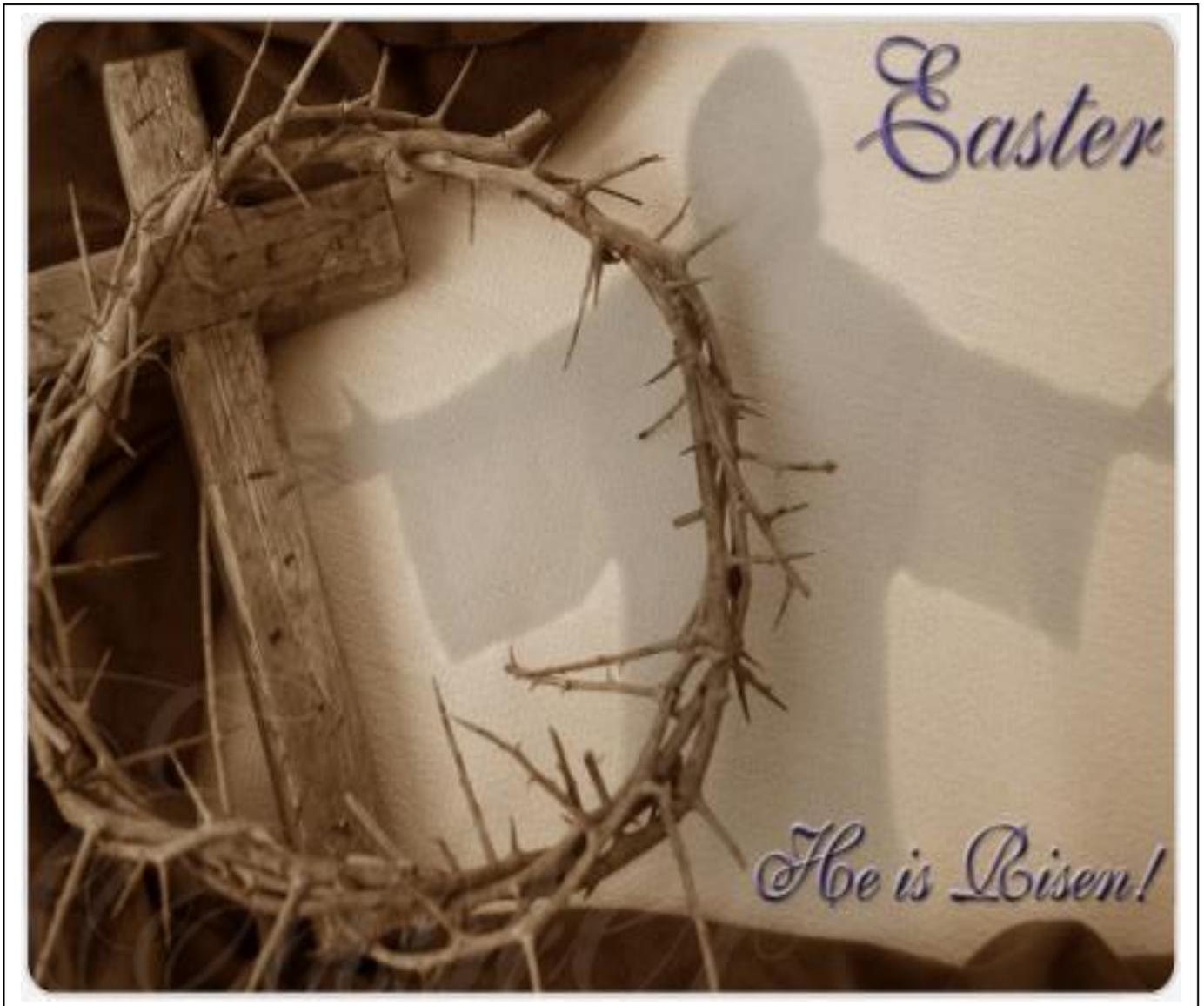


Journey



The continuing story

of

The Church at Carrs Lane

April 2015

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Minister's Letter

Dear friends,

For whatever reasons, there is a temptation for some of us to focus on all the churches in the UK which have closed in recent decades...rather than acknowledge the very many new churches which have come into being (admittedly, some of these have only had a very brief existence!). The reasons for the 'birth' of so many churches are complex – the significance of faith in the lives of many of those who have settled in the UK needs to be understood alongside growing impatience with some of the 'historic' churches and new ways of giving expression to the Christian faith on the part of some of those cradled in traditional expressions of Christianity in Britain. A lot is happening – and if you look at names taken by some of these new churches, whether they are single, stand-alone congregations or whether they belong to one of the emerging networks of churches which espouse a larger, shared life, it is notable how often the little phrase 'new life' crops up. This is often denoted with two capital letters – New Life.

By the time that you read this, you may well have shared already in Easter worship, eaten an Easter breakfast, pondered the symbolism of eggs and animals and flowers with family members and enjoyed a few days' break, in the hope that life's energies can be rekindled. Given the diversity of our congregations, I know that Easter means different things to different people; differing theologies enrich our varied faith journeys – but the common heart in which we share is the belief that Christianity continues to be about the manifold possibilities of 'new life' in Christ and with each other.

It would be interesting to explore together what our understandings and experiences of this 'newness' might be. Some of us have many decades of belief behind us – how do we sustain freshness and surprise? Some are relatively new both to faith...and to church as the family which gives expression to faith – how effectively can we share our thoughts on what it means to be relatively new to all of this? What are things which conspire most readily to quash resurrection experiences? Yes, we are not necessarily promised very long on the mountaintop; the Christian journey is one of undulations, ups and downs, but we do need to sustain that 'fix' on the experiences of Easter. Equally, what do we find most helpful in sustaining vigour and spontaneity and 'spring' in our Christian lives?

We both embrace 'new life' and, in turn, are embraced by it; what does this continue to mean for us?

With much love in Christ,
Your friend and pastor,



Sunday Worship during April

Sunday 5 April EASTER SUNDAY

10.30am Worship for Easter Sunday, including the Lord's Supper, led by Neil Johnson

Worship will be preceded by Easter breakfast (make sure that you have signed the list!) and followed by First Sunday Lunch: all welcome to share in fellowship and this ministry of hospitality

Sunday 12 April

10.30am Morning Worship led by A Sampson

2.45pm for 3pm Children's Church – continuing the series 'On Fire'

Sunday 19 April

10.30am Morning worship led by Neil Riches Key passage: Luke 24.36b – 48

Sunday 26 April

10.30am Morning worship led by Neil Riches Key passage: John 10.11 – 18

All-age

Worship will be followed by a church meeting at noon: all welcome

6.00pm Radical worship – continuing the series, 'seeing through the eyes of the world church'

A word of appreciation...

More will be said during the coming months, but I would like to offer an early 'thank you' at this stage for the consistently gracious way in which folk have received the news of my move to Swansea at the end of the summer. It is never easy passing on this kind of news, and people have received it with warmth and understanding, and offered encouragement and best wishes. This has been extremely helpful. Given the complexities of this pastorate, I felt that it would be unfair to offer three months' notice only – hence continued ministry in Birmingham until the end of July and an induction date in Swansea of 5 September. I hope that as many of you as possible will be able to join me on this occasion...but more of that in the coming months! Meanwhile, a reiterated word of thanks!

Neil

Music at The Church @ Carrs Lane - Sundays at 1.30pm

19 April National Flute Orchestra – Tony Bridgewater

26 April Birmingham Schools Recorder Sinfonia - Michelle Holloway

3 May Bacanu String Quartet – Cristi Bacanu

Notices

Justice for Asylum-Seekers A vigil was held in St Philip's Cathedral precinct on 2 March to be repeated fortnightly until the General Election, showing support for asylum-seekers and informing the public about the low levels of support they are given, and the current UK policy of indefinite detention. The event is organised by the Central England Quaker Asylum Group, with Restore, Freedom From Torture, Refugee Action, the Catholic National Justice and Peace Network and the Progressive Synagogue. Monday dates for the rest of the period are: **30 March, 13 April, 27 April, 11 May at 5.00pm.**

Barnes Close - 2 to 7 April. Spend Easter at Barnes Close and join in worship and reflections based around the events of the first Easter. There will be opportunity to walk & entertainment.
6 April 10-4 Easter Walk 12 miles.
9 April Reflection Day 10-4 £15
01562 710231 cfrenquiry@aol.com

Good Friday 3 April Ecumenical March of Witness Starting at 10am at St Michael's RC Church, the walk will meander through the city calling at the Victoria Square and St Philip's Cathedral and will conclude at St Chad's Cathedral.

Wed 15 April Faiths For Our City in partnership with Birmingham Council of Faiths - Faith, Health & Wellbeing Seminar 10-4.30 at The University of Birmingham Orchard Learning & Resource Centre, Weoley Park Road. No charge but please contact Dr Peter and Jean Rookes to book - pjrookes@gmail.com, phone 477 2282

Tues 28 April 7:30 to 9pm Methodist Minister Neil Richardson will be discussing his new book 'Who on Earth is God?' at Selly Oak Methodist Church. £5. Email Andrew Roberts robertsa@methodistchurch.org.uk.

Saturday 9 May 7.30pm Christian Aid Quizaid Selly Oak Methodist Church. Light refreshments available. Entrance fee £1 per person, max 6 per team. If you are interested in joining a team from TCaCL speak to Pat Davies.

About People

The United Reformed Church has announced the appointment of the Revd Steve Faber as moderator of the West Midlands Synod. He will take on the role on 1 September 2015, replacing outgoing moderator, the Revd Roy Lowes, who is retiring at the end of August. Mr Faber is presently serving as minister at Boston URC, and Riverside Church, Sleaford, Lincolnshire. He is also mission enabler for the East Midlands Synod.

Carrs Lane Fair Trade would like to thank Emma, Anna and Naomi for making some delicious cakes which were sold after the service on the first Sunday of Fairtrade Fortnight. £32.50 was raised for Traidcraft Exchange for the Fair Necessities Appeal and it will therefore be doubled by the UK Government. Well done and thank you – on behalf of the farmers of Bangladesh. *Joan Davies*

An invitation to join Chris Dowd in Hull...

Chris will be leading worship at Carrs Lane on 21 June...an opportunity to wish him well as he prepares to engage in new ministries with the URCs in the Hull area. We are invited to join him in Hull on 11 July, however, on the occasion of his induction; friends at Cotteridge – where Chris is on a major placement at present – are organising a coach for the day, and we are very welcome to join them. Full details to follow, but it will leave at 9am or thereabouts and get back to Birmingham at 8pm+; the cost per individual is reckoned to be about £10 – very reasonable indeed. A list will go up shortly, but I encourage you to make a note of the date in your diaries; since joining us as what was initially a ‘joint member’ some years ago, Chris has travelled a unique – and possibly ground-breaking – journey. His doctorate has cleared the way for a more coherent theology on transgender spirituality; he has offered significant leadership within the URC locally, most notably as chair of the Youth and Children’s Work Committee and at the Synod Youth Camp...and I know that he will continue to challenge, as well as affirm, in his move to Yorkshire.

Neil

Chaplaincy Fortnight: 7 – 21 June

Churches and Industry Group Birmingham and Solihull is facilitating a fortnight this summer on behalf of many types of Chaplaincy. Chaplaincy in its different forms will be celebrated in two weeks of meetings, prayer and discussion. Chaplains from healthcare, emergency services, retail, prison etc will make themselves available to come to churches to tell of what they have seen and heard, as well as to ask for prayer for chaplaincy. They have wisdom and experience from a frontline of mission. CIGB continues to see growing numbers of people wanting to be involved in voluntary workplace chaplaincy: over 30 people from difference church denominations completed our training courses in 2014. Similarly new businesses are asking for Chaplaincy support. Other chaplaincy teams report similar interest in becoming voluntary chaplains. For more information see www.cigb.org.uk/about-us/training-courses

Christians encouraged to sow the seeds of a new politics at this election

Delivering a keynote address to nearly 400 people at the Love your neighbour: Think, Pray, Vote conference, Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury, has urged Christians to resist political narratives that appeal to self interest and vote for the common good. In his thoughtful speech, Archbishop Justin said: “It’s impossible to love Jesus Christ and not to care about the welfare of people in every respect.”

The Archbishop went on to appeal for us to be positive and avoid ‘miserablism’, arguing that it is imperative for all to exercise their vote – for political activity is the only way to achieve the type of society that we say we want, saying: “If we don’t vote we share responsibility for the apathy and cynicism in our politics.”

Mr John Ellis, Moderator of the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church commented: “Archbishop Justin showed how we should view politics through a lens of the Gospel: If we did that we would never succumb to apathy or the temptation to demonise individuals or political parties – instead we would honour the positive and support all those seeking the common good. So, as Christians we stay hopeful, with a stronger motivation to use the political process to fight injustices.”

The busy programme included a lively Q&A session immediately after the Archbishop’s speech, reflective worship and a closing keynote speech from the Revd Ruth Gee, former President of the Methodist Conference, which built on the core messages of the day: Think, pray, vote – and act. Delegates also had the opportunity to attend workshops on poverty, communications, building a relationship with your MP, grounding politics in faith, immigration, climate change, preaching and praying social justice and peacemaking.

Rachel Lampard, Joint Public Issues Team Leader, said: “It’s been a wonderfully thought provoking and challenging day. I hope that people will go home excited, enthused and strengthened in their commitment to think, pray and vote. To tell Christians that they should not be involved in the political life of this nation is to tell them to stop being followers of Jesus Christ who has told us to love God and to love our neighbours.”

The Conference also saw the launch of the Love Your Neighbour: Think, Pray, Vote Election pack, produced by the Joint Public Issues Team together with the Church of Scotland. The pack explores four themes for the election – Truth, Justice, Peace and Wellbeing – through short films, postcards, prayers and Bible Studies and is designed for use in churches and small groups in the four weeks immediately before the General Election in May.

Commending the resources, the Revd Phil Jump, Regional Minister of the North Western Baptist Association and member of the Joint Public Issues Team, said: “Our hope and vision is that every member of our churches will enter the polling booth on Election Day, conscious that above everything else, they are called to be followers of Jesus.”

The Conference was organised by the Joint Public Issues Team, which combines the expertise of the Baptist Union, the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church in the area of public issues. The Team aims to enable our three Churches to work together in living out the gospel of Christ in the Church and in wider society. It aims to promote equality and justice by influencing those in power and by energising and supporting local congregations. The 2015 JPIT conference, held at Coventry Central Hall on 21 February, is the third conference organised by the three partner denominations and nearly 400 people attended.

The resource pack is available from www.methodistpublishing.org.uk and Podcasts of the keynote speeches from www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/loveyourneighbour
More info from Eve Parker, URC House, 020 7520 2715, eve.parker@urc.org.uk

More Thoughts from Ghana

An early start again and we travelled further north to the Ashanti Region where our first destination was New Koforidua, Africa's first Fairtrade Town, which has a close relationship with Garstang, the UK's first Fairtrade Town. It was here that we had our first meeting with Kuapa Kokoo which means 'good cocoa farmer' in Twi, the local language. We certainly had a warm welcome.

Cocoa is one of Ghana's most valuable exports and the state-run cocoa board only allows licensed traders to purchase cocoa from farmers. Kuapa Kokoo is the only farmer-owned organisation in Ghana to have been given a government license to trade cocoa. The co-operative started with just 200 members in 22 village societies but grew rapidly due to its reputation for efficiency and honesty. Now it has thousands of members in hundreds of village societies and it produces approximately 6% of the world's cocoa. As with most of Traidcraft's producers,



members are predominantly smallholders living in remote areas. Most do not have access to healthcare, clean drinking water or electricity and they rely on Kerosene for artificial light. Most villages also lack basic schools, educational materials and teachers. Basic Primary Education is free but uniform and books need to be bought before children can go to school.

Kuapa's slogan is 'Pa Pa Pa' which means the best of the best and the co-op are keen to ensure that their cocoa and their business practices live up to this.

After a good lunch we met some of the cocoa farmers, mostly women, and learned how things had improved for them because of Fair Trade. Not only do they get a better deal for their cocoa but the Fairtrade Premium provides additional income to invest in their community. We asked the farmers about the main benefit of belonging to a Fairtrade co-operative and they said that they had been able to build a school in the village so the children did not have to walk a long way to school. The premium also funded a Credit Union which could be used by the women for their own projects

Many are subsistence farmers whose level of income means there is little or no money for school, medicines, transport or other costs, despite the fact that they earn approximately 25% more than non-Fairtrade incomes.

The farmers of Kuapa Kokoo decided to invest in a chocolate bar of their own that could compete in mainstream markets and in 1998 Divine Fairtrade Milk Chocolate was launched in the UK. It was the first farmer-owned Fairtrade chocolate bar. Divine

is the UK's leading Fairtrade chocolate brand, selling only Fair trade products. Carrs Lane Fair Trade shop sells many varieties of this delicious chocolate.

We looked at the major sanitation problems facing Ghana by visiting a workshop in Accra called Trashy Bags. The plastic from huge advertising billboards in addition to plastic bags in which water or milk have been sold are a real problem as they block the drains. Trashy Bags employs over 60 people to collect these so that not only are the drains cleared of some of the rubbish but this waste can be turned in to useful and attractive gifts and fashion items which are unique. We saw purses, handbags, shoppers, even a case for a guitar and lots more truly ethical products for sale to local people and for export (not to mention their tourist visitors!)

We drove through the Central Region, making a stop to visit the Slave River before continuing our journey to Cape Coast where we toured more former slave sites. After this there was time to relax in our Beach hotel and its grounds (which included a crocodile pool! But there was no escape for them.)



Also in our itinerary was one of Ghana's beautiful National Parks – Kakum - where some of us walked through the interesting forest and others experienced the suspended tropical canopy walkway to look down on the forest.

On our final morning in Ghana we visited a Fairtrade banana farm which is made up of five plantations on the banks of the Volta Lake. 85% of its fruits is exported to Europe through Agrofair which is a Fairtrade fruit company co-owned by the farmers who grow the fruit it imports. They imported the world's first Fairtrade bananas into Europe in 1996 and they continue to supply high quality Fairtrade and organic-Fairtrade bananas, mangoes, pineapples and citrus fruits to supermarkets and other outlets.

We stood in one of the banana plantations learning how the bananas are grown and harvested, then taken to the factory close by where we saw them being processed and packed for export.



After thirteen very full days we returned to the UK full of memories after a great experience in Ghana, saddened by some things, in particular, the real poverty that we saw so much of, grateful and happy for the wonderful welcome we received as guests of the producers and convinced by what we had seen and heard that the Fair Trade way of selling and buying is making a difference to people, their families and their communities. However, we in rich countries need to buy more that is fairly traded. If you don't buy any at the moment, please would you consider buying just one product regularly? It would make such a difference.

Joan Davies

'You are the Salt of the Earth': Taizé Birmingham 7-8 March

"You are the salt of the earth. But if salt loses its flavour, how can it be made salty again?" (Matthew 5:13)

40 'grains of salt' came together at Carrs Lane on the weekend of 7-8 March to renew their savour at the Taizé Birmingham event hosted by Carrs Lane and St Martin's-in-the-Bullring. It felt like being at Taizé in more than one respect as there was an international mix of participants who travelled from all over the UK including some who originally hailed from Romania, Austria, Germany, France, Slovakia, Hungary, India, Scotland, Northern Ireland, Lithuania, Portugal and the Netherlands.

We came together three times for prayer, echoing the rhythm of life at the Taizé Community, France, where all come together three times each day to pray. The beginning and end took place in Carrs Lane church rooms, decorated with huge orange sails in imitation of the Church of Reconciliation at Taizé, along with a Taizé cross, Taizé icons and numerous candles. St Martins-in-the-Bullring hosted the Saturday evening prayer, which was open to anyone and about 100 attended in all. In Taizé style, the times of prayer were led by the volunteer musicians, with a prolonged silence of 8-10 minutes in the middle: an oasis in which to encounter God in the depths of our souls.

Two workshops were held over the weekend: (i) 'You are the Salt of the Earth in Acts of Friendship and Welcome' and (ii) 'You are the Salt of the Earth in Acts of Solidarity'. Each featured three speakers sharing their personal experiences of the themes, with an opportunity for reflection and discussion in small groups.

In the first workshop Tanya Srokosz spoke about her work with the Feast, a Christian charity promoting dialogue between Christian and Muslim young people as a way of fostering community cohesion. She spoke of what a difficult time it is for many Muslims in this country and called on Christians to reach out and befriend Muslims in their local neighbourhoods. Melissa Pearce of Carrs Lane Lived Community shared her experience of volunteering at St Chad's Sanctuary, a place of friendship and welcome for asylum-seekers and refugees, where the Gospel of Matthew 25:35 ("I was a stranger and you welcomed me") is truly lived out. She spoke of the inspiring and infectious spirit of generosity that is created by the selflessness of other volunteers, and how it is a place of hope. Steph Neville related the story of one of the asylum-seekers from St Chad's, who risked his life to escape forced conscription in Eritrea to undertake an uncertain and exceedingly dangerous journey through Sudan, across the Sahara, over the oceans and finally to England. Despite his horrendous experiences, what he dwells on is the acts of kindness he received from strangers along the way who reached out across the barriers of fear and suspicion to give hospitality to a refugee.

The second workshop began with Judith Krauss speaking of her experience of being sent by Taizé to be a 'small provisional community' along with two other volunteers for one month in Porto, Portugal. They showed solidarity by simply sharing the lives of those in the community, volunteering alongside locals in charitable organisations,

accepting hospitality and holding a time of prayer three times a day. Barbara Matt shared her experience of volunteering in Bolivia working with street children, providing a place of acceptance and love for those who had been starved of real love and affection. Finally Angelika Ketzner spoke about her volunteer work with the Street Banquet at Carrs Lane, preparing food and serving a meal to the homeless of Birmingham city every six weeks. Each spoke about the small things they did to reach out to others that meant so much to those who received it – particularly those in some way rejected or discarded by many in society.

Brother Paolo led a Bible introduction and discussion on the theme of the weekend and what it means to be ‘salt’ and ‘light’ and whether we as Christians have ‘lost our savour’. One thing that stays with me is his point that salt and light in themselves are very little and that they exist to *reveal* – a few grains of salt to reveal the flavour, and a few rays of light to enable us to see by. We need not try to dominate or overpower, but gently help to reveal the goodness in one another.

We feasted throughout the weekend on the culinary creations and delightful cakes made by Helen Woodall, and friendships and conversations deepened as we sat down to table with one another – an important part of our weekend together.

The entire event was flavoured by a remarkable spirit of generosity and fellowship embraced by all who attended and those who worked behind the scenes to make it all possible – those who prepared the food, led the music, decorated the churches, organised the prayers and workshops, provided accommodation and hospitality as well as those who turned up on the day and willingly lent themselves to washing the dishes, tidying up, moving pews, engaging with the spirit of the weekend and reaching out to one another in friendship and welcome.

Melissa Pearce

Experiencing Carrs Lane Lived Community

“For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” (Mt 18:20)

I had the chance to live for two weeks with the Carrs Lane Lived Community and to share my life with them. I have known the community before and got in touch through the weekly Taizé prayers on Tuesdays. Last year I was an international student at Newman University Birmingham originally from Germany and was looking for a regular prayer or a group I could join. Having found a regular Taizé prayer in Birmingham was more than I have ever expected. The Taizé Community in France is an important place for me and a place that helped me a lot to find and develop my

faith. As I feel a strong connection to the Taizé Community I was happy to find similar people in Birmingham and felt connected to them after a short period of time.

My life brought me back to Carrs Lane for two weeks in March and I am grateful for the warm welcome and the hospitality of the Carrs Lane Lived Community. Even though the community is still small, even though we often were just the four of us to pray together, I can feel that God is in the midst of their life.

During the two weeks I stayed at Carrs Lane I was volunteering at St. Chad's Sanctuary helping to welcome and support refugees and asylum seekers. For me, St. Chad's Sanctuary is a special place with an open and warm atmosphere where I can feel God's presence and his love in the people and in what they are doing. I am joyful when I am at St. Chad's. My heart is full of love when I come to this place and when I am with the people there. God's love enables me to give love and kindness to the people and I am happy to see people smiling who have suffered so much as most of the refugees and asylum seekers have. Hearing their stories I am touched and shocked at the same time. There is a great need of supporting refugees and asylum seekers and to meet them with a loving heart. Through volunteering at St. Chad's, listening to the refugees and asylum seekers, making them laugh, I feel a great joy in my heart; an inner joy and richness which is impossible to gain through money. Through getting to know refugees and asylum seekers, meeting them, listening to them I have learnt a lot.

For me volunteering, acting, spreading God's love, living in community with other people, praying together,.. are fundamental things strongly connected to each other. I am happy that I could experience this special kind of life in the midst of the busyness of Birmingham's city centre. I left the community with a grateful heart and they as well as St. Chad's have places in my heart.

Barbara Matt

Truth and Tolerance

One of the statements / questions on which I have reflected most deeply following November's church meeting is this one:

"You need to appreciate that the church membership is composed of a liberal mix of views regarding the existence of God and the value of prayer. Are you able to accept and work with this?"

At the most simple and practical level the answer is a straightforward one. We were invited to move here to establish an intentional, residential, Christian community. The URC and Methodist churches are both explicitly Christian denominations with a clear sense of finding their foundations in a belief in both God and the life and teachings of Jesus. This was the context into which we were invited, so the grounding of the community in Christian faith and values was never something which was up for debate.

Equally, with a vocation to live in and serve the city it was clear that our ministry would bring us into contexts with people of all faiths and none and every spectrum of belief in between: it is part of the joy, excitement and challenge of city centre life and was also never in question. We have shared our table with people of different faiths and none, and our voluntary work has brought us into contact with those of different beliefs and cultures. In prayer too, we have been joined by those with theological positions vastly different to one another, with those of other faiths, and with those unsure about the very existence of God.

To go a little further, though, this is, I think, a question which draws on a deeper societal context: one which holds both great promise and great danger for the church as well as for wider society, and on which it is well worth pausing to reflect.

I wonder whether, as the pendulum swings away from past intolerance and strict narrowly defined codes, we have strayed into a place where we have assumed that tolerance and understanding means standing for nothing; or perhaps more accurately not daring to admit to those things which are part of our fundamental beliefs and identity. Our very positive desire to be welcoming and inclusive has left us in danger of succumbing to the myth that “anything goes”. Our belief in universal freedom has left us so desperate to keep our options open that we have shied away from experiencing the true freedom of making a commitment. The most dangerous heresies are always those which are the closest to the truth.

It is true that as a community we hold strongly to our Christian identity. It is not something for which I feel the need to apologise. Holding tightly to a vocation to pray and be inspired by the love of God and being open and welcoming of those who do not believe in that same God have never been mutually exclusive.

On the contrary, it is the experience of God’s unconditional love through prayer together which has given us the courage and confidence to turn outwards. Finding our hope in prayer doesn’t make us better than others, nor does it mean we do not have our own questions, struggles, doubts and difficulties; but it has inspired the vision and vocation to always look outwards beyond our core community, and be open and welcoming to others. Of course there is always room for improvement, but I think, both through our volunteering and our hospitality, it is something we have done reasonably well so far. Perhaps it is the security of holding tightly to certain values, found in the experience of God’s love, which has also allowed us to deepen relationships with others in all their diversity.

I love the fact that The Church at Carrs Lane embraces diversity, and welcomes people where they are. It is, I think, one of the things Jesus did best. But Jesus found the strength for the ministry which took him out towards others in the firm foundation of a life of prayer and relationship with the Father. So for us too, like the Jesus we dare to try and follow, welcoming one another in mutual love never means forgetting, denying or hiding who we truly are.

Steph Neville

Hope kept me going

Paulette Mengnjo's story

"It's on me!" was Paulette's greeting when I met her at a church cafe in Birmingham in early February. I was about to challenge her offer to pay for lunch but then thought otherwise. Her African tradition requires that a first salary be broken in sharing with others ... and Paulette had just received her first pay cheque!

Paulette Mengnjo is in her early 40s and comes from southern Cameroon, West Africa. She was a successful business woman back home and engaged in politics through joining the opposition party calling for greater autonomy for the minority English speaking south. She had a son and supportive parents. Following arrests during political demonstrations she grew particularly fearful when security police called at her home. Warned that they had targeted her, she fled into the rural area and then left the country on false papers.

Arriving in the UK in September 2006 she made her way to Croydon to apply for asylum. She still speaks of her apprehension about approaching any one in uniform and the loneliness of being in a strange country. Yet there was relief and confidence that she would be granted asylum soon. She was dispersed to a hostel in Birmingham and went forth to find a solicitor - the first on a list she had been given (as they must be the best!)

Today she talks with frustration about the lack of quality legal representation she received in her first case. She was refused asylum by the Home Office case worker following her substantive interview and the case then went to court. Her solicitor arranged for a French interpreter, who was finally instructed to step back by the Judge who recognised that Paulette was an English speaker. There was no evidence to substantiate she had been tortured as her solicitor had argued a medical report was unnecessary as the Home Office believed she had been in prison. Paulette's asylum application was rejected. The Judge determined she was not a high profile political activist and could relocate to a safe place in the Cameroon.

With no more entitlement to legal aid she paid the solicitor privately to appeal. No action was taken, however, to translate a French medical report her parents had sent from the Cameroon and she became particularly vulnerable to removal from the country as she had no 'live' case. Paulette was detained when reporting at the regional Midlands Enforcement Unit in 2007 and sent to Yarl's Wood Removal Centre. An injunction led to her release some days later and she returned to Birmingham. Homeless and without benefits (as Asylum Support had long since been terminated), she turned to the Hope Projects, a Birmingham project offering accommodation to destitute asylum seekers. She reminded me that she was accommodated by Hope Housing for 1 year and 8 months!

Further submissions were made by another solicitor in 2009 and Paulette was able to apply for Section 4 Asylum Support (accommodation and cashless support - a card which is topped up each week and can be used in supermarkets). In 2010 her fresh claim was refused and she became destitute again. Finally in 2011 a much

respected legal firm took on her case and insisted a medical report was needed. She was referred to Freedom from Torture. Friends and church people accommodated her. In April 2013 she was detained again ... and then released after 11 days (she is currently seeking compensation for unlawful detention). Finally on the 25 January 2014 Paulette was granted Refugee Status!

"Seven years and four months later!" says Paulette, with a wry smile, she won her case for asylum. I ask her what kept her going through these tough years and she answers: "Hope kept me going!" She then refers to:

- the daily communication she has with her son, who is doing academically well in his studies back home
- the support of agencies like Restore and Hope Projects
- the commitment of her latest solicitor
- the wonderful support of her church community at Olton Baptist
- certain individuals who have generously provided accommodation, financial support and counselling
- her political activism in exile with Southern Cameroon National Council and involvement in Right to Remain as the Chair.

Now able to access mainstream benefits, housing and having entitlement to work, Paulette rejoices in the opportunities open to her. She has a small Council flat and through the Learning Hub at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital received training late last year. Her first salary cheque comes from the QE where she began work as an Auxiliary Nurse in January this year. She calls me 'next of kin' and I threaten that she is never to get ill and cause me further concern, but I am grateful for the inspirational, courageous woman she has been in my life over the past seven years!

Shari Brown, Project Coordinator, Restore
(published with Paulette's permission in BEN magazine February 2015)

The Truth Beyond the Tabloids Quiz

1. Who is a refugee?
 - (a) A person from another country who, owing to a well-founded expectation of financial gain, moves to the UK
 - (b) A person who, owing to a well-founded fear of persecution, is outside the country of his/her birth
 - (c) A person who has moved to another part of their own country to flee conflict or natural disaster

2. Who is an asylum seeker?
 - (a) A person from another country who is entitled to the same financial benefits as a UK resident
 - (b) A person from another country who is allowed to work in low paid jobs
 - (c) A person who has applied for protection as a refugee and is awaiting determination of his or her application for refugee status

3. According to the UNHCR how many refugees and internally displaced people are there in the world (approximately)? (latest UNHCR figures are from 2013)
 - (a) 5 million
 - (b) 51 million
 - (c) 520 million

4. What percentage of the world's refugee population comes to Britain to seek asylum?
 - (a) Less than 3%
 - (b) 14%
 - (c) 27%

5. What percentage of the world's refugee population is hosted by developing countries?
 - (a) Less than 8%
 - (b) 48%
 - (c) 86%

6. According to UNHCR figures, which 3 countries hosted most refugees in 2013?
 - (a) Canada, USA, Zimbabwe
 - (b) UK, Switzerland, South Africa
 - (c) Pakistan, Iran, Lebanon

7. According to UNHCR figures in 2013, the majority of the world's refugees came from which four countries?
 - (a) Palestine, Afghanistan, Syria, Somalia
 - (b) Rwanda, Bosnia, Kosovo, Congo
 - (c) Pakistan, Iran, Sri Lanka, China

8. In mid 2014 the largest number of new asylum seekers came to UK from which three countries?
 - (a) Poland, Romania, Bulgaria
 - (b) Afghanistan, Zimbabwe, China
 - (c) Eritrea, Pakistan, Syria

9. How many asylum applications were made in the UK in 2013? (according to Home Office statistics)
 - (a) 2,184
 - (b) 23,584
 - (c) 218,430

10. What percentage of those who apply for asylum receive refugee status at the initial decision by the Home Office? (from Home Office statistics for mid 2014)
 - (a) 20%
 - (b) 35%
 - (c) 60%

Commitment for Life

(from *Moving Stories 180*)

Pastor Nihad

On an ecumenical Study Tour of Israel/Palestine I met a wide range of people. Many members of the United Reformed Church would instinctively warm to Pastor Nihad. He leads an independent local church which tries to stay free of the complications and restrictions of the historic “established” Church traditions. His congregation uses a utilitarian building without expensive decoration or tourist appeal. He has a heart for evangelism, believing Jesus Christ to be the unique Son of God. He has a mixed congregation of around 300, keen to take their faith seriously. The notice boards in the hall show evidence of a lively Junior Church. His main request of us was for prayer.

But unlike any URC congregation, his church is in Bethlehem. His people feel vulnerable to political instability, dramatically illustrated by the 25 feet high wall that now separates Bethlehem from Jerusalem. Many of his congregation ask him for advice on whether to leave the country, given their sense that many would be glad to be rid of the Christian minority. A group of local youths bombarded our coach, although fortunately with nothing more dangerous than snowballs.

One could turn aside from all this and follow the peaceful pilgrim trail to the church in Manger Square, and enter the church on the traditional site of Jesus’ birth. It claims to be the oldest church in continuous use in the world. It is elaborately decorated in the style of the Greek Orthodox Church, which could hardly be more different from that of our tradition. The centrepiece, at which visitors are invited to pray for a few moments, is a silver star set into the floor. When I reached it, I found someone had left on the star an American one dollar bill. Whatever that was about, it was a sharp reminder that you cannot keep contemporary global influences out of life in Israel/Palestine.

And almost everything Nihad told us, with deep conviction and moving passion, was contested by someone else we met. For example, both the Israeli Government spokesman and the representatives of the Palestinian leadership insisted that they would honour and protect Christians. They inhabited a radically different story. Each conversation served to underline how the complexities of different narratives make any progress towards a lasting peace with justice seem almost impossible, at least while present leaders remain in place. Perhaps it was a relief that what Nihad most sought was our prayers.

John Ellis.

This first appeared in the Moderators’ Blog. <http://assemblymoderators.urc.org.uk/>

Hebron

The *status quo* was irrevocably altered as a result of the 1967 ‘Six Day War’. A victorious Israel occupied the West Bank and Jerusalem and set the scene for the situation that currently prevails. From a Palestinian perspective Israel’s success in 1967 was disastrous. In one fell swoop, all their territory was lost. The Palestinians became a subject people and remain so to this day. In the absence of a political settlement, militant Palestinians conducted acts of terror that were followed by the

first intifada (or uprising) in 1987. It lasted until the signing of the first Oslo Accord in 1993.

It has been suggested that it was in reaction to this first step towards peace that in February 1994 an American settler, Baruch Goldstein, entered Hebron's Ibrahimi Mosque. He then gunned down 29 men and seriously wounded 125 others before he was overcome and himself killed. In the ensuing violence 25 Palestinians and 5 Israelis lost their lives. The Israelis closed the mosque and the old city for 6 months with a strict curfew being maintained long after. During this time a synagogue was created and construction started on the Jewish visitors' centre that now fronts the mosque.

Since 1968, the centre of Hebron has been gradually penetrated by some of the most extreme Israeli settlers who now occupy five main sites in the old city. In addition to larger sites, settlers have established themselves in one location above the shops and stalls in the souk. They tip refuse and excrement onto traders and passersby in attempts to drive out the Palestinian traders. The traders have put up wire netting to protect themselves and those below. A major part of our work as EAs is concerned with monitoring and acting as a protective presence in the centre. Once established in a location, the settlers receive the support and protection of the occupying army. The 1994 massacre was used by the Israelis as a means to intensify control of Hebron's politically sensitive and symbolic centre. Rather than remove the provocative and illegal settlements in the heart of Hebron, Israeli policy has been to enforce separation between the Palestinians and the Israeli settlers by establishing check points so as to exclude any Palestinian presence while at the same time protecting and encouraging greater settler presence. For example, no Palestinian vehicles are allowed in the area while settler cars and buses have free access to the streets. The primary aim of settlement expansion appears to be to make all Israeli occupied areas in the city contiguous with Kiryat Arba. By so doing they are steadily eliminating Palestinian presence in the area.

Shuhada Street used to be one of the main city thoroughfares. The markets adjoining it bustled with business. Now the street is deserted and moribund. Everything is being done to squeeze out the Palestinian residents from this main street. All shops have been closed. Their shutters welded up. Where residents remain, they have been forbidden to enter and exit their houses by Shuhada Street. If they do not have an entrance on the other side, they enter through the roof. It is only in the top 200 metres of Shuhada Street that Palestinians are allowed. Even here, there are only five houses that remain occupied. In the mornings I stand outside the house of this lady when undertaking the morning school run. The Star of David marks the house as a target. For the Palestinians it has become a sinister symbol.

Douglas Saltmarshe. Disclaimer: I am participating in a programme with Quaker Peace and Social Witness (QPSW) as an ecumenical accompanier serving on the World Council of Churches (EAPPI). The views contained in this message are personal and do not necessarily reflect those of QPSW or the World Council of Churches.

Contributed by Wendy Firmin, permission given to reproduce.

On This Day ...

From the Carrs Lane Journal April 1915

To the Editor *(from F.W. Anderson)* *The comments quoted speak for themselves and for their time ...*

Sir – The following extracts from letters of Guild Soldiers at the Front will be of interest to your readers. May I say how highly they value letters from home assuring them of our remembrance, and more than ever appreciating intercession to the Almighty on their behalf. Concerning their actual experiences, Private Hill writes: “I have fought for my country under terrible hardships, but still I am hopeful of a glorious victory. Many a time I have given up hope of seeing England again, but every time my prayer has been answered, and thank God I am still well.” (Since then he has been wounded and is now in one of our English hospitals). Just before being wounded he wrote: “I have been in the fighting again ... The Germans have made many attacks but have been beaten back every time; the ground in front of our trenches resembles a shambles. Dead can be seen everywhere. This section of the line has been subject to the fiercest battles; hand-to-hand fighting has occurred in many places. I am still trusting in the Lord.”

Corporal Danks hopes the publication of a letter of his in the Journal recently would bring home to many the awfulness of this bloody campaign. “I am writing,” he says, “in the trench, the passing shells harmonising with the sombre surroundings. The position now occupied by us is as precarious as it is highly dangerous. Here was enacted the five distinct attacks by the Germans to break the Allies’ line; each time British pluck and endurance saved the situation, and the result is clearly shown by the large number of dead Germans now lying in front of our lines. These are unable to be carried away by either side, so must remain – surely a ghastly spectacle! Some are of fine physique. It makes one think what a heavy toll of human lives will be taken before peace is concluded.” And then a little later he adds this post script: “Today witnessed a glorious bayonet charge in which the 2nd Coldstreams (his regiment) proved successful; it was a lively encounter,” he adds, “and in many cases the bare fists were used with great advantage.”

And a message of support from across the Atlantic:

Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church, New York

Dear Mr. Anderson,

I feel proud to know that so many from the Guild are serving in defence of home and country. Our whole Church seems to be greatly honoured in the number of men who have offered for service. I am not surprised because I have known their quality of work in past days. There is no Church anywhere which has a larger and more splendid staff of workers than Carrs Lane, and I do not wonder that their spirit of devotion has expressed itself in such courageous action.

Will you send your men on the field my proud and affectionate goodwill? Tell them to keep in mind the sacredness of their cause. Tell them never to let the moral and spiritual ends to be forgotten in the heat and strife of war. They are contending for the liberty for which our fathers fought and died, and their work will be cherished by

generations still unborn. The Great Lover of Freedom is with them on the field, and as they are battling for the defence of human freedom, and for the protection of the oppressed, it must be that they have His presence and inspiration.

With all good wishes, yours sincerely,
(Signed) J.H. Jowett

From the Carrs Lane Journal April 1965

Making Notes (*T.W. Rumsby*) (*Is this an example of which we should take note?!*)

It has become my practice to take pen and paper to church and make notes of the sermon. This may not be apparent to any but my nearest neighbours – and the minister – but for these, let me explain. All motives are mixed and mine are as hard to define as any. Probably there is an element of professional concern and hope behind it all. I mean, I take notes of the sermon because they may be useful to me in another context. After all, I do teach, and I'm interested in finding good lessons. I've long ceased to believe that my lessons are bound to be better than those I can steal from others, and I gladly collect teaching matter where I can. Is this wrong? I don't think so. The great Molière, the Shakespeare of France, when he was accused of plagiarism, told his critics that they should not judge him by his methods of getting material for his plays, but rather by the use he made of what he borrowed.

There is a very practical reason why I do this copying. I confess this to my shame but I find it an excellent prophylactic against sermon somnolence. No doubt I am the only one affected in this way, but I admit to a remarkable desire to sleep for a part, at least, of many sermons. The exercise, physical and mental, of making a summary of the sermon as it proceeds is an excitement to wakefulness, I find. I am sure that the preacher would rather see me noting than nodding, and he will understand that the listener who "takes down" is likely to be "taking in". I can hear sermons better when the activity of my fingers accompanies the activity of my listening.

This is also an excellent chance to practice the art of making précis and it is never too late to learn how to pick out the main thread of the discourse with its supporting arguments. With my sheets of notes I am in a far better position to deal with the post sermon enquiries which so frequently come to us. "What did he preach about?" We are looking for a minister and it may be that one or more of the visitors who lead our services in these weeks will have been invited "with a view" as we so oddly put it. Ought I not to pay special heed to what these visitors say to us and how they say it, for I may be called upon later as a church member to make my judgment whether to "call" a certain man or not.

Do we not owe it to the minister to use the best means at our disposal to take in and hold what he says in his sermon? Can we take it in at one listening? Do we not need the brief summary from which we may discover more than we heard at the first utterance? So let me conclude by saying that, although I do not ask for imitators as a consequence of what I have written, I hope it will bring me sympathisers.

Contributed by Wendy Firmin

Dangerous teaching...

I am reading the short stories of Pinckney Benedict at the moment, many of which are set in remote, rural America...and which explore spiritual themes in disturbing ways. I found the following 'parable' particularly worrying and challenging; it represents the complete opposite of the teaching of Jesus, but does represent the views of some human beings. We need to be consistent in the ways in which we teach that 'selfless' replaces 'self' in gospel teaching.

So the Angel of the Lord appears to the farmer... The Angel of the Lord appears in all his blazing glory, and he says to the farmer, he says, Whatever you ask of me, I'll give that thing to you... But listen to me, says the Angel: whatever I give to you, twice that will I give to your neighbour... So the farmer thinks, and he thinks. And finally he says to the Angel of the Lord, he says, All right then, Angel, do this for me: Put out one of my eyes.

Complete antithesis to the teaching of Jesus.

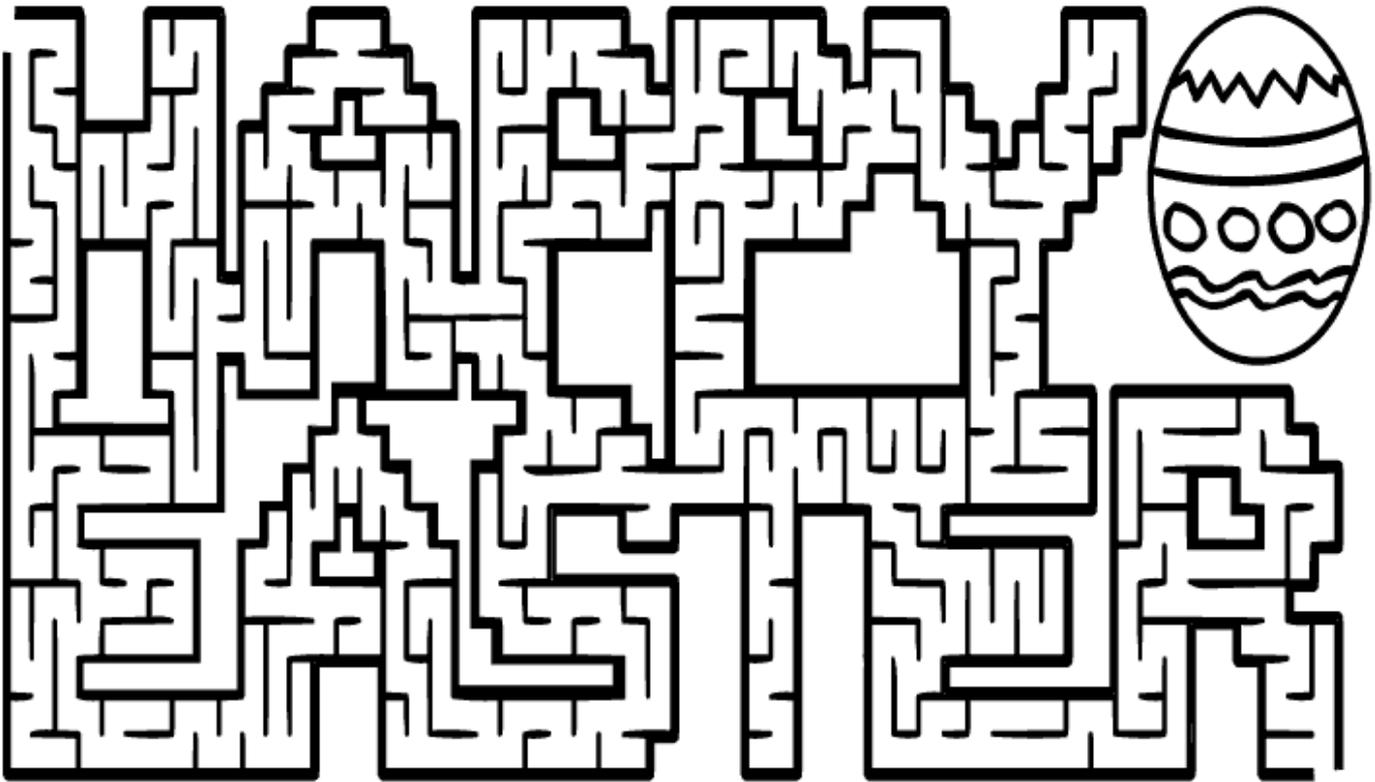
Neil

The power of the church magazine...

Traffic along the Stirchley Road is painfully slow at the moment, and so I took out my March issue of 'Journey' (the Carrs Lane church magazine) to read on a bus ride recently. A powerful black and white Lenten image was on the front cover...and this was registered immediately by my fellow travellers on the back seat. So it was that I struck up a conversation with a Palestinian Christian...who then drew in his friend, a Christian from Syria. They were concerned to know how much I knew about the Christian communities in their respective countries (fortunately, I had led Radical Worship on the theme of 'Christians in Syria' only a month or two recently!) – the issues that they faced, the fears which constituted a part of daily life, the role which Christians played in the complex political life of the countries. They were both surprised by what they regarded as the silence and the apparent lack of interest on the part of British Christians in what was happening to their sisters and brothers elsewhere in the world. I was sad to have to get off the bus at my usual stop – what could have been a very tiresome journey had become a very 'quick' journey.

Neil

START



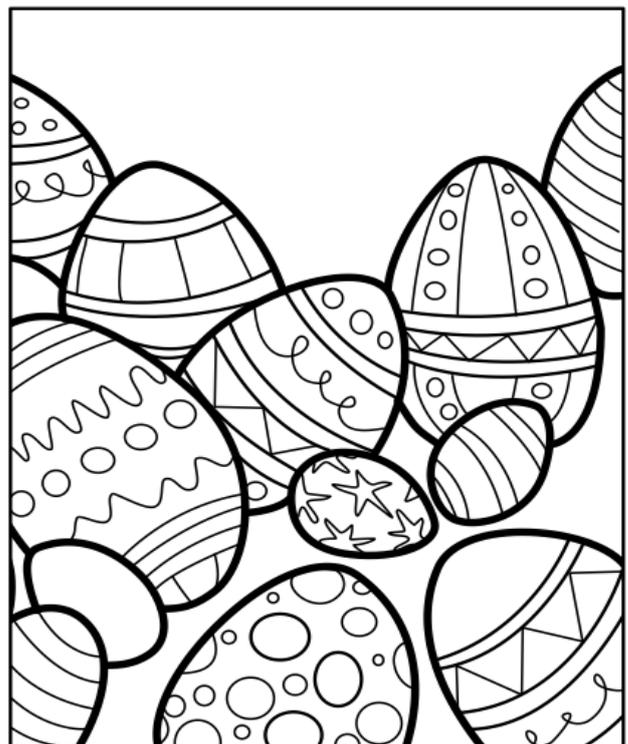
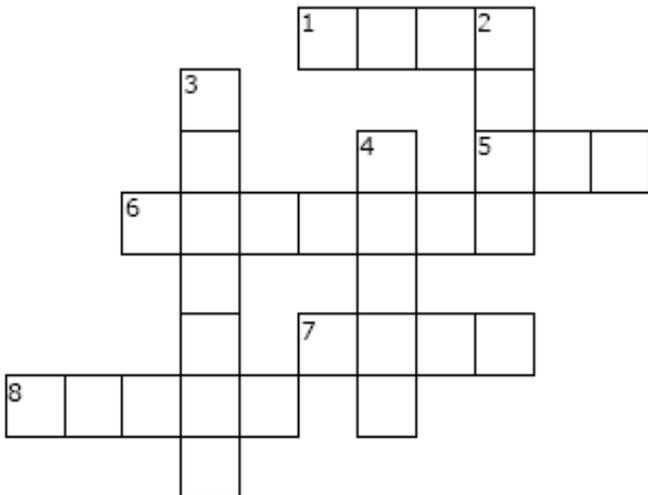
END

ACROSS

1. A place where someone, especially an important person, is buried
5. A period of twenty-four hours
6. To kill someone by tying or nailing them to a cross
7. A period of seven days
8. A hard solid substance found in the ground which is often used for building

DOWN

2. The whole physical structure that forms a person
3. The first or early part of a day
4. "He is not here, he has _____."
Luke 24:6



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Fighting poverty through trade

Please send your contribution for next month's Journey to the Editor, Mrs. Pat Davies, Carrs Lane URC, Carrs Lane, Birmingham, B4 7SX or by email to office@carrslane.co.uk.

The Church at Carrs Lane Regular Activities

SUNDAYS

Morning Worship	Every Sunday at 10.30am with Holy Communion on the first Sunday of the month
Children's Church	Second Sunday at 2.30pm
Radical Worship	Fourth Sunday at 6.00pm
First Sunday Lunch	First Sunday each month at 12.30pm
Church Meeting	Second Sunday at 12 noon
Singing Group	Third Sunday 9.45 – 10.15am

WEEK DAYS

Carrs Lane Lived Community meet for Prayers -

Monday to Friday 7.30am and 7.00pm, all are welcome to join them

Lunchtime Healing Service	Every Wednesday 1.15pm
Prayer Group	First Wednesday at 7.00 pm
Thinking Allowed	First Thursday at 10.15 am
Harborne House Group	Fourth Tuesdays 2.00pm (various locations)
Central House Group at Carrs Lane	Third Wednesdays at 6.30pm
Coffee Drop-in	Fridays from 10.30am-12.00pm
Carrs Lane Choir Practice	Fridays at 7.00pm
Carrs Lane Players (drama group)	Fridays at 7.45 pm
Charity Knitting Circle	First Tuesday 10.00 am - 1.00 pm
Carrs Lane Walking Group	usually meets monthly, see notice board
Fair Trade Shop	First and Third Sunday after morning worship and Tuesday - Saturday 10.30 am - 2.30 pm
Counselling Centre	Monday - Friday 11.00 am - 1.30 pm and Monday to Wednesday evenings 7.00 - 9.00 pm

Contact details for The Church at Carrs Lane
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