

Witney Congregational Church

CORNERSTONE

February 2009



Our Church is, and will continue to be, a living, growing congregation where people of all ages will find God reflected in us: a beacon of God's love and grace to all.

Led by the Holy Spirit, and through inspiring, meaningful worship, we seek to build relationships within our fellowship and the local community.

Following the teachings of Jesus Christ we give ourselves in dedicated service to the wider community

**4 Welch Way Witney Oxon OX28 6JF
Tel 01993 709992**

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

WHAT'S ON GUIDE

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

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

WORSHIP

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

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

PRAYER

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

STUDY & FELLOWSHIP

Friday 10.00 am Church

YOUTH ACTIVITIES

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

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 777870 Jude Levermore

St ANDREW'S BOOKSHOP ☎ 01993 709429

Opening Hours: Monday - Saturday 09.00 am - 5.00 pm



Welcome back! As the last magazine was a double-issue, this is the first edition of 2009; so may I take this opportunity of wishing you all a belated Happy New Year. I hope that the festive period was not too stressful and that 2009 will be a good year for you.

For me, the hardest part after the break, which was a rather lengthy one, was going back to work, and was most pleased when it was time to come home on that first day. Isn't it strange, that whenever there is a break in routine it is very hard, and sometimes very stressful, to get back into it. The paradox being that breaks are supposed to make you feel better and refreshed for the new start; when in reality, the reverse is often the case.

However, in this bleak economic crisis, those of us who are still in work should feel extremely fortunate, as there are many people, including those in Witney & the surrounding area, have been laid off. Please pray for these people and their families.

Before we get to the contents let us be thankful for the safe arrival of Jason and his family, and to God for giving him the vision to take the big step of leaving Scotland and coming to Witney as our Minister, and a new chapter in our church history.

Turning now to the contents, here is just a glimpse of some of the articles that have been submitted; Nanna Blackman asks - Why did God

create the world?; there is Press release re Jason's Induction service & Marjorie Lee gives an update on World Day of Prayer, to name but a few.

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:

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

For your information, the magazine for the remainder of the year is due on: 1st March; 29th March; 3rd May; 31st May; 28th June; 30th Aug; 4th Oct; 1st Nov & 29th Nov

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

Your Editor

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2. Diary
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11. Church Family
12. Rotas



Daily Prayer Time:

Mon-Fri 9.30 am

Services

10.30 am & 6.00pm and will be led by Rev Jason Boyd

The following events in **February** are given for your particular attention:

3 rd	Deacon's meeting	
7 th	11.00am	Saturday Praise (Praise, Prayer & Reflection)
10 th	Prayer Chain meeting	7.30pm
12 th	Fellowship Group	9 Pensclose
14 th	Prayer Chain meeting	9.15am
15 th	Sunday Diners	1.00pm
22 nd	Meditation	7.30pm
25 th	Ash Wednesday service	7.00pm
26 th	Pins & Needles	7.30pm
28 th	Big Brew - Fairtrade Cuppa (Saturday Coffee Morning)	

Emmaus Course coming

Starting Thursday 30th April

Details to follow

Get this in your diary and plan to come



**Churches Together in Witney and District
Lent Bible Studies 2009**

This year the format for our annual combined studies will differ from previous years, as the Bishop of Dorchester has offered to come to Witney to give three Thursday evening talks in the Winchester Room, St Mary's Church. Each will be followed by questions and/or discussion. In the light of this, Rev Elizabeth Thomson plans to arrange two further talks to complete the series

Also, Canon Tim Partridge has offered to lead a Friday morning Bible Study and discussion group in the Winchester Room at 10.15am, using the booklet 'Lentwise' that will also be used in the Tuesday evening studies

Rev Adrian Gabb-Jones will also be conducting a daytime series in Minster Lovell, and if you are interested in attending, please contact him on 01993 776492 for relevant details

If you would like to attend any of these groups, option forms are available in the church office

Minister's Letter

The following article was printed as the **Pause for Prayer** in the service sheet on 25 January, my 1st Sunday conducting worship as minister:

The induction on Friday, 23 January 2009, marked the beginning of our journey together. It was a joyful celebration. The singing was fantastic. And wasn't it good to see the church packed? The spread afterwards was top class. Viviane and I wish to say a huge thank you to all who worked so hard to give us such an enjoyable evening. We are so grateful for the warm reception and unstinting hospitality you extended towards our friends from Cumnock, Scotland. Thank you...thank you...thank you.

During the Induction, pastor and people promised to expend every ounce of energy in the service of Christ. An air of anticipation will gently settle down to reality: the reality of getting to know one another; of entering into the rhythm of worship and activity; the regular routine of the commonplace. That doesn't mean that life will be boring. Nothing of the kind!

The truth is that the Spirit is more often at work in the ordinary things of life than when as a dove he descends, or as wind he blows, or as fire he gently rests. God's grace was profoundly expressed in the ordinary birth of a baby to a carpenter and his teenage wife. God's humble love was demonstrated as Jesus stripped to the waist washing his disciples' feet. God's victory through brokenness was visible when Jesus took ordinary bread and

wine and made of them a gateway to memory and encounter.

We have encountered Christ in many ways since arriving in Witney. His welcome has been extended to us as we received two days of hospitality before being able to stay in the Manse; through neighbours coming in with cups of tea, homemade sausage rolls, and mince pies; and offerings of flowers and a lemon loaf; and much more.

On the first evening we were in the Manse, an elderly man with Alzheimer's had wandered from his home. He had no coat and was frozen right through. It was one of those cold nights in which he could easily have succumbed to hypothermia. As he sat at our kitchen table and warmed himself with a cup of tea, we found evidence of his address in his wallet and were able to reunite him with his frantic daughters.

The Manse in Pensclose looks like any other in the street. What had led this man to our door? When Viviane called me that night, I felt mildly irritated. I feel ashamed to say it and yet it's true. I had been engrossed in some bit of unpacking. I wanted to get on with things and here was an interruption! This man powerfully reminded me of Jesus' words, "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me" (Matthew 25:40)

Yours in Christ

Jason Boyd



News around the world

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

God's Politician

Hmar Sangliana has relished a career against the odds. As a Mizo chief of police in Karnataka state, India, and Christian politician with the Hindu nationalist BJP, he has trusted God to guide him in all he does. Hmar Tlomte Sangliana is, quite simply, an all-out crusader for Christ.

Former chief of police in the Indian state of southern Karnataka and now Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) parliament member in Bangalore, the formidable Indian politician has always lived by the same motto: "fear of God is the beginning of wisdom" - and it shows.

Since becoming a Christian at the age of eight, Sangliana has never looked back. His unshakeable faith, steadfast integrity and sheer gall, have earned him a place at the highest tables throughout his life and career. Where he has not been loved for his pull no punches approach, he has certainly been respected.

A Mizo member of the Presbyterian Church of India, Sangliana happily provoked outrage in 2004 when he decided to contest the parliament as a candidate of Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) for the national parliament soon after his retirement as police chief of southern Karnataka state.

Given his immense popularity as a much-loved, no-nonsense police officer, he did the unbelievable for the BJP - defeating sitting eight-time member of Lok Sabha (People's House - lower house Indian parliament) from Bangalore north constituency. Not content to simply champion God's work through the BJP party as it stood, Sangliana raised more than a few eyebrows when he said he'd joined with a view to converting the Hindu nationalist BJP into the Bharatiya Jesus Party.

Although this rather ambitious bid never actually came about, it did little to dampen the 66-year-old's spirits. "Instead of calling myself a BJP member of Parliament. I would rather put it as 'a member of parliament through the BJP'," he told CWM in an interview.

"The BJP was the first to invite me to contest the election for parliament and I accepted this offer as I wanted to remain active in public life after my retirement. It did not mean that I fully subscribed to their ideology," he says, "I have never made any compromise on matters of faith." When issues affecting the Christian faith arose, Sangliana launched himself into action, championing Christians' rights and steamrolling anyone in his way.

Following the increasing violence against Christians in September 2007, he led thousands on a march in Karnataka state which has Bangalore as its capital - while Hindu groups demanding a ban on Christian proselytism countermarched alongside.

In a veiled attack on Hindu fundamentalist groups, he said: "The right to freedom of worship is being

denied to Christians and places of worship are being attacked for no reason".

But perhaps Sangliana's finest testimony of character so far came during the crucial vote of confidence in the Indian parliament on July 22 when he defied his own party's whip and voted for government plans to sign a nuclear agreement in the US that would resolve acute power shortages in India.

Furthermore, he didn't think twice about airing his grievances to the media when the BJP refused tickets to Christians and Muslims wanting to contest the 228 seats to Karnataka Assembly election in May.

Having voted according to his conscience, the move paid off, for his and several other cross-votes helped secure a win for the government.

Faith driven

But it could all have been very different for Sangliana. "My baptism threw open a new life for me and I've never looked back. It is my Christian faith that has made what I am today," he says.

If not for his father's Christian conversion 58 years ago, which in turn led to his own - he is sure that he would now be an innocuous animist priest in Mizoram, north east India, as family tradition dictated.

And it was Sangliana's Christianity that led him into the first chapter of his career with the Indian Police Service, despite his dream to work as a diplomat through the Indian Foreign Service.

"God had different plans for me and I accepted the IPS post," he says matter-of-factly. Having passed the prestigious Indian Civil Service exam in 1967, he took up his new job at the IPS

with gusto, and the notoriety he quickly acquired in this 36-year-long role was no less spectacular than it was in his later career with the BJP.

From tough crackdowns on thugs at one end of the spectrum to exorcising the evil spirits of more troublesome offenders at the other, Sangliana's methods for cleaning up society in southern Karnataka packed a controversial punch.

He even made the headlines after exorcising evil spirits - but the publicity only made him stronger. Though some of these widely-reported incidents were brought before the state Legislative Assembly, Sangliana said legislators were satisfied with the explanations he gave.

Mission

"In such moments, I felt that God had sent to me expel evil spirits," he says. "Looking back, now I realise that maybe it is this service (IPS) that helped me become even a member of the parliament". As he puts it in his own words: "I never compromised on faith or Christian principles and I have always trodden the path God has shown me."

Divided Korean Christians pray for unity

Thousands of Christians in Korea have joined together for prayers of unity with each other and over the divided Korean peninsula.

Church leaders from the National Council of Churches in Korea (NCCCK) helped organise the prayer week which began with an ecumenical service of 3,000 participants in Seoul last week. NCCCK chairperson, Reverend Kim Sam-hwan said this year's event fell at a

particularly hard time for Korean Christians with crisis in the economy, environmental issues and unemployment as well as tensions between the two Koreas: "We cannot give up our hope, because we believe it is God's providence that makes us depend only on our Lord in these gloomy situations," he said.

"We believe that when we obey the words of God, our Lord will help us to recover from all this suffering." He added: "This year, all Christians will pray for the local Churches and the reconciliation of the two Koreas using the same materials, prepared by Korean Churches. Christians should be the apostles of God, and make the divided country and society into a united one." Churches in South Korea declared 2009 the Year of Prayer for Christian Unity and ecumenical activities such as prayer services, forums and exchanges between groups will take place throughout the year.

Dream of a new Jamaica

Jamaican pastor Rev Dr Roderick Hewitt has called on the people of Jamaica to join forces in a new drive to address social, economic and spiritual unrest in the country.

The Kingston-based Hope United Church pastor and CWM moderator Dr Hewitt lobbied peers at the National Leadership Prayer Breakfast which took place last week stating that recent hardships had left society with a "deeply infested wound that requires surgery."

Encouraging individuals to "dream of a new Jamaica", he urged

people to bear in mind the importance of a shared sense of identity that underpins national unity.

The National Leadership Prayer Breakfast took place at the Jamaica Pegasus hotel in Kingston under the theme: "No Transformation Without Reconciliation".

Disadvantaged youths from inner city areas were also invited to the event to pray over the increase in crime that is affecting the children's lives in Jamaica.

Caribbean youths seek a future with other faiths

Young people of different faith groups in Guyana got together for a series of special workshops to help them shape a better future.

Youths from Guyana Congregational Union and other church partners as well as participants from other faiths including Hindu and Rastafari met up over four weekends in November and

December as part of the Guyana leg of the Young Empowerment for Change Workshop in Georgetown.

The programme has been organised by the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands to educate and inspire youths from the Caribbean region to explore and consider positive changes for their future.

The youth programme will be followed up with the young people over the next six months.



Induction

Another occasion to celebrate, and for our history in the life of Witney Congregational Church, when on 23rd January, the Rev Jason Boyd was inducted as the church Minister. This was attended by 150 people coming from near and far and after the service fellowship was enjoyed over a shared buffet meal. It was really good to be so well-supported and to see everyone with happy and smiling faces for this special occasion. Below is the press release by Judi Holloway with photographs which were kindly taken at very short notice by the photographer from Open Doors (Michael Allen), which was sent to our local paper - Witney Gazette

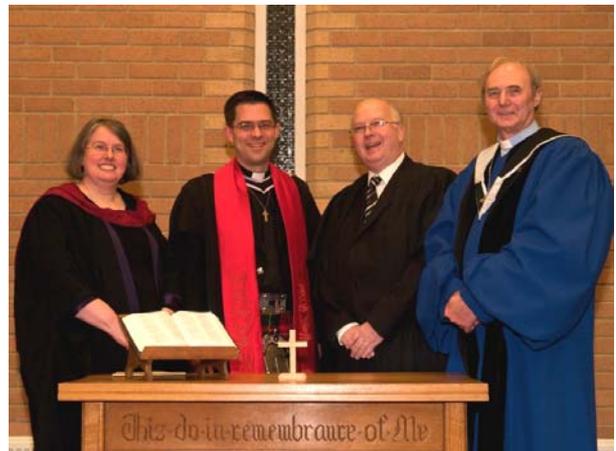
Press release

Rev. Jason Boyd, was inducted as Minister of the Witney Congregational Church on Friday 23rd January. Jason has previously spent 10 years as Minister to the Cumnock Congregational Church in Scotland and brings with him his wife Viviane and children Naomi, Sonya and Jeremy. Many members of Jason's church in Scotland joined the congregation at Witney for the celebrations.

The service was led by Rev Graham Akers, of the Newport Congregational church on the Isle of Wight, Rev Michael Heaney, General Secretary of the Congregational Federation and Rev. Dr. Janet Wootton, Director of Studies for the Congregational Federation.

First Picture (from left to right)

Rev. Dr. Janet Wootton, Rev. Jason Boyd, Rev. Michael Heaney, Rev. Graham Akers



The second Picture shows Rev. Dr. Janet Wootton, Rev. Michael Heaney, Rev. Jason Boyd, Rev. Graham Akers plus ministers and representatives from churches in and around Witney, including the Town Mayor (Cllr Alvin Adams) and the Town Clerk (Mrs. Sharon Groth)



PRAYER LETTER No 129

New Beginnings

A new year, a new Minister, a new month, a new day, each give us new opportunities to be positive about our faith, to recognise our role by serving God in our Church Fellowship and in the wider community.

Underlying all this is prayer. As Christians we cannot be effective without the foundation of prayer.

We are beginning to see buds on trees and shoots of spring flowers emerging through the soil after the dormant period of winter. Do we have dormant periods in our prayer life? There may be times when we feel we can't pray, other times we forget or are too busy or don't want to pray; yet as Christians it is a basic part of our faith to communicate with God.

Jesus taught His disciples to pray. There are many examples recorded in the Gospels where Jesus sets himself apart to pray to God.

Paul in his letter to the Philippians (4: 4-6) encourages bringing everything to God in prayer.

Time alone in prayer is valuable but it is also important to pray together. Prayer is a discipline which takes time to develop, needing endurance., so keep persevering. May your 'new day's ' resolution be, to commit time each day to God in prayer.

**Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again : Rejoice!
Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.
Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything,
by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving,
present your requests to God .**

Philippians 4: 4-6

Every Blessing
Beryl

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

The following article, taken from a Yahoo blog, has been submitted by Nanna Blackman, and is entitled:

Why did God create the world?

I believe he created the world in his own merriment.
He wanted to see his tiny replicas - us humans in the world and enjoy how they will ultimately progress towards him. How they will start loving him more and more.

Since God created us humans as his child (children).
And he is waiting patiently till his child (children) feels an urge to throw away the worldly toys and go back to him with all the love.

He is waiting patiently like a mother who is busy with her household chores but when the baby throws away his or her toy(s) and starts crying incessantly for the mother, she drops everything on her hand and runs to the child to take the child in her lap.
If the child is hungry she immediately feeds him.
If the child has become dirty she immediately cleans him
She will not stop serving the child until the child becomes happy.

God is waiting for just that for each and everyone of his children.
He will give us everything to play with money, cars, houses, power, pleasures, food, drinks, travels, family, pets, prestige, fame, glory, glamour whatever we want.
He will give us all the worldly toys we want.

But he is waiting for the moment when his child throws away all these expensive or marvellous toys and weeps for him with all the love in this child's heart.

Then he will not wait even for a moment to run to this child and take this child in his arms, ... forever.

This play of the world in God's merriment has just this purpose.
God will keep giving us better and better toys.

Until one day we realize that these toys have no meaning.

What we need is God.

And then the one who realizes will weep with all the love for God.

And God will come to that child, lift him in his arms, do anything to soothe him and bless him with his eternal presence with him and with all his love he will start eternal relationship with this child.

After that there is no break in God's relationship with this child, God will always be with him and help him.

If need be God will even play a role of his servant since this child has won God with his (or her) love for God.

God's heart will beat for this child first and then for himself !

This is known as the eternal joy or merriment of God - and purpose and secret of Creation.

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

The Women's World Day of Prayer 2009

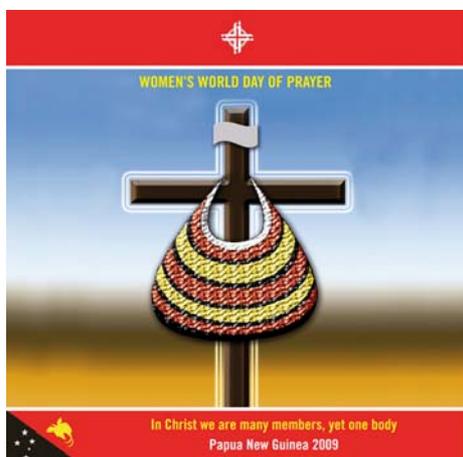
On 6th March, the World Day of Prayer is being held at Our Lady & St Hugh's Roman Catholic Church. We do hope that you come and join in this world-wide circle of prayer and praise being held at 1.45 pm and 7.30pm.

The hymns are all known to us, except a special one from Papua New Guinea, which has two verses as follows:

*Dark were the days when men lived in fear
Fear of the arrow, stone-club and spear
Fighting and hatred filled every hand
That was my country that was my land*

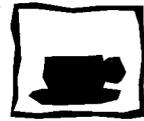
*Then came the change that brought peaceful days
News of our Saviour, learning his ways
Darkness is fading out of our land
We know the peace of his guiding hand*

Let us come together to pray for peace and justice throughout God's world



CHRISTIAN VIEWPOINT

COFFEE
MORNING Plus



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

Thursday 12th February 2009

WITH PASTOR BILLY DOEY OF
WELCOME EVANGELICAL CHURCH
TALKING TO US



The following article, written by Patience Strong, has been submitted by Maureen Miles, and is entitled:

If you stand very still

If you stand very still in the heart of a wood, you will hear many wonderful things

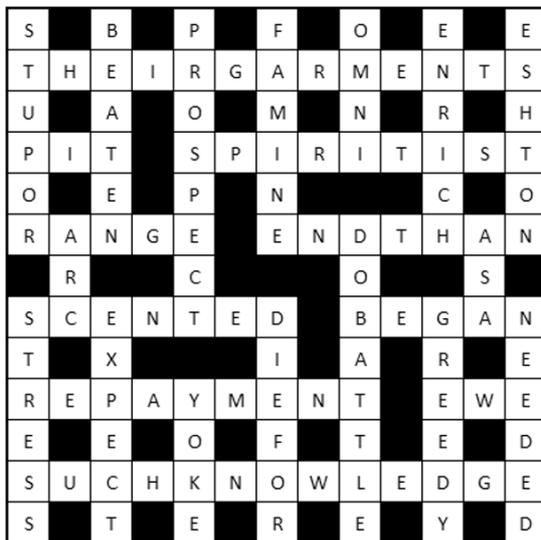
The snap of a twig and the wind in the trees, and the whirr of invisible wings

If you stand very still and you hold to your faith, you will get all the help that you ask

You will draw from the silence the things that you need - hope, courage and strength for your task



- Feb 10 Thomas Hayes
 13 Emily Chennells
 Judi Holloway
 16 Leah Cotton
 22 Dave Wesson
 23 Bethan Thorpe
 25 Jean Howell
 26 Alison Hazell
 28 Jacob Hambidge



December answers

Thank You

It took five minutes to do a few squiggles on an old paper bag, but a team of people, and time, to make those squiggles to come alive and tell the story that God sent his Son to earth for everyone. Not for those over 2000 years ago, but for as all today in 2009

Thank you to Jacqui, Beryl, Sue, Susan & Terry, who spent hours on the computer, for giving everyone's time, and to Judi - hope it didn't interfere too much with your sermon

God Bless Val



23rd February - 8th March

The Fairtrade fortnight is supported by Traidcraft throughout Berkshire, Buckinghamshire & Oxfordshire.

There is a Fairtrade Day at the Langdale Hall on Saturday 7th March



24th February

The following poem has been written, and submitted by Florence Smith, and is entitled:

What will this New Year bring?

What will this New Year bring?
 Will our hearts be filled with hope?
 Will we learn from past mistakes
 Or tell ourselves we cannot cope?

Look ahead into the light
 Fill your thoughts with Christian love
 Our Saviour's message clear and bright
 Pray earnestly, which feels so good

Our Saviour's love will never fail
 It does not bow to race and creed
 With stirring hymns to him we hail
 Discovering love is all new need

ROTAS

DEACON & STEWARDS

Feb	01	Jill & Robert McBride
	08	Nanna Blackman & Irene St Clair
	15	Susan Wass & Iris Lindsay
	22	Pat & Ben Smith
Mar	01	Beryl & Pip Cartwright



COMMUNION

Feb	01 pm	Pat Smith	
		Preparation	Iris Lindsay
	15 am	Elaine Gundem & Peter Gamston	
		Nanna Blackman & Susan Wass	
		Preparation	Pat Smith
Mar	01 pm	Jacqui Powlesland	
		Preparation	Iris Lindsay



FLOWERS

Feb	01	Val Obriain
	08	Rita Hayes
	15	Jill McBride
	22	Pat Smith
Mar	01	Alison Hazell



COFFEE

Feb	01	Pat & Ben Smith
	08	Marjorie Lee, Iris Lindsay & Judith Bungey
	15	Val Obriain & Sarah Hopwood
	22	Sue Birdseye & Linda McCormac
Mar	01	Peter Gamston & Gwen Mee
	Note:	Reserve Irene St Clair



REST & CHAT

Feb	05	Pat Smith & Gwen Mee
	12	Marjorie Lee
	19	Jean Stanley
	26	Iris Lindsay & Joan Currie
Mar	05	Jill & Robert McBride



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