

Witney Congregational Church

Issue 9

February &
March 2010

R CROSS A D S

Witney Congregational Church is a crossroads where we:

meet God in worship

meet one another in friendship

meet our community and world with the love of Jesus



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
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

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
Friday 7.00pm Y4J - 1st & 3rd Friday of the month

OTHER ACTIVITIES

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 200682 (Office)
☎ 01993 777870 (Office - Methodist)

St ANDREW'S BOOKSHOP

Opening Hours: Monday - Saturday ☎ 01993 709429
09.00 am - 5.00 pm



I know it is now some time ago, but to you the reader, Happy New Year and Happy New Decade! And a warm welcome to the latest issue of Crossroads.

Notwithstanding that the name changed to reflect our vision statement last year, there is still more change effective from this edition. For those of you who were unable to attend the recent Church meeting, the decision was made that the magazine would be published on a bi-monthly basis, and hence only 6 times per year. Bearing in mind that the magazine has been produced for approximately 20 years, it is inevitable that it would undergo some changes. However, and regardless of format, it is, I feel, still an important publication for Church life, and also outreach - and on the positive side, it will allow you to know what is happening well in advance!

So, turning now to the contents, here is just a glimpse of some of the articles that have been submitted; There is a sermon recently given by Rev Jason Boyd; Viviane Boyd gives us a poem; Jean Howell gives us an article by Rev Angela Robinson; There is a new series on exploration of the books of the OT and there is an article on where in the world is God, to name but a few.

As always, many thanks to those who have contributed to this edition, but would also encourage anyone to

consider submitting articles for the next edition by either:

- CD\Memory Stick
- E-mail:
 - terrypowlesland@hotmail.com
 - jacquipowlesland@uwclub.net
- Just plainly written on paper, which can be typed up.

ESSENTIAL NOTE: All contributions should be submitted ***NO LATER THAN the WEDNESDAY*** of the week in which the magazine will be published.

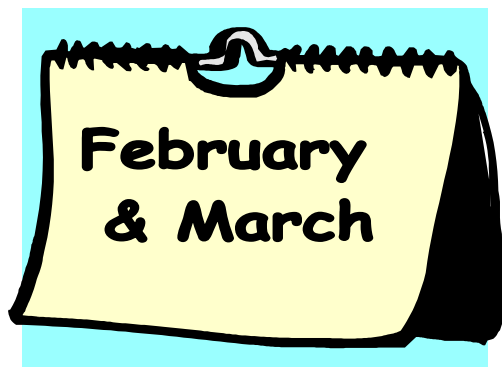
The magazine for the remainder of the year is due out on 4 Apr; 6 Jun; 1 Aug; 3 Oct & 28 Nov

Your Editor

- ❖ I took my car in for a service the other dayand it got stuck in the church door!
- ❖ **Fair Trade Fortnight**
22nd February - 7th March

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Daily Prayer Time:
Mon-Fri 9.30 am

Services
10.30 am & 6.00pm and will normally be led by Rev Jason Boyd unless advised below

Feb

6th 11.00am Saturday Praise
7th am Café Church Rev Michael Heaney
pm Joint Service at Congregational church Communion
14th am Morning Worship
pm Joint Service at Methodist church
17th Weds 7.30pm Ash Wednesday Service
21st am Morning Worship Communion
pm Joint Service at Congregational church
28th am Morning Worship
pm Joint Service at Methodist church

March

6th 11.00am Saturday Praise
7th am Morning Worship
pm Joint Service at Congregational church Communion
14th am Mothering Sunday All-Age Worship
pm Joint Service at Methodist church
21st am Morning Worship Communion
pm Joint Service at Congregational church
28th am Palm Sunday morning Worship
pm Joint Service at Methodist church

April

1st pm Maundy Thursday Supper & Communion
2nd 10.00am Good Friday Service
10.45am CTiW Meet at High St Methodist & walk to Market Square
3rd 11.00am Saturday Praise
4th 6.00am Dawn Service The Paddock St Mary's church Cogges
8.00am Easter Sunday Communion
am All-Age Worship Communion
pm No evening service

The following events are given for your particular attention:

Feb

2nd Deacon's Meeting 7.30pm
10th Base 33 AGM 6.00pm light refreshments AGM 7.00pm
11th Fellowship Meeting 2.30pm at 6 Swinbrook Court

Feb (Cont)

12 th	Y4J	7.00pm
13 th	Prayer Meeting	09.15am
22 nd -26 th	Half Term	
25 th	Meeting re starting young children's group	
26 th	Y4J	7.00pm
27 th	CTiW Prayer Breakfast	8.00am at High St Methodist church
	Fair Trade Market at Langdale Hall	10.30am - 4.00pm

March

2 nd	Deacon's Meeting	7.30pm
5 th	Women's World Day of Prayer at St Mary's Cogges	1.45 & 7.30pm
11 th	Fellowship Meeting	2.30pm at 9 Pensclose
12 th	Y4J	7.00pm
13 th	Prayer Meeting	09.15am
16 th	Church Meeting	7.30pm
20 th	SWMA Assembly at South Cerney Cong Church	10.00am - 4.00pm
26 th	Y4J	7.00pm
27 th	CTiW Prayer Breakfast	8.00am at High St Methodist church

April

1 st	Maundy Supper	7.00 for 7.30pm
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**Churches Together in Witney and District
Lent Study Groups 2010**

A Lent study guide from Biblelands
A 5-session course based on Food from the Middle East
Material may be downloaded from the internet

Week 1

Bread – a look at the Last Supper 23 to 25 February

Week 2

Wine and Fruit – Jesus, the true Vine 2 to 4 March

Week 3

Olives – Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane 9 to 11 March

Week 4

Lamb – Redemption and Sacrifice 16 to 18 March

Week 5

Barley – Kindness and generosity 23 to 25 March

Or

Fish – Becoming Fishers of Men

Minister's Letter

Happening in the Street Where You Live (Text: Luke 4:14-21)

"Change you can believe in" Barack Obama declared as he was swept into the Presidential Office. On the brink of an election in the UK Cameron promises a "Year for change" whilst Mandelson invites the electorate to, "Change for good, change with Labour." Voters want more than a manifesto presenting the prospect of change. They want to see change happen.

It was the final stretch of road. Coming into Jesus' view was the familiar outline of Nazareth. Jesus was a changed man. He'd left a carpenter's son and returned as the Father's Son.

It wasn't the first time he'd returned to Nazareth having changed. Jesus could hear his mother telling him the story of his circumcision, of Simeon's song of salvation and Anna's words of deliverance. Scarred with the sign of the covenant Mary and Joseph left the temple with Jesus and went home to Galilee.

It wasn't the first time Jesus had returned to Nazareth having changed. He could still see the panic and relief in his mum and dad's faces. His mothers' scolding words echoed in his ears. Their boy was growing in awareness of his identity. He was the Father's Son. Jesus went home with them, changed.

Jesus was returning to Nazareth. He'd been baptised by John and, submerged in the murky waters of the Jordan in solidarity with the human plight. He emerged gasping fresh air and the Spirit descended dovelike. He heard the voice of his Father, "You are my Son;

I love you." Jesus could trace his lineage right back to Adam: right back to God. He was God's Son. This was scandal. Romulus could make claims to be the son of the gods Mars and Ilia, but Jesus?! No! To say Jesus was God's Son was political and treasonous.

The voice affirming Jesus' identity as the Son of God was tested. The Spirit that filled Jesus led him into the wilderness. Ravenous with hunger and physically weak he discerns that the voice of the desert is not the voice of his baptism. He knows that there is more to life than a full belly. God alone is worthy of his worship. He does not have to prove his identity by performing stunts.

Jesus returns to Nazareth changed. As he turns into Fig Lane and then left into Carpenter's Close, unlatches the door and kisses his mum, he realises that nothing has changed and yet everything has changed. Carpenter's hands design a world of grace in the shape of a cross.

Going to the synagogue on Sabbath was nothing out of the ordinary. This was where he had worshipped and been schooled. He stands to read the lesson from Isaiah 61:1-2. Then, assuming the posture of a teacher, he sits to speak. The silence was palpable. Rapt attention was blown apart with the bombshell, "This text is being fulfilled today even while you are listening."

Jesus is saying, "I am what this text is all about. I am the manifesto happening today. I am the Spirit-filled life anointed to enact this word. It's happening today, right now in this synagogue, in your streets, in this town of Nazareth. The 'today' I announce is 'every day' from now until the end of time. It is my actions and words lived out in my followers in their own time, in their

own street, in their own communities. It is my action and words spreading as good news all over the world."

Jesus says, "It's time for change. It's time to put fine sounding talk into action. It's the time for Isaiah's manifesto to become reality. It's change you can believe in. It's good news to the poor...to those who have nothing...to those who recognise that all of life is totally dependent on God. It is said that a man who had lost everything - his whole family - during the Rwandan massacres, told a missionary, "I did not know that Jesus was all I needed until Jesus was all I had." The good news Jesus brings is liberation for all those who live under the lock and key of whatever it is that imprisons. The good news Jesus brings opens the eyes of those blind to God's just kingdom. The good news Jesus brings frees those oppressed whether by poverty, wealth, worry, habit, a system or a people. The good news Jesus brings is an announcement of God's favour; his forgiveness and grace, the triumph of love over hate, and the primacy of action over creed.

Jesus is here and he looks us in the eye, "This text is being fulfilled today even as you listen." Jesus is bringing good news into your street...into your home...into your relationships...into your community...into your world. Where is your poverty in life? Are you serving time in the prison of Bitterness because there is a wrong you cannot forgive? Do you want God to open your eyes to his right ways, to see how you can help create a just and fair life for all? Are we living under the pressure to win approval, be successful, and seek out pleasure? Where is poverty in Minster Lovell? How can we bring good news and make it happen in the lives of the people

who live here? In our world we see poverty on a scale that we cannot grasp. How can we be agents of good news to the people of Haiti?

How will you and I make this a year for change, a change for good, a change with Jesus, making good news a reality in our own lives, community and world? "One day, as usually was the case, a young waif, a little girl, stood at the street corner begging for food, money or whatever she could get. Now this girl was wearing very tattered clothes; she was dirty and quite dishevelled.

As it happens, a well-to-do young man passed that corner without giving the girl a second look. But when he returned to his expensive home, his happy and comfortable family, and his well-laden dinner table, his thoughts returned to this young waif and he became very angry at God for allowing such conditions to exist.

He reproached God, saying, 'How can you let this happen? Why don't you do something to help this girl?'

Then he heard God in the depths of his being respond by saying, 'I did. I created you!'"¹

And we see a Haitian boy pulled from the rubble and lifted up, his arms outstretched in crucifix form; arms outstretched in triumph. Jesus brings good news to the poor, crucified and risen, suffering and triumphant. Jesus brings good news through us to others. It is good news in the street where you live.

Yours in Christ

Jason C Boyd

¹ Brian Cavanaugh, The Sower's Seeds (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1990), 30.

The following article is the first in a series written by Rev Paul Hardingham, and has been extracted from Church News Service, and is entitled:

What's the Big Idea?

An Introduction to the Books of the Old Testament: Genesis

Historically, Jews and Christians believed that Moses was the author/complier of the first five books of the Bible (the Pentateuch). However, this view has been questioned by scholars over the last two centuries. As the title suggests, Genesis is primarily about beginnings. In the first of its 10 sections (chapters 1-11), it records the beginnings of our world, in the account of the creation of the heavens and the earth, human beings, sin's effect on the world, marriage and family, society and civilisation and blessing and curses. In the remaining sections, it tells of God's dealings with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph, and their families. In this story of the Patriarchs we see how God is establishing a people who will bless the world, as he seeks to bless them.

The book of Genesis is key to understanding the whole of the Bible. It is supremely about relationships; the relationships between God and the created order, God and human beings, and between human beings themselves. Fundamentally man has been created in the image of God, by which he can relate to God in a personal way. However, Genesis plots how this relationship was broken by sin, when Adam and Eve disobeyed God, resulting in the fall of both human beings and the created order. Clearly by creating people with free will, God risks the possibility that they might reject him; this is inherent in his love for human kind.

In Genesis, God is presented as supreme over his creation, but he enters into covenants with the world (the rainbow following the flood) and with Abraham and his descendents (circumcision), pledging his love and faithfulness to them and calling them to respond similarly to him in faith.

A key verse for our understanding of Genesis comes right at the beginning of the book:

'So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them' (1:27).

It reminds us that God is fundamental to living. If we don't have a sense of the centrality of God's place in life, we will never get our lives right.

Thank You

I would like to thank everyone who prayed for my friend Sharron and her daughter Jane.

Jane, aged 26, who died from injuries sustained in a car crash on 23rd January was a great loss to everyone who had the privilege to know her

Jane's heart knew no bounds in giving her love and support to her family. She was her mother's rock of pure gold, her sister Anna's friend and her youngest sister Emily's second mum.

In life, Jane was warm, loving, thoughtful, kind and compassionate to her family and friends, and in death she remained the same - 5 strangers now have life and hope because she always thought of others.

Please continue to pray for this family, and for Billy, Jane's boyfriend in their grief

Val Obriain

The following is a sermon, by Rev Jason Boyd, was preached on 17 Jan

Where in Hell is God?

(Text: Isaiah 43:1-7)

Going through hell: a messy divorce; an affair uncovered; abuse endured.

Going through hell: cracking under the pressure of running a small business in a recession; being bullied by a manager; coping with mental illness.

Going through hell: planes collide into twin towers; a terrorist bomb explodes on a bus and in the underground; shots ring out and Charles de Menezes slumps dead, mistaken for a terrorist.

Going through hell. Tectonic plates go head to head violently shaking Haiti. Buildings collapse. Lives lost in an instant. Life cruelly ebbs away from the trapped and injured.

Going through hell. Elie Wiesel survived Auchwitz and wrote a harrowing account of his experience in his book *Night*. They returned from gruelling work to find a gallows prepared for an execution. Two adults and a child stood on chairs and had a noose placed round their neck. The chairs were kicked over in the sight of weeping prisoners. One prisoner asked, "Where is God? Where is he?" The whole camp was forced to file past the corpses horrified to see that the child had not yet died. It took half an hour or more for the boy to die and as Ellie past in front of him he heard the same prisoner ask, "Where is God now?" Ellie heard a voice within speak, "Where is he? Here he is - he is hanging here on the gallows."

Going through hell: personal tragedies; natural disaster; human cruelty. Where in hell is God? Is he punishing us? Are we suffering the

consequences of our own actions? Or has God nothing to do with any of it - do these things 'just happen'?

Some Christians have no problem saying that the tsunami of 2005 or the Pakistani earthquake was punishment upon Islamic fundamentalists. Even now, some Christians are saying the Haitians are being punished by God for their evil deeds. This is a crass assessment for most of us.

It is easier to recognise our own part in the hells we create. Extreme weather occurrences may be caused by human activity and are a consequence of our abuse of God's creation. We also know that too much drink damages liver function, smoking raises the chances of lung cancer, and a high fat diet increases the risk of heart disease and stroke.

Isaiah did not hesitate to say that God had created the hell of exile experienced by his people. But this was not the capricious action of a cruel parent punishing a child for not tidying up their room or having their elbows on the table. God acts against his people because justice is bought with a bribe. The widow and orphan, the poorest in society, went unprotected. Those entrusted with justice stooped to murder in order to suit themselves. God's call to turn from evil goes unheeded (Is. 1:16-26). God's people have looted and now he has given them to the spoiler. They have robbed and are given over to thieves. Even the conflagration of war did not have the desired effect in turning the people's heart to God (Is. 42:24-25).

A God who punishes is both disconcerting and comforting at the same time. On the one hand, we do not like the idea of a God who inflicts bad things on us. On the other, we do hope that God will mete out justice to those who've done

wrong (we usually don't include ourselves in this desire).

Is there any hope for this punished people living in exile? The LORD speaks to his people. Nestled in the centre of his message three words: "I love you." The hell of his people ignoring his ways and words and being sent into exile is framed by all-encompassing love. They are precious, held in his loving gaze, honoured so much that he is willing to pay top price for them, to give the most powerful and wealthy nations in exchange for them.

The Lord says, "I love you. I created you, Jacob. I saw you grasping your brother's heel, elbowing your way into first place, a nation seeking to be like other nations (Genesis 25:22-26). I formed you, Israel. When you saw the silhouette of a man and wrestled with him through the night you came to realise it was me. Such determination! You wouldn't give up the fight for a blessing, even with a dislocated hip joint. I named you Israel: the one who strives with God (Genesis 32:22-32).

Do not fear. Though my white hot anger, the fury of war and raging fire does not turn your heart to me, I will not obliterate you. I have redeemed you. I have bought you back from the enemy. I cannot annihilate the one I have created. Dislocate a hip, yes, but not destroy. I cannot leave you to your fate. After all, I have called you by name. You are mine. I'm not fickle. Once mine, always mine. None can rob me of you.

When you're going through hell do not be afraid. When you ask, 'Where in hell is God?' know this: When you pass through the waters you will not be alone. I will be with you. Do you remember your fear as you stood on the shores of the Red Sea hemmed in by Pharaoh's army

and the water? I was with you in the fiery-cloudy pillar, darkness to them and light to you. I was with you in the fiery-cloudy pillar leading you through on dry ground and clogging their chariot wheels.

When you pass through the rivers the torrent will not drag you under. Do you remember how I was with you as you gathered on the banks of the Jordan River (Joshua 3)? I was with you in the Ark borne by priests standing in Jordan's edge so that you could walk across on a dried up riverbed.

When you walk through the fire of judgement you will not be burned. The flame will not consume you. I blaze against injustice burning away the evil things you do. I am a fire that refines and shapes you into the kind of people I created you to be (1:24-26).

In this hell that you are going through, know that I am present with you. "For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour." I AM WHAT I AM - I WILL BE WHAT I WILL BE. I belong to you as you belong to me. I am the Holy One of Israel and will be true to my covenant of love in creation. All the great nations...the powerful nations...the wealthy nations...the exotic nations...Egypt, Ethiopia, Seba...these I created. But I am willing to give these nations as a ransom - as payment - to get you back. I will pay a high price to buy back you back.

Do not be afraid, for I am with you. My love affair with you means that I will never abandon you to your doom. I will enter your hell. I will be with you through the waters and in the fire. I am in your hell leading you out to freedom. I will command east, west, north and south to release you. The scattered will be gathered to the great homecoming of all those whom I have created."

Jesus says, "Do not be afraid. I am with you. I baptise with the Holy Spirit and with fire. I rage against injustice and inequality. I consume that which does not bear good fruit.

Do not be afraid. I am with you. I step into the waters of the Jordan. I look into the murky river. I sink in baptism into the suffering caused by wrong-doing. I enter into the hell of human sin.

Do not be afraid. I am with you. As the Holy Spirit descended on me and the voice called me by name, Beloved Son, Pleasing One, so I call you by name. You are my beloved. I'm pleased with you. I am with you in your hell to bring you to new life, the wholeness - the Shalom of God."

Where in hell is God? "Where is he? Here he is - he is hanging here on the gallows." In the cross God whispers, "I love you." In personal tragedy, natural disaster, human cruelty, God whispers, "I love you."

Simon Barrington-Ward in his book "The Jesus Prayer" sketches the lives of two people who have discovered God in hell.¹ He writes of an American priest who has a parish in a deprived area. He works amongst the poor and homeless and as he does he silently prays, "Jesus...Mercy." Prayer shapes his ministry. He even prays while he watches television! On one occasion, as he was prayerfully watching a program on Sierra Leone and was so deeply moved that he went with his wife to set up a home for children who had been injured both physically and psychologically during the conflict. Prayer had drawn him to be with the Sierra Leonians in their suffering.

Barrington-Ward touches on the life of St. Silouan, a Russian monk who lived from 1866-1938. He entered the community on Mount Athos at the age of 27. During those early years in the monastery he experienced sin and demonic darkness to such an extent that he was deeply distressed. He cried out for the assaults on his soul to stop and felt that God was saying to him, "The proud always suffer." St. Silouan wanted to know how his pride could be removed from his life and heard the reply, "Keep Thy mind in Hell and despair not." He listened to the voice and prayed through the darkness of feeling cut off from God's love. He came to see that this struggle with evil was not only his alone but that of the world. By praying in the hell of sin's darkness God's grace was being received not only in his own life but in those around him. He prayed through the bleak, bloody years of the World War I and the rise of Hitler who was preparing for the slaughter of the Holocaust. A man deeply aware of suffering and grief was possessed by peace. Through prayer he stayed in hell and there experienced God's mercy and grace.

Rabbi Lionel Blue in his *Thought for the Day*, on 4 January 2010, recounted the words of his friend, the late Rabbi Hugo Gryn: "In Auchwitz you could even live without bread, though not for long; but you couldn't live a day without hope."

Jesus is our hope in hell. Do not be afraid. I am with you.

¹ Barrington-Ward, 80-81.

The following article, a reflection by Jean Hanson, has been submitted by Marjorie Lee, and is entitled:

Where in the world is God?

Grey, graffitied, concrete dividing wall
Snaking defiantly, mile upon mile
Sullen security guards gesturing
Demanding compliance from us all

Where is God?

Conscripts boarding buses, gun-slung,
munching
Scanning passports, blind to anxious
faces
Boys pestering, pushing trays of
trinkets
Land stolen, Palestinian hope fading

But where is God?

By the Western Wall, Jews bending,
praising
Flags flutter, blue on white, Star of
David
Skull-capped young men dancing,
circling, chanting
Women watching, waiting, children
clapping

Is God here?

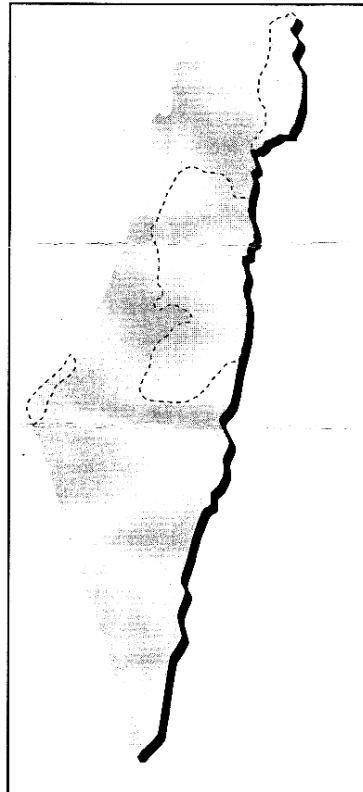
Sun lighting golden Dome on Temple
Mount
Jostling crowds on Via Dolorosa
Oasis of quiet, the Garden Tomb
Everywhere churches, more than we can
count

Was God here?

Around blue Galilee where Jesus walked
Fed the hungry, stilled the storm
Healed the sick, gave the Beatitudes
And with his disciples lived and talked

God was here!

In flowering shrubs, songs of birds,
mountain ranges
In the lives of those who work for
justice
In the celebration in bread and wine
In the hearts that love him, we know
THERE GOD IS!



Getting through today

So far today, God, I've done all right.
I haven't gossiped,
haven't lost my temper,
haven't been greedy, grumpy,
nasty, selfish, or over-indulgent.
I'm really glad about that.
But in a few minutes, God,
I'm going to get out of bed...
and from then on I'm going to need your
help!



News around the world

The following information has been taken from CWM Website dated 29th January, so is up to date at the editing of this month's magazine

Anti-Christian nation list

India and North Korea are two of the top 10 worst countries in the world for the persecution of Christians. The two nations join Pakistan, China, Eritrea, Iran, Somalia and Saudi Arabia at the top end of Human rights group International Christian Concern's annual list.

According to the report, India is consistently billed in the top 10 due to "constant violent attacks against Christians" where religious freedom has been suppressed and atrocities persist on an alarming scale.

The list was released this month in a bid to raise awareness of the trend of Christian persecution around the globe. The report said: "Sources indicate that in 2009, there was an average of three attacks per week against Christians. Although attacks are not comparable in intensity with other top ten countries, the scope of persecution in India is widespread and affects millions of believers."

The report cited the 2008 Orissa violence where dozens of Christians were murdered and over 50,000 were displaced following the murder of a Hindu leader.

"Many Christians in Orissa are still unable to return to their homes due to threats issued by Hindu radicals forcing their conversion to Hinduism as a condition for their return. These Christians continue

to suffer in refugee camps that lack housing, sanitation and food," ICC said. But the report says that Communist and former Communist states are becoming less antagonistic towards Christianity (North Korea being the exception). Whereas persecution continues to increase in Islamic countries.

UK: Delay for women bishops

The consecration of women bishops in the Church of England has been setback after it emerged that legislation for the move won't be completed by the February deadline.

The revision committee charged with drafting the legislation have failed to ensure paperwork is pushed through in time for February's General Synod. Criticisms have been voiced over the possibility that the committee deliberately stalled progress to prevent the legislation going through.

But secretary general of the General Synod William Fittall dismissed these claims saying no formal deadline had been set. He said the delay stemmed from the "avalanche" of submissions received but assured that the legislation would be ready in time for debate at the July Synod.

Mr Fittall said it remained unlikely that the final approval stage for the legislation would be reached before 2012 and that the first woman bishop would not be consecrated before 2014.

Last February, the Synod charged the revision committee with drawing up legislation that would include a Code of Practice to make it possible for those who oppose women bishops to remain within the Church.

Christina Rees, chair of WATCH (Women and the Church), said she was "deeply disappointed" by the delay in bringing legislation before Synod. It is another indicator that the Church is taking its time and being painstaking about this issue," she said.

PCW marks Thomas Jones bicentennial

Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Wales, Rev Gwenda Richards has addressed a 40,000-strong Christian congregation at the landing place of Wales' first missionary in Sohra (Cherrapunjee), India, 169 years ago. Ms Richards unveiled a memorial tablet in the Khasi Hills in Nongsawlia to mark the conclusion of the two-year long celebrations of the Bicentennial Birth Celebrations of Thomas Jones by the Khasi Jaintia Presbyterian Assembly (Presbyterian Church of India) on 23 January 2010.

The celebrations were inaugurated in April 2007 at Shillong, India by Rev Dr John Tudno Williams, then the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Wales.

Thomas Jones (1810 -1849) was born a carpenter's son in Tanyffridd, Montgomeryshire, Wales. As a young man he volunteered to be sent out as a missionary, and on 4 November 1840 he embarked from Liverpool as a missionary to the Khasi Hills of North East India. Thomas Jones was the first missionary candidate of the newly founded Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Foreign Missionary Society at Rose Place Chapel in Liverpool. He landed in Sohra (Cherrapunjee) on 22 June 1841 in the middle of the heaviest Cherra monsoons.

Although he had no convert to his credit, Thomas Jones founded the Presbyterian Church of India, one of the major Protestant churches in the world today.

Among his notable contributions, were his work with the Khasi language and literature and promotion of the economy of the local community. Thomas Jones is now known as the 'Father of the Khasi Alphabet' while another Welshman, the Rev Dr John Roberts of Corris, Wales, is known as the 'Father of the Khasi Literature'. Thomas Jones started the first primary schools in Mawmluh, Mawsmi and Cherra of the Khasi Hills. He initiated in the 1840s what we now call 'local capacity building' and 'resource management'. The Khasis of his time were amazed by his carpentry skills which he imparted to them, and by what he could do with his saw.

He taught the Khasis to burn limestone with coal rather than wood, thus creating a great sense of environmental awareness and promoting the protection of forests - long before our modern day environmentalists! A 19th century prophet of social change, Thomas Jones was a man before his times. The Khasi people and the Presbyterian Church of India are greatly indebted to this great man for what God had done through him. Thomas Jones is held in high respects among this people. He died on the 16 September 1849 and was buried at the Scottish Church Cemetery in Calcutta where his tomb still stands to this day.

The Welsh nation and the Welsh Church should be proud of this illustrious and committed son of Wales who had sacrificed his life for the betterment of a people and nation in one corner of the world.

Today, the house where Thomas Jones lived is a beautiful cottage "Llifior Mills" in Berriew near Welshpool, and a plaque in his memory unveiled by Dr R Arthur Hughes stands on the wall of the Chapel in Berriew.

Hong Kong: Christian students protest China rail link

Christian students in Hong Kong have joined thousands of demonstrators protesting a new high speed rail link, by joining them in meditation.

The Zen-inspired demonstration is being carried out in protest at the HK\$66.9 billion (US\$8.6 billion) link intended to connect Hong Kong, a Special Administrative Region of China, to the mainland's high-speed rail network. Many fear the China-wide link - which includes controversial plans to relocate an entire village - will cause major environmental damage.

Lau Kim Ling, the executive secretary of Hong Kong's Student Christian Movement said the rail link was unnecessary. We do not need a development model that divides people from the land, he said.

The Hong Kong government has predicted that almost 100,000 people will use the rail link each day, and that it would bring economic benefits to the territory by connecting it to major cities on the mainland.

But the results of a university opinion survey issued on 14 January found that 59 percent of the 1,000 people interviewed considered the proposed project to be "very expensive", while half of those surveyed said there had not been enough discussion on the proposal.

In addition to the meditation, the student Christian group has already carried out a walking meditation exercise at six universities and colleges this month to encourage members to reflect on the use of land.

Haiti: Solar-powered Bibles

As global aid agencies flood Haiti's earthquake victims with food and supplies, one US group is hoping to reach the masses through a different medium - solar-powered Bibles.

The audible books, which are charged by the sun, can broadcast the holy scriptures in Haitian Creole to 300 people at a time, Reuters reported. Sent in by the Faith Comes By Hearing organisation, the 'Proclaimer', as it is known, delivers digital quality and has been designed for poor and illiterate people.

With 600 Proclaimers already on their way to Haiti, the Albuquerque-based organisation says it is responding to the Haitian crisis by "providing faith, hope and love through God's Word in audio".

The audio Bible can bring the "hope and comfort that comes from knowing God has not forgotten them through this tragedy," a statement on its website says. They added: "The Proclaimer is self-powered and can play the Bible in the jungle, desert or ... even on the moon!"



The following article has been extracted from 'The Congregationalist' and has been submitted by Jean Howell, and is entitled:

Gospel – Shock the rich

Aid donations to the world's poor are enabling their corrupt and wealthy neighbours to avoid their responsibilities, and Christians need to target rich people with the challenge of the gospel, says Congregational minister Rev Angela Robinson, currently serving in Bangladesh

In a statement enlarging on her plea to the Federation Assembly in Harrogate, for mission to include the rich as well as the poor, she said; A lot of Christians today, not just the Bangladeshis, assume that those who have money do not need the gospel, or if they do, they can get it for themselves. After all, surely they do not have problems; it is the poor who have problems?

Money alone cannot lift the burden borne by poor people; those with wealth and power should come alongside the poor and help free them from all that binds them. Donors to Bangladesh, where Angela has worked as a school teacher for 10 years, should realise how wealthy some of the people there are. A girl came to school with a sari costing £700, and a boy pestered his parents to buy him a Jeep.

Many children of the rich, including those who have become rich through corruption, are, like similar children in the rich world, behaving worse and worse, but it is not their fault; they are great kids and respond well to moral education. The church needs missionaries with special skills to get involved with them.

In Bangladesh, the machinery of government is so riddled with corruption that a lot of government funding never reaches the truly needy. No wonder the government keeps harping about poverty, in order to deflect attention for the reasons for the poverty and the action that should, and could be taken, from the top if only there was the courage.

A lifelong supporter of Christian Aid, Angela says emergency aid should be linked to our prophetic calling, of speaking the truth to power, challenging those who hold power with their responsibilities to the whole society.

But, politicians of the world are keen for the church not to speak out. They condemn us if we dare to suggest that one of the key reasons for poverty is the corruption, incompetence and carelessness of those in power, and the greed of the middle and upper classes who refuse to vote for any party that dares to discipline the 'upwardly mobile', whose ambitions are only reasonable up to the point when they stamp on the heads of those below.

Angela commends Jesuits, who in the past, targeted the courts of kings and emperors on the assumption that people at the bottom of society did not have much of a chance unless you converted those at the top. Christians in position of power in society must be helped to practice their faith in more ways than writing cheques. They must have the courage to speak out when they see things going wrong - the financial services and MP's expenses to name but two. The church must speak God's word to all who need to hear it. Of course, we must be charitable to the poor, but not think that is all there is to being the people of God.

The following poem, written by Shane DeRolf, has been submitted by Viviane Boyd, and is entitled:

The Crayon Box That Talked

While walking into a toy store the day
before today
I overheard a crayon box with many
things to say

"I don't like Red!" said Yellow and Green
said "Nor do I"
"And no one here likes Orange but no
one knows just why"

"We are a box of crayons that doesn't
get along
Said Blue to all the others "Something
here is wrong"

Well, I bought that box of crayons and
took it home with me
And laid out all the colours so the
crayons all could see

They watched me as I coloured with
Red and Blue and Green
And Black and White and Orange and
every colour in between

They watched as Green became the
grass and Blue became the sky
The Yellow sun was shining bright on
White clouds drifting by

Colours changing as they touched
becoming something new
They watched me as I coloured - they
watched me till I was through

And when I finally finished I began to
walk away
And as I did the crayon box had
something more to say

"I do like Red!" said Yellow and Green
said, "so do I"
And Blue you were terrific! So high up in
the sky

"We are a box of crayons each one of us
unique
But when we get together the picture is
more complete"

John 13:34-35 (NKJ) "A new
commandment I give to you, that you
love one another; as I have loved you,
that you also love one another. By this
all will know that you are My disciples, if
you have love for one another."

<http://www.skywriting.net/inspirational/poems/>

WOMEN'S WORLD DAY OF PRAYER 

Let Everything That Has Breath Praise God

A Service Prepared by Christian Women of Cameroon

Friday 5th March 2010

ALL WELCOME – MEN WOMEN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

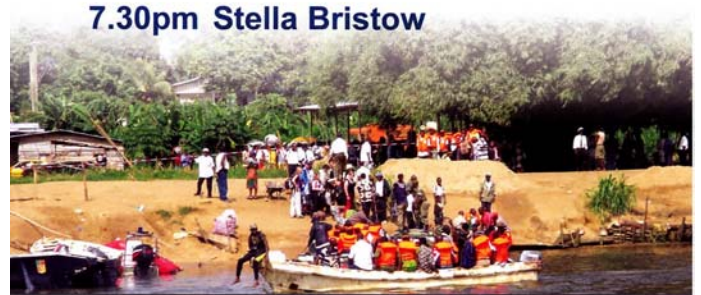
Venue:

St Mary's Cogges

Speakers:

1.45pm Frank Ryan

7.30pm Stella Bristow





PRAYER LETTER

No 139

Attitudes and Actions

'There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore I command you to be open handed towards your brothers and towards the poor and needy in your land' Deut 15:11

For brothers read all mankind and for 'in your land' read in the nations of the world.

'Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under any compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.' 2Cor 9:7

The disastrous earthquake in Haiti has touched and prompted people all over the world to give generously to help the people of Haiti. People acted immediately out of compassion, which is a very positive reaction and gives us, as global citizens, hope.

Remember the parable that Jesus told of the 'Good Samaritan'. The Samaritan (one of a despised race by the Jews) helped the dying man, (a Jew who had been attacked by robbers) at his time of need. The Samaritan also left enough money with the Innkeeper to provide medical attention, food, drink and shelter for his recovery however long it took. The Samaritan's attitude was generous and his actions were short term and long term in helping this injured man.

The situation in Haiti is short term and long term. Yes, the people need medical supplies, food, water and shelter now and people to administer these. However the infra structure of Haiti needs to be completely re-built which will be a long on going process taking decades.

God requires our attitude to be selfless and positive.

What can our actions be?

We can pray continuously for the people of Haiti.

We can give money. Any amount however small will make a difference.

We can keep informed. If you support an International Aid Agency find out what they are doing in Haiti. If you don't support one perhaps you may be prompted to adopt one.

Write to your M.P/ P.M/Foreign Minister/International Development Minister asking what the Government is doing for Haiti.

A Prayer from Christian Aid (Nigel Varndell)

May those who are poor be freed from their hunger,
May those who struggle be freed from injustice,
May those who need peace be freed from violence,
And may those of us who are comfortable be freed from our indifference,
So that together we may all be free to make a difference.

Every Blessing
Beryl

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

The following has been extracted from last year's Prayer letter for Lent, and thought it appropriate for this year too, and has been submitted by Beryl Cartwright

*'Create in me a new heart, O God
And renew a right spirit in me,
Wash me, cleanse me, purify me,
Make my heart as white as snow'*

Psalm 51 & S&HF 74

Lent is the period of 40 days from Ash Wednesday to Easter Saturday. Lent reminds us of the 40 days that Jesus spent in the desert praying and fasting when he was tempted by the Devil. Lent is a time when Christians usually 'give up' or sacrifice something as well as fasting and praying in preparation for HolyWeek and Easter Day.

Why not make this Lent a time where the words in italic above really mean something to you.

During the recent snow I wore my very muddy, dirty, walking boots. After all the walking in the snow my boots became so clean.. Apparently if you drag a piece of stained or dirty laundry across the snow it becomes clean. During Lent can we be aware of the things that 'stain and taint' us.

Keep in mind the line '***Make my heart as white as snow***' as you journey through this Lenten time.

Ed Note: This year's Lenten Study Groups can be found at the Diary page in the magazine

The following article has been submitted by Marjorie Lee, and is entitled:

World Day of Prayer

It is a small world and when disasters occur in any part of the globe, help, of all kinds, is sent to alleviate the suffering and bring comfort to those who are distraught. The world then seems even smaller and for this we thank God, who is the Father of us all.

One day that brings Christians together to worship is the first Friday in March, and this year the 5th. People of the Cameroon have set the theme 'Let everything that has breath praise God'.

The services this year will be at St Mary's Cogges at 1.45pm and 7.30pm and I would encourage you to come and enjoy at least one of these services, which are open to ALL - women, men and young people. If you feel that Cogges is too far, do ask for a lift - we shall be glad to help

Thank You

A very big Thank You to the young people & leaders for dressing up & acting out the Christmas story. The cards & the cake are appreciated for the thoughtfulness they show

Marjorie Lee

A Gift of Time?

After the celebrations of Christmas, with its giving and receiving of presents, and the New Year, reflecting on times past and looking forward to things to come, could you possibly give up just a little of your time for those with very little time left?

Marie Curie Nursing Care are asking people in Witney to give up a hour or so of their time to join a team of collectors at Sainsbury's on Friday 26th & Saturday 27th February.

It is hoped to raise £5million in this year's Great Daffodil Appeal to fund the much needed nursing care for cancer patients who are thereby enabled to stay in their own home.

To find out more, or to offer your gift of time, please contact me either by phone: 01993 702785 or by e-mail: rogfner@aol.com

Your assistance in this would be much appreciated

Yours in Christ
Roger Faulkner

Thank You

Jean, Marina, Peggy, Joyce and Maureen would like to express their gratitude and thanks for all the Christmas treats. The Sunday Diners Lunch was, as usual, fantastic. A lot of work went in to the preparation, planning and presentation of this. Also thank you to the Junior Church for the lovely, decorated and very tasty Christmas Cakes!

Thank you to everyone concerned. We did appreciate it!



Feb	10	Thomas Hayes
	13	Judi Holloway
	16	Leah Cotton
	22	Dave Wesson
	25	Jean Howell
	26	Alison Hazell
Mar	08	Joan Currie
	09	John Watson
	11	John Jephcott
	14	Arthur Carter
	15	Doris Hall
	16	Ben Smith
	19	Beryl Cartwright
	22	Peter Sellman
	26	Zoe St Clair

Curiosity

A teacher was finishing a lesson on the joys of discovery and the importance of curiosity.

"After all," she declared, "Where would we be today," she asked, "if no one had ever been curious?"

One child quietly spoke up from the back of the room. "In the garden of Eden?"

Shoes or Boots in need of repair?
Need new keys cut?

What about the new shop at
33a High St
Part of Congregational church
old premises

Give him a try!

ROTAS

WELCOMING TEAM

Feb	07	Jill & Robert McBride
	14	Pip & Beryl Cartwright
	21	Nanna Blackman & Theo Howells
	28	Pat & Ben Smith
Mar	07	Susan Wass & Iris Lindsay
	14	Nanna Blackman & Irene St Clair
	21	Joan Currie & Val Obriain
	28	Pat Smith & Irene Jephcott
Apr	04	Pip & Beryl Cartwright



COMMUNION

Feb	06 pm	Nanna Blackman & Jacqui Powlesland
		Preparation Iris Lindsay
	21 am	Peter Gamston & Pat Smith
		Nanna Blackman & Dave Wesson
		Preparation Irene St Clair
Mar	07 pm	Jacqui Powlesland & Pat Smith
		Preparation Iris Lindsay
	21 am	Judi Holloway & Chris Esapa
		Elaine Gudem & Jacqui Powlesland
		Preparation Beryl Cartwright
Apr	04 am	Nanna Blackman & Pat Smith
		Peter Gamston & Chris Esapa
		Preparation Pat Smith



FLOWERS

Feb	07	Val Obriain
	14	Alison Hazell
	21	Jill McBride
	28	Pat Smith
Mar	07	Jacqui Powlesland
	14	Joan Currie
	21	Beryl Cartwright
	28	Rita Hayes
Apr	04	Easter



COFFEE

Feb	07	Café Church
	14	Jill & Robert McBride
	21	Pat & Ben Smith
	28	Marjorie Lee, Iris Lindsay & Judith Bungey
Mar	07	Val Obriain & Sarah Hopwood
	14	Sue Birdseye & Linda McCormac
	21	Peter Gamston & Gwen Mee
	28	Susan Wass & Irene St Clair
Apr	04	Jill & Robert McBride
	Note:	Reserve Irene St Clair



ROTAS

REST & CHAT

Feb	04	Jean Stanley, Marina Bowerman & Irene St Clair
	11	Marjorie Lee
	18	Pat Smith & Gwen Mee
	25	Iris Lindsay & Joan Currie
Mar	04	Jill & Robert McBride
	11	Jean Stanley, Marina Bowerman & Irene St Clair
	18	Marjorie Lee
Apr	25	Pat Smith & Gwen Mee
	01	Iris Lindsay & Joan Currie



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

SW Mids. Area
Congregational Federation

20th March 2010

10.30am—4pm

South Cerney United
Church



2010 Area Assembly

Family Friendly Faith

The main opportunity of the year for all churches of the Area to gather together to support each other and share expertise and information. This year's programme includes

- Worship
- Area Business
- News of the CF sponsored Christian Aid project in the Dominican Republic. Oné Respé.
- Ideas of how Area churches reach families in their communities and the difference it makes to them.
- Opportunities to find out more about the ideas that interest you.
- Fellowship over refreshments

More details from:

**Rev Barbara
Bridges,
Church Support
Worker,
5, Churchill Place
Fairford
Glos. GL7 4JT
Phone: 07813
242144
Email:
swmidscf@aol.com**

Local contact person:

**Your Church Secretary
has the full
programme.
All refreshments
provided by South
Cerney, help them by
letting them know you
are coming. Booking
forms will be with every
church in January.**