

1662

Celebrating

2012



350th Anniversary

Witney Congregational Church



Courage

Conscience

Conviction

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
Thursday	2.30pm	Homes (2 nd Thursday of each month)

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

☎ 01993 709429

Opening Hours: Monday - Saturday 09.00 am - 5.00 pm



Welcome back! As all the magazines are now double-issue, this is the first edition of 2012; so may I take this opportunity of wishing you all a belated Happy New Year. I hope that Christmas and New Year were not too stressful and that 2012 brings great things for both you personally and the Church here at Witney.

Within the church, this year we will be celebrating the 350th anniversary of the 1662 Great Ejection, a key event in the journey of our faith.

The 24th August 1662 is the date that almost 2000 ministers of the Church of England were ejected from their churches, pulpits and homes, because, 'for conscience sake', as they put it, they could not bring themselves to submit to an Act of Uniformity drawn up by Charles 11 and his bishops.

The Act of Uniformity issued an ultimatum - all ministers of the Established Church should 'conform', by accepting the Book of Common Prayer and the 39 Articles, by St Bartholomew's Day, 24 August 1662. But to 'conform' to the Anglican doctrine did not suit our forefathers, and therefore they became the first 'Non-conformists'.

Because the Great Ejection happened on St Bartholomew's Day, it became known as 'Black Bartholomew'. Non-conforming ministers began to gather their own congregations around

them, and so began the early structures of Congregationalism.

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:

- E-mail: terrypowlesland@uwclub.net
jacquipowlesland@uwclub.net
- Just plainly written on paper, which can be typed up.

The next edition is due on 1st April

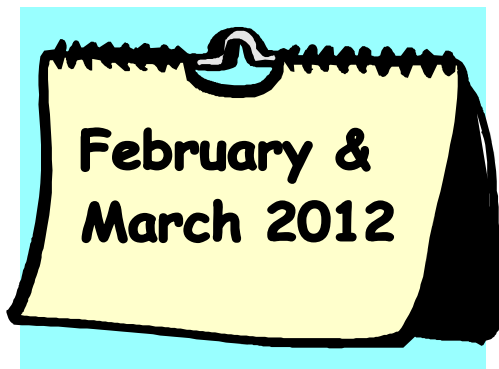


21st February

I was driving this morning when I saw an RAC van parked by the road. The driver was sobbing uncontrollably. I thought to myself, "That guy's heading for a breakdown."

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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

5th am Morning Worship
 pm Joint Service at Congregational Church Communion
 12th am Morning Worship
 pm Joint Service at High St Methodist
 19th am Rev Judi Holloway Communion
 pm Joint Service at Congregational Church
 22nd 7.00pm Ash Wednesday Service with St Bartholomew's Ducklington
 26th am Morning Worship followed by Word Café
 pm Joint Service at High St Methodist

Mar

2nd 10.30 am Women's World Day of Prayer St Mary's Church Green
 7.00pm Women's World Day of Prayer evening service Congregational Church
 3rd am Messy Church
 4th am Café Church
 pm Joint Service at Congregational Church Communion
 11th am Morning Worship
 pm Joint Service at High St Methodist
 18th am Morning Worship Communion
 pm Joint Service at Congregational Church
 25th am Morning Worship
 pm Joint Service at High St Methodist

Apr

1st am Morning Worship followed by Word Café
 pm Joint Service at Congregational Church Communion
 7th 11.00am Saturday Praise

The following events are given for your particular attention:

Feb

6th Deacons meeting 7.30pm
 9th Fellowship Group 2.30pm 9 Pensclose
 'Lyfe' Bible Study 7.30pm Hill Side, Witney Rd, Finstock
 11th Prayer Chain meeting 9.15am
 16th 'Lyfe' Bible Study 7.30pm Hill Side, Witney Rd, Finstock
 17th www. 6.00pm
 23rd 'Lyfe' Bible Study 7.30pm Hill Side, Witney Rd, Finstock
 24th Y4J 7.00pm

Mar

1st Lent Soup Lunch 12.30 - 2.00pm Our Lady & St Hugh's
 2nd www. 6.00pm
 5th Deacons meeting 7.30pm

6 th	Lent Soup Lunch	12.30 - 2.00pm	High St Methodist
8 th	Fellowship Group	2.30pm	6 Swinbrook Court
9 th	Y4J	7.00pm	
10 th	Prayer Chain meeting	9.15am	
15 th	Lent Soup Lunch	12.30 - 2.00pm	Congregational
16 th - 18 th	Mansfield College		
16 th	www.	6.00pm	
20 th	Church Meeting	7.30pm	
23 rd	Lent Soup Lunch	12.30 - 2.00pm	St Mary's Cogges
	Y4J	7.00pm	
24 th	SWMA Assembly at Stapleton Rd, Bristol		
28 th	Lent Soup Lunch	12.30 - 2.00pm	St Mary's Church Green
30 th	www.	6.00pm	
Apr			
3 rd	Deacons meeting	7.30pm	
4 th	Lent Soup Lunch	12.30 - 2.00pm	Davenport Road Methodist

ROTAS

WELCOMING TEAM

Feb	05	Jill & Robert McBride
	12	Sharon Watson & Theo Howells
	19	Pat & Ben Smith
	26	Irene St Clair & Iris Lindsay
Mar	04	Susan Wass & Joan Currie
	11	Pip & Beryl Cartwright
	18	Nanna Blackman & Val Obriain
	25	Jill & Robert McBride
Apr	01	Sharon Watson & Iris Lindsay



COMMUNION

Feb	05 pm	Jacqui Powlesland & Susan Wass
		Preparation Iris Lindsay
	19 am	Sharon Watson & Peter Gamston
		Chris Esapa & Nanna Blackman
		Preparation Pat Smith
Mar	04 am	Judi Holloway & Nanna Blackman
		Preparation Iris Lindsay
	18 am	Jacqui Powlesland & Susan Wass
		Chris Esapa & Peter Gamston
		Preparation Susan Wass
Apr	01 pm	Sharon Watson & Jacqui Powlesland
		Preparation Iris Lindsay



FLOWERS

Feb	05	Beryl Cartwright
	12	Rita Hayes
	19	Joan Currie
	26	Jill McBride
Mar	04	Jacqui Powlesland
	11	Alison Hazell
	18	Mothering Sunday
	25	Judi Holloway
Apr	01	Val Obriain



COFFEE

Feb	05	Susan Wass & Irene St Clair
	12	Lyn & Andy Thomas
	19	Linda McCormac & Sue Birdseye
	26	Word Café
Mar	04	Café Church
	11	Marjorie Lee, Iris Lindsay & Judith Bungey
	18	Jill & Robert McBride
	25	Jean Stanley, Marina Bowerman & Marian Walker
Apr	01	Word Café



REST & CHAT

Feb	09	Jill & Robert McBride
	16	Iris Lindsay & Joan Currie
	23	Jean Stanley, Marina Bowerman & Irene St Clair
Mar	01	Marjorie Lee
	08	Pat Smith
	15	Jill & Robert McBride
	22	Iris Lindsay & Joan Currie
	29	Jean Stanley, Marina Bowerman & Irene St Clair
Apr	02	Marjorie Lee



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



Feb	10	Thomas Hayes	Mar	08	Joan Currie
	13	Judi Holloway		09	John Watson
	16	Leah Cotton		11	Lesley Barter
	22	Dave Wesson		13	Joel Thomas
	25	Jean Howell		15	Doris Hall
	26	Alison Hazell		16	Ben Smith
			19	Beryl Cartwright	
			22	Peter Sellman	

Minister's Letter

Spark of Knowledge

A bedtime routine was disrupted by delight. My chest swelled with joy. I wanted to laugh but held back so as not to shatter the sanctity of the moment. Jeremy inherited some encyclopaedias and was devouring the information on Native American Indians. We were soaking up the illustrated articles on tepees, bow and arrows, and moccasins. Our attention turned to the picture of a flint stone.

"Dad, is this what flint stones look like?" he asked.

Not being an expert in geological matters I made a non-committal response. "I guess it must look like that."

In a flash he was mobilised. He leapt across the bed and opened the drawer of his bedside table. "It's a bit messy," he admitted. Despite being jam packed he somehow knew exactly what he was looking for and fished out two stones. He compared them with the picture. He was ecstatic to discover that he possessed flint stones.

I got excited too. I said, "I'll show you something." We switched off the light and closed the door tight. In the pitch black I struck the flint stones together and created a spark. Then we had to visit Sonya and Naomi to show them our discovery.

Excitement continued to build as he ran down the stairs. "I've got other flint stones!" he cried. He scrambled onto a chair and precariously balanced went into the kitchen cabinet to produce more flint stones (given to him by Pip Cartwright!). This was the moment, as I watched and warned him

to be safe, when a smile spread across my face and I felt the pleasure of learning.

What was read in a book leapt to life in practice. He had made a connection between a picture and what he already possessed. Pretty stones in the bottom of a drawer now had a name: flint. Pretty stones now had a purpose: creating fire. Pretty stones connected him to the past: Indians honing flint stones into arrow heads.

In the Gospels we find Jesus calling his students, "Follow me and I will make you fish for people." He taught by showing them through his actions and words what love and compassion is all about. The Bible comes alive when we dare to take it out of the drawer, dust it off, read it and live it. Jesus' way of love for God and neighbour is something that is sparked off in practice.

Anthony de Mello tells this story: "The explorer had returned to his people, who were eager to know all about the Amazon. But how could he ever put into words the feeling that flooded his heart when he saw flowers of breath-taking beauty and heard the sounds of the forest at night? How to communicate what he felt in his heart as he sensed the danger of wild beasts or paddled his canoe over the treacherous parts of the river? He said, 'Go and find out for yourselves. There is no substitute for personal risk and personal experience.' To guide them, however, he drew up a map of the Amazon. 'They siezed (sic) upon the map. They framed it in their Town Hall. They made personal copies of it. And everyone who had a copy considered himself an expert on the Amazon, for did he not know every turn and bend of

the river, and how broad it was and how deep, where the rapids were and where the falls?

The explorer lived to regret that map. It might have been better if he had drawn nothing."

The way of Jesus is lived. When the crowd told him that his mother and brothers were outside he responded, "Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother" (Mark 3:34-35). It's no good having the Bible in the drawer. The spark of the Spirit makes the words leap off the page and work their way out in our lives.

Your Pastor
Jason

The New Year is often the time to re-dedicate ourselves anew. Jason led us in January to re-affirm our belonging to Jesus Christ. The following poem, written by Michel Quoist, and extracted from Prayers of Life, has been submitted by Marjorie Lee, and is entitled:

Talking to God

I am afraid of saying 'yes' Lord
Where will you take me?
I am afraid of drawing the longest
straw
I am afraid of signing my name to an
unread agreement
I am afraid of the 'yes' that entails
other 'yesses'
And yet I am not at peace
You pursue me Lord, you besiege me
Where shall I hide?
I meet you everywhere, is it then
impossible to escape you?
Say 'yes' son
I need your 'yes' as I needed Mary's
'yes' to come to earth
For it is I who must do your work
It is I who must live in your family
It is I who must be in your
neighbourhood
For it is my look that penetrates, not
yours
My life that transforms, and not yours
Give all to me, abandon all to me
I need your 'yes' to be united with you
and to come down to earth
I need your 'yes' to continue saving the
world
O Lord, I am afraid of your demands
That your kingdom may come and not
mine
That your will may be done and not mine
Help me to say 'yes'

'Let Justice Prevail'

**Friday
2nd March
Women's
World Day
of Prayer**

www.wwdp-natcomm.org
Registered Charity Number 233242

Praying for Malaysia

Venue: St. Mary's Church Green.

Time: 10.30am

Speaker: Rev. Sally Wright

7.00pm Service at Congregational Church

All are welcome - men, women and young people

The following article has been submitted by Pip Cartwright, and is a continuation in the series 'History of Witney Congregational Church, and is entitled:

Church Building Development (ROCK Appeal) 1990-1996

ROCK was an acronym for Reaching out for Christ's Kingdom. With the induction of the Rev. Michael Heaney in September 1990 ably assisted by his wife Rose, activities within and outside the Church increased.

During the interregnum Church membership had slowly decreased due to people moving away from Witney or worshipping in other local churches. However, use of our limited old buildings continued. Wear and tear on our limited resources was apparent.

It must be remembered that the old building consisted of a Sanctuary which was 75% of the present Auty Lounge. Two small rooms off the Sanctuary, where our Kitchen is today, were a dingy Vestry and Office/Storeroom. A small room to the left of the foyer entrance on the High Street (now the St Andrew's Bookshop), a wooden panelled Committee Room (used originally by the Sunday School) but used by the Citizens Advice Bureau and an antiquated Kitchen behind the Committee Room with door access off the foyer by the stairs. Upstairs we had a long room and the Rainbow Room used by our youth organisations and the Coffee Bar (now Base 33).

With the coming of the Rev. Heaney, Church Membership increased. (61 new members between 1990-1994). On a few occasions the Sanctuary was so full that late comers had to sit

outside in the foyer.

This situation was crystallised in May 1991 when the local Planning Officer informed us that a proposed development of a superstore along Welch Way might affect the Church. In fact the developers offered to buy our garden (which was much bigger then) to make service access easier. The pressure on our overburdened and limited facilities led to the situation where the Minister and Deacons felt that the Church needed to be extended in the near future and we needed all our land. A working party was set up to consider the possibilities and in July 1991 a questionnaire was handed out to Church Members. Of the 52 replies, 2% agreed that our present Church needed extension or alteration and 70% expressed the desire to consider a purpose built Church.

In November 1991 Alistair Watson, a Christian Architect from Thatcham was approached and went ahead to make preliminary plans based on facilities we thought the Church needed.

In January 1992 the architect proposed a development costing approximately £400,000. This plan included a new Sanctuary, Vestry, Office, Toilets and School Rooms and extending the old Sanctuary to make a lounge and new kitchen. The possibility of a flat for Minister or Caretaker was also considered. This new development would take up half of the garden.

After much prayer and discussion particularly regarding finances, the Church stepped out in faith and agreed to apply for full planning permission (51 for and 2 against) and Alistair Watson submitted plans to West Oxfordshire District Council in May 1992. Mr Watson provided a full set of plans and

breakdown of cost of phasing of the Development.

In November 1992 planning permission was granted and a Deacon, Mr Pip Cartwright, was asked to coordinate the setting up of a Building Fund and a Fund Raising Committee. Fund raising started immediately.

Mr George Howell, Chairman of Trustees, approached the Halifax re the sale of the freehold of their site and in January 1993 they offered £50,000. He also arranged for the money in the Church Capital Trust Fund (£220,000) to be made available for the Church Development. This was the invested money raised from the selling of the old High Street Church site. It was considered advisable that £10,000 be kept back to cover any major repairs that might occur.

In March 1993 Mr John Jarman was asked to chair a Fund Raising Committee consisting of Mrs Elaine Hayes, Mr Pip Cartwright, Mrs Judi Holloway, Mrs Jacqui Taylor and Mr Tony Clark.

Mr Alistair Watson agreed to address the Church at a Special Church Meeting held on Monday 26th January 1993. He explained his plans and offered 4 options. These varied from Option 1 which would cost £316,000, where much of the shell would be built and only the Sanctuary, Vestry and fully fitted kitchen would be completed to Option 4 which included everything and costing £440,000.

May 1993 Tenders were sent out to 6 firms (3 local and 3 nationally). The returns which varied from £346,619 to £430,623 were evaluated by Mr Watson and at a Church meeting in September 1993 under the guidance of Mr Watson, Western Counties Construction

(£361,714) was given the contract. At a further meeting between the Directors and Mr Watson, it was agreed to commence work on a figure of £270,000, which would provide the shell of the main building with a completed foyer, Sanctuary, crèche room, kitchen and stores. The Church Office, Vestry, Toilets, Rooms 1, 2 and 3 and 1st Floor would be finished at a later date as finances allowed. To complete the ground floor would cost £292,000. The £270,000 phase was accepted by the Church Meeting.

Work started on October 11th 1993 and was scheduled to last 40 weeks. Payment of the first phase relied on the Church Capital Trust money and sale of the Halifax freehold and £12,000 already raised by the Building Fund (now called the ROCK Appeal).

Our first celebration was on December 18th 1993 with the Stone Laying Ceremony carried out by one of our youngest children, Charlotte Hayes, and our oldest member, Mrs Mary Honey, in the presence of our Minister, Deacons, Mr Watson and many friends and members. You can see this stone in the wall to the left of the Sanctuary doors.

I feel it is important at this juncture to mention fund raising: The monies from the Church Capital Trust and critically the sale of the Halifax freehold covered the largest part. Loans from the Congregational Federation (Area and National) and our Bank were considered. Sadly in December 1992 Mrs Elsie Auty, wife of a former Minister (1938-1953) and one of our oldest members, died. Her family having pre-deceased her, generously left the monies from the sale of her home in Davenport Road, to the Church. The

interest from this invested money was to be used for repairs and upkeep partly for the Manse and partly for the Church. St Andrew's Christian Bookshops were approached to see if they would like to be part of the Development, commanding a prime site for a shop on the corner of Welch Way and the High Street next to the Halifax Building Society. With rent income from Citizens Advice Bureau and Pregnancy Crisis, who occupied rooms next door, further income could be generated.

To achieve completion of our Development it was considered that the Church needed to raise £50,000 which was the task of the ROCK Appeal. Suggestions for fund raising activities were called for. One Gift Day raised over £500 as did a generous Wedding Gift, but social activities were paramount. Fund raising activities included:

Auctions, Bar-B-Qs, Bring and Buy sales, Buy-a-Brick, Bazaar, Coffee and Cakes (each week), Concerts and three performances of Saints Alive (Roger Jones) Musical, produced by Judi Holloway, (raising over £1,000), filling Smarty Tubes with 5p's and 20p's (raised £1,000), sponsored Half Marathon (our Minister and Dr Paradine), House Parties, Ladies Craft, selling Marmalade,); Moth Watch (Lawrence Bee), Musical Evenings, New Beginnings (Keep Fit sessions led by Mrs Beryl Cartwright), Plant Sales, Seekers Week (activities for youngsters during school holidays), Sponsored Slim and Toy sales. Michael Heaney, when he launched the ROCK Appeal, said it was a test of our faith. The £50,000 was a 'financial faith gap'. We needed to consider our commitment and pray about it.

The ROCK Appeal money would be vital in completing all the details of the Development. The Church responded with enthusiasm and imagination and the target was reached in 1996.

With the commencement of work, we lost the use of our Sanctuary and Rainbow Room. Thus, accustomed to being peripatetic, we worshipped at The Batt C. of E. School hall on Sunday mornings and our Evening Services were held in The Long Room. The Church tried to continue as normal as best as possible. The Neighbourhood Centre ceased but the Coffee Bar and youth activities were able to continue. Much dust and disruption was overcome with good humour.

In February 1994 at a Special Meeting, the Church was told that for a further £55,000 the whole of the downstairs could be completed and the upstairs walls plastered and ceiling artexed. It was agreed to use the offer of an interest free loan from the Congregational Federation South West Midlands Area (£8,000) and National Congregational Federation (£3,000) and a commercial rate loan from our Bank (£35,000).

The St Andrew's Bookshop agreed to open a shop in Witney on a partnership basis (split profits 50/50) and this opened in August 1994.

By July 1994 the Roof was on and good progress was made on the interior. It was hoped that the work would be finished by August. This was in the main accomplished, but tidying up and seeding of the grass area continued.

On Saturday 22nd October 1994 a Service of Dedication of the New Sanctuary and premises took place. The Official Opening (cutting of a ribbon on the foyer doors) was done by Mrs

Andrea Adams, who was the President of the Congregational Federation. Many people were present including the Mayors of Witney and Carterton. The Address was given by Pastor Graham Adams BA, MBA, General Secretary of the Congregational Federation.

Under the leadership of Mr Pip Cartwright a team of members decorated the upstairs rooms and two rooms for Junior Church were ready by November 1994.

Unfortunately an important glitch regarding the sale of the Halifax freehold had continued on in the background. It revolved around West Oxfordshire District Council's insistence that the Halifax continued to rent the car park. It was finally resolved in March 1995 and the sale went through. Sadly it meant the Church had to borrow another £66,000 until the sale was completed.

With the need for new chairs for the Sanctuary and other furnishings, fund raising had to continue.

In June 1995 the Church decorated and furnished the Flat in order that the Rev. Rupert Hambira from Botswana, who was on a 2 year course at Mansfield College, could stay there.

Thus the Development was finished. Our debt was cleared in 1996, the 'faith gap' was bridged and we now have our lovely new Church and buildings.



The following article has been submitted by Nanna Blackman, and is entitled:

Native Wisdom

A Grandfather from the Cherokee Nation was talking with his grandson. "A fight is going on inside me," he said to the boy. "It is a terrible fight between two wolves."

The young grandson listened intently.

"One wolf is evil, unhappy, and ugly: He is anger, envy, war, greed, selfishness, sorrow, regret, guilt, resentment, inferiority/superiority, false pride, coarseness, and arrogance. He spreads lies, deceit, fear, hatred, blame, scarcity, poverty, and divisiveness."

"The other wolf is beautiful and good: He is friendly, joyful, loving, worthy, serene, humble, kind, benevolent, just, fair, empathetic, generous, honest, compassionate, grateful, brave, and inspiring resting wholeheartedly in deep vision beyond ordinary wisdom."

The grandson paused in deep reflection of what his grandfather had just said. Then he exclaimed; "Oyee! (in recognition).

Grandfather continued; "This same fight is going on inside you, and inside all human beings as well."

The grandson paused in deep reflection and recognition of what his grandfather had just said. Then he finally cried out deeply; "Oyee!

Grandfather, which wolf will win this horrific war?"

The elder Cherokee replied, "The wolf that you feed. That wolf will surely win!"

The following article, written by Nigel Beeton, has been extracted from Church News Service, and is entitled:

Poor old February!

Thirty days hath September,
April, June, and November.
All the rest have thirty-one
Save for February, and it alone,
Short-changed when they gave out the
dates,
Whose days are only twenty-eight!
Though, to be completely sure
In leap years it just gets one more.

It puzzles me, why should this be?
That some months have an extra three
Days more than poor old February!
May? Now that I understand;
Sometimes its days can be quite grand
And August too, when we get tanned!
July, when we can drink cold beer,
December, full of Christmas cheer!

These months, indeed, should not be
short;
But don't you think perhaps they ought
To pick a month that's much too long
And bolster Feb - would that be wrong?
January, month of cold and frost
Improved if just one day were lost!
Or March is not so very great
To feel the loss of just one date!

The boffins and the scientists say
February can't be as long as May -
The equinox needs a certain day!
But February is just that special time
When the grip of winter rime,
Weakens with the Spring's first sign!
So, hearken to my heartfelt plea
For a longer February!

The following article has been submitted by Nanna Blackman, and is entitled:

Nails in the fence

There once was a little boy who had a bad temper. His Father gave him a bag of nails and told him that every time he lost his temper, he must hammer a nail into the back of the fence.

The first day the boy had driven 37 nails into the fence. Over the next few weeks, as he learned to control his anger, the number of nails hammered daily gradually dwindled down. He discovered it was easier to hold his temper than to drive those nails into the fence.. Finally the day came when the boy didn't lose his temper at all.

He told his father about it and the father suggested that the boy now pull out one nail for each day that he was able to hold his temper.

The days passed and the young boy was finally able to tell his father that all the nails were gone.

The father took his son by the hand and led him to the fence. He said, 'You have done well, my son, but look at the holes in the fence. The fence will never be the same.

When you say things in anger, they leave a scar just like this one. You can put a knife in a man and draw it out. But it won't matter how many times you say I'm sorry, the wound will still be there. A verbal wound is as bad as a physical one.





PRAYER LETTER

No 151

Bread and Wine

Luke 2:19 And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying: This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me. In the same way, after supper He took the cup, saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.

Jesus was celebrating the Passover with his disciples and used the staple food of bread and wine which was plentiful at every meal in those days.

These familiar words of Jesus have been read and heard by Christians from all traditions for hundreds of years when the Eucharist/Mass/Communion is celebrated. Have Christians of all denominations made this simple act of remembrance into a rigorous tradition with all sorts of unwritten rules? In many Churches it is only the Vicar/Minister who is allowed to officiate. In Congregational Churches it is the Minister/Lay preacher/Deacon who officiates. But why all this officialdom?

I have taken Communion for many years in different ways and situations, mostly in Churches but occasionally in House Groups, Sunday school, in hospital and on a communal walk with Christians of all traditions. On some of these occasions there wasn't an ordained person officiating but the act of service was just as powerful and reverent.

The Communion on Christmas Day in our Church was different and for me it was an experience of fuller understanding. At first when Jason explained about the dipping the bread in the wine and then eating it straight away, I felt very uneasy, not liking the change of habit I suppose. However, after eating the bread dipped into the wine I bowed my head to reflect, and thought about the absorption of the wine into the bread and how it is digested in our bodies. Jesus said in John 6:35, "***I am the bread of life, he who comes to me will not go hungry and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.***" Further on in verses 55, 56, ***He says "for my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink, whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood, remains in me, and I in him"***. These are spiritual terms. 'To remain' means to stay. Jesus will stay with us. He repeats the phrase '**remain in me and I will remain in you**' when He talks about the vine and the branches in John 15:1-15. Our bodies cannot function without nourishment. Bread and wine have been, for thousands of years, the staple diet of mankind.

Our bodies cannot function without the job of the blood. We have to have blood for our bodies to work. The blood is made up of red blood cells, which transports life giving oxygen and gets rid of carbon dioxide; white blood cells, which defend the body against disease and platelets, the key elements in blood clotting. Plasma makes up about 55% containing different substances, distributing them to all parts of the body that need nourishment and protection. So for me as I was reflecting, I realised that every part of my body would eventually, after absorption, benefit from the bread and wine/juice; symbolically remembering the elements as Jesus' body and blood as a renewal process available to anyone who believes in Him. If Jesus 'remains in us', we remain in Him, not just on Sunday but every minute of every day.

So whether we take communion as little bits of bread, or breaking from a loaf or wafers; drinking the wine from individual glasses or from a communal goblet or bread dipped in wine we are sharing together and remembering Jesus' body broken and blood shed for our sins in a

LIFE-GIVING WAY, that re-unites us with God, sustaining and protecting us as we continue in our Christian life.

I would welcome any comments or discussion on the way we celebrate communion and what it means for you.

Pray that we would reflect in our everyday life the love and sacrifice Jesus made for us. In John 13:34-38 Jesus says,

" A new command I give you. Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know you are my disciples, if you love one another.

Every Blessing
Beryl

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





News around the world

The following information has been taken from CWM Website dated 3rd February, so is up to date at the editing of this month's magazine

CWM: What's Happening?

CWM is currently in the process of relocating to Singapore. This month we received some positive news stating that our application to be registered as a company in Singapore has now been approved. Between now and the 20th of February we will sign and submit the ACRA our Memorandum of Articles and Association, thereby finalising the registration process.

As you will see on our vacancy page on the website, we are still in the process of hiring new members of staff, there are currently two senior staff positions available and six other positions in the Singapore office. If interested in applying please click on the link for further details: <http://www.cwmmission.org/vacancies>

As we continue our planning for the upcoming 2012 Assembly which will be held in Pago Pago, American Samoa 16th-23rd June, we hope that you will journey with us in contemplating the assembly theme - '**Hope: the Language of Life.**' - Follow us on [twitter](#) for daily updates on 'hope' and some of our prayers for our CWM family around the world.

What we stand for - Our inspiration in mission has its roots in a biblical mandate drawn from John 10.10. All CWM's activities work toward the vision of

"Fullness of life through Christ for all creation".

Our mission statement describes the nature and goal of our work. We are "called to partnership in Christ, to mutually challenge, encourage, and equip churches to share in God's mission."

CWM was founded in 1977 on the conviction that no particular church has a private supply of truth, or wisdom or missionary skills. So within the circle of churches which we serve we seek to encourage mutuality. This is a recognition that to share in international mission, every church is both a receiver of help and a giver of its talents.

While our vision and range of activities is broad, there are organisational values that permeate all our work. These are: justice in relationships, mutuality, equality and inter-dependence, generosity of spirit, and unity in diversity as we respond to the transformative work of the Holy Spirit.

Malawi Gender Activists Protest for Women's Right to Wear Their Own Clothes

The streets of Blantyre, Malawi's commercial capital were taken over on January 20th in a protest against a spate of recent attacks by vendors on women. The attacks have involved the public undressing of women wearing pants or miniskirts. The protest was joined by Malawi Vice President Joyce Banda who spoke saying, "we have to say no to abuse of women, we have to fight for women's rights". Some of us have spent our entire life fighting for the freedom of women; it's shocking some men want to take us back to bondage."

Organizations such as Women and Law in Southern Africa (WILSA) joined forces

with others including, church leaders, MP's, university lecturers and lawyers in this protest. Protestors wore pants, miniskirts and leggings, sang and danced to Marleys "No woman no Cry" and hoisted banners in the local Chichewa language ("Venda, Ndikugule, Undibvulenso ???") loosely translated as "Vendor, I buy from you and you strip me naked???"

During the dictatorship of the late Hastings Banda women were banned from wearing trousers and miniskirts and men from wearing bell bottomed trousers and sporting dreadlocks. University of Malawi law lecturer Dr. Ngey Kanyongolo said it was shocking that in 2012 these issues were still being discussed when the indecency in dress laws was abolished 18 years ago.

The actions of vendors that triggered this protest was grounded in the belief that it was un-Malawian for women to wear miniskirts and trousers as this was an indicator of loose morals bordering on prostitution. President Bingu wa Mutharika weighed in on the issue saying "women are to be free to wear what you want", saying the country had no dress code barring women from wearing trousers. In the view of Seodi White one of the key speakers and organisers the protest was about the reclaiming of dignity for Malawian women.

Malawi is a predominantly agrarian economy with acute unemployment, fuel and foreign currency shortages. Last year there were nationwide protests organized by civil society organizations. It may have been this economic back drop that led Vice President Banda to suggest "economic woes" as the basis for the attacks on women. A similar view is held by Seodi White who suggested that women are being targeted by disaffected youth unhappy with the economic situation.

If women are the targets, an outlet for venting frustration it is the view of Faustace Chirwa Executive Director of the Malawi based National Women's Lobby Group that there should be tougher laws protecting women from abuse. She goes further to say "Like a lot of Africa there is a culture of instilling fear in women because people know they are voiceless even though they are guaranteed equality on paper. A lot of men in Africa believe they can dictate what women can do".

Among strangers in Delhi

"Do you want me to take you somewhere for shopping?" with these words my colleagues and I begin a 48-hour journey of association with a stranger in Delhi.

He rides an autorickshaw (tuk-tuk), one of the venerable people movers of the city. There is something about the way he speaks that seems to say that he is genuinely offering help even though it means a fare for him. This is different from other encounters we have had while walking around looking clueless.

We say, "We need food". He takes us to a place and waits, then through the chaotic traffic of Delhi. Horns blaring, brakes squealing, near misses with only the protection of God and the genius of his driving he takes us to tourist places to shop.

I am only a tag-along as I had been in a gentle fatherly way scolded by the hosts and joint group leaders "Randolph take rest, leave the work, get out of the hostel, today is a free day go shopping".

Into Delhi

My colleagues say to PM "we want local stuff, good but cheap, where the local people buy". PM says "I will take you to

where only local people shop". My gut says "hmmm" but my spirit says something else; PM exudes life, so we went.

Off the beaten track, through narrow lanes and near misses into places where there is a visible decline in the shape of the community to this local shop. Selections are made, some need to be altered, I even buy cloth to make the top of a kurtha.

A tailor is brought in, measurements made, payments taken. PM says "Let's go, the kurthas will be made somewhere else. I will come back for you at the hostel at 6pm and take you back here to collect your altered cloths".

Trust, trust. So off we go to another side of the community into a compound filled with people and animals into the workshop of a tailor. He takes my measurements and then says, you can't get it today. Tomorrow.

Trust in the human capacity, and one's first encounter with each other. It does not always work out.

PM comes back for us, horns, screeching brakes, near misses again, as darkness falls on Delhi. Then on the journey to collect the rickshaw breaks down.

We stop at the roadside, leave it at a mechanic and then PM said "come let's walk". We walk through crowds, animals, dust, dirt and the noise of Delhi as evening takes hold back to the first shop. The altered garments are collected, then PM says, "Come to my home, have tea". Hmmm.

But we go, a wide open space, very little light and within seconds we are surrounded by people who have drifted out of the darkness. He sits us down, introduces us to his wife, gives us a cup of tea saying "for you the tea is made with milk not water, I protect your stomach".

We drink, keeping our thoughts to ourselves, and I keep wondering at the biblical dimensions of what we are encountering. How often we forget hospitality to those who share a common humanity with us irrespective of who they are; especially when the games of power and domination, driven by resentment and history are in full flight. May God forgive us.

The rickshaw fixed, we walk back to the mechanic with PM accompanied by his son and were then taken back to the hostel.

The following day he takes us back to the compound to collect work from the tailor. PM insists on making a gift to us and later that night brings one garment that had not been finished.

Later, I share our encounter with our local hosts and co-leaders. Concerned looks flash across their faces as the story progresses.

At the end they quietly affirm PM's sense of community and humanity. One remarked "there are still good people around". For this we give thanks; there still remains hope for humanity across cultures, religions, ideologies.

Incidentally PM is of Muslim heritage. Our recognition of this came later - we saw a fellow human being all the way through who represented one of the finest examples of what it means to be human.

His sharp wit and commentary on life in India spoke to his inner spirit. It was an honour to have met him for 48 hours and maybe the privilege might exist again.

But for now I would simply say to PM, his family and his community and his family As-Salaam Alaikum, Peace be upon you. May Allah bless and watch over you.



The following article has been submitted by Nanna Blackman, and is entitled:

Malawi Partnership

The CF7 are: Judith Mbaabu (Congregational Federation), Gordon Campbell (Perth), Candi Williams Tarling (Kingswood), Anne Newman (Fairford), Trish Damen (Uppingham), Janice Carrington (Taunton) and Nanna Blackman (Witney)

The group of 7 people from the Congregational Federation who set out for Malawi on 27th October 2011, who became known as the CF7, were not entirely sure how the partnership mission was going to work in practice. There were three formal objectives, which are discussed elsewhere. Beyond that there was not much structure to the visit. The lack of structure became even more apparent when we reached Malawi and realised that some of the organisation, which should have been done by our friends in the Churches of Christ in Malawi (CCM) had not been done: The person who met us at the airport was expecting us on a flight from Nairobi, Kenya when in fact we were on the flight from Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The transport that had been organised, on which we were going to be reliant for the next 12 days, was not large enough to accommodate 7 people never mind our luggage. The hotel rooms we needed for our first night in Lilongwe had not been booked. Not the best of beginnings.

Judith Mbaabu, leading the group and Abudjetta, the driver, organised a larger (more expensive) mini-bus. It became clear that fuel was going to be a problem; there isn't any in Malawi. The

queues for the ATM were long and not all ATMs take Visa. Eventually we got enough money and diesel (don't ask how) to get us going. We did get some basic rooms at the hotel, even if the sink to brush our teeth was in open air and we had to dispatch a snake before we could go to bed. In Lilongwe we had running water and electricity; these are commodities we soon learnt not to take for granted.

We set off the next morning, bright and early for Ntcheu, where we were meeting Johnston, Moderator of CCM and Patrick, General Secretary of CCM, in office only since the previous week. Patrick accompanied us to Gowa mission where we stayed 3 nights. The 'girls' stayed in one room with Rev Tendence and Mrs Suya. Gordon and Patrick stayed with Catharine and Fraser. We were made very welcome. Egg and Chips for breakfast is an acquired taste, the norm in Malawi. Rice, Sema (corn meal), eggs, bean, and a bit of chicken all with tomatoes and onions either on the side or as the 'soup' are Malawian staples.

In Gowa we joined in the Sunday service, getting to Church around 9 and the service finishing at about 1:30. This followed by another hour of discussions in groups. Judith and Gordon both preached. I was privileged to do one of the readings. Although men and women are segregated in the Church in Malawi, as visitors we were requested to sit at the front on the men's side, close to the action. A fellow reader, Rogers led me through the service and shared his hymnbook. Chichewa is fairly phonetic, so I managed to sing along. Some hymns, including Amazing Grace, had been specifically chosen because they can be sung in English. The solos, ladies

choir and congregation's jubilant voices were uplifting and moving. The CF7 also sang, having prepared something the night before, a little panicked at the request, and got enthusiastic applause, more from friendship than from merit.

The following Sunday we joined in the Sunday service in Namiwawa. The welcome was somewhat different; we were on the side-lines, spectators rather than part of the congregation. Gordon was asked to preach, but Judith was only asked to speak, to convey a message from CF and our churches. Again we sang for our hosts, a little more proficiently as we had been singing together for a week by then. Compared to the experience at Gowa the experience at Namiwawa was somewhat stilted.

We visited the primary and secondary school at Gowa and the school at Namiwawa. In Gowa the primary students sit on the floor, they have no desks or benches. In Namiwawa they have desks and chairs. The secondary students in Gowa expect that entrance to University is going to be hard for them. The school does not have the books, science equipment or reputation for excellence that the state secondary school in Ntcheu or larger, better equipped secondary schools nearby. The students talked of the need for scholarships and a wish to study in the UK. The students were all happy to see us, very polite and inquisitive. Some were shy and some were bold. All seemed keen to get a good education. The ambitions were to become nurses, pilots, doctors and teachers. When I told them I was an engineer many of the girls wanted to know more.

We visited the clinic at Gowa. I was depressed that there seemed to be

little or no progress since I last visited such a clinic 30 years ago in another African country. The sparseness of every amenity and the lack of basics, including medicine is very frustrating. Janice had brought two big bags of bandages and other medical front line basics, but they seemed like a drop in the ocean. HIV/AIDS is rife in Malawi and the social stigma attached to it is infuriating because it hinders the combat of the disease. Women who contract AIDS are ostracised as are their children. Men refuse to understand that they spread the disease and put the blame entirely on the women. As a result few admit to having AIDS, until it is almost too late to treat them. The maternity ward at Gowa clinic was also sparse, but at least had some good news stories.

In between Gowa and Namiwawa we stayed in Blantyre. I stayed with a family in the township of Chirimba and visited their church in Mbayani. I have previously written of this, so look in the Dec 2011/Jan 2012 issue of Crossroads. My fellow CF7 stayed with various families in Blantyre. We visited Soche Church all together one evening. On that occasion we split into various groups, with members of the congregation and asked, what challenges does your church have and what would you expect from this partnership. The answers were varied; some said they needed bibles in English; others talked of the tray holding the communion cups being heavy. Some however seemed to grasp the idea of on-going communication, learning from each other, and widening our fellowship opportunities. In Mbayani we talked of the lack of Sunday school materials and how the lack of electricity hindered some of the more ambitious initiatives,

such as the youth choir recording their singing, to raise funds.

So, back in the UK, what next? Some personal contact is being maintained with friends in Malawi. Gordon sent some English Bibles to Gowa, and they did get there, so some more are going to be sent to other Churches. We are writing a letter to all those for whom we have contact details. It will be a general, open letter, with photographs, each one of us will write a section from our church. I intend to tell about our 350th Anniversary and the planned activities. Who knows, perhaps some of our activities will inspire some of the church leaders in Malawi. There are other long term initiatives being discussed. In particular we have invited CCM to send some members for a return visit to the UK. CWM sponsored our visit to Malawi and CCM are eligible to apply for similar sponsorship.

The Congregational Federation will not be making financial contributions to CCM. However, we will find direct ways to use the funds each church is raising for Malawi. The CF7 will meet in April, to evaluate what funds are available and how they can be deployed in targeted and reliable ways. There are individuals in Malawi to whom such funds could be sent with confidence that they would be put to the best use. We are also making contact with publishers in Malawi with a view to setting up an account so that school books and resources can be delivered to schools and churches with a minimum of cost.

The friends we made in Malawi are an inspiration. They have so little and are willing to share so much. Faith is at the very heart of the community, shops are called 'Jesus Loves Corner Shop' and 'God's Grace Laundry'. Kids ask 'what is your favourite Bible verse?' and then happily discuss the meanings of theirs. Our friends in Malawi ask for your support in prayer and friendship, we ask for the same.



The children of Phalombe, Malawi. They and their mothers have AIDS. They fend for themselves by farming and fish farming in a collective initiative. The uniforms indicate they are at Primary school.



Flying in hope in Lesotho

Lesotho, a small landlocked country surrounded by South Africa, has enormous needs. Up to 23% of the population is HIV-positive and many live cut off from any kind of medical care.

MAF has been operating there since 1980, providing support to numerous organisations, including the Lesotho Flying Doctor Service and the six clinics operated by Partners in Health. Life is challenging, but there is much hope. Pilot Justin Honaker gives a recent example:

'I flew into Methaleneng, a difficult airstrip high in Lesotho, often affected by strong winds. At the landing strip there was this man, Theboho, terribly anxious about his ten-year old son. Motlatsi was lethargic, incoherent and barely conscious after being hit on the head with a stone the day before.'

Justin Honaker carefully buckled Motlatsi's nearly limp body into the back seat of the Cessna 206. "I remember the boy's father peeling back the edge of his hat to reveal the huge knot forming. I remember Motlatsi's eyes darting aimlessly about the cabin and wondering if he would make it."

Justin Honaker flew the Cessna 206 to the nearest hospital, and dropped off both father and son. But even so, the pilot was deeply concerned for the boy. "I didn't hold out much hope for him."

Yet five days later, as Justin prepared to fly a plane load of people

back to Methaleneng, there they were again - Theboho and his son, Motlatsi. "This time, things were very different! Bright-eyed, Motlatsi sat grinning up at me from the same back seat of the 206 with the same maroon hat that had covered his badly injured head. The details of his seemingly hopeless story came flooding back to me - yet here he was, happy, coherent and excited to be heading home. I couldn't believe what I was seeing!"

Nearly 200,000 people depend solely on the Flying Doctor Service and on Partners in Health for medical care. Praise God for their work and others like them. To find out more about Lesotho and MAF's involvement, please visit www.maf-uk.org



Well done to those who sent greetings to 'prisoners of conscience' named by Amnesty International. If you should hear back from any in response to your greetings, please let me know
Many thanks - Marjorie Lee

Thanks

Many thanks to the Junior Church members for making the most delicious Christmas cakes which were given to the more senior amongst us. They were greatly appreciated by all who received them

Joan Currie

The following article, written by Canon David Winter, and extracted from Parish Pump, is the first in a series on Queen Elizabeth II, looking back down the 60 years of her reign.

Diamond Jubilee: Elizabeth - Child of Destiny

In 1926 a baby girl was born to the younger son of King George V. She was named Elizabeth and was joined a few years later by a sister, Margaret Rose. Growing up in royal circles, in the custom of the time they were privately educated at home.

Elizabeth knew from an early age that her father was a royal prince, but it would probably never have occurred to her that he might one day be the King nor, even more improbably, that she would one day be Queen. After all, the Prince of Wales and heir to the throne was the very popular and personable Edward. Her father was altogether of a more retiring nature and - as the whole world now knows - was handicapped by a serious stutter.

When Elizabeth was ten an event occurred which shook the nation and was destined to change the whole course of her life. Edward, Prince of Wales, had become king on the death of his father in 1936. However, before his coronation he made it known that he wished to marry an American woman, Wallis Simpson, who was divorced. That would probably not seem an insurmountable problem today - after all, the current heir to the throne is married to a divorced woman - but in 1936 it provoked a constitutional crisis.

The Archbishop of Canterbury was opposed to the marriage. The Prime

Minister, Stanley Baldwin, and his cabinet came to the conclusion that despite Edward's popularity it was unlikely that the people would ever accept Mrs Simpson as his Consort, let alone their Queen.

The newspapers had a field day, the nation was in uproar, and a new ditty was added to children's playground repertoire:

*Hark the herald angels sing,
Mrs Simpson stole our king.*

Of course, she hadn't 'stolen' him. Far from it. Everything he said indicated that - as he put it in his last broadcast speech to the nation - he could not achieve anything 'without the support of the woman I love'.

The final outcome was inevitable. Edward signed an Act of Abdication, and as he did so his younger brother George automatically became king - and the young Elizabeth (though she may not at that moment have realised it) became heir to the throne.

A story was told at the time of the two sisters, Elizabeth and Margaret, being challenged in Windsor Great Park, where they were playing, by a security guard who didn't realise who they were. 'Now then, you two, what are you doing here? Who are you?'

Elizabeth, taking responsibility for her younger sister, replied, 'Oh, we're nobody. But our daddy is the King'. So he was - somewhat reluctantly. But he had an almost painful aversion to the public spotlight that now inevitably followed him, his strong and dedicated wife (another Elizabeth) and the two small girls.

Storm clouds were gathering over Europe. Hitler was demanding more

territory in which to build his Arian dreamland. Already Jews were being rounded up and labelled in Germany and Austria. The new King and his family, together with the people he was pledged to serve, were about to face a monumental test of courage, character and resolve.



The following poem, written by Don Robinson, has been submitted by Maureen Miles, and is entitled:

Winter Rain

I hear you tapping at my window,
 Sorry, no, you can't come in!
 I'm snuggled in my little bed,
 The duvet to my chin.
 I'm dreaming of a sunny place
 Where gentle tides creep in,
 their waters warm and crystal clear,
 Where jewelled fishes swim.
 Golden sands and cloudless skies,
 Not fingers cold and thin,
 So stop tapping at my window,
 Sorry, no, you can't come in!

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Wednesday 29th February 2012 7.30pm

Lower Hall, Methodist Church, Witney

The following article, written by Steve Pearce, World Church Partnerships coordinator for Asia & the Pacific, has been extracted from Church News Service, and is entitled:

A visit to the Church of Pakistan

I am writing this in Peshawar, having arrived by road from Lahore in the middle of last night, and am now listening to the sounds of children working and playing in the school next door and to air force planes and helicopters roaring overhead every half hour or so. Pakistan is full of people ready to welcome the visitor with a smile, some questions and ready explanations. It is also a place where a cathedral dedication service merited a dozen armed policemen to supplement the armed guards who already protect the diocesan compound 24/7.

Time and again our discussions, both formal and informal, returned to the Blasphemy Laws. The Indian constitution, drafted by the British in the nineteenth century, contained a law against blasphemy and this continued when Pakistan was formed in 1947.

In the 1970s two clauses were added which gave protection only to Islam, one about the Prophet and one about the Qur'an. In recent years, as the climate of hatred towards the West (and therefore to Christianity) has grown, the number of accusations under these clauses has increased.

Most of the accusations are malicious, arising out of revenge, envy or hatred. It is easy to make an accusation, and since the offence was blasphemy you don't have to repeat

what was said, as to do so would be to commit the offence yourself. The results are horrific. Often mobs are motivated to sit in the court and pressure the judge to convict; in one case the accused were shot in the court building, even before any conviction.

Once you are accused, you have to leave your home and go into hiding. One of our partners, CLAAS, runs a safe house, offers legal support and visits prisoners. I visited their office and heard their stories. I was proud that the World Mission Fund, through your support, is able to be part of this work and took the liberty of promising your prayers.

The level of hatred involved in these and other types of individual and structural behaviour against religious minorities is the activity of a small number of people and organisations, but is having profound effects on people's lives and some leaders are talking about the survival of the Church in Pakistan, and even about Pakistan as a failed state.

Of the 190m people in Pakistan, about 3% belong to religious minorities. Of those, half are Christian - equal numbers of Catholic and Protestant. The foreign Christian missionaries (known here as 'dollar missions') are increasing the number of denominations, but seem only to be spreading the same numbers more thinly. Clearly evangelistic activity among the Muslim majority is not tolerated but is often focused in Hindu areas.

Our partner, the Church of Pakistan, was formed in 1970 when Anglican, Methodist and Presbyterian traditions united. The moderator is one of the eight bishops and he, the Rt Rev Sammy Azariah, is bishop of Raiwind,

which is part of Lahore and formerly an area of Methodist missionary activity. The new cathedral is on the site of the former Central Methodist Church. The general secretary of the World Council of Churches was present for this and for the Mission Conference which followed, as was I and representatives of nine other European partners.

Four of the eight bishops are new - one of several real signs of hope. One of them is the Revd Kaleem John - until recently a minister in the British Methodist Connexion, serving in the London District. He was consecrated and made bishop of Hyderabad on 23 October. I have promised him, too, our prayers and partnership.

Enabling the Church of Pakistan to survive and develop must be a priority for us. The Church is seeking prayer and partnership from circuits and districts in Britain.

If you are interested in discovering more, please contact me at Methodist Church House, 25 Marylebone Road, London, NW1 5JR

wcr.asiapacific@methodistchurch.org.uk

Thanks

Christmas time was celebrated when we welcomed the old story and marvelled again at God's outpouring love. The cards, candles & crib scenes, together with prayers and our wishes to each other made Christmas special.

How well the Christmas Tree fitted our sanctuary, and how beautiful the cakes made by the youngsters! Thanks to all who planned and prepared the time of Emmanuel - God with us

Marjorie Lee



TRAIDCRAFT
Fighting poverty through trade

The following article, extracted from a letter from the CE, has been submitted by Ken Lee, and is entitled:

A request for help

Traidcraft plc had a profitable year of trading in the 2010/2011 financial year. This was combined with a one-off profit made when we sold our holding in Cafedirect to Oikocredit which helped in providing Cafedirect with a strong partner for its own future development.

However, in the current financial year, and given the economic climate and the continued competition from supermarkets' own label Fairtrade products, it is not surprising that market conditions are tough.

We are finding that although our customers and supporters are placing as many orders with us, each order is for a smaller amount than was the typical pattern in previous years, and consequently our overall turnover is well down and makes it very likely that in the financial year 2011/2012 we will make a loss. More importantly, it will have a big impact on the volume of purchases we can place with our producers around the world.

Times are hard for all of us, but it is vital that we continue to find ways of supporting those who are even worse off than ourselves. So, could I encourage family, friends, colleagues and church members to continue to buy Traidcraft products over the coming months.