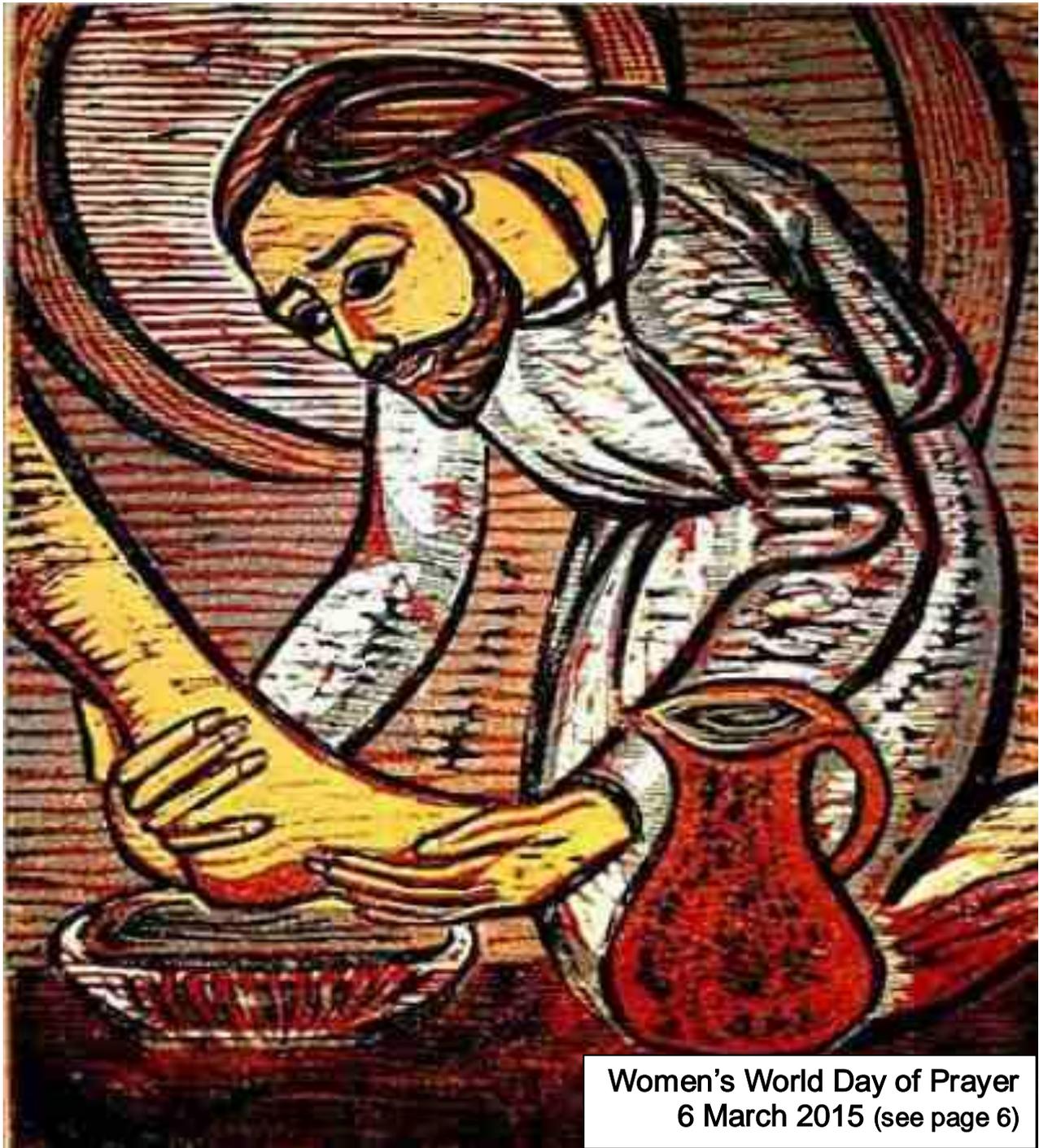


# Journey



**The continuing story**

of

**The Church at Carrs Lane**

**March 2015**

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## Minister's Letter

Dear friends,

Lent study groups appear to be on the increase! In Hall Green, there is a long tradition of well-supported, ecumenical groups, and this year's take-up appears to be as enthusiastic as ever; the groups meet on different days throughout the week – and at different times during the day. Equally, there appear to be more opportunities in the city centre this year...not least because one evening group last year operated at 'capacity' throughout Lent, and there seems to be an increased desire for daytime provision. The same is true in the area in which I live: whatever may be happening in terms of regular church attendance Sunday by Sunday, there is evidence of a clear thirst for this kind of opportunity.

A number of things come to mind as I reflect on this: there may be useful lessons which can and should be noted as we reflect on the common life of the church. People clearly value something which has a known commitment in terms of 'length'; Lent groups are not open-ended, though some may take on life which sees them continue beyond Lent. Opportunities for discussion in a small group which offers a safe, non-judgmental environment – preferably with ecumenical friends – are appreciated; Christian spirituality is taken seriously, and if Lent provides a welcome focus for this, then the number of churches which now run similar groups during Advent should also be taken on board. Again, such groups are time-limited and offer space for reflection in busy times...and an opportunity to think through some of the things of faith in what are theologically challenging times. The great themes of Advent are no easier than the overriding themes of Lent!

There may be another lesson to be learned – or, at least, relearned, however: these are times in which a 'one-size-fits-all' approach to Christianity simply doesn't work. A church – perfectly responsibly – may decide that the regular 'diet' of Christian worship on a Sunday morning will be broadly traditional in approach; this will be sustained over most Sundays and will be appreciated by those who share in it regularly. This will not be enough to sustain effective Christian nurture and teaching within the church, however, and we may need to think through what other opportunities may be appropriate ever more creatively...and with ever greater discernment of what the Spirit may be saying. In a sense, I am delighted that I could be involved in 6 or 7 small 'growth' groups on a regular basis as a part of my ministry, but this is simply not practical; as I ponder how best to respond to these challenges, I suspect that they do not simply come to me alone.

With much love in Christ,

Your friend and minister,



## Sunday Worship during March 2015

### Sunday 1 March 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Lent

10.30am Morning worship, including the Lord's Supper, led by Neil Riches.

Key passage: Mark 8.31 – 38

*Worship will be followed by First Sunday Lunch – all welcome*

### Sunday 8 March 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Lent

10.30am Morning worship led by Neil Johnson

2.45pm for 3.00pm Children's Church - Theme: Peter's denial

### Sunday 15 March 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Lent - Mothering Sunday

10.30am Morning worship led by Neil Johnson

### Sunday 22 March Passion Sunday

10.30am Morning worship led by Neil Riches, with a focus on the 'Gethsemane Garments' exhibition (see below for details of this)

4.00pm Street Banquet – hospitality for the vulnerable, based on Jesus' story of the Great Feast

6.00pm Radical Worship – continuing the series on, 'seeing through the eyes of the world Church'

### Sunday 29 March Palm Sunday

10.30am Morning worship, including Palm Sunday procession, led by Neil Riches - All-age



*Note that on Maundy Thursday – 2 April – there will be food and worship at 7pm; and on Good Friday – 3 April – short acts of worship using the 'Gethsemane Garments' at stations will take place at 4pm, 5pm and 6pm, with concluding prayers at 7pm*

## Gethsemane Garments Exhibition

**D**esigned and created by Peter Privett the exhibition features a set of garments and texts exploring hope and suffering in the world. The exhibition opens on Friday 20 March at 7.30pm, with an opportunity to meet the artist. Peter uses his self taught artistic skills to create art work that encourages people to explore their thoughts and feelings in a safe environment.

Come and join us for Gethsemane-focused worship on Passion Sunday 22 March at 10.30am; Maundy Thursday 2 April with worship and food at 7.00pm; Good Friday 3 April 'Stations of the Cross' music and a short, guided walk/meditation at 4.00pm, repeated at 5.00pm and 6.00pm, with prayers at 7.00pm; and Easter Sunday 5 April at 10.30am.

## Notices

**Saturday 7 March** Sustainability Fair at the Botanical Gardens 10.00 – 5.00. Reduced entrance charge to Gardens and much to enjoy including a stall from Carrs Lane Fair Trade Shop.

**7/8 March:** "You are the Salt of the Earth" Taizé meeting for ages 15 - 35. Saturday evening prayer, 7.30pm at St Martin's in the Bullring open to all ages.

**Events at Barnes Close** Reflection Days  
*Walking With God* 12 March & 9 April  
£15 per day. 10am - 3.30pm.  
*Quiet Retreat - Journeying with Jesus.*  
Tue 3 to Thur 5 March Cost £140 Full board. More info from Ian Ring, Community Coordinator, Tel: 01562 710231 Email: cfrenquiry@aol.com

**15 March** Prayer in the way of Taizé  
6pm South Aston URC. Call 0121 478 3841 or email phpaw2@btinternet.com

Disabled Christians Fellowship meeting  
Sat 10.30am **28 March** at Waterloo Road Chapel, B25 8JR. Info from 0121 440 3564 or [www.throughtheroof.org](http://www.throughtheroof.org). All ages and abilities welcome.

**Wednesday 18 March** 'Sacred Space Project 'End of Life and Dementia Care' 7.00pm at St Lukes Church Centre. Hot vegetarian meal, £8, booking essential. Contact Ann Lovelock 0121 449 6402, [ann\\_lovelock@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:ann_lovelock@yahoo.co.uk).

Please sponsor Darren King, Deputy Principal at Oasis Academy Foundry who is running the London Marathon this year to raise funds to help transform the lives of children and young people through the work of Oasis. If you would like to sponsor him, please see Emma Johnson or visit [www.justgiving.com/Darren-King28](http://www.justgiving.com/Darren-King28)

**29 March:** Vigil for peace - Aldermaston (Nuclear Weapons Factory) See Matthew or Steph for more details.

**24 March** Social Media for Beginners training at Church House –aimed at those who want to use social media to actively engage with their community. The day will include a very practical session helping delegates get connected – with step-by-step instructions in getting started on face book and twitter; and also look at the potential benefits of using social media, plus some top tips on how to use and how to write for it. The day is free, includes lunch, and is open to anyone who attends a United Reformed church (lay person, elder, minister). Places are limited, but to register your interest, please email [emma.pearce@urc.org.uk](mailto:emma.pearce@urc.org.uk).

**Good Friday 3 April** Ecumenical March of Witness Starting 10am 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.

**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 please book in advance -email [robertsa@methodistchurch.org.uk](mailto:robertsa@methodistchurch.org.uk)

The URC has announced the appointment of Revd Steve Faber as moderator of the West Midlands Synod, from 1 Sept - 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. He is also mission enabler for the East Midlands Synod.

## Women's World Day of Prayer 6 March 2015

**W**omen's World Day of Prayer is an international, interchurch, organisation which enables us to hear the voices of women, from a different part of the world each year, expressing their hopes and concerns and bringing them before the rest of the world in prayer. On Friday 6 March an estimated 3 million people, in over 170 countries, will gather to observe the day of prayer, using an order of service written by Christian women from The Bahamas and translated into over 1000 different languages and dialects. In the British Isles alone over 5,000 services will be held.

The day will begin when the sun rises over the island of Samoa, and continue until it sets off the coast of American Samoa some 35 hours later. The theme of the service is taken from St John's Gospel, chapter 13 verses 1-17, 'Jesus said to them: "Do you know what I have done to you?"' and it challenges us to demonstrate the same radical, unconditional love for others that Jesus showed when he washed the feet of his disciples.

The Bahamas consists of over 700 islands, scattered over 100,000 square miles in the Atlantic Ocean, only a small proportion of which are inhabited. It refers to itself as a 'family of islands' and in the service the needs of the smallest islands are given as much prominence as those of the larger ones. Everyone is welcome to attend the service, men, women – people of all ages. For further information and resources please see the WWDP website: [www.wwdp.org.uk](http://www.wwdp.org.uk)

*The Chaplaincy Team at QE Hospital is organising a service for Women's World Day of Prayer on Friday 6 March at the Faith Centre at 11.30am. All are welcome. Ed*

### Aston and Nechells Foodbank

**A**ston & Nechells Foodbank have been redeeming an average of 30 vouchers every week since January, helping several 100 individuals. Consequently they are rapidly using up some of their foodstocks. They have requested donors to step up collections back to the level of 2014.

The following are the items they regularly run short of: sugar, tinned fruit and vegetables, coffee, tinned meat and fish, milk (UHT or powdered), pasta sauce (jar), tinned rice pudding, packet soups, toilet rolls, soap, toothpaste/brushes, feminine hygiene products, deodorants, washing up liquid, nappies, chocolate snacks

If you would prefer to give cash donations this is also very helpful as it supports the running costs and enables them to bulk purchase any items that they run out of altogether. Cheques should be made payable to "CanDo 4:13" and posted to ANFB at St Matthews Church, 63 Wardlow Road, Nechells B7 4JH.

Thank you again for all of your previous donations. Without your support ANFB could not keep serving those experiencing food crises in our parts of Birmingham.

## 24 Hours of Prayer

‘Like a taste of heaven’: was the comment of a man who happened to call in during the 24 hours of prayer, at Birmingham Cathedral, Sat 24 – Sun 25 Jan. He stayed in the cathedral for several hours, deeply moved by the prayer led by Christians of different backgrounds and traditions, united in a common faith in Jesus Christ.

The idea was simple: to start our special tercentenary year with a great wave of prayer and to invite local churches to join in. Birmingham is home to an incredibly rich Christian expression and we invited people to come and lead prayers for an hour in their own tradition. We were overwhelmed by the love and care with which people responded. Prayers were offered with silence, or with great and joyful noise; we sang Taizé chants and prayed the Luminous Mysteries of the Rosary; we formed a prayer tunnel to surround one another in prayer and took part in inter-active prayer stations; teenagers prayed through the night in the comfort of onesies and just as we were flagging, at 8.00am the Salvation Army turned up with a nine-piece brass band!

Thank you to everyone who took part and made this possible. Special thanks to the World Prayer Centre and Birmingham Ecumenical Network, to Laurence Sharman and Revd Colin Marsh. This was a unique, powerful and profound experience. In accepting our invitation, you have blessed us with your presence and your prayer. We have grown closer in unity and love in Christ. Our hope is that our city, nation and world will continue to be blessed by these prayers and the generous service of so many amazing Christians.

Catherine Ogle, Janet Chapman, Nigel Hand. *Clergy of Birmingham Cathedral*



# Priscilla Margaret Steele

21 June 1923 – 13 January 2015

In some ways, it is not easy to say much about Priscilla because she was quite a private person, and reluctant to give details of her background and career, but the following has been gleaned from various sources.

She was born in Bradford on 21 June 1923, the youngest child by some way in a family of three, and educated at Bradford Girls Grammar School. She remained a proud Yorkshirewoman all her life. Her elder sister Barbara died in her 20s from diphtheria, and Priscilla said that, as there was a twelve-year gap between them, she was not particularly affected. Her father was a chemist, who worked for the Bradford Dyers. He found an alternative to starch, which was used in the dying process but was not available in World War I, and for which he received an MBE. She had an aunt who was PA to Cecil Sharp when he was collecting folk songs in the US. The family were Congregationalists.

In her youth, Priscilla was a great camper, and used to take her nieces camping. One can imagine these outings were very efficiently organised! Later, she became a formidable badminton and hockey player, as well as a keen walker in the Yorkshire Dales.

Priscilla initially trained as a primary teacher at what was then the Bedford Froebel Training College. She then taught in Liverpool, Middlesex and Bradford, before moving to the Manchester Training College in Didsbury, where she was from 1951 to 1962 and became a Senior Lecturer. She also completed a part-time Masters in Education while there. She was then Principal of Darlington Training College from 1962 to 1970. She received glowing testimonials to her abilities and achievements from both Manchester and Darlington on moving to be Principal of the Froebel Institute College of Education at Roehampton, but we gather this may not have been an easy appointment for her. She returned to Manchester, living in Cheadle Hulme with her good friend G Williams.

She came to Birmingham to work as a staff inspector in primary schools, and joined Carrs Lane Church in January 1974. Initially, she was not much involved because she spent weekends looking after G in Manchester. When G died, she had the choice of being in Birmingham or Manchester, and chose the former. She became active at Carrs Lane, serving as an Elder and later a formidable Church Secretary, working closely with Murdoch MacKenzie, who became a good friend. Priscilla was extremely efficient and dedicated in all she did, and many will remember that one did not cross her as Church Secretary!

She had a strong faith, and was ecumenical in her outlook. She was a long-standing Associate of the Iona Community. She visited the island many times, and took an active part in the West Midlands group. She was committed to the cause of justice and peace and, as a small example of this, persuaded the Church to sell the white peace poppies alongside the red ones for Remembrance.

She had many interests and gifts. She was widely read, had a good singing voice, was an accomplished water colourist and embroiderer. She enjoyed food, loved travel, and visited among other places, South Africa, Malawi, India, Russia, Canada and New Zealand. She was an active Soroptomist in the West Birmingham group.

Although she never married – there was such a possibility, but it would have meant giving up her career and going as a missionary wife to China – she had many friends. She kept in touch with them and her family of three nieces regularly, and them all with her.

She was very hospitable and generous, often to those experiencing some difficulty, and many have reason to be grateful for her help in hard times.

She suffered severely from asthma and excema all her life. After her move to Pinner Court in Harborne in 2009, she began to realise she was having memory problems, and was diagnosed with vascular dementia in 2011. Sadly, both her physical and mental health declined fairly rapidly after this. Despite having help from the staff at Pinner Court and an outside agency, it became clear in late 2014 that she needed to move to a care home, which happened in November, and where she was well looked after.

In recent weeks, Priscilla declined rapidly, and it seemed clear she did not want to prolong her life. She died overnight on 13 January 2015.

Those of us closely involved with her care in recent years were very sad to see such an able and strong person become a shadow of her former self, but we cling onto memories of her in her prime, and are grateful that she is now at peace.

Simon and Christine Rowntree

*Priscilla was great influence in my life, encouraging me to look ahead as I approached retirement, and she suggested I might enjoy the work of chaplaincy visiting at Selly Oak Hospital. In my final term of teaching I attended a training course, and began my work as a volunteer in 2000, being placed as a visitor on the ward for the elderly. Priscilla was a member of our team, and she became involved with Home from Hospital Care too, encouraging me to try visiting folk at home after a spell in hospital. I am still enjoying both roles and thank God for Priscilla's support and help in opening up a new chapter in my life. Pat D.*

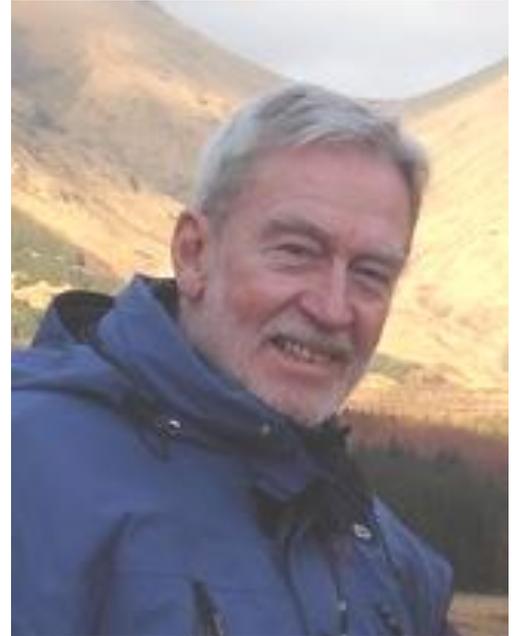


## Murdoch MacKenzie

23 February 1938 – 3 February 2015

We were privileged to be able to attend on Thursday 12 February in Edinburgh both Murdoch's Cremation Service and the Thanksgiving Service that afternoon.

While the morning service was attended by about 50, there must have been towards 300 or more at Greyfriars Kirk in the afternoon, an indication of the affection with which Murdoch was held and of the many lives he touched. Among these, were various people associated with Carrs Lane in the past: Bungie and Mandy, David Coleman, Anthea Kaan, Joyce Membe, John Potter, Mark Thompson, and others. At both services, his children paid moving tributes to him as Dad, while others spoke of his work in many places and as a longstanding Member of the Iona Community. \*



Murdoch was asked by the Moderators to come to Carrs Lane in 1988 to help heal what was a bitterly divided fellowship. That he and Anne in their different ways achieved this is an enormous tribute to their skills and commitment. As a small example of his care, we remember him chairing a Church Meeting very soon after he arrived in mid-1988, and knowing by name all those who spoke.

In his time here, Murdoch introduced us to different forms of worship, not least in patterns of Communion. He built up the format of pastoral visiting, he encouraged women to become stewards, he almost single-handedly revitalised the city centre partnership of churches, he encouraged our engagement with the wider world, and developed good relations with the City leaders.

He led a memorable trip to old haunts in India, he helped get the Aston University Chaplaincy onto a firmer footing, and he inaugurated the 1995 Dale Centenary Appeal, for which we raised funds not for Carrs Lane, but for related organisations needing support.

He may at times have exhausted us with his energy and commitment to Christ, but he left us a very different fellowship from when he arrived. In her own quieter way, we should not forget the part Anne played in all this, with her involvement in the choir and the Eldership, her easy friendship with many and, not least, her many years of running the Traidcraft stall.

In early 1996 the MacKenzies left us, with Murdoch once again being asked by the Moderator to go to Milton Keynes as Ecumenical Moderator, a post ideally suited to

his life-long commitment to church unity. After that, retirement in Connell beckoned, followed by a move to Edinburgh in 2013 to be nearer to two of the three children. Sadly, following that move, Murdoch fell gravely ill, and the last months were very demanding for him and the family who, as always, supported him with great care and love. Murdoch was a very gifted and committed minister of the Gospel, and we at Carrs Lane have much for which to give him thanks.

*\* [For more information, see: <http://www.murdochmackenzieofargyll.com>]*

Simon and Christine Rowntree

## Thank you.....

To all friends in The Church at Carrs Lane.

**T**hank you so much for all the loving concern you have shown and the prayerful support you have given to Murdoch and to me over these last months. Life was really a struggle for Murdoch towards the end and we are glad he is now at peace.

Our years in Birmingham were very precious ones for us and I will continue to value your friendships very deeply. The children and I were so glad that some of you were able to share in the Thanksgiving service and much appreciate you travelling the distance.

I hope that I may be in Birmingham later this year and look forward to seeing you then.

Thank you again.  
Peace! Anne MacKenzie

*If you would like to read the tributes to him given at his funeral and memorial service by his children, Iain, Catrina and Ruth, you can find them at:  
<http://www.murdochmackenzieofargyll.com/>*

...thanks.....

**I**'d like to thank all my dear friends for the many cards, prayers and asking after me when I was in hospital having a knee operation, and at home afterwards.  
God bless you all, Pam Littleford

....and goodbye and thanks

## Birmingham Drugline

On 27 February 2015 the doors will close at Birmingham Drugline and Zephyr Community Rehabilitation Service for the last time. The national social care charity Turning Point has run a drug service in Dale House, at the back of Carrs Lane Church Centre, for over 30 years, supporting drug users throughout Birmingham. Services offered included: substitute prescribing, needle exchange, outreach support for rough sleepers, a helpline, counselling and complementary therapies. In 2013 Zephyr moved in and have been delivering courses on: parenting skills, mindfulness, stress control, anger management etc to equip clients to integrate effectively into the wider community.

Throughout the 30 years, Carrs Lane Church Centre has provided an invaluable central location, accessible to clients living throughout Birmingham. Church Centre staff have given constant support to the drug service staff and clients, offering a sanctuary of acceptance in what can often be a hostile world. The caretakers have also given practical assistance on numerous occasions to enable the services to function in this truly unique building!

The closure of the services is as a result of a major reorganisation of substance misuse provision in Birmingham. With effect from 1 March 2015 services for all clients who are affected by drug or alcohol issues will be provided by Crime Reduction Initiatives, based at Scala House on Smallbrook Queensway, Birmingham. Turning Point staff from Birmingham Drugline and Zephyr, together with staff from 17 other support services in Birmingham, will be transferred to CRI to deliver the new services.

Drugline and Zephyr would like to extend heartfelt thanks to the staff of Carrs Lane Church Centre who, over many years, have provided a safe and welcoming haven in which to operate vital drug services for clients and their families.

Rachel Gittins,  
Administrator, Birmingham Drugline Turning Point



## 'Ten Times Table' deserves Ten out of Ten!

**A**lan Ayckbourn's 'Ten Times Table' was not a play with which I was at all familiar, and my first reaction on finding out more about it was that it would not be easy to stage effectively. The majority of the action consists of four committee meetings, a format which might tend towards 'inaction' and quickly lose the audience's interest. In this production that danger was avoided. The way in which the delightfully diverse characters were introduced, interacted, and commented on each other was lively and often amusing. Two enjoyable little touches were the verbal punning between 'cockle' and 'winkle' and 'jerkens' and 'bodkins'! It all sustained one's interest. The little digs about committee routine and the problems of heating and lighting in a public building (the latter handled with impeccable timing) will surely strike a chord with many in any audience.

The plot of the play is based on the committee's planning of a pageant to re-enact a well-known piece of local history, a confrontation between agricultural agitators protesting against taxation and the militia of the time. The planning becomes a present-day confrontation between left- and right-wing political views, and this plot line develops through the committee scenes, each on ending with a clever little pointer forward, leading to the Festival day itself, which is the dénouement of the piece, and is, in contrast to the previous scenes, full of physical action.

This final scene was expertly staged and beautifully costumed, and featured a number of delightful elements of humour. As an equomaniac, I think my favourite was the 'cock' horse! It also presented some thought-provoking comments on the class struggle. No-one really wins. In the pageant the leaders of both factions are eliminated from the action, but one feels the left-wing protagonist will continue the struggle in some form. John Cockle, the proletarian ringleader in the historical incident, was soon killed, but the legend lives on. Perhaps the serious theme highlighted in this play may be summed up in some thoughts from the John Cockle ballad. He will not let down the people of his town; he is still needed; there is still a cause to be fought for ... in this case the cause to be supported with profits from the production is SIFA Fireside.

An ironic finishing touch is provided by the elderly lady who has difficulty hearing and producing the committee minutes, and who so loses herself in the playing of the cleverly chosen incidental music that she completely misses the pageant; she it is whose research indicates that the historical incident is a fabrication, and provides the final punch-line to the play – an alleged confrontation between Romans and Britons in the local area – will that be the next pageant ...?

Hearty thanks and congratulations are due to all who contributed towards this excellent 'evening out with meal and entertainment'. Well done, John Cockle and friends ... and foes!

Wendy Firmin

## Faith in Focus: search for the city's most iconic image

**S**t Philip's Cathedral is to launch a photography competition in 2015 – with the winning images being displayed in Birmingham Library. The competition, Faith in Focus, supported by the Birmingham Post, will run until summer 2015. This is to coincide with the cathedral's 300th anniversary.

Faith in Focus will carry four free-of-charge categories, each with an open and under 21 class; a Crossing Place, the People of God, Faith in the City and Growing Younger.

- A Crossing Place invites images taken both inside the cathedral and outside in Cathedral Square, reflecting the building as a place of worship or its key location within the city.
- The People of God category will feature individuals or groups engaged in the cathedral or Cathedral Square.
- Faith in the City will reflect any faith across Birmingham.
- Growing Younger is a new Church of England Birmingham-wide initiative within its overall mission strategy of 'Transforming Church'. The aim is precisely to pass on the baton of the Christian gospel to children and families, students and young adults as part of our vision of 'growing churches at the heart of each community'

The Very Reverend Catherine Ogle, Dean of Birmingham said: "We are inviting photographers of all ages to capture images in different and imaginative ways. We often receive images of the cathedral and surrounding areas, in particular, via social media. Some of these images are truly breath-taking and we thought it would be a lovely way of bringing people together during such a special year. The competition will be a fantastic way to document the cathedral's 300th year. We encourage entries from anyone regardless of photography experience."

Winning images will be exhibited at Birmingham Library, feature in cathedral literature and also be published in the Birmingham Post. Entries can be uploaded to [www.birminghamcathedral.com/faithinfocus](http://www.birminghamcathedral.com/faithinfocus).



## SIFA Fireside

The winter months have brought mixed blessings to SIFA Fireside. On the one hand, it was a time of great goodwill as we had a heart warming response to our Christmas Appeal, which raised £14,000 towards the cost of the fuel bills at our Day Centre. This has helped us to 'keep cooking this winter' – providing hot meals to over 120 people each weekday, hot drinks at weekends and a warm daily 'drop in' session where Birmingham's homeless and vulnerably-housed adults could receive emergency and ongoing support services. Thank you to all who went out of their way to help with donations of money, food, sleeping bags, clothes and time.

On the other hand, it was a time of anxious waiting for the outcome of budget decisions by Birmingham City Council (our main source of statutory funding) as it grappled with the need to make funding cuts. Over the summer we heard that the city-wide contract for Drug & Alcohol services had been awarded to a new provider, national charity CRI, rather than to a Consortium of local agencies which included SIFA Fireside, and the loss of this significant funding stream means that from March 2015, SIFA Fireside will no longer be funded to deliver alcohol recovery work. This in turn threw doubt on our capacity to run our daily 'drop in' service.

We acted quickly to highlight the implications for our clients to BCC's Officers and elected Councillors, and on 30 December we heard that we have secured funding to enable us to continue with a weekday 'drop in' service for another year, although at a reduced level, so we can support the health and wellbeing of some of the most disadvantaged adults in Birmingham, most with multiple and complex needs.

While we are pleased that SIFA Fireside's services have been recognised as a valuable part of Public Health provision in the city, and our weekday 'drop in' service is secure for another year, we are disappointed that, due to reduced funding we are no longer able to run 'drop in' sessions at weekends. As a result our weekend volunteers have started an appeal, Birmingham Teapot, to raise the money needed to reopen. (Please see [www.justgiving.com/sharon-baker11](http://www.justgiving.com/sharon-baker11) )

We are reviewing how we can best use the skilled and dedicated team that is the backbone of SIFA Fireside and who have shown their commitment through difficult and uncertain times. We will also continue to work hard in 2015 to secure funding from various sources to ensure that Birmingham's vulnerable and marginalised adults have a safe place to go for support and help to achieve a more stable and healthier lifestyle.

We need your help more than ever – in whatever way you can - donations of money for fuel and rent; gifts of food and sleeping bags for our clients; sponsorship for our training and educational activities; ideas and energy to run fundraising events; and your time to volunteer with us. Your support was wonderful this winter. Please help us in any way you can in the challenging year that lies ahead.

Cath Gilliver, Chief Executive

## In no particular order.....

....some thoughts from Rev David J.M.Coleman

**C**arrs Lane was not just my 'sending church', it was a springboard to the sort of ministry I have found myself involved with since the nineties. As "publicity officer/resident artist" (choose whichever title you're comfortable with) I supported the Corrymeela Weekend at Carrs Lane in 1990 with graphics and DTP. I was also able to do arty things on the room that leads on to the roof, all of which were a vital part of the reflection that led me to feel called to ministry, chatting first to the younger of Carrs Lane's then two ministers, Bungie (Rev Mitchell Bunting) of whom I see quite a lot just now, as he is ecumenical officer for the National Synod of Scotland, and I am convenor of the Church and Society Committee, leading sometimes to being in the public eye.

Last year I was called to give evidence to the Scottish Parliament Equal Opportunities Committee on inclusivising legal reforms to marriage. This was somewhat less hair-raising than when, a few years previously, the buck had stopped with me on the hire of a room in the church centre in Brighton in which Zam and I began the job-share ministry we continue to this day. The group in question had said they wanted to discuss euthanasia. Many and varied groups hired rooms, and the church prided itself on being a place of civilised discussion, but a day or so later, the Daily Mail started claiming "Sussex vicar invites Dr Death to church". We discovered a lot of other venues had been bullied and hounded by the press, and a local BBC reporter did her best to edit an interview with me for shock value. Apparently the fact of something being "controversial" boils down to the same as being "a bad thing" if you're in some parts of that business. The reporters also revelled in claims of 'splits in the church' which was bizarrely unfounded, since the church itself was firmly behind us on the issue, which they felt was one of free speech. When the event eventually happened, with a slight modification due to police worries, we began and ended it with silent prayer, and many of those present thanked us for the opportunity to think these things through.

Job-share ministry seemed the right way to go when following her diagnosis with breast cancer 12 years ago, my wife Zam Walker once more felt called to investigate ministry training - something she had considered some years before - and now in the URC, both as her home church, and one which was unambiguous about the equal ministry of men and women. I supported her through training at the Scottish URC and Congregational college, and Edinburgh University. I remember taking the children out of the house from time to time to give her room to get the essays done. People have said that sharing a study as well as a home can be very demanding, and I suppose it is, but the swings (the things you lose on) do not compare to the roundabouts (the rides you gain on). It probably works best for personality types able to cope with spontaneity, and our deal with the local church is that if either one or both is available at any one time, then the job is done. Actually this also means that committee work, and, for instance, travel to Samoa for CWM is more often than not covered: the local church certainly doesn't lose out. But we are also emphatic that our job-share is a shared calling of equal ministry. Our understanding of marriage is

of a relationship of equality, in which 'assistant' would not be an appropriate designation for either of us. Our partnership has enabled us to weather one or two storms, but also allows us to offer time to support the work at Iona, both with committees and contributing to programme. The Iona Community is an extended family for us and our children, but it was also through Carrs Lane that I first got involved when Mitchell Bunting and Murdoch Mackenzie led their groups there from Carrs Lane in the late eighties.

PS : Those of you who wondered what developed from my church-related graphics can follow the Facebook page 'Lectionary Clips and Hymns' where I share audio-visual material I originate for worship use.

David Coleman



## Who on Earth is God?

**A**n evening with Neil Richardson, to explore the themes of his critically acclaimed new book *Who on Earth is God?* written for both Christians and those who would not claim to be, who want to delve deeper into the reality, character and purposes of God. Dealing head on with biblical passages that many find difficult and the challenges of 'new atheism' Neil presents what he believes to be the reality of God as revealed by Jesus.

*Tuesday 10 March* Wolverhampton University, 5:30pm to 7.00pm.

*Thursday 16 April* Bayston Hill Methodist Church, Shrewsbury, 7:30pm to 9.00pm

*Tuesday 28 April* Selly Oak Methodist Church, 7:30pm to 9.00pm

*Thursday 21 May* New Room, Bristol, 7:30pm to 9.00pm

Evenings include presentations, an interview with Neil, a summary of the themes of the book by him and an open question and answer session. Light refreshments will be available from 30 minutes before start time. Copies of the book will be available for signing and purchase. Admission £5 per person payable in cash or by cheque at the venue. Places do need to be booked in advance.

For further information, please email Andrew Roberts at [robertsa@methodistchurch.org.uk](mailto:robertsa@methodistchurch.org.uk) or write to him c/o The Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury District Office, Beckminster Methodist Church, Birches Barn Road, Wolverhampton, WV3 7BQ.

## **Commitment for Life** *(from Moving Stories 179)*

### **Focused skills training**

**F**or more than 20 years the YMCA in Beit Sahour, near Bethlehem in the West Bank, has been working with young men, with disabilities, to live active and fulfilled lives. In the beginning young men came to the centre with a clear idea of what job they wanted to train for. However, when they started it became clear that sometimes the job was unsuitable for their skill set. Many became despondent, telling their trainers “I cannot do anything!!!” So something had to change.

Whilst on an exchange programme in Canada, trainers were introduced to VALPA, a series of assessment tests that measure a person’s mental and physical capabilities and link these to suitable careers. The tests has proved very successful and empowering for those taking part. Once the results of the tests have been shared and job opportunities discussed, the young men work with local trainers on developing these skills and looking for suitable employment. This means training is more focussed and rewarding. An exciting development of the work has been agreements with local business to provide job experience. Finding new businesses to take part is a constant challenge as unemployment is high in the West Bank. Those living in places such as Bethlehem often have to pass through checkpoints to go to work in Jerusalem because work is hard to find in Bethlehem. Even this has its problems as many people cannot get permits to work in Jerusalem and those that do often have to rise as early as 3am to queue to get through the checkpoints. Access through is not a right and you can be refused passage on a technicality.

Because of the continual pressures of living under Israeli occupation coping mechanisms are also taught as, although therapy is useful, it is not enough in this ongoing volatile environment. Through this programme, as well as the many others they run, the YMCA feel they are providing the skills for the young men to find a path that will allow them to be full members of their local community.

### **Strawberries**

One of Gaza's most popular agricultural products is strawberries. This is a large yielding crop that requires great care. The fruit can be exported either fresh or frozen. The strawberry-picking season begins in December which is when the fruits are at their ripest, according to the farmers. Beit Lahia in the north of the Gaza Strip is known for planting and producing the best types of strawberries.

The plants are imported in May and are grown in nurseries. They are then moved to their permanent plot in September normally in greenhouses. They are sometimes planted under plastic mulches.

The plants can bear fruit for up to four years. This year, farmers faced serious problems in growing their crops, in particular following the large scale destruction to agricultural lands caused by Israel's war on the enclave last summer. This delayed

the planting of crops, destroyed some of the strawberry nurseries, and led to export problems for the farmers. The delay in planting the strawberries following the war led to late germination, especially for the first batch which is allocated for export to Europe as it coincides with the New Year holiday season.

Agricultural engineer at the Palestinian Ministry of Agriculture Eid Siyam noted that the volume of strawberries exported this year to Europe since the start of the season amounted to 70 tonnes, 40 per cent less than what is usually exported. They were expecting to export no less than 200 tonnes by the end of the month, which is the end of the exporting season. Gaza also exported 90 tonnes of strawberries to the West Bank.

*Permission given to reproduce*

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/news/middle-east/16430-picking-problems-the-impact-of-the-war-on-gaza-on-strawberry-farms>

*Contributed by Wendy Firmin*



## On This Day ...

### From the Carrs Lane Journal March 1915

*Thoughts on the passing of a much valued and active long-term church member from the Revd Berry and Mr. H. Hindmarsh*

**T**he tale of the losses we have recently sustained among the oldest and most devoted members of the Church receives the addition of another name this month. We have to record another vacancy in the ranks in the person of Mr. Suffield. To the end he retained his keen interest in all that concerned the welfare of Carrs Lane. That interest has for many years been expressed in the most practical forms of service.

Mr. Suffield did much quiet and unobtrusive work before the church recognised his gifts, and called him to its highest honour as a member of the Diaconate, in 1902. I recently asked Mr. Suffield how long he had been about Carrs Lane. He said, "Since I was a little toddler, so high." He was born almost within sight of the chapel, and from the time he was "a little toddler" he grew up to know all about Carrs Lane and to take an interest in every part of the buildings.

There were probably few of the various alterations and emendations in the Chapel, schoolrooms and other buildings which have taken place during the last fifty years in which Mr. Suffield had not a share. But Mr. Suffield's interest was not limited to buildings. He served on many committees. Though Carrs Lane probably had the first

place in his affections, they were not bound by its walls or its work. He has acted as secretary to the Trustees of Scott Trust and was one of the oldest members of the Central Literary Association.

He compiled a very interesting history of the Scott Trust and thus rescued from oblivion many facts which are bound up with Carrs Lane and its work. He told me not long ago that he had begun to gather up his recollections of old Carrs Lane. I fear his illness did not allow him to carry it very far, which is to be regretted, as the time will come when there is no one left who remembers the days when Mr. James was old, and Mr. Dale was young and wore a white tie.

No one loved Carrs Lane more than he did. It was a privilege for him to serve the Church, and who can deny that such a spirit accounts largely for the vitality of our church life today. No church need fear the future which nurtures such a spirit. It is the greatest possession of our church life. It is our priceless privilege to see that spirit at work in some of our oldest members. It is our responsibility to see that it is not allowed to die with their passing.

### **From the Carrs Lane Journal March 1965**

*Thoughts from Barry Jones, Associate Minister, looking in some depth at CL's city centre ministry, plus a rather tongue-in-cheek comment on church attendance ...*

Looking back, I think I have only scratched the surface of what could be done. I am disappointed that a scheme for chaplaincy among the police, fire and ambulance services has not come into being. I planned this with one of the St. Martin's curates, and we hoped it would develop into an operation involving the four main city churches, but with uncertainties and changes of staff nothing has yet come of it.

Here I come to my great plea. I have seen in the congregation over the last two years an increasing understanding of our responsibility in and for the centre of the city. If you want something to do now, it is to press for the establishment of a council for the regular meetings of representatives of the central city churches. If we can share our present resources and stimulate and develop new ideas together, I think things will happen. Obviously, this should be done under the auspices of the Birmingham Council of Christian Churches, but this body is powerless without the wholehearted support and enthusiasm of the churches concerned.

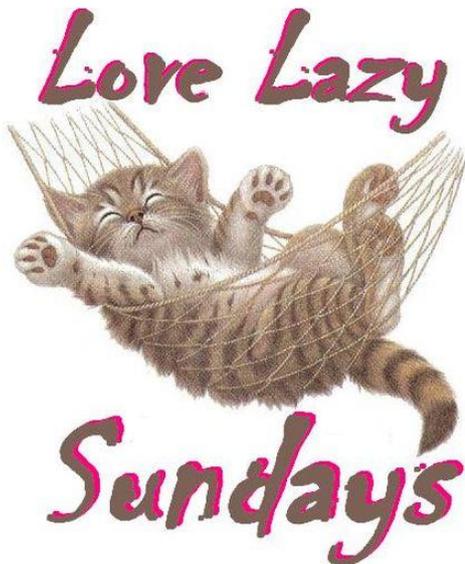
You have shown your understanding of and support for mission in the centre of the city by my appointment. I hope this is just the beginning. Carrs Lane occupies an almost unique position in the denomination as a strong central city church; we have a great potential and responsibility to lead in new work. Carrs Lane is approaching a new and extremely challenging era of its history. Our relation to other Congregational churches in the inner ring of the city may be a big issue for us in the near future. Also I feel we should develop as an adult education centre for ourselves as well as for other churches of the city, not necessarily those of our own denomination. Carrs Lane could become one of the leading ecumenical centres of the district; but this will only come from hard work, courage and imagination from us all. It is not for me to

say what pattern of ministry or staffing requirements are desirable or possible for the future, but please do not disregard those concerns which led to my appointment.

## A Letter to God

I am sorry you made Sunday where you did, dear God. You see, it's like this – we could attend Church more regularly if your day came at some other time. You have chosen a day that comes at the end of a hard week, and we are all tired out. Not only that, but it is the day after Saturday night.

Saturday night, you know, is the one time we feel we should enjoy ourselves, so we go out and it's often midnight when we get home. It is almost impossible to get up on Sunday morning. You have chosen the very day we want to sleep late and it is mighty hard to get ourselves and the children ready. Then there are the dishes to wash, and we always have some things we just have to wash out. I mean no disrespect, dear God, but you must realise you have picked the very day on which we have our biggest dinner. A lot of the morning gets taken getting it ready.



Then, too, you must think of John. He is cooped up working all week, and Sunday morning is the only time he has to tinker with the car and mow the lawn. When he gets into his old clothes and his hands are all greasy, you can't expect him, dear God, to be able to get off to Church.

I am telling you these things, dear God, because I want you to know that it isn't our fault that we don't get to Church. We would like to go, we know we should go, and need to go, but it must be clear to you that the real reason we can't go is because you have chosen the wrong day. If you select another day, dear God, we shall be glad to go to Church and be more faithful.

Yours always,

Nomin L. Christian

(from *The Venture*, All Hallows, Greenford, Middlesex, England)

*Contributed by Wendy Firmin*

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](mailto:office@carrslane.co.uk).



## Room Hire at Carrs Lane

Carrs Lane Conference Centre Ltd is in Birmingham city centre and within a few minutes walk of New Street and Moor Street train stations and the National Express coach station. Public car parking and bus stops are also nearby.

The Conference Rooms on offer are of several sizes and situated on three floors. We can support most types of events. Rooms can accommodate from 6 up to 350 delegates. You will find that our prices are very competitive. Our staff will be pleased to discuss ideas for your event with you and advise on the suitability of our facilities.

Hot and cold drinks can be supplied in the meeting rooms as often as required. Buffet meals can be pre-ordered. These range from a simple sandwich menu to a full buffet

Full details and prices are available on our website, [www.carrslane.co.uk](http://www.carrslane.co.uk), or you may call the conference team on 0121 643 6151 if you have any questions or email [booking@carrslane.co.uk](mailto:booking@carrslane.co.uk).



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## The Church at Carrs Lane Regular Activities

### SUNDAYS

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

### WEEK DAYS

<b>Carrs Lane Lived Community meet for Prayers -</b> Monday to Friday 7.30am and 7.00pm, all are welcome to join them	
<b>Lunchtime Healing Service</b>	Every Wednesday 1.15pm
<b>Prayer Group</b>	First Wednesday at 7.00 pm
<b>Thinking Allowed</b>	First Thursday at 10.15 am
<b>Harborne House Group</b>	Fourth Tuesdays 2.00pm (various locations)
<b>Central House Group at Carrs Lane</b>	Third Wednesdays at 6.30pm
<b>Coffee Drop-in</b>	Fridays from 10.30am-12.00pm
<b>Carrs Lane Choir Practice</b>	Fridays at 7.00pm
<b>Carrs Lane Players (drama group)</b>	Fridays at 7.45 pm
<b>Charity Knitting Circle</b>	First Tuesday 10.00 am - 1.00 pm
<b>Carrs Lane Walking Group</b>	usually meets monthly, see notice board
<b>Fair Trade Shop</b>	First and Third Sunday after morning worship and Tuesday - Saturday 10.30 am - 2.30 pm
<b>Counselling Centre</b>	Monday - Friday 11.00 am - 1.30 pm and Monday to Wednesday evenings 7.00 - 9.00 pm

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