____ death (Num 19.16) (7); 5 Bent the body, like Moses in Ex 34 (5); 8 Father of James and John in Matt 4 (7); 9 Drink made from apples (5); 10 In Gen 7 it fell for forty days (4); 11 King of Israel renowned for his wisdom (7); 14 Weight equal to 60 minas (6); 16 1 Peter 3 describes a wife as such a partner (6); 18 What the fishermen were doing to their nets in Luke 5 (7); 19 Of which Og's bed was made in Deut3 (4); 23 Burnt remains eaten as food in Ps 102 (5); 24 King Xerxes imposed _____ (Esth 10.1) (7); 25 Had the necessary courage (5); 26 eg Christmas or Easter (7)

Down

- 1 Jesus' home town (8); 2 Son of Ginath in 1 Kings 16 (5); 3 ..no galley with oars will _____ them (Isa 33.21) (4); 4 Remain in hiding (3,3) 5 Made a summoning gesture (8); 6 Matrimony (7); 7 Like the clouds in Ps18 (4); 12 Showed great excitement (8); 13 Like the mansions in Ps49 (8); 15 John the Baptist's belt was made of this (7); 17 As heat and drought _____ await the melted snow (Job 24.19) (6); 20 Circular, like the loaf of barley bread in Judges 7 (5); 21 A disembodied one wrote on the wall in Dan 5 (4); 22 Cultivate the soil (4)

ROTAS

DEACON & STEWARDS

June	01	Susan Wass & Val Obriain
	08	Pip & Beryl Cartwright
	15	Judi Holloway & Sue Birdseye
	22	Nanna Blackman & Irene Jephcott
	29	Dave Wesson & Joan Currie
July	06	Pat & Ben Smith
	Note:	Reserve Irene St Clair



COMMUNION

June	01 pm	Jacqui Powlesland	
		Preparation	Iris Lindsay
	15 am	Peter Gamston & Jacqui Powlesland	
		Susan Wass & Judi Holloway	
		Preparation	Beryl Cartwright
July	06	Pat Smith	
		Preparation	Iris Lindsay



FLOWERS

June	01	Beryl Cartwright
	08	Jill McBride
	15	Pat Smith
	22	Judi Holloway
	29	Alison Hazell
July	06	Jean Howell



COFFEE

June	01	Susan Wass & Theo Howells
	08	Pat & Ben Smith
	15	Marjorie Lee, Iris Lindsay & Judith Bungey
	22	Sue & David Harper
	29	Val Obriain & Sarah Hopwood
July	06	Peter Gamston & Gwen Mee



REST & CHAT

June	05	Jean Stanley
	12	Iris Lindsay & Joan Currie
	19	Pat Smith & Gwen Mee
	26	Marjorie Lee & Elaine Gudem
July	03	Jean Stanley
	Note:	Reserves June & Derrick Woodley



Every effort has been made on the rota list to meet individual circumstances. However, please change with someone else if the dates are not convenient for you - Thank You