

Minister's Letter

Dear friends,

As I write the subject of the moment at The Church at Carrs Lane is 'prayer'. How wonderful! We have just had a weekend with 24 hours of prayer led by different groups of Christians all around Birmingham. Some were exuberant, some silent, some were in the middle or a mixture... I hope that you were able to come, and that you found some ways of praying that suited your natural inclination, and some that were new, refreshing, even challenging.

Rabbi Sachs said that prayer is, 'inclining the heart towards God'. I love this definition. If you pray with great sounds, in quiet, or a moderately noisy way, great! Go for it! Providing that it is about you inclining your heart towards God. Like a flower leans towards the sun, as we express a leaning towards, a preference for certain people or things, as someone leans to be upheld- we incline our hearts to God

This can free us up, and maybe even illuminates our view of others ways of prayer. In the end it is not the level of noise – or lack of it – that defines what we are doing, but rather what our heart and soul are about in that time. It doesn't matter if we incline our hearts to God in different ways, but that we DO incline our hearts to God.

There is a challenge for us here: how can we in our daily lives – the joyful 'highs', the difficult 'lows', the drudgery of 'getting on with things' and 'plodding on' – have lives where we incline our hearts towards God, whatever is happening? To 'pray without ceasing' and maintain an awareness of the presence of God in drudgery, ordinariness, misery or in joy?

'Inclining the heart towards God'... which we can certainly do in moments of quiet contemplation, and in moments of celebration, but can also perhaps learn to do in the midst of the moments of our days – the good, the bad, the ugly moments – and surely, if we can learn to 'incline our hearts to God' whatever is before us, we will learn how to travel with God.

Perhaps in training ourselves to mentally and spiritually take a 'pause' in which we picture ourselves inclining towards God... or say in our hearts, 'I incline my heart to you, God'... to recognise and invite God's presence in every moment. The boring or ordinary bits of life, in the middle of a confrontation, the celebrations...

And in Church life – perhaps there are ways in which we could more 'incline our hearts towards God' together in the decisions we make, the meetings, the activities, the listening, the speaking, the worship we offer, the prayers we offer for the needs of others? Is our life together about 'inclining our hearts to God'?

May we all learn to more 'incline our hearts towards God' and in so doing, understand more of who God is, come closer to God and not just know 'about' God, but know God deep in our hearts and recognise God's transforming presence with us each and all.

Peace to you,
Ruth

Sunday Worship during February

Sunday 7 February

10.30am Morning Worship, including the Lord's Supper, led by Neil Johnson
Followed by First Sunday Lunch – all welcome

Sunday 14 February

10.30am Morning Worship led by Ruth Yorke
Followed by Church Meeting – all welcome

Sunday 21 February

10.30am Morning Worship led by Diana Cullum-Hall
2.00pm Children's Church

Sunday 28 February

10.30am All-Age Morning Worship led by Richard Becher

Lent and Easter

You are invited to be part of Lent groups following the theme of 'Migration and Movement', exploring these topics in the light of the life of Jesus. We will meet at 6.30pm to eat together (please bring sandwiches/similar, soup provided), 7pm prayers, 7.30-8.30pm sessions. Dates: Tuesday 1 March, Tuesday 15 March, Thursday 24 March (Maundy Thursday - session will include an agape feast). Good Friday service will be at 9.15-9.45am to enable us to join in the Walk of Witness in Birmingham City Centre. Easter Sunday, breakfast (details to be announced), and Easter Celebration at 10.30am.

Carrs Lane Players will perform a comedy 'The Ladykillers' by Graham Linehan on Thursday & Friday 18 and 19 February at 7.30pm and Saturday 20 February at 6.30pm. The price of tickets for the play are unchanged at £7. Suppers will be served at 6pm on Thursday & Friday at a cost of £5 and Afternoon Tea on Saturday at 5pm is priced at £4. Tickets will be on sale after each Sunday morning service, or they can also be purchased from members of Carrs Lane Players or from the office.



Notices

Songs of Praise invites you to two recordings, all the music will be broadcast in future editions of *Songs of Praise*. First recording (Contemporary hymns) Combined Choir Rehearsal: Thurs 18 Feb 7.15 - 8.30pm, Television Recording: Sat 20 Feb 2.30 - 6.00pm. Second recording (Gospel hymns) Combined Choir Rehearsal: Thurs 18 Feb 8.30 - 9.45pm, Television Recording: Sun 21 Feb 2.30 - 6.00pm. All rehearsals/recordings take place at St Germain's Church, Portland Road Edgbaston, B16 9TD. Admission by free ticket (max 4 per applicant). Please email ticket application forms to songsofpraise@bbc.co.uk, or post to 'Songs of Praise' Tickets (Birmingham), 1st Floor, Dock House, Media City UK, Salford M50 2LH. The deadline for applications is **Tuesday 2 February**.

Carrs Lane Film Club: Thursdays - Prayer at 7pm followed by a film. 25 February: Slumdog Millionaire; 17 March: The Judge.

The Annual General Meeting of Carrs Lane Fair Trade will be on Monday 14 March at 10.30am in the Margaret Rowland Room. We will hear a report on last year's trading and activities and a presentation of accounts and we will elect officers for the coming year. Light refreshments will be served from 10.00. Following the formal meeting we look forward to welcoming a local Fair Trader, Gill Parkin, who will be speaking of her recent visit to South Africa when she was part of a Traidcraft Meet the People tour. A date for your diary: **Fair Trade Fortnight** this year runs from 29 February till 13 March.

Christmas Greetings

Thank you to all those who donated money for Restore instead of sending cards to their friends at church. Their generosity has enabled us to send £280 towards this charity which helps refugees and asylum seekers in the city.

Hall Green Events

From Tuesday 19 January (then every fortnight) 6.00-7.30pm at Hall Green Baptist Church, 1250 Stratford Rd, B28 9AJ **Tuesday Soak** is an opportunity to come quietly to God in prayer. A time just for you, to be with God and leave the business of the day outside for a while. There will be some quiet and reflective music; there may also be some visual images. Come and sit for long or as little as you like! There will be no interruptions. But there will be people around if you require further prayer. Based on Psalm 23 "*He makes me lie down in green pastures he leads me by still waters*". For further details contact: Rev Elaine Hutchinson Pioneer Minister on 07595116958

From Tuesday 2 February (then First Tuesday every month) 9.30-12 **Men's Breakfast** at Trinity URC Etwall Road Hall Green B28 OLE. There will also be newspapers, books snooker table and a variety of board games available. For more details contact: Roger Green email rogergreen12@icloud.com. Mobile 07710078346

Growing With God

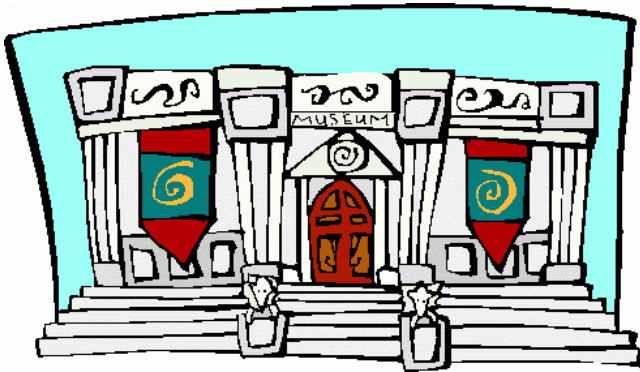
Booking for Growing with God 2016 is now open. Shaping the Future – empowering children's leaders with practical and spiritual ideas. Saturday 5 March, 9.30am – 4.15pm at Birmingham Cathedral.

Our new Bishop of Aston, The Rt Rev Anne Hollinghurst will lead us in worship in the morning and explore how we can be a more outward looking church in our work with children and families. Margaret Pritchard-Houston, founder of Mustard Seed Kids will give the keynote address and help us to think about children as lifelong disciples. Workshops include **Building Relationships** to help with ideas for forming new relationships in your community; **Deeper Insights** for more experienced leaders and those who wish to encourage new volunteers and **Unpacking the Bible** for loads of ideas and resources to work with children in lots of different ways and contexts – with even more ideas in the Market Place. If you have a particular issue with children's ministry that you're struggling with you can visit the **Advice Bureau** where experienced children's workers will be on hand to help.

The conference costs £10 per person or £50 for groups of six or more from the same church. Why not encourage others from your church to come too and take advantage of the group discount? To book online or for more information contact Jelena Cammack jelenac@cofebirmingham.com or 0121 426 0435 for a booking form www.cofebirmingham.com/gwg

Health and Wellbeing at Birmingham Museums

Birmingham Museums Trust has recently started a number of health and wellbeing initiatives across its sites, and will be developing these throughout the year. From free creative sessions for carers, to gardening for mental health and support for people with dementia and more, we are keen that our museums can support all Birmingham's residents in being well.



We are also running a 'Wellbeing Day' on Saturday 5 March, to coincide with the first annual Museums and Wellbeing Week. There will be free tasters of activities such as yoga and baby massage, healthy options in the Edwardian Tearoom, family crafts and more. We are also having an area for information stands to promote wellbeing initiatives in the area. If you'd like to have a stand to promote your service, or you'd like to find out more

about our wellbeing programme and how we can work together, then please do get in touch with Rosie Barker, Community Engagement Officer on Rosie.Barker@BirminghamMuseums.org.uk or 0121 348 8103.

Amnesty International Greetings Card Campaign 2015 Write for Rights

Once again I want to thank everybody who contributed to the Amnesty Write for Rights Campaign by sending Greetings Cards to Prisoners of Conscience and their families, during worship on 13th December last year, also to everybody who took cards home to write. Thank you to everybody who donated money towards postage, and to Margaret Cross who made all the cards. As a result of everybody's effort we sent about 150 cards. This is more than we have ever sent before.



This is the fourth year that we have written the cards this way and many appreciate the quiet and the space to concentrate on the people we were being asked to contact. Thank you also to Neil Johnson for this year's service which was so appropriate. It is hard to believe that we have been writing cards to Prisoners of Conscience for over 30 years now. We know your messages of support mean a huge amount, because the recipients have told Amnesty so. Please do let me know if you do receive a reply from anybody else. I will then forward the information to Amnesty in London. For further information you can look up the website www.amnesty.org.uk/write

Thank you to everybody
Christine Rowntree

Christian Aid Swim

If I'd had them when as a child I was struggling to learn to swim in the rough waves of the North Sea on the Thames estuary I'd have doffed my swim cap and goggles in honour of the eight stalwart swimmers who together achieved 165 lengths of the pool at Birmingham University within an hour on 10 January.

One of these intrepid water sprites was a non-swimmer, yet with encouragement (and tuition from Tim Batty) he splashed his way up and down the pool to cover the equivalent of 7 of those lengths!

Once again the members of Carrs Lane have dug deep in their pockets (after giving to Restore) and have sponsored Carrs Lane's team in this annual Christian Aid swimming marathon. On the day we set off to the baths I'd already received over £200 promised for the team – that's without the swimmers' own friends and family's contribution who are always so very supportive. Those who were able to tick the Gift Aid box were pleased that pound for pound will be matched by HM government so the wonderful work of these charities can continue. That really is Christian Aid.

Pat Davies

NB: To have gift aided donations doubled by HM Government these must be paid in before 5 February, so if you have not yet donated please see me ASAP. Pat.

They Came to a City

This was the title of a play being performed by Carrs Lane Players when the IRA bombed the Birmingham public houses, 'The Mulberry Bush' and 'Tavern in the Town' just a short distance away. Our building rocked!

The recent attacks in Paris reminded me of that evening in our city. People innocently enjoying an evening out and indiscriminately cut down. As in Paris, people here were determined to carry on as usual, shops opened as usual and 'Players' agreed the show must go on.

The anti-Muslim reaction in Paris was so like the anti-Irish reaction in Birmingham. The play continued that night, but those there in a supporting role had other things to do. It was the natural thing to do to open up the doors and offer sanctuary to the frightened people fleeing the scene of the atrocity. We made numerous cups of tea, listened to people and did our best to offer comfort and support. My lasting memory is of two angry men covered in blood and dust and threatening to kill the first Irishman they could find. We listened and talked, and when they left they were still shaken, but calmer. They had been helping to dig survivors out of the rubble of 'Tavern in the Town'. It felt so appropriate for Carrs Lane to be trying to play some part.

The atrocity in Paris was much greater than in Birmingham, but the similarity of these two events 41 years apart is depressing. Has the world learned nothing? The IRA did at last talk peace. Can we hope that one day progress can be made with IS.? I hope so, but I fear not in my lifetime.

Margaret Cross



Thank You

A very big Thank You to you all for my presentation at last week's service, marking my relinquishing of my position as Singing Group Leader. I am very grateful for the cheque (I have a feeling more model buses may be on the way), the superbly detailed cake (it looked so good, it was such a shame to cut it – but I'm glad we did and I hope you all enjoyed a piece), for Liz's very kind words and for the wonderful card which Tim had painstakingly created.

I have directed the Singing Group at Carrs Lane for the last twenty-five years, working closely with the church musicians/organists (Mark Dancer, Sue Hill and Tim Batty). The make-up of the Singing Group is different from the Choir, in that I have tried to encourage any member of the congregation who enjoys singing to be part of the group, regardless of the quality of their voice, or their standard of musical ability. I have always chosen items for Introits and Anthems which are not too difficult and can be learnt with just one rehearsal immediately prior to the Service in which they are to be sung.

The other main difference between Choir and Singing Group is in the type of music chosen. Drawing on my experience of conducting the Christian Music Ministries choir for ten years, I have used a lot of Roger Jones' music with the Singing Group, as I firmly believe that Roger writes superb new tunes to traditional hymn words. But I have also used more contemporary worship songs by other composers (Graham Kendrick, Stuart Townend, Chris Bowater and others), many of which now appear in our *Singing the Faith* Hymn Book. And our *Common Ground* hymn book has also been used to introduce new songs from around the world.

Some of you may not be aware of the reasons that I am relinquishing some responsibilities. I was fortunate to be able to retire from full-time work at the age of sixty. I have enjoyed ten years of retirement, but having now reached *three score years and ten* I have realised that I am involved in far too many activities (both at church and in several other fields) and that I need to slow down a bit, particularly in regard to a couple of fairly major health scares during the last twelve months. I am not giving up everything! I will still be at church, I'll play the organ if required when Tim is away, I'll play for the Wednesday Service, along with Peter Redwood I'll organise monthly walks, I'll continue to be a Visitor, be on the Coffee Rota, and I'll still be your Trusted Travel Advisor.

So, once again many thanks to you all. (You may like to know that I nearly missed my presentation at the end of the Service, as I had sneaked out during the last hymn as I was on Coffee Duty. But Jill noticed, and dragged me back in! I'm very glad I didn't miss it.)

Phil Parkin

Spiritual Ecology

As we enter the new year, full of energy and optimism, we are very excited to announce that our Spiritual Ecology Youth Fellowship programme is now officially open for application. The fellowship is a nine month programme of deep study, reflection and practical project development exploring ways in which the principles of Spiritual Ecology can contribute to social and environmental regeneration, and a new way of life that is in harmony with the Earth.

Spiritual Ecology can be defined as a spiritual response to our present ecological crisis. It is a developing field that joins ecology and environmentalism with a deeper awareness of the sacred within creation. It calls for responses to the environmental issues that include spiritual awareness and/or practice. It acknowledges that at the root of the ecological crisis of our civilisation is a spiritual crisis and therefore to resolve such environmental issues as depletion of species, global warming and over consumption, humanity must examine and assess our underlying beliefs and attitudes towards the earth, and our spiritual as well as physical responsibilities towards the planet.

We have been inspired by the teachings of a number of religious and spiritual traditions including: Thomas Berry and Pope Francis from the Christian tradition, Joanna Macy and Thich Nhat Hanh from the Buddhist tradition and Vandana Shiva and Satish Kumar of the Hindu tradition.

The programme is rooted in the values of interconnectedness, reverence for nature, stewardship and service, and a central component is the exploration of how these principles can be incorporated into projects, and lived in ways that create lasting change.

Our Spiritual Ecology Youth Fellowship seeks to bring together young people who want to create a more beautiful world and empower them to bring it into being. It calls those with the spark of the future in their hearts, with committed spiritual lives and the impulse to lead to rise to the challenge of initiating dynamic and sustainable social change from a place of oneness and love.

We are looking for ten emerging young leaders between the ages of 22-30 and from a diverse range of backgrounds to apply. The deadline for applications is 30 April. Applicants will be notified of acceptance by 1 June and interviews will take place on the week of 9 May. Apply online at <https://www.stethelburgas.org/application>

The St Ethelburga's Team
78 Bishopsgate
London, EC2N 4AG

Birmingham Interfaith Week

Interfaith Week now takes place throughout the UK in November each year and is an opportunity to celebrate our faith and cultural diversity in Birmingham. On behalf of the Birmingham Council of Faiths, we coordinated a programme of 12 events hosted by different faiths in different locations covering a wide range of topics including spirituality, creative arts, music, health and climate change. Events were promoted through the Birmingham Faith Map, Interfaith Network, Churches Together and Birmingham Voluntary Services Council e-news. Details of events are as follows.

Understanding Sikh Faith, Nishkam Centre, Soho Road, Handsworth, Sat 14th Nov. Organised by Ruth Tetlow, Senior Advisor, Birmingham Council of Faiths and Coordinator, Faith Encounter Programme. 20 people participated in the seminar, including the organiser and speakers, representing Muslim, Quaker, Sufi, Sikh, Christian faiths and no faith. The evaluations were very positive and indicate that this was a valuable opportunity to explore the Sikh faith more deeply.

Annual Interfaith Conference to Celebrate Diversity, & Communities Together to Share our Values Darulbarakat Mosque, 85 Tilton Road, Sun 15th. Nov. Organised by the Pan African Ahmadiyya Muslim Association Midlands Region UK. 137 people attended including members of the Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist, Sikh and Hindu faiths, as well as civic leaders, charities, police and the armed forces. There were a wide range of exhibitions including Birmingham Council of Faiths, other faith displays and World War 1 memorabilia. There were several speakers on the theme "How can we stop the crisis and establish peace and community cohesion". This was followed by a complimentary dinner for participants.

Faiths, Health & Wellbeing Seminar, University of Birmingham Orchard Learning & Resource Centre, Weoley Park Road, Selly Oak, B29 6QW, Mon 16th Nov. Organised by Dr Peter and Jean Rookes on behalf of Faiths for our City of Birmingham & Birmingham Council of Faiths. 47 people participated, including members of Christian, Muslim, Baha'i, Sikh and Hindu faiths and no faith, as well as health workers, 3rd Sector, patients and public involvement organisations. This was the 5th twice-yearly seminar. There were 8 presentations, followed by discussion on different aspects of mental health.

Expressing your faith through creativity, Multi-faith Centre, Barberry Hospital, Vincent Drive, Edgaston, B15 2SG, Mon 16th Nov. Organised by the Spiritual Care team, Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust. This was a drop-in session for people to explore their faith and spirituality through the use of craft activities and share with people of other faiths what it is that we have in common and things we can learn from different traditions. Creative activities on offer included mandalas, beading their spiritual journey, creating poetry around identity and meditation on faith, hope and love.

Interfaith Presentation of 3 Spiritual Paintings, Al-Mahdi Institute, 60 Weoley Park Road, Birmingham, Wed 18th Nov. The event was organised to present 3 spiritual paintings by artist and theologian Jyoti Sahi, which were once displayed in the former

United College of the Ascension Chapel (now the Al-Mahdi's multi-faith chapel). The program began with the recitation of the Holy Quran, followed by Revd Donald Eadie who shared a spiritual message about the wonder of 'taking off our shoes' and being in the presence of God in the chaos of the world. Canon Dr Andrew Wingate (Former principle of UCA) shared his insight on the transformation from UCA to the Al-Mahdi Institute and his delight that so much can be learnt from interfaith sharing of the truth, and then presented the three spiritual paintings to the representatives of each establishment as follows: The Agony in the Garden of Gethsemane to Selly Oak Methodist Church, The Martydom of Stephen to the Al-Mahdi Institute, and the Women of Jerusalem to St Mary's Church Selly Oak. To close the programme Arul Israel, member of Selly Oak Methodist Church, gave a theatrical performance entitled 'Creation'. It was a classical Indian performance depicting Genesis 1 of the bible and a great end to the evening.

Prayers in Harmony, Nishkam Centre, 6 Soho Road, Handsworth, Thurs 19th Nov. Organised by the Sikh Nishkam Centre. The event began with a meet and greet over light refreshments allowing all to get to know someone new. Conversations became increasingly enthusiastic as people found common ground and related to one another on a more personal level. Many people from the local community, as well as some dedicated faith leaders, came to reflect on the collective meaning of prayer with the aim of bringing the city's major faiths religions even closer together. Guests were invited into the Heritage Centre to view the specially resurrected the Sound & Silence Exhibition which had previously been on display at the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery. The exhibition highlighted the 24 Moral and Spiritual Dispositions, which were created by the Standing Advisory Committee on Religious Education (SACRE). This was followed by the sharing of thoughts from representatives of Muslim, Sikh, Christian, Buddhist, Jewish, Quaker and Jain faiths.

Faiths for a Low Carbon Future –Exhibits and Conversations, preceding the Paris Climate Change Summit, Peace Hub, 41 Bull Street B4 6AF, Fri 20th Nov. Quakers, who organised the event, were very pleased with the occasion as an interfaith networking occasion. Approximately 50+ people attended in total including with representatives from different faith groups as well as local Quakers. Most were already involved with interfaith and climate change work. Panel displays explained the importance that each of the six main faiths placed on valuing and protecting our planet and its natural environment and the need to move to low carbon, more just, ways of living. There were also displays of children and young people's work depicting the 'world they wanted to see when they were old'. The room buzzed with constructive conversation forging new links and contacts. The Exhibits and Conversations event was followed on Saturday 28 November by the Faiths for a Low Carbon Future Walk of Witness and Interfaith Gathering attended by over 100 people from across Birmingham's faith communities including Archbishop Bernard Longley representing the Birmingham Faith Leaders Group and Steve McCabe MP.

Interfaith Devotional, Queen Elizabeth Hospital Chaplaincy, Fri 20th Nov. Organised by Birmingham Baha'is. 7 people of mixed faiths attended.

Interfaith Devotional, Readings Road (domestic home) in Moseley , Fri 20th Nov. Organised by Birmingham Baha'is. 14 people , 7 Muslims and 7 Baha'is attended. As in the event held earlier in the day, texts from various faiths were read, with musical interludes. It is our wish that we continue to work together towards a peaceful world.

Kol Kinor Choir Concert, St Catherine of Siena Church, Bristol St, Birmingham, Sun 22nd Nov. The concert featured Kol Kinor a mixed voice Jewish Choir, including a wide range of Jewish music from both Synagogue and folk music traditions. There were contributions also from Chris Kearn Organist at St. Catherine's, the St. Catherine's Choir and the Choir of Blessed Robert Griswold Church.

Spirituality in Music, Nishkam Centre, 6 Soho Road, Handsworth, Sat 28th Nov. There were 105 participants of diverse backgrounds and faiths attending this Bhatikh Style Indian classical music event, which explored spirituality in music.

Conclusion The general view is that this was a successful week with a good variety of events, which were generally well supported by people of different faiths and none.

Dr. Peter Rookes & Mrs Jean Rookes
Birmingham Council of Faiths



Footsteps: Faiths for a Low Carbon Future

Around 120 people took part in the Multifaith Walk from St Martin in the Bullring to the Gathering at Bull Street Meeting House on 28 November.

RC Archbishop Bernard Longley spoke on behalf of all the Birmingham Faith Leaders. Leaders from the local Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh communities reflected on the challenges of being good stewards of the Earth & its resources, and the footsteps we will need to take towards a more hopeful future. Multifaith prison chaplain Patricia Bradbury, compering, said "We were particularly inspired to hear the voices of Birmingham's young people, who challenged us all to work for the low-carbon future they hope for when they are older."

A letter was given to Steve McCabe MP from those present to be delivered to Amber Rudd MP, the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change. "Footsteps: Faiths for a Low Carbon Future" is to continue as a project of the Birmingham Council of Faiths.

Commitment for Life (from *Moving Stories 188*)

Can anything good come out of Nazareth?

This oft quoted question by Nathanael in response to Philip's statement that he had *found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth*, and Philip's response "***Come and see!***" has become a personal quest for Valerie and I this year as we relocated from the UK to Nazareth at the end of March for me to take up the role as spiritual director of the Nazareth Trust (the operating name of the Edinburgh Medical Missionary Society or EMMS Nazareth). The Trust runs the historic EMMS Nazareth Hospital (which has been offering *healing in the name of Jesus* to all the residents of Nazareth since 1861), the Nazareth School of Nursing (the only Arab nursing school in Israel), the Nazareth Village (the recreation of a first century village on an authentic first century farming site below the hospital) and the SERVE Nazareth Programme (a programme for volunteers who serve in Nazareth for up to 3 months). This makes the Nazareth Trust one of the largest employers in Nazareth with close to 600 employees who roughly reflect the current demographics of the town where Jesus grew up. As the largest Arab city in Israel, Nazareth has a population of approximately 80,000 people of whom about 55,000 (70 per cent) are Muslims, and the remainder Christians (28 per cent) and Druze (2 per cent). The Jewish population live in Nazareth Illit (Upper Nazareth) which is directly opposite the City of Nazareth and has a population of 60,000, of whom 85 per cent are Jewish (mostly Russian immigrants) and 15 per cent Arab (Muslim and Christian). Added to this complex mix of Nazarene residents is the constant stream of Christian pilgrims to the Basilica of the Annunciation (the largest church in the Middle East), the Orthodox Church situated at Mary's Well and the Nazareth Village (among other attractions in the town where Jesus grew up).

These demographics and the religious and political context of Israel and the Palestinian Territories make for a dynamic and often challenging environment to live and work in. However, in the nine months that we have lived in Nazareth, our overriding sense is one of peaceful co-existence between the various religious, ethnic and cultural traditions that constitute the diverse population of Nazareth. This dynamic is perhaps best demonstrated by the Nazareth English Hospital (as it is affectionately known in Nazareth) where Christian, Muslim, Jewish and Druze staff work together in an environment of mutual love and respect to deliver compassionate and professional health care to the diverse population of Nazareth and the wider Galilee region!

The School of Nursing also provides excellent education and training to Christian and Muslim students who coexist as a student body in a very positive way under the capable leadership of Dr Amal Khazin, the first Arab woman to receive a doctorate in nursing in Israel. The Nazareth Village also lives out the reality of our unity in Christ in a profound way where Arab and Jewish Messianic believers work side-by-side as guides and villagers to provide visitors with an authentic experience of life in a first century village at the time of Jesus!

This is not to deny the deeper divisions related to religious and political identity which is an ever-present reality of life in this troubled neighbourhood of the world and surfaces in disputes from time-to-time. An example of this was the recent month long strike by Christian schools in Nazareth and the rest of the country over a cut in their funding from the Department of Education. However, what was remarkable about

this dispute was the solidarity between the Christian and Muslim communities who stood together to provide a united front to demand justice for the Christian schools (which many thousands of Muslim children also attend). Even more remarkable was the solidarity which was expressed by the Jewish schools in Nazareth Illit who threatened to join the strike if the Department of Education persisted in their policy of under-funding Christian schools. Many believe it was this act of solidarity which finally resulted in a resolution to this protracted dispute!

Living in Nazareth – a few personal reflections!

We live on the third floor of the home of the Srouji family (one of the largest Arab families in Nazareth) which commands a panoramic view over the City of Nazareth and Mt Tabor to the east and Mt Precipice and the Valley of Jezreel to the south. We have been adopted as members of the family and have enjoyed many sumptuous Arab dishes cooked by Mrs Srouji and we will be celebrating our first Christmas in Nazareth with them on Christmas Eve (which we look forward to with relish)!

We were initially awakened each morning with the call to prayer from one of the many mosques that surround us at around 4.30am in the summer but thankfully now often sleep right through this early morning intrusion! The work day at the Nazareth Hospital generally commences at around 7.30am and finishes at around 4.00pm for the administrative staff and the working week is Monday to Friday (similar to the UK). From our home it is a ten minute walk to the Nazareth Hospital campus through the bustling streets of Nazareth where you do need to keep your wits about you as Nazarene driving through the narrow, steep streets is a challenge at the best of times! Fortunately, the route to work is along a broader road with a sidewalk, which invariably has cars parked on it (which was initially frustrating but now something I barely notice). This makes a pleasant change to my one-hour commute from Northampton to London and the weather, although extremely hot and dusty over the summer, is once again a very pleasant 15 degrees Celsius.

Each day commences with prayer at different venues and a service in the Chapel on Wednesday mornings. My work requires me to remain flexible to the daily demands of providing spiritual care to the staff, patients and students in the different institutions as well as lead to various projects to help strengthen and promote the Christian witness of these institutions in a culturally sensitive way without compromising the core vision, mission and values of the Trust. This has proved challenging in the religiously diverse environment in which we work and I have developed an advisory group of experienced Nazarene spiritual and medical leaders to provide me with counsel and guidance in this challenging task.

The Nazareth Hospital has developed a number of interesting social accountability projects in and around Nazareth including a medical outreach into Area C in the West Bank where a mobile clinic is in the process of being set-up to provide medical care to Bedouin and other residents of these disputed areas. There are also plans to begin treating children from the West Bank requiring corrective surgery for club foot and other impediments at the Nazareth Hospital and more information about both of these projects will be forthcoming in future.

Concluding comments Based on the above reflections of our life in Nazareth thus far, Valerie and I can say a resounding Yes! To Nathanael's question! There are still many good things that come out of Nazareth.

Frank Kantor Advent 2015

Contributed by Wendy Firmin

Commitment for Life Newsletter January 2016

Greetings to you all at the start of this New Year. This first newsletter of 2016 can be found on our website www.cforl.org.uk under 'mailings.'

Looking Back

As we look back on 2015 a high point must be the adoption of the new Sustainable Development Goals in September. They came into effect on 1st January 2016 and are, in the words of UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, "our shared vision of humanity and a social contract between the world's leaders and the people". All areas of the Goals require ongoing work and prayer; the need to improve access to healthcare, quality education, good jobs, clean water and sanitation, to achieve gender equality, end hunger, build sustainable communities and peaceful societies and protect habitats and ecosystems... and so much more.

2015 also saw the publication of the Pope's encyclical *Laudato Si*, which seemed to capture people's imaginations leading up to both the adoption of the SDGs and The UN climate talks in Paris. People of faith were well represented and welcome at both negotiations. The global climate deal that came out of Paris has shown that the pressure is working. But the only way Paris means anything is if we ensure that pledges made in our name are honoured. We also had a General Election which was followed by the June's 'Speak Up Lobby' to enable new MPs to know of people's climate change concerns. There was also a well attended march in November which included an Interfaith meeting.

Commitment for Life encountered a year of change. In April Becky Harrington, my administrator, moved on, and this role was not replaced. Since then I have been combining the roles of programme co-ordinator and administrator. Although there are some practical difficulties, it has allowed me to be in closer contact with churches. This has been both uplifting and encouraging. 2015 also saw a change in the way the money you contribute is shared amongst Global Justice Now, Christian Aid and Commitment for Life. With the yearly total lower than previous years it was necessary to increase the percentage to the URC to cover essential running costs. However, it has been good to see that this year's total is slightly higher than last year, so we can look forward with some confidence.

Looking Forward

2016 is a General Assembly year and this will take place in July at Southport. Look out for the Mission Team report which will include our news. Amelia Sutcliffe, our intern, is visiting Christian Aid partners in Brazil in January. They will be looking, in particular, at partners working on gender issues. Amelia is happy to share her thoughts with youth groups or churches.

The Ecumenical World Development Conference - Methodist Central Hall Coventry on the 15-17 April 2016. The EWDC is an initiative organised by a variety of Christian development organisations and several major denominations: those on this year's planning group include Christian Aid, the Church of England, Tearfund, Operation Noah, Commitment for Life, and A Rocha. The conference has been meeting for about three decades at intervals of roughly 18 months to consider a topic

of importance: This year's conference will be entitled '**Hope in a Changing Climate**' and will focus on how, following recent developments in Paris, Christians can work together locally and globally to care for creation. Our own Rev Dr Rosalind Selby, from Northern College, will be speaking. Everyone is invited to attend if they have an interest in the topic. Booking forms will be available shortly on our website or through Eventbrite. This year we are trying something new as participants will need to find their own accommodation over the weekend

Show The Love- Climate Coalition Campaign The Climate Coalition's Valentine's Day campaign is fast approaching and there are a number of ways you can be part of this event. The resource pack has everything you need to be part of this two week campaign. Key Dates - 1st - 8 February – New film 'Show the Love 2016' is available. 8th - 14 February - Make, wear and share your green hearts and green heart art. Hold events and share images online. 11 February - Good News Day. An opportunity for supporters and organisations to show they are taking action
Fairtrade Fortnight, 29 February to 13 March 2016 Will you join the Big Fairtrade Breakfast? Millions of farmers and workers in developing countries work hard to grow the food we eat, yet many don't know where their next meal is coming from. You have the power to change this. **This Fairtrade Fortnight is focusing on breakfasts**, so it would be great to get everyone across the UK sitting down to a Fairtrade breakfast and standing up for the people behind the food. To help you, there is a FREE Big Fairtrade Breakfast pack that contains everything you need to organise a breakfast, including a guide full of ideas and inspiration, posters, stickers, decorations and postcards.

Report from Global Justice Now – January 2016 Despite increasing wealth and prosperity for a few, around the world millions can't access basic things like energy, food, healthcare and education, that they need to live decent lives. A big reason for this is global trade, energy and food systems in which control is increasingly given to multinational corporations who put profit before people, fuelling inequality and injustice. This needn't be the case. We work as part of a global movement demonstrating that sustainable, just and democratic alternatives are not just necessary – but also possible. That's why in 2016 Global Justice Now will be campaigning for trade justice, challenging the corporate control of African agriculture and building the movement for energy democracy.

Trade Justice A new wave of trade deals is being negotiated which threatens democracy, public services and the environment worldwide. They also threaten to undermine development in the world's poorest countries. What's more, if agreed these secretive deals will give multinational corporations unprecedented new powers. Most controversially, they aim to set up special courts in which companies can sue governments over decisions they believe might harm their profits. The Transnational Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) between the EU and US is one of the biggest of these deals – and the UK government is one of its major backers. Other deals are CETA, which is between Canada and the EU, and the Trade in Services Agreement (TiSA) which will force developing countries to privatise their public services. The good news is that public opposition to TTIP is huge. Over 3 million people across Europe have signed a petition calling on it to be scrapped. But the UK government remains committed to supporting TTIP. In 2016 we want to

change this by working with campaigners across the UK to make their areas TTIP Free Zones. But we won't stop there – we want to begin to build a movement that looks beyond TTIP towards a just global trade system.

Food for all Globally, there's enough food produced to feed 9 billion people. But millions go hungry, mostly in the global south. In Africa, small scale farmers still provide food for 70% of the population, but increasingly these farmers are being marginalised, forced to move off their land or produce for Western markets.

Shockingly, this is being supported by the UK and other G7 countries that use aid to incentivise governments to make it easier for multinationals to operate. This leads to land, seed and trade law changes that make it harder for small scale farmers to produce for local populations and forces them to use fertilisers which harm the environment.

We are working with farmers groups around the world to support their calls for a food system that puts their needs and the needs of local populations above the profits of multinational corporations. In 2016 we'll be demonstrating the better, more sustainable approach to agriculture is possible, and calling on the UK government to support it.

Energy democracy As we've seen here in the UK energy privatisation doesn't work. We get higher prices and worse service. Moreover, this affects the poor the most. So why is the UK using aid money to promote privatisation? We'll be working to call on the UK government to drop its support for energy privatisation, particularly in Nigeria. We'll also be working to build the climate justice movement in the UK and build on the outcome of the Paris climate negotiations.

Our campaigns tackle big issues and they won't be won overnight. This is what sets us apart. Because we are independent, and because we have a strong network of groups and supporters, we are able to take on issues others can't and push the envelope in the fight for justice. If you aren't already a member – join us.

Global Justice Now - January 2016

Thank you for your contributions and hard work that has made all this possible. Life brings great demands on our time and resources. Please pray that our lives will be guided by what we discover in the Bible, and through prayer, so we may give generously of our time and money in 2016.

Every good wish
Linda Mead

On This Day ...

From the Chronicle of the London Missionary Society February 1916

The Healing Gift (*James Cantlie, formerly Dean, Hong Kong College of Medicine*)

It is of the highest importance that missionaries should be of the best, not only in a religious but in an intellectual sense. Religious enthusiasm is the foremost requirement; but added to this there must be intellectual training, which brings with it that something with which we associate the name "gentleman" and "lady." The scholars, the literati, have to be convinced of the glory of the light of the Gospel if the teaching of a new doctrine is to be speedily established; but they will listen more readily to educated persons than to others. If the lower classes only are gathered in, there is a tendency for the higher classes to despise the teaching, saying it is only for the uneducated. This argument is advanced for the purpose of bringing home to our scholars and graduates that they are the class who should go forth to proclaim the teachings of Christ. They will meet philosophers and men ardent in their own religious belief and conclusions, and it requires a man or woman imbued with an intellectuality the outcome of thought and sound education to counter arguments and remove deep-rooted prejudices.

As it is with the philosopher so it is with those sent abroad as missionary doctors. It is important that they should be well and carefully trained. There is a belief in many quarters that a missionary doctor is not a "real" doctor. This is not the case; there is but one channel to qualification in medicine, a five years' course of study and training; examinations at one of the universities or colleges acceptable to the laws of the realm.

If anyone requires to be specially well educated and well trained it is the missionary doctor. He works as a rule not at the great centres, but in out-of-the-way regions, where it may be the white man is seldom seen. He has to acquire a native language or more than one native language; he has to rely upon his own skill in surgical cases and he has to be an expert in eye, ear, skin and throat diseases, and to deal with a number of ailments which he has perhaps never seen before, or even read of.

The missionary doctor has even yet other duties in many instances; he has to teach orderlies and nurses for hospital work; and he may have to teach medicine and surgery to young men wishing to become qualified practitioners. This means a sound knowledge of many branches of science and of medicine in all its phases. It is plain, therefore, that we want highly trained doctors for work in tropical lands and how much more is it necessary to select only the best when not only is he or she to serve as doctor but also as missionary! The combined callings require the very best men and women to be found in our land, and we should endeavour to send them. An intimate acquaintance with at least one centre of our Society's work convinces me that this combination is possible. There are many such men throughout the world, and men whom we as doctors recognise as amongst the foremost members of our profession. It is to be hoped that this great Society will be enabled to continue the glorious work. British folk have more than those of any other nation contributed to the spread of the Gospel; it is for us to see that the good seed sown by those who have gone before us is brought to fruition by sending the best of our race to bring to the unenlightened health for their bodies and healing for their souls.

From the Carrs Lane Journal February 1966

Christian Aid (by J.H. Townend)

The above is now the title adopted to cover the overseas work of the British Council of Churches. Work among refugees has diminished as more and more have been permanently settled. Efforts are now being made to make a serious impact on the problems facing growing nations and the "have nots" of the world. The work being attempted is of a practical nature administered as far as possible through the local churches. Some of the work is purely relief work but a great number of projects aim to get the people concerned to help themselves by providing better methods of farming and husbandry – tools, fertilisers, etc. support of farm schools, forestry and food processing are among other activities.

The number of projects supported in recent months is a formidable one, covering Europe, Asia, Africa, Australia, Middle East, U.K., the Americas and Caribbean. The following illustrates what is being done.

Africa: Algeria: £16,000 for social, medical and agricultural work; Burundi: £56,000 to finance agricultural resettlement of refugees from Rwanda; Kenya: £80,000 for agricultural training and settlement projects. £35,000 community developments and welfare work; Nigeria: £50,000 to cover a number of projects in agriculture (fertilisers), community halls for farm settlement areas, etc.; South Africa: £5,000 for relief work following drought in Transvaal and Zululand; Tanzania: £50,000 to Y.M.C.A. for agricultural institute and farm training school.

Asia: Ceylon: £5,000 towards keeping open two schools in the Tamil community; Hong Kong: £45,000 for trade training areas, youth work, workers' hostel and children's meal service; India: £60,000 for relief work, resettlement of families, agricultural work, well-sinking, etc.; Korea: £24,000 for resettlement of families on land reclaimed from the sea and provision of livestock seeds, etc.

Australia: £3,000 for transit hostel for refugees and migrants. £2,000 for welfare work for among migrants of the European-Australian Christian Fellowship.

Europe: Austria, France, Greece: £20,000 for work among refugees – housing, trade-training, etc. U.K.: £11,500 for World Council of Churches scholarships. £9,000 for refugee Old People's Homes.

Middle East: Jordan: £41,000 for training refugees, development of smallholdings.

Americas: Brazil: £43,000 for resettlement of Korean refugees and from within Brazil

Miscellaneous: Voluntary Service Overseas: £62,000 for sponsoring volunteers selected by this organisation to work abroad for a year on Church and Missionary projects; World Council of Churches; £75,000 towards the cost of maintaining the refugee settlement staff and other essential services.

The above small selection of projects shows the world-wide scope of the work and the use that is made of our contributions. Many of those projects form part of the Churches' contribution to the Freedom from Hunger Campaign. At Carrs Lane we began in 1957 to raise money monthly in a regular manner for "Inter-Church Aid and Refugee Service", as it was then called. Since that time to the end of 1965, a total of £2,250 has been raised through the regular giving of a small but devoted number of Carrs Lane folk.

Contributed by Wendy Firmin



Can you help the two lovebugs find each other?



Valentine Jokes

What did the caveman give his wife on Valentine's Day?
Ughs and kisses!

What did the boy sheep say to the girl sheep on Valentine's Day?
I Love Ewe!

Knock knock! Who's there?
Frank. Frank who?
Frank you for being my friend!

Knock knock! Who's there?
Howard. Howard who?
Howard you like a big kiss?

What did the boy owl say to the girl owl on Valentine's Day?
Owl be yours!

What kind of flowers do you never give on Valentine's Day?
Cauliflowers!

What do you call a very small Valentine?
A Valentiny!

What did the boy squirrel say to the girl squirrel on Valentine's Day?
I'm nuts about you!

What did the girl squirrel say to the boy squirrel on Valentine's Day?
You're nuts so bad yourself!

Knock knock! *Who's there?* Sherwood. *Sherwood who?* Sherwood like to be your valentine!

Knock, knock. *Who's there?* Pooch. *Pooch who?* Pooch your arms around me, baby!

Interfaith Prayer: Eternal God

Eternal God, Creator of the universe, there is no God but You.
Great and wonderful are Your works, wondrous are your ways.
Thank You for the many-splendored variety of Your creation.
Thank You for the many ways we affirm Your presence and purpose,
and the freedom to do so.
Forgive our violation of Your creation.
Forgive our violence toward each other.
We stand in awe and gratitude for Your persistent love
for each and all of Your children: Christian, Jew, Muslim,
as well as those with other faiths.
Grant to all and our leaders attributes of the strong:
mutual respect in words and deed,
restraint in the exercise of power, and
the will for peace with justice, for all.
Eternal God, Creator of the universe, there is no God but You. Amen.

World Council of Churches



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

Room Hire at Carrs Lane

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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
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
Carrs Lane Fair Trade Shop	Tuesday - Saturday 10.30 am - 2.30 pm and most Sundays after morning worship
Counselling Centre	Monday - Friday 11.00 am - 1.30 pm and Monday to Wednesday evenings 7.00 - 9.00 pm

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