

Witney Congregational Church

Issue 16

April &
May 2011

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



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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	1.30 pm	Tuesday	For under 5's parents and carers
Saturday Praise	11.00 am	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	6.00pm	www. - 1 st & 3 rd Friday of the month
	7.00 pm	Y4J - 1 st & 3 rd 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)

St ANDREW'S BOOKSHOP

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



We have nearly reached that part of our Christian Calendar - Easter; where we are free to rejoice in a risen saviour who is near to us in resurrection power. However, the sad fact is, that since the last edition, the American, English and other allied troops are in a conflict situation with Libya.

We must all affirm our trust in God, whose redeeming love never waivers and whose mercy endures in all situations. We must continue to pray that God's will be done and that God's kingdom come. The final outcome of this conflict must be that of a more democratic Middle East and not American power; not just for the people of Libya, but also for other occupants of that area of the world.

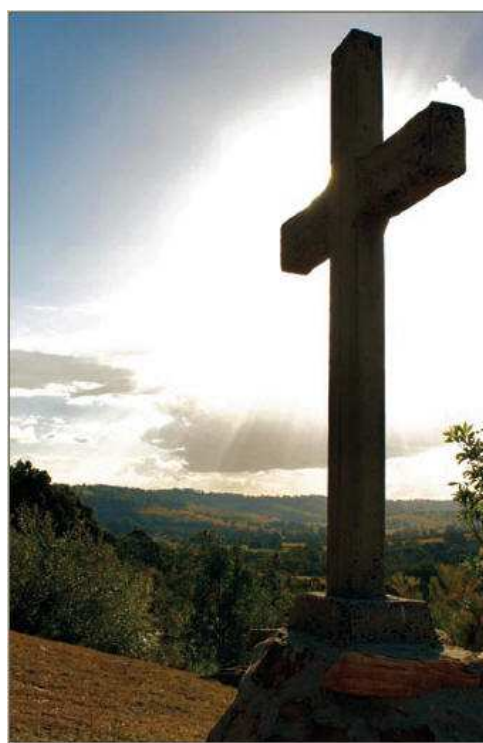
So, turning now to the contents, here is just a glimpse of some of the articles that have been submitted; Pip Cartwright continues the series on the history of WCC; Val Obriain reflects on Street Pastors; Doris Hall celebrates her 100th birthday and there is CF news update to name but a few.

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@uwclub.net
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 next edition is due on 4th June
Your Editor



Contents

1. Editorial
2. Pastor's Paper
3. Diary
4. Rotas
6. Easter
7. CWM News
10. Easter reflections
11. Prayer Letter No 146
12. CF News
14. History of WCC
18. Street Pastors
19. Christian Aid
20. English Language
21. Visiting the sick
22. Doris Hall
23. The most ...
24. MAF

Pastor's Paper

One penny off a litre of petrol wasn't the only surprise contained in the budget. The Chancellor's decision to levy a two billion pound tax on North Sea oil companies shocked the industry and is sure to be a crowd pleaser with the electorate.

Motorists also will breathe a sigh of relief that the forecast 4p rise due in April has been put off until 2012. It's hard to believe that there is relief that fuel prices will remain around £1.34/35. This is a far cry from the year 2000 when refineries were being blocked off in protest against prices pushing towards 90 p per litre.

Those were the days!

Times are tough. The austerity measures have only begun to bite. Things are going to get harder as large numbers of people lose their jobs in the public sector. National budget cuts are having an impact on local councils. In West Oxfordshire the effects of fiscal restraint are being felt already. Youth services will be greatly reduced. Repair and improvements to our pock marked roads will not be addressed as readily as we would wish. There will be an impact on the NHS and services in the community to those who need support.

The government proposes that promoting the Big Society will address the gaps in the welfare state. Many, including those sitting on government benches, are struggling to articulate the Big Society. Is this an attempt to foster community spirit or a strategy to soften the impact of a severe contraction of public funds? Time will tell.

A key part of the Big Society idea is volunteerism. It is impossible to put a monetary value on those who give of their time and energies to a myriad of organisations in communities across our

country. A walk into Witney town centre and we could step into any number of charity shops staffed by volunteers. Then there are those who are not readily seen: folk who volunteer as visitors in the local hospital; the small army of people who care for paths in our town that are untended; those who befriend those who need companionship; individuals who volunteer for Base 33, the Late Night Cafe, and Street Pastors. The three groups just mentioned exist because of the vision and commitment of churches in Witney. Churches already model Big Society values and provide invaluable services to the community.

The core value at the heart of the Christian faith is to love God with our whole person and to love our neighbour as we love ourselves. In these times of economic hardship there will be many victims beaten up and bleeding on the roadside. In Jesus' story of the person robbed and left battling for life it was the two religious people who walk past. We expect them to help but they don't. It is a surprise that the loathed foreigner is the one who stops and offers generous assistance (Luke 10:25-37). Will Christian communities lead by example and set the trend for the Big Society, giving selfless service to all who are our neighbours? Or will we have a look at the needs and pass on by?

During this season of Lent as we prepare for the sorrow of Good Friday and the joy of Easter morning, Christians are reminded of what drove Jesus to do all that he did. "For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). In these cash strapped days the Kingdom of God is Jesus' Big Society and is summed up in one word: service.



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

Apr

- 3rd am All-Age Mothering Sunday
- pm Joint Service at Congregational Church Communion
- 5th 10.30am Springfield School Easter service at Congregational church
- 10th am Karen Brusch
- pm Joint Service at High St Methodist
- 16th 2.00pm Wedding of Marie St Clair and James Squire
- 17th am Morning Worship & Communion followed by Word Café
- pm Joint Service at Congregational Church
- 21st 7.00pm Maundy service
- 22nd 10.00am Good Friday service
- 10.45am Join outside High St Methodist church for CTiW service at 11.15am at Market Square
- 24th 6.00am Dawn service at The Paddock, St Mary's church Cogges
- 8.00am Communion service
- 10.30am All-Age Worship Communion
- pm No evening service

May

- 1st am Morning Worship
- pm Joint Service at Congregational Church Communion
- 7th 11.00am Saturday Praise
- 8th am Morning Worship
- pm CTiW United Service at Our Lady and St Hugh
- 15th am Morning Worship Communion
- pm Joint Service at Congregational Church
- 22nd am Morning Worship followed by Word Café
- pm Joint Service at High St Methodist Church
- 29th am Morning Worship
- pm Madley Park Residential Home

Jun

- 4th 11.00am Saturday Praise
- 5th am Morning Worship
- pm Joint Service at Congregational Church Communion

The following events are given for your particular attention:

Apr

- 5th Springfield school Easter service at Congregational church
- 6th CTiW Soup Lunch at High St Methodist
- 9th Prayer Chain meeting 9.15am

14 th	Fellowship Group	2.30pm	9 Pensclose
15 th	CTiW Soup Lunch at St Mary's Cogges		
17 th	Word Café	12.00 noon	
19 th	Special church meeting	7.30pm	
20 th	CTiW Soup Lunch at Oasis church 11 Fettiplace Road		
21 st	Maundy service supper		
22 nd	Hot Cross buns at High St Methodist		
24 th	Easter Breakfast	8.45am	
29 th	www. & Y4J Street Party	5.00pm	

May

3 rd	Deacons meeting	7.30pm	
12 th	Fellowship Group	2.30pm	7 Riverside Gardens
13 th	www. & Y4J	6.00pm & 7.00pm	
14 th	CF National Assembly at Edgbaston Birmingham		
	Christian Aid Coffee Morning		
	Prayer Chain meeting	9.15am	
17 th	Church meeting	7.30pm	
22 nd	Word Café	12.00 noon	
24 th	CTiW AGM at Congregational church	7.30pm	
27 th	www. & Y4J	6.00pm & 7.00pm	

ROTAS

WELCOMING TEAM

Apr	03	Susan Wass & Val Obriain
	10	Nanna Blackman & Irene St Clair
	17	Jill & Robert McBride
	24	Beryl & Pip Cartwright
May	01	Pat & Ben Smith
	08	Sharon Watson & Joan Currie
	15	Nanna Blackman & Theo Howells
	22	Susan Wass & Iris Lindsay
	29	Irene St Clair & Val Obriain
Jun	05	Jill & Robert McBride



COMMUNION

Apr	03 pm	Jacqui Powlesland
		Preparation Iris Lindsay
	24 8.00am	
	24 am	Nanna Blackman & Jacqui Powlesland
		Chris Esapa & Sharon Watson



May	01 pm	tba	
		Preparation	Iris Lindsay
	15 am	Judi Holloway & Chris Esapa	
		Sharon Watson & Jacqui Powlesland	
		Preparation	Beryl Cartwright
Jun	05 pm	tba	
		Preparation	Iris Lindsay



FLOWERS

Apr	03	Jacqui Powlesland
	10	Alison Hazell
	17	Wedding
	24	Easter
May	01	Joan Currie
	08	Beryl Cartwright
	15	Jill McBride
	22	Judi Holloway
	29	Val Obriain
Jun	05	Rita Hayes



COFFEE

Apr	03	Marjorie Lee, Iris Lindsay & Judith Bungey
	10	Jill & Robert McBride
	17	Word Cafe
	24	Linda McCormac & Sharon Watson
May	01	Peter Gamston & Gwen Mee
	08	Marjorie Lee, Iris Lindsay & Judith Bungey
	15	Susan Wass & Irene St Clair
	22	Word Cafe
	29	Jill & Robert McBride
Jun	05	Linda McCormac & Sharon Watson



REST & CHAT

Apr	07	Jill & Robert McBride
	14	Jean Stanley, Marina Bowerman & Irene St
	21	Marjorie Lee
	28	Pat Smith
May	05	Iris Lindsay & Joan Currie
	12	Jill & Robert McBride Clair
	19	Jean Stanley, Marina Bowerman & Irene St
	26	Marjorie Lee
Jun	02	Pat Smith



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 - Thanks

The following article, written by Rev David Winter, has been extracted from Church News Service, and is entitled:

EASTER – the most joyful day of the year

Easter is the most joyful day of the year for Christians. Christ has died for our sins. We are forgiven. Christ has risen! We are redeemed! We can look forward to an eternity in his joy! Hallelujah!

The Good News of Jesus Christ is a message so simple that you can explain it to someone in a few minutes. It is so profound that for the rest of their lives they will be still be 'growing' in their Christian walk with God.

Why does the date move around so much? Because the date of Passover moves around, and according to the biblical account, Easter is tied to the Passover.

Passover celebrates the Israelites' exodus from Egypt and it lasts for seven days, from the middle of the Hebrew month of Nisan, which equates to late March or early April. Sir Isaac Newton was one of the first to use the Hebrew lunar calendar to come up with firm dates for Good Friday: Friday 7 April 30 AD or Friday 3 April, 33 AD, with Easter Day falling two days later. Modern scholars continue to think these the most likely.

Most people will tell you that Easter falls on the first Sunday after the first full moon after the Spring Equinox, which is broadly true. But the precise calculations are complicated and involve something called an 'ecclesiastical full moon', which is not the same as the moon in the sky.

The earliest possible date for Easter in the West is 22 March, which last fell in 1818 and won't fall again until 2285. The latest is 25 April, which last happened in 1943 and is next due in 2038.

Why the name, 'Easter'? In almost every European language, the festival's name comes from 'Pesach', the Hebrew word for Passover. The Germanic word 'Easter', however, seems to come from Eostre, a Saxon fertility goddess mentioned by the Venerable Bede. He thought that the Saxons worshipped her in 'Eostur month', but may have confused her with the classical dawn goddesses like Eos and Aurora, whose names mean 'shining in the east'.

So Easter might have meant simply 'beginning month' - a good time for starting up again after a long winter.

Finally, why Easter eggs? On one hand, they are an ancient symbol of birth in most European cultures. On the other hand, hens start laying regularly again each Spring. Since eggs were forbidden during Lent, it's easy to see how decorating and eating them became a practical way to celebrate Easter.





News around the world

The following information has been taken from CWM Website dated 1st April, so is up to date at the editing of this month's magazine

CWM receives Certificate of Sponsorship

The UK Border Agency has issued CWM with a Certificate of Sponsorship, which now allows CWM general secretary Rev Dr Collin Cowan to apply for a three year non-renewable visa.

Dr Cowan took up his post as general secretary in January of this year, but has until now been unable to apply for permission to live and work in the UK.

CWM has welcomed the UK Border Agency's decision to issue a Certificate of Sponsorship on 29 March, but has drawn attention to the fact that the wider issue of its ability to employ international staff remains unaddressed.

From its inception in 1977, CWM has upheld its ecumenical and global ethos by recruiting key staff representative of its member churches. Because it is still unclear how future applications will be handled, CWM remains concerned about the implications for its commitment to a secretariat that reflects its membership.

Dr Cowan said: "We are most grateful for the support of our ecumenical partners and initiatives of our UK-based churches, which have helped considerably to bring us to this place.

"We accept this first positive move as a signal of the power of collective capacity and collaboration and it beckons us to continue to look for ways to combine efforts for more effective outcomes."

CWM's member churches are drawn from Africa, the Caribbean, East Asia, Europe, the Pacific and South Asia

Bangladeshi evangelist jailed

A Christian in Bangladesh has been sentenced to a year in jail for selling and distributing Christian literature near a Muslim gathering north of the capital city, Dhakar.

Twenty-five-year-old tribal Christian Biplob Marandi was arrested near the huge Bishwa Ijtima (World Muslim Congregation) on the banks of the Turag River near Tongi town on 21 January.

The court heard that police found Mr Marandi distributing Christian booklets near the field where the Muslim gathering was being held. Mr Marandi admitted the charges and told the court he had simply wanted to propagate his religion, Compass Direct News reported.

His brother, Rev Sailence Marandi, a pastor at the Church of Nazarene International in northern Thakurgaon district, said there was no altercation between Mr Marandi and the gathered Muslims, but that his brother had created chaos near the event when they realised he was handing out un-Islamic literature.

Taiwan church backs nuclear protest

Church members from the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan have got behind a special rally to urge the government to rethink nuclear safety in the country.

The protest, which was led by the Taiwan Environmental Protection Union (TEPU) in Taipei on 20 March, came in the wake of the earthquake-triggered nuclear crisis in Japan earlier this month.

TEPU issued a statement claiming that past national policies restraining the use of nuclear energy had severely eroded in recent years with some plants still in operation and safety regulations continually glossed over, Taiwan Church News reported.

Protestors called for the government to halt nuclear operations at three of the country's plants and not build any new nuclear facilities in the future. They requested an investigation on a further nuclear facility over concerns that it has been built on land vulnerable to earthquakes and tsunamis and they also want emergency procedures be put into place at all four plants.

At the rally, PCT Church and Society Secretary Huang Che-yen, who has recently returned from a solidarity visit to Japan, said it would be foolish not to re-evaluate nuclear safety measures following a nuclear disaster in a country as progressive and conscientious over safety as Japan.

Former PCT Premier Chang Chun-hsiung, who has historically voiced his concerns over nuclear plants in Taiwan, said he was worried that there are less stringent measures in place for nuclear safety in densely populated Taiwan than other less densely populated countries.

He urged Christians to pray for Taiwan's environment and for a new drive to find alternative power sources to nuclear in the country.

CWM Europe explores postmodern mission

How can churches share the gospel in an age where absolute truth claims and universal explanations are met with suspicion? That was the issue under the spotlight at a special CWM conference held in Manchester.

A group of 25 delegates from CWM's member churches across Europe gathered for the three-day event to focus on how to share the news of Jesus Christ in a postmodern age.

Union of Welsh Independents communications officer, Alun Lenny, who was at the event, said it was clear that past structures and the Church's way of "doing religion" was no longer so effective.

"Basic changes in the attitudes of society, coupled with the digital revolution, have ushered in a new era in the history of Western culture. "The Modern has become Postmodern, almost without us noticing, let alone understanding what it means," he said.

"A main feature of the postmodern is mistrust of the absolute, of the 'Big Story', and those who claim they hold the truth. Postmodern society considers any effort to impose ideology an abuse of power, as violence."

A "big story" or metanarrative offers a universal explanation of history and experience. Examples of these "big stories" are religious doctrines, some

feminist interpretations of patriarchy, and belief in universal progress. Metanarratives legitimise power, authority, and social customs.

"We tried to grasp the main features of the Postmodern era, considered how to capitalise on new digital media, and discussed ways of witness and action that would be understandable, relevant and appealing to contemporary society."

At the conference, delegates heard lectures on Media and Culture and Christians in Public Life. They were also addressed by Rev Dr Noel A. Davies on Science, Ethics and Christianity, whose presentation was followed by a lively discussion.

Mr Lenny said the group acknowledged that as Christians the problem is both theological (what exactly is the message?) and one of medium (how to reach people?). "We discussed the meaning of the phrase 'Christ with us', the influence and role of the Holy Spirit, the use of 'language' of religion and the Bible, and people's attitude to the church - inside and outside the chapel," he said.

"Jesus Christ didn't measure the success of God's Kingdom by counting heads in the synagogue! He was out among the ordinary people, showing the face of God in word and deed. The consensus among delegates was that the church, too, needs to be one that serves the community; a church that sees the face of Christ in the 'other' and shows the face Christ to him or her. The church needs to reconnect with society in a country where Christianity is just one religion among many."

He added: "Christ is our gift to a society obsessed with money and property. We cannot force the gift on

anyone, they may not accept it. But we must take risks and try new ways with confidence, patience and faith."

Myanmar quake kills worshippers in Baptist church

Twenty five people were killed when a Baptist church collapsed during an evening meeting following a series of earthquakes in Myanmar.

Kya Kuni Village Church was in the middle of a service for women when the earthquakes measuring between 6.8 and 5.4 in magnitude struck on 24 March, the Baptist Times reported.

Many more were injured and were taken to the Tachilek Township Hospital. Initial reports put the death toll at more than 100 with more than 150 injured. A second church nearby was also totally destroyed. It's thought that no one here was hurt.

The Catholic church of Tili Village, located on a main road very near to Ta Lar was also destroyed.

Scott Coats, director of Mekong Minority Foundation (MMF) said, "We have never experienced such earthquakes before. People rushed out, they panicked. They didn't know what to do."

Mr Coats said that churches will be at the front of the relief response.



The following article has been extracted from Parish Pump, and is entitled:

Easter Reflection: 'There was a Garden'

We were standing looking at the snowdrops in the churchyard. It's been a bitter, frozen kind of Winter hasn't it? But now the sun was shining, the temperature had climbed above freezing, and those little bulbs buried in the soil had responded to it. A few weeks ago, all looked dead. But now, all around us, were the signs of Spring.

'Makes you think,' said my companion. 'Death and resurrection - it's simply part of the way things are.' I agreed, and pointed out that in a few days time we'd be celebrating, in the church in the middle of that graveyard, a man who rose from the dead and said, 'Because I live, you will live also'.

This idea, of life blossoming in the place of death is right there in the Gospels, too. 'In the place where Jesus was crucified,' St John tells us, 'there was a garden'. And in that garden was a new tomb, in which, after his crucifixion, he was buried. But within three days the tomb was once again empty. Like the Easter flowers blooming in the graveyard, life had conquered death.

If you visit Jerusalem, you will find the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, built on the probable site of the tomb of Jesus, which you can just about find underneath all the pious artefacts. Less than a mile away is the Garden Tomb, which General Gordon thought was the tomb of Jesus, located beside a craggy hill and set in a garden. It was, in fact,

inside the city wall in the time of Christ, which means it can't be the actual place of his crucifixion and burial, but there is no doubt that if you want to feel and see what it would have been like, and even peer into a genuine first century tomb, this will probably quicken your pulse more than the Holy Sepulchre.

As Jesus himself said, the seed has to die before it can produce fruit. 'In the place where he was crucified there was a garden'. The seeds and bulbs are buried, and at the right time they burst into life. As my friend said, it's the way things are, and it is the heart of the Easter message.



Congratulations with love and best wishes to:

Marie St Clair and James Squire on their marriage on 16th April



Thank You

I would like to thank all our flower arrangers at church for giving me, and I'm sure many others, such pleasure throughout the year with their floral arrangements - So varied and beautiful

Maureen Miles



PRAYER LETTER No 146

Live simply so others may simply live

We are halfway through Lent. Does the 40 day period of Lent make a difference to how you, think, behave and act as a Christian? Lent is a wakeup call on our commitment as Christians as to how we live our lives - Do we 'live simply so others may simply live'?

During the last weeks we have witnessed through our T.V. screens the horrors of the earthquake and tsunami in Japan leaving people distraught in their grief, with family, friends and communities wiped out. Also on our screens we witness the civil unrest and conflict in the Middle East and North Africa. We often ask 'why does God let this happen'? ; Either natural disasters or people denied freedom or justice by tyrannical leaders. God is in the suffering of the people whatever the cause but too often people don't let God in.

Jesus was in the desert for 40 days where he was tempted several times by the devil. However Jesus stood his ground and told Satan to get away from him. For it is written 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.'

We are surrounded by temptation every day in our highly materialistic Western World. How do we react ? Do we really mean the words of the Lord's Prayer when we say: 'Lead us not into temptation , but deliver us from the evil one'. Matt 6:13

Whatever our immediate circumstances we are 'rich' in this country with comfortable homes, enough to eat, clean water, medical facilities, freedom of speech and freedom to worship but are we spiritually rich? We need to be accountable to God for how we spend our time, money, talents.

Within the following prayer are the words of Colin Gibson from New Zealand taken from 'Just One Year'

*May the anger of Christ be mine, when the world grows hard and greedy;
When the rich have no care for the poor, when the powerful take from the needy.
In a world of restless change, standing for love, faith and justice;
in a dark confusing time, bearing the light, the shining light of Christ.
May the pity of Christ be mine, when the outstretched hand's not taken.
When the need stand in line, when the lonely live forsaken.....
May the love of Christ be mine, for the anguished , for the ailing,
For the frail disabled life, for the failing....
May the actions of Christ be mine,
bringing hope, bringing new direction, bringing peace in a warring time,
offering welcome, not rejection.....
May this fasting , thinking, reflective time of Lent bring you joyously to Easter Day.
Halleluya !*

Every Blessing
Beryl

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



CF NEWS

Congregational Federation

Issue Spring 2011

Bringing together independent free churches for mutual support through a vision of unity in creative diversity

Latest news and resources available from the Congregational Federation

Forthcoming Events

April

Council 1st & 2nd
Training level 4/5 8th to 10th
Easter Sunday 24th
Leaders Conf 26th to 29th

May

May Assembly 13th to 14th (Edgbaston Birmingham)
Invest Trust & Trading Bd. 18th

June

CFL Executive 11th
Training level 4/5 24th to 26th
Youth and Children's Group 25th

Special points of interest:

- Birmingham bound
- What is God saying?
- Pilots 75th anniversary
- Invitation to Induction
- News round up

Birmingham bound



The Churches of North West Midlands Area are looking forward to hosting this year's May Assembly.

It is in Birmingham on May 14th in the Edgbaston Conference Centre, a new facility in the Edgbaston Cricket Ground, home of Warwickshire County Cricket Club. Famous for many cricketing triumphs over the years we warmly invite you to come and make this event a great success – in worship, in business and in meeting old friends.

Birmingham is a great city and has excellent transport connections to the rest of the country by way of road, air and rail. As a world famous sporting venue Edgbaston is well signposted and there is generous parking, free for those attending. Just opposite is the Cannon Hill Park and the MAC Arts Centre which houses a cafe along with small exhibitions.

Don't forget the Friday Fringe meeting the night before on Friday 13th and a warm welcome awaits you if you are able join our Birmingham Churches at Ladypool Road or Hay Mills in worshipping God on Sunday

morning at 11.00 a.m.

There is also plenty to do. Visit the wonderful gardens and greenhouses of Edgbaston Botanical Gardens which are set in 15 acres of grounds or take in The Royal Birmingham Ballet (Previously known as Saddlers Wells) or The City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra. But there are all kinds of theatre, film, music and comedy. Contemporary art in the Icon, Pre-Raphaelites (and others) in the Birmingham Art Gallery and the Barber Art Gallery are all here.

There are restaurants to suit all tastes and pockets and of course Ladypool Road is the actual birthplace of the Balti Curry (though more than one restaurant claims the honour). For shopping the Bull Ring Shopping Centre and the Mail Box are unparalleled. Further afield, Warwick, Stratford, the Malvern Hills and the Vale of Evesham beckon along with the Severn Valley Railway and all the history you could ask for.

Visit www.visitbirmingham.com or phone 0844 888 3883 for further things to do in Birmingham and for information on accommodation and www.edgbaston.com for more about the Cricket Ground.

A day of inspiration and encouragement

What is God saying to us?

Brian Grist will be inducted as the President of the Congregational Federation on the 14th May at Edgbaston Birmingham.

He writes "There is no, one size fits all, formula for "success" in today's church. However, we do have the greatest revivalist of all time in our midst. The Holy Spirit. His voice must be heard in our church meetings. God may well say the same or different things, to each

church. But we need to listen. Perhaps the first item on our agendas ought to be "What is God saying to us? Led by The Holy Spirit, and not by finances and buildings, which after all are secondary at best... are they not?"

"He who has an ear, let him hear what The Spirit is saying to the churches.." Rev. 2 v 17. (And often in chapters. 2 & 3)



Pilots celebrates 75 years of mission and ministry with children and young people

Pilots, the non-uniformed Christian organization for children and young people aged 5 – 12 is 75 years old this year.

Pilots was created by the London Missionary Society in response to children collecting money for missionary work as: a way of saying thank you, giving them a safe place in which to meet and to inform them of the good work that their money was doing in other parts of the world.

Pilots became a collaboration between the LMS and the Congregational Union and passed into the ownership of the United Reformed Church when it was formed in 1972, whilst still maintaining its links with the churches that formed the Congregational Federation.

To mark this momentous occasion Pilots has produced a booklet for Pilots companies and churches. The booklet is based on the decades through which Pilots has travelled, taking children, young people and adults on a journey to discover what it was like living in that decade, what was happening in the world

at that time and what being a Pilot in that decade felt like.

The book is full of historical material, activities, crafts, games and worship ideas and includes a sharing of memoirs from former Master Pilots recounting their memories of the decade in which they served. A whole chapter is dedicated to planning a celebration party and every church is encouraged to hold their party at some point in the week 3rd – 9th July.

Many churches have been involved with Pilots at some point in its history and in recognition of this, the names of all of the churches known to us are recorded in the booklet. There is even a link to the Pathé News clip of the launch of John Williams VI which was presided over by Princess Margaret and Revd Arthur Chirgwin, Master Pilot at the time.

The booklet will be sent to all Pilots companies and to every United Reformed and Congregational churches. Our hope is that the book will be used or passed around congregations as so many people have a

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connection with Pilots and its history in some way.

The book culminates with an act of worship on Pilots Sunday and a re-dedication prayer has been written for use in Pilots, churches with Pilots companies or for churches who want to recognize and thank God for the good news that is Pilots.

Pilots invites you to join it in celebrating 75 years of amazing work and encourages you to continue the journey.

Michael to be inducted as Moderator of the Free Churches Group



An open invitation is extended to attend the induction of Michael Heaney, General Secretary of the Congregational Federation, to the office of **Free Churches Moderator**, at 3 p.m. on Wednesday April 13th, at Bunyan Meeting Free Church, Mill Street, Bedford.

The office of Moderator gives the member churches of the Free Churches Group a representative at national and public events. The office is held for four years on election by the Group Meeting. The Free Churches Moderator is one of the four Presidents of Churches Together in England, along with the

Archbishop of Canterbury, the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster and Bishop Nathan Hovhannissian, Primate of the Armenian Orthodox Church in the UK.

Michael writes "Whilst it is primarily one of representation and profile on national state occasions for the Free Churches of England, it does mean that I will have by implication the privilege of carrying the voice of the Congregational way and that of the Federation on a much wider public and church scale. I count this as a real privilege and will seek to do all I can over this term of office to serve the 23 groupings of churches that make up the Free Churches Group whilst being an ambassador for CF."

News round up

Not the only thatched roof church in the CF – January's Congregationalist reported that Roxton Bedfordshire formed in 1808 was the only thatched roof church in the Federation. This of course is not the case as Horningsham in Wiltshire built in 1566 also does. Apologies to our friends at Horningsham - you also have a beautiful and historic thatched building!

Window on the World is a holiday conference organised by the Council for World Mission, European Region taking place 15th-21st August 2011. Window on the World gives Christians of all ages the opportunity to meet the world church, discover more about God's mission and grow in faith. Inspiring theme talks, lively and creative worship, outdoors activities, sports and entertainment

are all part of the Window on the World experience.

The conference theme of "Christians @ work" will help us explore work and discipleship – and how the two relate. How do we express the venture some love that is at the heart of discipleship in our daily lives, both in the work place and beyond? Are we really any different from those from whom we work with or live alongside? In the current economic climate how can Christians be people who live hope filled lives? Where do we gain our sense of self worth and self esteem? Window on the World 2011 will give us an opportunity to reflect on these and other questions.

Ask for a booking form.



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Visit the Website for more copies of this Mailing and much more at www.congregational.org.uk

The following article has been submitted by Pip Cartwright, and is entitled:

History of Witney Congregational Church: 1977-1978

1977 was a momentous year in the history of Witney Congregational Church. Our student minister, Graham Twelfthtree, moved on to study for his PhD at Nottingham. The failure to obtain planning permission to stay at Staple Hall meant we had to find new premises and we had a change of leaders at the helm.

The first priority was to find new premises with room for expansion and accessible parking. At this time the Christian Scientist Reading Room based in Field House at the corner of the High Street and Welch Way came on to the market. I believe the asking price for this property was £43,000.

If my memory serves me right, when the Church moved from the High Street to St Mary's Close in 1971, our Trustees at the Congregational Union organised the letting of the High Street site. It was understood by the Church members and Deacons that it was on a 7 year lease with a rent of £3,500 a year. With this income, by 1977 we had paid off what we owed on the purchase of Staple Hall and looked forward to the next year when the rent on the High Street site would be reviewed. During the 1970's rents were rocketing and it was expected that the rent would rise to at least £7,000 a year. On this basis, calculations were made and the purchase of Field House was a possibility, especially as our numbers

had grown and weekly offerings had increased.

When the Church considered this option, there were those who felt it was too expensive and were apprehensive about the size of the debt. Others felt it was an opportunity not to be missed. It was built on a prominent corner site next to the 'town's' main car park, with a large back room for the chapel and a four bedroomed house next door (future Manse). It had a long back garden running parallel to the pavement and to the commercially minded there was room for retail development if necessary. It was so attractive that I believe an Estate Agent tried to 'gazump' our bid (£50,000?), however the Christian Scientists wanted the building to be used for Christian purposes.

It was finally decided to put in a bid. Bob Richardson, our respected Church Secretary, who had been at the helm for our previous move to Staple Hall, felt he did not wish to take on this responsibility. Consequently Miss Angela Pedlar (later Rev. Angela Robinson) bravely accepted this post. At the same time Mr George Howell took over as Church Treasurer from Mr Gerald Hayes.

From a letter written by Angela Robinson she recalls that "We took it step by step and every door opened. Mr Philip Turner (Deacon) was a huge help and it would have been impossible for me, without his support". This venture depended upon the sale of Staple Hall (£23,000) and the increase in rent in 1978. With loans from the Bank (£29,500) and from the new Congregational Federation (£1,000) the decision was made and our bid accepted.

At this point we must move forward to 1978 to the time when the Church expected (with some anticipated relief) a rent increase. To our horror, unbeknown to us the Trustees had in fact agreed to extend the lease to 14 years instead of 7 years and nobody recalls ever having been informed of this change. The Rev. Angela Robinson wrote "If we had known that the Church would not be receiving the higher rent on which we had based our calculation we would not have gone forward. How kind of God to keep us ignorant!"

To aid us with our considerations, the Congregational Federation made firm proposals:

1. A Gift of £800
2. A Loan of £1,000 at a minimal rate of interest
3. That they were willing to provide all expenses for a full-time Minister for 3 to 5 years if this project (with Manse) went ahead.

As you can imagine this exercised the mood of all the Church and fundraising and the need to develop the site, took on a new meaning. To begin with in 1977 the whole property needed decorating and furnishing. The Church worked as one, both young and old. To get our new Chapel ready meant that we had to worship elsewhere and we used a smaller room to the left of the High Street front door which is now the Christian Bookshop. We held our first Church Meeting in Field House on December 6th 1977 when, incidentally the pastorate was discussed.

In January 1978 the Deacons recommended that the Church should plan to call a Minister for August 1979.

Philip Turner suggested we should organise a 50/50 Auction to raise funds for the refurbishment of

the Chapel. With his enthusiastic driving force and 'connections', a mammoth sale of 500 lots, taking 5 hours took place on February 4th 1978 in the Chapel to be. A friend of Mr Turner's, Mr Archie Payne, was the auctioneer and with his expertise £894.25 was raised. With the proceeds of half the sale plus donations, the Church raised £556.26. It was a real 'church family' effort, with the young people and men being particularly useful in fetching and moving items, whilst the ladies provided non-stop coffee and tea. It was a resounding social and financial success and bound our church family even closer together.

April 1st 1978 was the opening and dedication of the new chapel. Painstaking decoration of walls and ceiling made the room shine set against green velvet curtains on the end wall either side of a wooden cross. Our green chairs, which we still use, were full, not only with our own Church members but also we were supported by many friends from other Witney Churches. The presiding Minister was Pastor F. Charlesworth of Southam, the sermon was delivered by Rev. Emlyn Howells supported by our minister elect, Mr Robert A Henry.

Being without a Minister the Church relied upon lay preachers and friends from other Witney Churches to fill the pulpit. At the same time we were able to invite Ministers who might be looking for a move and student ministers.

During the summer of 1977 at Staple Hall we welcomed a student minister who was training at Swansea Memorial College, University of Wales and a former member of Marston Road, Oxford and Launton Village

Congregational Church, near Bicester. Mr Robert Henry took our Carol Service at Field House in December 1977 and immediately 'gelled' with our church, especially the young people. The Church has a Tradition of calling student pastors and the Church was led to call him as our Student Pastor on the understanding that he completed his Bachelor of Divinity Degree in 1979 and he filled the Pulpit during Easter and August and Christmas holidays. He duly obtained his B.D. in 1979 and was ordained on September 29 1979.

The Rev. John Bourne gave the charge and the Rev. Clifford Hill preached to an overflowing church. During all this time the church grew in numbers. One family, Cliff and Nell Puleston, retired here and with their son Roy had their membership transferred to Witney. Cliff and Nell were great workers and support to the church and in fact, at a later date, Cliff became Church Secretary. Both Nell and Cliff had been deeply involved with Scouting all their lives and they were of great encouragement to our young people.

The commemorative plaque recording the opening and dedication of our new chapel (now our Auty Lounge) was designed and painted by Cliff Puleston. This plaque is to be found on the wall in the Lounge.

It was a time of constant activity with



so much to be done. The Manse, with cottage next door, had to be decorated and to some degree modernised. New central heating was installed and the Church Kitchen updated. After the ordination the Henry family (Bob, Angela and four children: Joanne, Lisa, Debbie and Daniel) moved into the Manse.

Then Angela Pedlar dropped a bombshell. She was a graduate of Oxford University with a Theology Degree and an R.E. Teacher at Henry Box School. She announced that she had responded to the call to enter the Ministry and as she was already well qualified she was to be ordained and to become a Congregational Minister at Grasington in Yorkshire. She was deeply aware of her responsibilities as Church Secretary at this crucial time, however the Rev. John Bourne said to her at the interview "If the Lord wants you in the ministry He'll look after Witney".

Angela had been with us for 7 years and acted as Preacher, Deacon, Church Secretary and worked tirelessly with the Junior Church and young people. At her farewell party in September 1978 she was presented with a Witney blanket and a painting of the Buttercross. For the record, a year later she married Mr John Robinson and late after the sudden sad death of her husband she moved to Wivenhoe in Essex and then went to Bangladesh as a C.W.M. Mission Parishner (1998). She became a Headmistress of a Girls School and is now a Chaplain.

In July 1978 Philip Turner was appointed Church Secretary and Mrs Beryl Cartwright was co-opted on to the Diaconate. Both were elected at the

October A.G.M. Later in March 1979 Cliff Puleston was co-opted on to the Diaconate.

Obviously finance was a constant concern especially as we had a large debt to repay. During 1979 two decisions helped our cause. Firstly the West Oxfordshire District Council Planning Department approved our plans for the development of our corner site. Secondly the Congregation (now URC) agent, Mr Foster Taylor, relinquished his responsibility for our High Street property and we transferred to a local Witney Agency. With the coming of the Rev. Henry our congregation increased and his friend, Mr Graham Lee, took over the Y.P.F. and a number of young families with children swelled the ranks.

Sadly one of our oldest members died. Miss Beattie Hicks who was a loyal member in the old church and was a keen Guider, in fact was a founder member of the Guides in Witney. It must be mentioned that the Women's Guild prevailed right through the various moves in the 1970 decade. Mrs Linda Wheeler, Mrs Auty (widow of a former Witney Congregational Minister), Mrs Kathleen Collis, Mrs Diane Sellman, Mrs Mary Honey, Mrs Elsie Keates and Miss Jessie Smith all loyally supported the Guild and the Church. Mr Bent, Mrs Elsie Keates and Mrs Kathleen Collis cleaned the various church buildings and Mr Sid Collis and Mr Bob Richardson loyally nurtured the various gardens we occupied. As regards the young people, Mary Witt started Pilots and with the growing numbers in the Sunday school and Young Peoples Fellowship the Church was 'buzzing'.

The following article has been extracted from Parish Pump and is entitled:

Real Easter Egg on its way to become a UK top seller

A church-backed campaign has succeeded in convincing retailers to stock The Real Easter Egg, the UK's first and only Fairtrade charity egg to mention Jesus on the box.

Morrison's, Waitrose, Co-op and Booths are to stock a limited 'trial listing' of the Real Easter Egg and sell it in their biggest stores. A number of independent shops and a selection of cathedrals are also stocking The Real Easter Egg. And hundreds of Traidcraft supporters have ordered thousands of eggs on behalf of their communities.

The retail price of The Real Easter Egg is £3.99. It is made from high quality Fairtrade chocolate. Two charities benefit from the sale of the egg: Traidcraft Exchange receives 30 pence from every egg sold and Baby Lifeline will receive 10% from Real Easter Egg net profits.

Despite selling over 80 million Easter eggs a year, supermarkets initially turned down The Real Easter Egg, unsure if there was a place for a charity-faith egg in their Easter range. The Rt Revd, Nigel McCulloch, Bishop of Manchester, said: "It is great news that for the first time people will have the chance of buying an Easter egg from a shop that explains the significance of the festival on the box. The egg brings to light the Easter themes of hope and new life. I believe there will be widespread support for the product.

The following article has been submitted by Val Obriain, and is entitled:

Street Pastors/Late Night Café

Training for being a Street Pastor has made me new friends from different churches, working together to make a difference to the night time economy in Witney. So far we have learnt about alcohol abuse, this is not with just the young people out for a good time but people of all ages, and the drug abuse which is rife in Witney - amphetamines, ecstasy and cocaine.

We had a talk from the Police who explained to us the powers that they have and those they don't as well as what we are able to do or not to do. Another from a man who works for a local organisation which helps those with problems including addiction, who told us about the work he does. We also had a 'how to listen' evening.

I am now about half way through my training and hope to go out on the streets with the other Street Pastors sometime in May. After my first training session I decided to find out just what was happening in Witney on a Saturday night when I would normally be in bed, so I joined the volunteers in the Market Square at the Late Night Café. This was something I had wanted to do for ages but due to working six days a week and getting up at 5.30am, had been unable to do so until now. Witney on a Saturday night is completely different from the day; it is vibrant, full of life and noise, music and laughter and sometimes fights.

There are people out celebrating birthdays etc. in groups, couples or alone and many of these come for a cup of tea, coffee, hot chocolate or soup. Some people are lonely or have problems and need someone to talk to, some just come to see what we are doing and why. We get regulars who come each week, and relationships are formed. We also give out flip-flops to young girls who are having difficulty walking in their own shoes, so that they can walk safely.

Lots of people say why do you do it? Does the café and the Street Pastors make a difference? Yes it does. The people who come are accepted just as they are they feel valued because you remember them, that there are people who care about them. We work as churches together, serving the community and building relationships with one another. If anyone would like to come and see Witney at night with us we are there from 11pm Saturday night until 3.30am Sunday morning, it is sometimes very cold but great fun.

Thank you to all of those that pray for us and the work we do, please continue to keep us in your prayers. God Bless,

STREET PASTORS™



The following article has been submitted by Pip Cartwright, and is entitled:

CHRISTIAN AID WEEK

Christian Aid Week is from 15th- 21st May. Our Church, with 9 other Churches in the Town, attempt to cover most of Witney and Ducklington by delivering and collecting House to House gift envelopes. There will be over 200 volunteers involved in this activity of which 25 will be collecting on behalf of the Congregational Church.

As an additional event to raise more money, on 14th May the Coffee Mornings at our Church and High Street Methodist Church will be donating the proceeds to Christian Aid. Please support us and, if possible, help by making and donating a cake to be sold during the morning.

The Churches Together Service at 6pm held at Our Lady and St Hugh's Church on 8th May will have a Christian Aid Speaker and we would encourage all collectors and friends to support this Service.



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

All in the month of April

350 years ago on 23rd - Coronation of King Charles II of England, Scotland and Ireland took place.

250 years ago on 15th - one of the founders and the first governor of the Royal Bank of Scotland died. Archibald Campbell was 3rd Duke of Argyll, and his portrait appears on current Scottish bank notes.

150 years ago on 12th - the American Civil War began when Confederate troops fired mortar shells at the Federal garrison at Fort Sumter, Charleston Harbour.

80 years ago on 29th - Lonnie Donegan the songwriter was born. Songs included 'My Old Man's a Dustman'.

75 years ago on 19th - the Arab Revolt began in Palestine with a general strike that lasted until October.

70 years ago on 6th - Germany invaded Greece and Yugoslavia.

60 years ago on 17th - the Peak District National Park was established; Britain's first national park.

50 years ago on 11th - the Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann went on trial in Jerusalem.

40 years ago on 6th - Igor Stravinsky, Russian-born composer, died. He was one of the most influential composers of the 20th century.

30 years ago on 9th - IRA hunger striker Bobby Sands, imprisoned in the Maze Prison, Northern Ireland, was elected as a Member of Parliament.

25 years ago on 14th - the USA launched major bombing raids on Tripoli and Benghazi in Libya, killing 60 people.

(Libya responded by blowing up a Pan Am passenger jet over Lockerbie, Scotland in 1988.)

20 years ago on 3rd - Graham Greene, British novelist, short story writer and playwright died. He wrote Brighton Rock, among many other novels.

15 years ago on 16th - there was the BSE outbreak (mad cow disease). British Agriculture Minister Douglas Hogg announced all cattle older than 30 months would be destroyed rather than enter the human food chain.

10 years ago on 11th - Harry Secombe, Welsh comedian, actor, writer, singer and TV presenter died. He was one of the stars of the 1950s radio series 'The Goon Show'.

The following prayer, written by John Henry Newman (1801-90), has been submitted by Sharon Watson

I read this prayer out when Elaine & I gave our presentation on Israel, and a few people asked me for a copy. So here it is for all of you!

*Dear Jesus, help me to spread your fragrance everywhere I go,
Flood my soul with your spirit and life,
Penetrate and possess my being so utterly, that my life may only be a radiance of Yours.*

*Shine through me, and be so in me, so that every soul I come in contact with may feel Your presence in my soul.
Let them look up and see no longer me but only Jesus!*

Stay with me, and then I shall begin to shine as You shine:

So to shine as to be a light to others

The following article has been extracted from Parish Pump, and is entitled:

Let's face it - English is a crazy language.

There is no egg in plant, nor ham in hamburger; neither apple nor pine in pineapple. English muffins weren't invented in England or French fries in France. Sweetmeats are candies while sweetbreads, which aren't sweet, are meat.

We take English for granted but if we explore its paradoxes, we find that quicksand can work slowly, boxing rings are square and a guinea pig is neither from Guinea nor is it a pig.

If teachers taught, why didn't preachers praught? If a vegetarian eats vegetables, what does a humanitarian eat? In what language do people recite at a play and play at a recital or ship by truck and send cargo by ship or have noses that run and feet that smell? How can a slim chance and a fat chance be the same, while a wise man and a wise guy are opposites?

You have to marvel at the unique lunacy of a language in which your house can burn up as it burns down, in which you fill in a form by filling it out and in which an alarm goes off after it's been switched on. English was invented by people, not computers and it reflects the creativity of the human race, which, of course, is not a race at all. That is why, when the stars are out, they are visible, but when the lights are out, they are invisible.

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

Visiting the Sick:

1 - The Patient

You don't actually want to be there. Nobody would *choose* to spend a week or a fortnight in hospital. Yet sooner or later most of us will, and when we do we shall be 'visited'. Family and friends, and possibly the dutiful vicar or pastor, will come and sit at our bedside. It's nice to see them, of course, but in a way they are like messengers from another world.

In hospital - and it's no criticism to say this - everything is strange and alien. You are woken very early. Meals come and go. Pills are administered. Our most intimate functions are no longer private. There's the strange ritual of the doctor's rounds. And at night, when you are used to peace and quiet, there is none. Your fellow patients cough, or snore, or push the buzzer for the nurse.

The staff flit to and fro. Lights go on and off. Although you seem to have spent half of the day dozing, by some strange contradiction you can't get to sleep at night.

Into this alien world come your visitors. Some come bearing gifts - grapes, perhaps, or if you're lucky chocolate or a news paper. Some sit and look sympathetically at us, sighing slightly and asking with heavy emphasis how we are. Some ask about our symptoms, or when we expect to go home. And some, the very worst, insist on telling us about their own experience of just the same problem, or even about someone they know who died of it.

Truthfully, patients in hospital don't particularly want sympathy, or a cross-examination about their illness and its treatment. What they principally want from their visitors is a whiff of normality, a reminder that there is a world outside, of which they are still a part. They want to know all the gossip, to feel connected to the familiar world of home and church and club.

The beloved is permitted to hold one's hand and even look anxious (we rather like that). For the rest, come in, sit down, regale us with a few stories and then - after about forty minutes maximum - please go.

That's really the secret of being a good hospital visitor.

Ears

Why do they have ear piercing 'while you wait'; is there some other shop where you can drop them off and pick them up later?"



Apr	14	Derrick Woodley
	26	Sonya Boyd Simon Brusch Joyce Kearsey
	27	Sharon Watson
May	16	Jean Stanley
	21	Terry Powlesland
	24	Pip Cartwright
	25	Bill Elliot
	30	Pat Smith Robert McBride

The following article has been extracted from the Oxford Times, and is entitled:

Doris Hall

A 100-year-old was left "disappointed" by her card from The Queen as she reached the milestone.



Doris Hall, who turned 100 on Tuesday 15th March, said: "I thought it would be more glamorous." She has decided not to keep the card, but instead to send it to her niece in Australia.

She celebrated the day at her care home Newland House, Newland, Witney, surrounded by family and friends.

Mrs Hall said: "Having all my friends with me and having all the flowers and chocolates was very, very nice. "It was a lovely day, but very tiring."

The home baked her a cake and gave her gifts, including orchids, her favourite flowers.

Anne Chambers, activities organiser at the home, said: "We tried to make the day as special

as we could.

"I think everyone else was far more excited about it than Doris herself.

"A lot of us haven't seen a card from the palace before, but she took it in her stride."

Thank You

Dear Friends,

Thank you all so very much for the lovely card, flowers and good wishes you sent for my 100th birthday. I had a wonderful day with many friends visiting and lots of cards and presents to open. By the end of the day I was quite tired but happy.

With my love to you all and God bless you,
Doris Hall

The following article has been extracted from Mission Aviation Fellowship website, and is entitled:

A memorable day in Mongolia

A pilot with MAF in Mongolia, Ryan Van Geest describes one of his days:

'I arrive at the airport at 5am. It is dark and -10°C, but I have lots to do. After creating three flight plans and other paperwork, I complete the aircraft walk around checks and make sure all the aircraft wing covers are together, since this will be our first overnight in the countryside with freezing nights and a chance of frost. The passengers then arrive at the aircraft.

'We depart in the dark. As we climb, I teach my Mongolian translator Tumerbaatar in Mongolian about some icing procedures, talk on the radio in Mongolian and don my oxygen mask when the icing stops - now just snow, clouds and the first sporadic glows of the sun trying to rise. Levelling off nice and high, we clear the approaching mountains and, 30 minutes after departure, the sun rises. We break out of the clouds and see the snow on the hills and the bleak Gobi Desert spotted with gprs and accompanying herds. I smile again at the unique beauty that God has granted me to see today.

'The plane is now starting to warm up and the passengers are taking off their deels (traditional Mongolian robe-like coats) and passing around their salty milk tea and dried milk. Only two more hours of this three-hour flight, then an hour and a half more by road and these

passengers will be home, saving them the 50-hour drive over rough ground. No other aircraft fly this route. When we get to the very remote Bulgan Sun, these seven passengers, including a mother and baby and four very elderly people between 65 and 91 years old (average life expectancy is 67), will be so happy to be home they will kiss me and repeatedly thank us.

'After that leg, Tumerbaatar and I have another 1½-hour flight to Khovd, the provincial capital, saving the trip over the mountains, so that expectant mothers can get hospital checkups and others have different appointments.

'Then I get to meet with a Brazilian missionary in Khovd who will be introducing me to one of the newest Christians there. This older gentleman's wife is a leader of a ger church in the community and they have the church service in their ger every week. This gentleman wasn't a Christian, but allowed the church in his house. Last Sunday, after hearing so much about Jesus, he said he wanted to become a Christian as well.

'It will be a very full but good day for the "Jesus plane" as well as its drivers. I again thank God for safety and being allowed to be a small cog in what God is doing here in this country.'

For more information about MAF:

www.maf-uk.org



Mission Aviation Fellowship