

Journey



The continuing story
of
The Church at Carrs Lane
February 2014



Minister's Letter

Dear friends,

February may not seem an obvious month for marriages...but two feature prominently in my diary during the next few weeks! On 8th February, my daughter Beth is getting married to Dan; my role on this occasion is very clear – I am doing the traditional 'Dad' thing, walking her down the aisle and speaking at the wedding breakfast. I am very pleased that this is my role, just as I am delighted that Frank, her step-father, will be speaking in the service. Clearly, this is a 'one-off' for me, and very different to the role which I usually play within marriages: I am liberated from one responsibility...only to take on another, very different responsibility within the day! If you ask Beth, 'Why February', you are likely to get a very pragmatic answer indeed (nothing to do with romance!): overall, the costs of getting married in February are about 25% less than a wedding in high summer.

On 21st February, I will be conducting the marriage of Nichola and Peter at a URC in Lancashire – and, again, there is more than a hint of role reversal on this occasion. Nichola's dad is a full-time pastor within the URC, and he will be doing the traditional 'Dad' thing on the day...the walk down the aisle, the speech after the meal and the near-silence in the service (apart from singing). As uncharacteristic for him as it is for me! I have known Nichola and her family since she was a very little girl – indeed, she and Beth did a number of church camps together – and she always said that she would like me to conduct the marriage. I am moved to be able to do so...and saddened that the wedding has had to be brought forward from a date later in the year, because of very particular circumstances within the family.

At one level, I suppose that I should be asking folk to pray for fine weather in February...but at another, thoughts about 'playing a different role' are going around my mind. Most of us like the familiarity and the comfort of the tried and tested; we like the security of a role – the responsibility – a job which we know and understand well. Once we have settled into a particular 'space' within the community of the church, we tend to assume that that is it: the Spirit has taken us to a place, and will allow us to remain there ever hereafter. Not so! The Spirit often ensures that we *don't* become too comfortable; the God of surprises can lead us into responsibilities that we wouldn't have considered previously; all of us – potentially – can find ourselves in situations where we have to look at our 'other' self squarely in the face.

A part of the journey of faith is about that openness to the unexpected which frequently appears central to the continuing plans of God.

With much love in Christ,



Sunday Worship during February

Sunday 2nd February

10.30am Morning worship including the Lord's Supper, led by Neil Riches
Key passage: Matthew 5.1 – 12

Worship will be followed by First Sunday Lunch – a light lunch and fellowship, to which all are invited; the Elders' 'consultation' takes place following lunch

Sunday 9th February

10.30am Morning worship led by Neil Johnson

Worship will be followed by the monthly church meeting at noon – all welcome

2.45pm for 3.00pm Children's Church – 'Making waves' The story of Jonah

6.30pm Circuit Praise – *lively and informal worship*

Sunday 16th February

10.30am Morning worship led by Neil Riches Key passage: Matthew 5.21 – 37

Worship will be followed by the monthly concert at 1.00pm – details elsewhere.

Free admission, with retiring offering to defray expenses

Sunday 23rd February

10.30am Morning worship led by Neil Riches Key passage: Matthew 5.38 – 48

This is all-age worship, with children and young people 'staying in' for the full service; there will be crèche provision at the back of the Church Room

5.30pm Radical Worship: we meet at 5.30pm for 'Night Service' – a reflective bus journey around a part of the city (fares paid!), followed by prayer and reflection back at church

Carrs Lane Players

The next play will be 'When We Are Married', by J B Priestley which is by arrangement with Samuel French Ltd. The performances will be on Thursday 20 and Friday 21 February 2014 at 7.30 pm, and on Saturday 22 February 2014 at 5.30 pm. Ticket prices have been held at £7 each.

Set around the year 1908 this British comedy centres on three couples who gather to celebrate their 40th wedding anniversaries. The play was written in 1938 and remains a favourite with audiences today.



Suppers will be available on Thursday 20 February and Friday 21 February at 6.00 pm, costing £5 and Afternoon Tea on Saturday 22 February at 4.00 pm is £4.

Tickets are now on sale by Carrs Lane Players or from the office at the Church at Carrs Lane. We played to large audiences last year, so recommend that you book early to avoid disappointment.

Notices

Forthcoming events at the Windermere Centre. February 7-9 Finding Your Voice. 7-9 Faith, Hope & Chronic Illness. 12-14 Rock & redemption. 14-16 iChurch Level 2. Contact Anne Veitch for more information.

Thursday 27 February Meet the new Jubilee Debt Campaign Director at 1 Colmore Row (8th floor). Buffet meal at 6.30pm (bring some to share if you can) meeting at 7.00pm. The new Director Sarah-Jayne Clifton will speak on 'Life before debt: why we need a debt Jubilee at home and abroad'.

On Saturday 8 March, the Sikh Nari Manch is planning an inter-faith event in Erdington to celebrate International Women's Day. The theme is '**Spirit and Wellbeing**' - focussing on women's health and Well-being and how different faith traditions promote and support this, inspired by their scripture or tradition. We are looking for women from different faiths to share a story, parable, event from history, scripture or music from their faith tradition, which epitomises this theme from their faith perspective. If you would like to participate as a speaker please email details to membersbcf@gmail.com.

Sunday 9 March Birmingham Scout Association in conjunction with Birmingham Council of Faiths, **Faiths for Fun Event** 1.30 – 5.30pm, for youngsters 7½ to 12 years of different faiths to have fun and learn together about other faiths. £1 per participant. Hamstead Hall Community Learning Centre, Handsworth, B20 1HL. Application forms from Peter Rookes, pjrookes@gmail.com or tel. 477 2282.

Tuesday 11 March Sacred Space Meal 7.00pm. You are invited to join an interfaith group for a buffet meal at the Unitarian Hall in Ryland Street, Five Ways. Speaker Revd Barry Clark on Interfaith Chaplaincy in a busy city hospital. £8. See Pat Davies to book and for further details

Saturday 15 March Burning the Book of Debt,– The artist Alinah Azadeh will present debate and drama on the effects of debt as explained to her by people in Birmingham. There will be discussion in St Philips Cathedral, at 2.40pm then at 3.15pm activities in the square culminating in the burning of the book at 4.15pm.

Monday 17 March *In the Wilderness Together* – an evening for Christians and Muslims to think about how we live in a secular society being faithful to our beliefs and engaging with the world. Speakers The Very Revd Catherine Ogle, Dean of Birmingham and Muhammad Sarfraz Madni, Chairman of the Mosques and Imams National Advisory Board. With discussion and questions. 7.15pm at The faithful Neighbourhoods Centre, B11 4LX. £5. More details from Mrs Parm Sidhu at parms@faithfulneighbourhoods.org.

Tuesday 18th March Would YOU like to participate in an assimilated Emergency Planning and Response Exercise situation at Birmingham International Airport on the evening of? If so, please contact my colleague, Ade Powney at the British Red Cross at APowney@redcross.org.uk. All out of pocket expenses are paid. We're always looking for willing First Aid volunteers- no previous training necessary.

Christian Aid

January 12th saw thirteen brave swimmers from Carrs Lane achieve a total of 390 lengths at the Birmingham University's Munrow Centre; two people swam 1Km and our young swimmers completed 21 lengths.

Many thanks to all who took part and to those who supported our team. Ed



Amnesty International Greetings Card Campaign 2013 Write for Rights

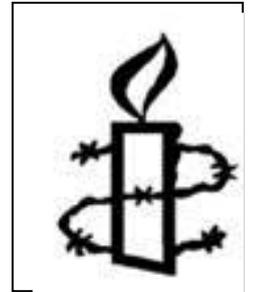
Thank you so much to everybody who contributed to the Amnesty Write for Rights Campaign by sending Greetings Cards to Prisoners of Conscience and their families, during worship in December last year, also to everybody who took cards home to write. I would also like to thank everybody who donated money towards postage, cards and also gave stamps. As a result of everybody's effort we sent about 120 cards, more than we have ever done before. In fact we nearly ran out of cards on the day.

In early 2012, Neil suggested that we try a different format for the campaign and so we decided to write the cards during worship. This is the second year that we have written the cards this way and many people appreciate the quiet and the space to concentrate on the people we were being asked to contact.

We know your messages of support mean a huge amount, because the recipients have told Amnesty so. *Yorm Bopha to whom we wrote this year says:*

Thank you to Amnesty International's Supporters. Your campaign has been a success as my release shows. The case is not over yet. Keep pushing the Cambodian Government to end the case against me. We can achieve to most success when we all work together.

Please do let me know if you too receive a reply from anybody. I will then forward the information to Amnesty in London. For further information you can look up the website www.amnesty.org.uk/gcc



Thank you to everybody. Christine Rowntree

Christmas Card Collection for Restore

Please pass on our thanks to members of The Church of Carrs Lane for their generous donations totalling £260 in lieu of sending Christmas cards. We do appreciate your church's support of Restore in befriending refugees and those seeking sanctuary.



This gift will be put towards meeting the costs of Restore's social activities for lone asylum seeking men and women. Last month, for example, my colleague Jess initiated a visit to the Birmingham Conservatoire. Twelve asylum seeker women and 2 volunteers enjoyed a free concert and then shared together at the Edwardian Café in the Museum and Art Gallery. Some of the women talked of experiencing live classical music for the first time in their lives. Such activities are much valued by our asylum seeker friends as they assist integration by offering recreation, social interaction, learning and fun.

With thanks and best wishes
Shari Brown, Project Coordinator

Disasters Emergency Committee Thanks

Firstly I want to say thank you for your generous gift of £500 to the DEC Philippines Typhoon Appeal. Because of your generosity we can provide hope to some of the millions whose lives have been turned upside down by the devastation of Typhoon Haiyan.

Hope to people like 10-year-old Rafael, who lost his father when the typhoon struck. His cries for help did not go un-noticed; it was you and many others like you that decided to answer his call. Now, we can provide people like Rafael with food, shelter and urgent medical supplies. We simply could not do this without you, so once more on behalf of all those affected by this disaster, who will receive aid because of you, we say thank you.



With very best wishes, Saleh Saeed, Chief Executive

Lent Study Group 2014

This year's Lent study group will meet at church at 7.30pm on a Thursday evening (don't forget Community Prayers beforehand at 7pm!). Following discussion about communion at a recent church meeting, we will be following a course entitled 'Facing the Challenge: Meals with Jesus'.

Dates and topics/passages are as follows:

6th March	In Levi's home: Luke 5.27 – 32
13th March	In Simon's home: Luke 7.36 – 50
20th March	In Mary and Martha's home: Luke 10.38 – 42
27th March	In a pharisee's home: Luke 11.37 – 53
3rd April	In another pharisee's home: Luke 14.1 – 24
10th April	In Zacchaeus's home: Luke 19.1 – 10
17th April	In a home in Jerusalem: Luke 22.7 – 38

Water Aid

At the January meeting Harborne House Group were told of the Water Aid appeal for Lent in 2014, and in view of the current experiences of people in the UK it highlighted the difficulties many countries suffer constantly through lack of clean water. To find out more about this visit www.wateraid.org/lent or email lent@wateraid.org or speak to Phil Parkin.



The Passing of Greatness

On December 9, 2013, 65,000 people braved strong rains to gather in the Olympic Soccer Field in South Africa to pay tribute to a man named Nelson Mandela. They were joined by over one hundred heads of state from around the world, the largest number ever to attend a funeral service for a king, a president, a prime minister or a pope. The rain was not just endured, it was treated as an omen of blessing. My cousin, Bernard Spong, a long time battler against Apartheid in that land from his position as the executive head of the Congregational Churches of South Africa, has told me that rain at a wedding or a funeral is regarded in Africa as a sign of divine favour. The people, these political leaders, and perhaps even the rain, came to pay tribute to a man who had spent 27 years of his adult life in prison, but who had discovered in the words of St. Paul that, "God works in all things for good." This man expanded the potential of what it means to be human in ways that most people can still hardly imagine. On this first day of a New Year in human history, it seems fitting that I pause to pay tribute to this person who probably did more to alter the affairs of this world in his lifetime than anyone else who died in the year 2013.

Nelson Mandela was born in 1918 in the village of Mvezo and raised in the village of Qunu, where he is now buried. He was a member of the Xhosa tribe and his given name was Rolihlabia, which literally means "troublemaker." From the perspective of the ruling class of South Africa's Dutch descendants, known as the Afrikaans, he would more than live up to his name. His father was a chief of the Thembu people, who are a subdivision of the Xhosa nation. At his birth, this area was considered part of the Transkei, a former British protectorate in the South. His father had been stripped of his chieftainship by the British for the "crime of insubordination." This family was, however, proud of its roots and its heritage. They were conditioned never to accept the definition of inferiority that their oppressors sought to impose on them. They believed that humanity had dignity and they understood that "black is beautiful" long before that phrase was coined by the civil rights movement. Nelson Mandela, endowed with this noble heritage, was also an heir to his family's unwillingness to be subordinate to anyone. No prison and no amount of time could ever destroy that definition of his being.

The history of his nation on the southern-most part of the continent of Africa was a troubled one, bound up as it was with the colonial search for wealth. Both the Dutch and the English vied for control of South Africa's gold and diamonds. The Boer Wars (1880-1881 and 1899-1902), which pitted the British against the Dutch settlers, were fought three to four decades before Mandela's birth. Those wars resulted in a British victory that produced in the Afrikaans population a seething resentment that was not relieved until after World War II when the Dutch population finally came to power politically and instituted the policy of Apartheid, which began the systematic subjugation of black people. Natives of Africa lost their citizenship and were relocated to assigned "territories" or "homelands," which the ruling Dutch party had carved out of those areas of the nation that the white community did not want. The land in the "territories" was so poor that poverty for black people was assured and survival was at risk. A forced separation of the blacks from the whites became law. Black people were not allowed in white areas after sundown. The police force in this

police state had no black officers. At all times, black people had to carry identification passes; and to be without a pass was a sure way to jail. Very few black people were allowed passports to enable them to leave the country.

Black children were not to be educated except to the level necessary for them to do menial tasks, which was thought by the white population to be all that they were capable of achieving. Nelson Mandela came to maturity in that kind of world.

Given his ability and royal background, Mandela became a lawyer, although at that time he still had no law degree. He then identified himself with the resistance movement and began to live on the edges of what in that land was deemed to be "legal." When there is no legal way to redress grievances, people will inevitably employ illegal means to guarantee their survival. Mandela joined the African National Congress. He participated in guerilla activities against his government. Ultimately he was arrested and served a prison term in a Johannesburg jail. When released, he returned to the work of the ANC and was arrested again, this time on charges of sabotage and treason, both capital crimes. In the subsequent trial the South African government asked for the death penalty. By this time, the impressive and articulate Mandela had been chosen by the ANC to be the face of the black resistance movement and great national attention was focused on his trial. The General Assembly of the United Nations even passed an almost unanimous resolution calling on the South African government to spare his life. It was successful as one of the defendants was released and the other four, including Mandela, were sentenced to life imprisonment on Robben Island, a maximum security prison. Nelson Mandela was 44 years old when he entered this prison. He was 71 when he was released. In that time he went from being an inmate to negotiating the transfer of power in South Africa from the white minority to the black majority. This was accomplished without civil war and Mandela became the first elected black president. This peaceful transfer of political power was unprecedented in World history. Mandela became a universally admired human being, honoured in his life and in his death by the whole world. How did this miracle happen? Nelson Mandela had out-loved and out-lived his enemies. I do not mean that he out-lived them in years, though he did that too, but he out-lived them in the quality of his life and in the essence of his humanity.

I watched South Africa's struggle from the vantage point of one engaged in America struggle over segregation, our version of Apartheid. Transition times in national life are never easy. I was serving a church in Lynchburg, Virginia, when Mandela was sentenced to life in prison. Our segregation battle was fierce in the South. The pastor of the Thomas Road Baptist Church in Lynchburg was one Jerry Falwell, who started what today is known as Liberty Baptist University as a segregation academy. Falwell publicly referred to Nelson Mandela as a "communist" and stated that the Apartheid government of South Africa was the only thing keeping all of Africa from becoming a communist continent. In those days, the charge of communism was levelled at any force which threatened the status quo of white power.

In 1976, as a new bishop, I made my first trip to South Africa. Apartheid was in full force. I stood on the boundary between Soweto, the black city, and Johannesburg, the white city, and watched the flood of black workers come into the city when morning broke and then retreat into Soweto when evening began to fall. About three weeks before I had arrived, riots in Soweto had been put down with massive police

force, resulting in the killing of several hundred, mostly teenage black young people, whose bodies were hurled unceremoniously onto flat bed trucks by the white police and taken to the morgue, where grieving parents came in search of their deceased children, The voice of Soweto, interpreting the riots to the world, was the Dean of St. Mary's Cathedral, a man named Desmond Tutu.

While in Johannesburg on that occasion, I joined with eight other Anglican bishops to consecrate Desmond Tutu to be the bishop of Lesotho, one of the "black territories." At the meetings I attended, held in a conference centre in Rosettenville, a suburb of Johannesburg, blacks and whites roomed together in violation of the Apartheid laws. It was my first taste of civil disobedience. Desmond and I became close friends and we were able on three occasions to get him out of South Africa and into the Diocese of Newark to alleviate the pressure under which he lived, as his career and influence grew. He later became the Bishop of Johannesburg and eventually the Primate and Archbishop of Cape Town. On this visit I also met with many in the resistance movement and even talked with some under house arrest on the lawn outside their homes. When Desmond's passport was taken away and he could no longer travel, I personally went to the South African Embassy in Washington to register my protest and to hear them speak of Desmond with derision.

In 2007 I returned to South Africa to do a series of lectures at universities in Pretoria and Johannesburg. Apartheid was now dead, but its effects lingered. By this time, Nelson Mandela had served his term as president, declining to run for a second. Thabo Mbeki had become the second black president of South Africa. On this occasion, we toured the new government buildings and were taken by my cousin Bernard to the place where Mandela had served time in the Johannesburg prison, now a museum. We read the new South African Constitution which banned discrimination on every basis: race, creed, gender and sexual orientation. We saw the Nelson Mandela Bridge. We ate with black friends in restaurants that had once been closed to people of colour. We saw the effects of Mandela's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, designed to make forgiveness, not vengeance, the way to remove the evil of the past. We saw how this great man, who had moderated the bitterness of Apartheid in the black population and had reassured the white population that was living in fear of revenge. He made a united South Africa possible. These were the gifts of Nelson Mandela to his nation and to the world. He was one of those people who showed the world what it means to transcend the survival fears rooted in our biology and to live out a new understanding of humanity based on wholeness, forgiveness and the common good. Such lives are rare, but surely Nelson Mandela was one of them.

A child looking at a stained glass window of a saint in a dark church once noted that a saint must be a figure through whom the light enters the world. Given that definition, I nominate Nelson Mandela for sainthood.

John Shelby Spong

Christmas Messages from Around the World

South Africa

We went on our first Meet the People (Traidcraft) Holiday in 2008 to South Africa. Our first night's stay was at the Caledon Villa in Stellenbosch. It was run by a Christian family who worked a lot with children. The first thing I saw on arriving was an elephant money box that we were selling in our shop at Carrs Lane. Ever since then we have had a Christmas letter from them. I am not sure how old Ode is but thought her poem worth sharing.

*In this sense I wish every one of you
to grasp every opportunity you are given with both hands,
to enjoy every day that you are granted to its full,
to be grateful for small things,
to be kind,
and to shower the blessings you receive
on every one you meet each day.
May this Christmas be special and full of joy,
may you get time to reflect and rest,
and may you start the new year afresh
with all the courage and spirit you need.*

Joan Duffield

Cyprus

Some years ago we made friends with a URC Minister who had gone on to be an RAF Chaplain based in Cyprus. He was worshipping at Carrs Lane during a sabbatical. We always kept in touch and a pleasure of Christmas was the hilarious 'round robin' letter that came each year, making even every day events sound amusing, despite some family traumas along the way. This always was balanced with a deep faith - quite a skill!

Sadly Geoff died suddenly on Boxing Day, 2012, so we did not expect our usual funny note this year. But we had misjudged his widow, although parts of her letter were obviously sad, and private, we thought her description of Geoff's funeral amusing enough to share:-

He was buried in Lania village cemetery (there is no cremation in Cyprus) on January 4th. Those of you who knew him well will remember his 'what went wrong' funeral stories, and he would have enjoyed his own! The service at the church was just what we wanted - a real celebration of his life - but when it got to the cemetery it descended into a farce. The rain poured down and the village priest, whom, with our limited understanding of Greek, we understood would just give a quick Orthodox blessing, obviously decided that his mate Geoff should have the whole works. So when the gravediggers didn't produce the oil and wine (as is routine for the Orthodox) he threw what can only be described as the biggest hussy fit ever..... Even those who had no Greek at all got the message! The rain continued to pour, the ground was muddy, but eventually the oil and wine arrive (from the local taverna) - but only after our minister filled the time with a very appropriate ad-libbed 'remembrance' address. Topmost in my mind was the memory of Geoff telling the

tale of the young funeral director who fell into the grave when G was taking a burial service.... Yes the very chap who was standing by my side!

Another story I think Geoff would enjoy would be when, asked for clothes by the funeral director , I decided that his best RAF Blue would be good. Of course, it was nowhere to be found, so mess kit it was to be.... But only later did I discover his epaulettes in a drawer. Not only that but I decided he would have all his qualifications following his name on the order of service, but whoops I got one wrong - I put M.Ed instead of B.Phil.Ed. So when he presented himself at "Head Quarters" not only was he improperly dressed, he was bearing the wrong credentials.... But I know they let him in anyway!

Margaret and Bob Cross

Japan

At their nursery my daughter was friendly with a little girl from Japan whose family was staying locally whilst her father studied Shakespeare at Birmingham University. Her mum was anxious to learn about English life so our friendship also grew as we shared recipes in our homes, whilst the children played. Hiroshi went on to become a professor of Shakespeare on their return to Japan. We still correspond at Christmas and have followed the children's progress with interest over the years. The 2013 letter brought back happy memories of our young families growing and learning together, along with some photos of dishes which I believe would have made a good impression for the Great British Bake-off! :-

"Season's Greetings

28 years have passed since our time in Birmingham. I realize those years have marked our lives in many ways. Hiroshi is getting frail but continues his studies in a more relaxed way at home. Fumiko (Jenny's friend) returned from her ICRC mission in Darfur, Sudan in July. She enjoyed several months ' holiday in Japan before leaving for another ICRC mission in Laos in October. Midoli is a mother of three lively children - a 14yr old daughter, 11yr old son, and an 8yr old daughter. She is a good cook, just like you. Shogo, now a professional photographer is busy in Tokyo and he seldom returns home. The internet helps us keep in touch.

As for me I praise God for letting me know you. You taught me well - the culture, different customs and practices, our children's education, cooking cakes and pastries.... The long list goes on. You were my true British teacher! I cannot thank you enough. I am sure you can identify the pictures - pineapple upside down pudding and scones - amongst the recipes I learnt from you - are still my family's favourites.

Thank you for thinking about us during the Japan earthquake and tsunami.

Fortunately we were not directly affected by them.

Pat Davies



Done and Dusted for Another Year!

How long does Christmas last for a minister? About six weeks, is my guess... This year, it started when I led Advent worship in Blackburn on 1st December – and effectively came to a close with Worship for Epiphany at Carrs Lane on 5th January. Many of you know that it is *not* my favourite time of year (reasons why...another time, another place!), but I do relish the opportunities which it brings and I do love some of the great themes, particularly the challenges of Advent. So, as a rather cautious participant in the whole thing, what memories of Christmas 2013 will linger as we move on in 2014? If what follows may be puzzling for you, it does make sense to me!

I recall – and treasure – the explanation given by a young Brownie present at Trinity's Christingle service to my question, 'What is a symbol?' In a season rich with symbolism, her straightforward grasp of something which lies at the heart of faith was both sobering and encouraging. Believe it or not, I enjoyed hoovering the church – Hall Green Baptist Church – prior to a mid-week shared service of Christmas worship there: it seemed an entirely fitting act of preparation, not least because of the life-sized tableau of the key figures in the nativity stories present in church. After Christmas morning service, I arrived home to find that the radio had been left on (accidentally) – and it was home to enter an empty house to the sounds of a favourite carol being sung to a contemporary setting. Finally, I did something which I do every year: reread all the Christmas cards (in one sitting!) on the day on which our decorations were taken down...I offer a short prayer for all those who have remembered us, and give thanks for so much love and friendship.

Nothing of rocket science, then...and a very quirky list of 'high points', but it works – and worked – for me. What worked for you?

Neil

Notes From the Organ Bench

Our choir members are always very busy in the lead-up to Christmas, both preparing for our Carol Service, and with additional commitments with various other community choirs in the area. Nevertheless, the choir did manage to shoe-horn an additional engagement into their diaries – quite different from our usual activities, and very worthwhile and rewarding. As reported by Pam Turner:

"It began with a 'getting-to-know-you' conversation during the Carrs Lane Walking Weekend at Willersley Castle in Derbyshire in October. I work as a chaplain for the Birmingham & Solihull Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust and following the weekend one of the choir members asked if we'd like the choir to give a short concert for patients. Creating and maintaining sympathetic community links is an important part of what we do as a Spiritual Care Department so I was delighted! There was a flurry of emails and a change of venue from the original due to a double booking on the only evening the choir could offer. Then it happened. About ten members of the choir gave up a precious evening eight days before Christmas to

sing for a small group of patients and staff at one of the Mental Health Trust's units where elderly folk with very complex needs are cared for.

When brain function is disrupted or chaotic, and short-term memory gone, music has the capacity to reach into the recesses of the mind and call up memories and associations not otherwise accessible. Feedback from staff was most appreciative. Thank you, Tim and team, for your presence – at the end of a working day for some - and your singing of the familiar and the not so familiar!

I overheard one of the choir members saying 'maybe we could come again from time to time and make it our choir practice?' The ward manager would be delighted if that were to happen!"

Pamela Turner

We may well do something similar in the coming months. Meanwhile, recruitment efforts for In8 Voices have started in earnest – watch this space.

Tim Batty (Church Musician)

Upcoming Sunday Lunchtime Concerts, all at 1 pm (admission free, retiring collection):

16 th February	Junior Conservatoire
16 th March	Birmingham Schools Recorder Symphonia
20 th April	Vellen Ensemble (Piano Trio)
18 th May	Romanesca Tre (Recorder Trio)
15 th June	Cristi Bacanu (Violin)

Thank You for the Music...

Fifty minutes of stunning performance; four piano pieces, two by Bach, then Mozart and Chopin; not a sheet of music anywhere; intense concentration; the church room reverberating to the ceiling with the sound; fingers flying across the keyboard. It was spine-tingling!

That was the January lunchtime concert, truly a feast of music-making by Jill Crossland. It was a riveting performance, not surprising given her professional profile, but an utter mystery to me...simply awesome!



This was not an experience shared by many with, disappointingly, only about twenty people in the audience, maybe because of the change to third Sundays I hope that was a blip. This is a wonderful opportunity to have music in our laps and the effort involved in making it possible is much appreciated by those of us who do attend.

Thank you, Tim!
Julie Grove

A Story You Can't Contain

It has never before been told like this. The BBC is planning to dramatise the final moments before Jesus Christ's crucifixion using a giant cross made up of dozens of shipping containers. It will tell the Easter story in a live spectacle on the north east coast in an attempt to appeal to non-religious viewers put off by traditional church services. Up to 80 shipping containers will be placed on the sea front of South Shields, providing a walk-through set for a series of dance and musical performances in an hour-long programme on BBC1. The scale of the cross, which will be longer than St Paul's Cathedral, is intended to replicate the length of the path trodden by Christ on the way to His crucifixion. The BBC believes that the show, due to be broadcast on Good Friday will attract viewers who would not be drawn to its traditional Easter broadcasting.

From Ideas Forum – Association Church Editors

Si Senior! – Volunteers needed

Would you like to be involved in an exciting overseas volunteering programme? Are you over 50? Are you available to volunteer between March and the end of June and to travel abroad for three weeks during this period? "Si Senior!" is an exciting European Volunteering Programme for over 50's. It is a partnership between BVSC and the Spanish Association Gantalcala which is based in Rioja, Spain and funded by Gruntvig as part of the European Commission's Lifelong Learning Programme. During the course of the project BVSC will send senior volunteers to Spain for a period of 3 weeks during May and in turn will host senior volunteers from Spain during June. The cost of travel, accommodation, travel insurance and meals will be covered, however you may require a little spending money. Places are limited so please register your interest by attending our open evening on the 26th February or with donnaa@bvsc.org or tel: 0121 678 8804.

"I was a Stranger and you made me welcome"

As part of our community agreement, we have made an active commitment to volunteering in the city: *"Living as a Christian Community allows us to experience the love of God and the love of others, a love which inspires us to a ministry of service. Our community must be outward looking and mindful of the poor."*

Among other things, I spend one day a week teaching English at St Chad's Sanctuary, a centre supporting refugees and asylum seekers.

Writing about St Chad's Sanctuary has proved more difficult than I anticipated. I think the difficulty lies here: my time there is a life-giving and positive experience. I want to write in celebration of something I have come to value very highly. But those who come are among the most vulnerable of our society: people who have lived horrific experiences in their home countries, and who continue to suffer trials and exclusion here. How do I write of my joy in being with them, without appearing to glory in their

suffering? How do I explain why a place where my students' descriptions of their lives can bring me close to tears, is a place of joy and life?

My students come from all over the world. Most have very little and they have often left much behind. Often they have come alone, leaving their families and bringing only their fears for their wellbeing. But for all their struggles, they are on average, the most motivated students I have ever taught, coming as they do with a deep desire to learn, to be able to be part of society here, and with a belief that something better is possible.

Perhaps ultimately, my love for St Chad's Sanctuary is very simple. It is a place that gives me life because it is a place of hope. In spite of everything in their past and their present, my students are people of hope. Perhaps because they know what real suffering looks like, they also know the meaning of true hope: a hope which is tangible, even if it is hard to explain. And I feel hugely privileged that they are able to share a part of that hope with me.

<http://www.stchadssanctuary.com>

I am here
And in amongst
The cold grey concrete
Is a silence
Which does not sing
Like the warm red dust
Of home

That offered hope
That does not seem
So golden as it looked
When glimpsed
From in amongst
My shattered
war torn
Home

And will you look
And try to see
That I am me
Just me

Or will you turn
Your eyes away
From all I've lived
And loved
And lost

And will you hear
My children's tears
For what they hoped

And dared to dream
That cannot be

Or will you turn
Your ears away
From faltered words
That cannot say
All I have brought
And wish to
Give

And all is cold
So cold
As I stand hunched
Against harsh grey skies
And biting wind
And bitter, angry fear

Until
You hold
A hand out to me
And speak
A whispered breath
Of warmth
And welcome

When you notice
That I
Just I
I am here

Steph Neville

As we consider the idea of City of Sanctuary here at Carrs Lane, you may find the following useful.

City of Sanctuary is a national movement to build a culture of hospitality for people seeking sanctuary in the UK. It is a place of safety and welcome for people whose lives are in danger in their own countries. Its goal is to create a network of towns and cities throughout the UK which are proud to be places of safety, and which include people seeking sanctuary fully in the life of their communities.

A 'City of Sanctuary' is a place where a broad range of local organizations, community groups and faith communities, as well as individuals, are publicly committed to welcoming and including people seeking sanctuary and where:

- the skills and cultures of people seeking sanctuary are valued, where they are included in local communities and able to contribute to the life of the city.
- community groups, local government, media, business, schools and colleges have a shared commitment to offering sanctuary, so that it is seen as part of the city's identity by local people.
- people seeking sanctuary can easily build relationships with local people as neighbours, friends and colleagues. Through these relationships, local people come to understand the injustices refugees face, and become motivated to support and defend them.

Starting a Local City of Sanctuary Initiative - Some questions to consider:

- 1, What is our vision for our town/city as a City of Sanctuary?
- 2, Who do we want on our core group? How will it be structured?
- 3, What other groups & networks can offer us support?
- 4, How can we attract and motivate helpers and volunteers?
- 5, What money or other resources will we need? How can we obtain them?
- 6, How will we approach local organisations for pledges of support?
- 7, How will we encourage supporting organisations to put pledges into practice & keep track of what they are doing?
- 8, How will we establish a working relationship with the Council?
- 9, How can we share our vision of a City of Sanctuary with the whole population of our town/city?
- 10, How will we celebrate and record our achievements?

A Kind of Parable...

Very loosely, anyway: a kind of 'PS' to the story of the civic service. You may recall that the Civic Service was held on the same day as a Street Banquet at Carrs Lane – Christian service modelled on Jesus' story of the Great Feast. A number of our guests at the Street Banquet went on to the Civic Service – and I later met up with one of them at the reception in the Council House. He told me that he had been going to the reception for several years, and that nobody ever asked to see the invitations! I have to say that I allowed myself a wry smile – and decided that this was entirely appropriate...quite in keeping with the parable at the heart of our meal in the afternoon. He was very keen that the Lord Mayor had an opportunity to share in the life of the Choir with No Name, and handed him a CWNN card at the reception. Would but that we were all as adept at networking!

Neil

Street Banquet

Our most recent Street Banquet was held on the afternoon of Sunday, 19th January. The Church at Carrs Lane hosts this regular event, when on this occasion 80 guests were welcomed for food and fellowship, supported by volunteers from a variety of churches. That morning in worship I described the Street Banquet as being the most visible expression of our ministry to those people on the margins of our city.

Over the years we have built good relationships with people who attend the Street Banquet, which was always the hope for this Social Gospel project. In Jesus' parable of the Great Feast we are told that people on the margins of a local community were welcomed into the home of the King. What is not described is the atmosphere in that packed palace and the conversations which took place between the guests and their host. On Street Banquet Sundays the church foyer bustles with life as people relax over a meal and share their concerns and hopes.

The day after the recent Street Banquet the Birmingham Churches Winter Shelter project began. Seven churches in central Birmingham, including Saint Martin in the Bull Ring, are involved with the Winter Shelter this year. Due to the increase in social need, including a rise in the number of people sleeping rough on the streets of our city, the shelter project has extended its provision for two months and is offering more bed spaces.

For more information on ministry with the city's homeless community and the developments in the Birmingham Christian Homelessness Forum please contact me at njohnson@birminghammethodistcircuit.org.uk or on 0121- 616 1800, or speak to me on the Sundays when I am leading morning worship at The Church at Carrs Lane.

We follow Jesus, "the Son of Man who has nowhere to lay his head" (Matthew 8:20)

Neil Johnson

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MHA - Selly Oak Live At Home Scheme

In January 2014 the Scheme will have been running for one year and we offer our sincere thanks to all our friends, members, associates and volunteers who have supported us thus far. We look forward to our continued mutual partnership. There are 10 signed up members to whom we are offering befriending and shopping support, and 21 volunteers who have worked tirelessly over the months to make this possible.

Membership of the Scheme is on a subscription basis of £5 per month and a small charge made for other services and/or activities accessed.

Quote from a member of the Scheme: "I look forward to the visit from my kind volunteer each week. She cheers me up and helps me to feel more positive. I enjoyed taking part in an outing with some of the other members of the group, and it was good to be able to chat to others in a similar situation".

Selly Oak Methodist Church is continuing to run coffee mornings with occasional lunches on Tuesdays for which Open House will charge a small amount each week. We continue with our recruitment drive for volunteers and our attendance at the University's Jobs & Volunteering Fair in October was a success. Over 20 students expressed interest in working with us in their spare time to help the elderly within the areas that we cover. References and DBS clearance are in progress for 7 of these students so far.

For more information call 0121 472 5913 or email sellyoak.liveathome@mha.org.uk

The Food Bank

In the middle of 2013 a member of the congregation suggested, that in view of the economic climate and the changes in the benefit system we should be collecting food for a food bank, as the number of people finding themselves hungry was increasing. Investigations were made and it was found that our nearest one was operated by the Trussell Trust from St Matthew's Church in Nechells. This was very appropriate as The Church at Carrs Lane has a long association with that part of the city.

It was agreed that at the Harvest service in September dried and tinned food would be collected and donated to the Food Bank. On that occasion a large amount of food was given.

On a Sunday morning there is now a collection point at the back of the Church in which appropriate tins and packets can be put. As a result, seven more loads of food have been delivered to St Matthew's. **The kind of food that is particularly required is tinned meat and fish, tinned fruit, small packets of sugar and fruit juice.** A full list of what can be donated is beside the collecting box but people are requested **not** to donate baked beans or tinned spaghetti as there is a surplus of these products.

The food bank is designed to help individuals and families in crisis through the provision of emergency food supplies. Local care professionals in the Aston and Nechells area refer people, with a food voucher to the food bank centre where they are given three days of emergency food supplies, a cup of tea or coffee and help in finding other professionals who can help them out of their crisis.

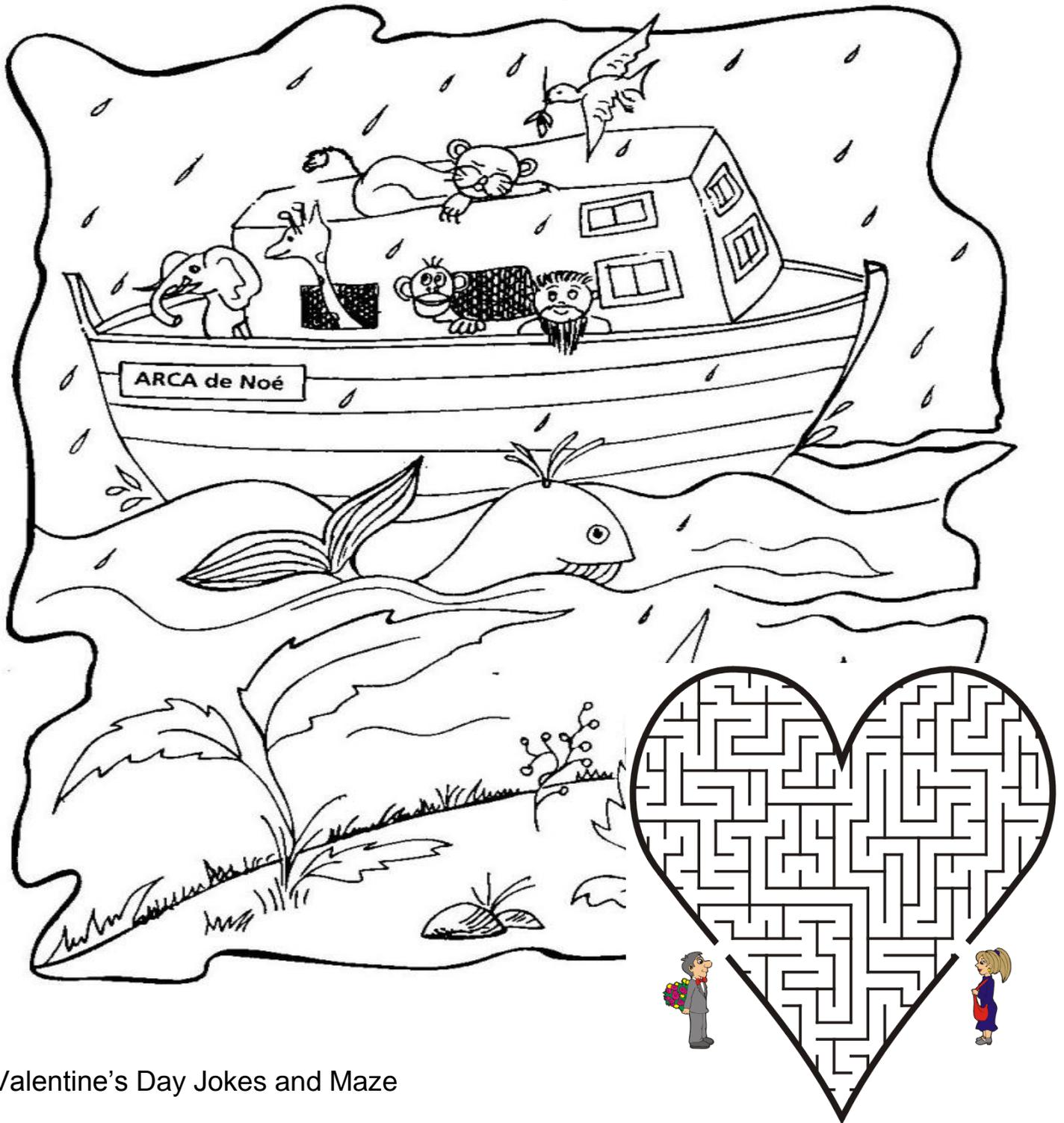
The food bank also supports existing agencies working with the distressed and destitute by donating food in bulk. The food bank allows the general public to contribute to and support local well-being in a simple practical way. Further information can be obtained from me or from www.astonnechells.foodbank.org.uk.

It is quite appalling that there should be people in Britain, in this day and age, who are having to rely of this kind of help because they are hungry as a result of changes in their lives over which they may have no control, something about which the current government seems to be in denial. However, it is hoped that the small part that we can play in collecting food will help people out of a crisis.

Simon and I would appreciate it if there was somebody else who might be able to take food to St Matthew's occasionally as we are not always available.

Christine Rowntree





Valentine's Day Jokes and Maze

- Q: What do squirrels give for Valentine's Day? A: Forget-me-nuts.
Q: Did Adam and Eve ever have a date? A: No, but they had an apple.
Q: Why did the banana go out with the prune? A: Because it couldn't get a date.
Q: What is a vampire's sweetheart called? A: His ghou-friend.
Q: If your aunt ran off to get married, what would you call her? A: Antelope.
Q: Why did the pig give his girlfriend a box of candy? A: It was Valenswine's Day!
Q: What is a ram's favorite song? A: I only have eyes for ewe, Dear
Q: What did the caveman give his wife on Valentine's Day? A: Ughs and kisses!
Q: What kind of flowers do you never give on Valentine's Day? A: Cauliflowers!

Commitment for Life: *Story (from Moving Stories 166)*

3pm A Friday afternoon on a sleepy road above Beit Sahour. The ancient olive groves seem untouched for centuries. A car arrives, and then another. A bus pulls up with guests from a convention. Mass is to be celebrated among the olive trees by the local priest. It is worship and not a demonstration, but each week more people, of all ages, have gathered. The children play tag around the legs of the adults, and some young men plant a Palestinian flag.

This land belongs to a Roman Catholic convent. But the ownership is irrelevant. Above the olive grove, but creeping nearer, is the separation barrier. It is routed through this spot. These ancient olive groves will be torn up. The priest elevates the host. The multinational interfaith gathering shuffle into lines, and move forward to receive it. The peace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

©Rev Muriel Pearson

“Our Church is a church of people who pray and serve. This prayer and service is prophetic, bearing the voice of God in the present and future. Everything that happens in our land, everyone who lives there, all the peace and hopes, all the injustice and all the efforts to stop this injustice, are part and parcel of the prayer of our church”

(Kairos Palestine 3.4)

Prayer

Stay with us, Lord in the uncertain moments.

With your Holy Spirit raise us from our hopelessness, wipe away our disbelief and strengthen our faith, so that our hearts will burn to proclaim your resurrection, Your eternal life springing forth and bringing hope.

©Rev Kathy Galloway

“O Lord, be gracious to us; we wait for you. Be our arm every morning, our salvation in time of trouble.” (Isaiah 33:2)

Little boy: Mummy what is the sea like? Please take me to the sea.

Mother: “I can’t - It is against the law.”

Friend: Come with me and my family, we will take you.”

And so it happened that a little boy – and his mother – from near Bethlehem, were taken to the sea near Jaffa, by a woman from Jerusalem. What’s unusual about that? The little boy and his mother were Arabs. The woman from Jerusalem was Jewish. The Jewish woman broke the law by taking them. Neither woman knew the Bible, which speaks of “their being neither Jew nor Greek, but being one in Christ.” But they lived as if they did know it. They were sisters, children of Abraham. They were sisters, children in God’s family. But their homes were separated by the separation barrier.

© Rev Clarence Musgrave

Prayer

There is no “must” about a wall or a fear that divides. There is no “must” which says tomorrow will be like today. The only “must” is that love will win; that God is stronger than evil. Your Kingdom come, O God; your will be done. Amen.

©Very Rev Dr Andrew McLellan.

Snow in Hebron (*from Moving Stories 167*)

The largest winter storm in decades blanketed much of Palestine and Israel in snow from 11-13 December, 2013. Sixty to 120 cm (about two to four feet) fell in Hebron and the surrounding area. Heavy rain fell causing schools to close and the few students who showed up to return home. By early afternoon, water was knee deep in the souq. Snow began falling that evening, and continued overnight and into Thursday. The wet snow made transit next to impossible. All shops in the Old City remained closed; only a few businesses near Bab iZeweyya opened.

Damage on Old Shalala Street was extensive. Part of the front of one building fell off, leaving inner rooms exposed. The mesh fencing protecting the market area from settlers dropping heavy objects fell under the weight of the snow. The metal girders bent. The roof of a shoe store fell in, ruining the building and merchandise.

By Thursday, 19 December people had cleared away much of the wreckage. Bab il-Baledeyya became the repository for damaged awnings from the souq, and much of the snow was ploughed away. Even though some snow remained in certain areas, especially around checkpoints, on Old Shalala Street life returned to normal by Saturday. All the shops were opened, and merchandise filled the street. The only reminder of the snowfall was the absence of the mesh fencing protecting the street from the settlers above.

Prayer

Spirit of the Living God, come afresh on your Holy Land. Help your people to restore broken relationships. Give them patience to break down barriers of suspicion and mistrust; ability to discern personal prejudice and the courage to overcome fear. Teach them to respect each other's integrity and rights so that your kingdom may be established on earth. For Jesus' sake.

*© The Rt Rev. Riah Abu El-Assal,
The Episcopal Church in Jerusalem and the Middle East, WCC website*

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.

On This Day ...

From the Carrs Lane Journal February 1914

Two items reflecting good news and the importance of members' contributions, including its ministry to the young, which currently, by its inclusion in the regular prayer cycle, is becoming an increasingly meaningful part of this church's witness.

From the Editorial (by Revd Sidney M. Berry)

We have every reason to be grateful for the result which attended our effort on Thanksgiving Sunday. To raise a sum of £1,270 in a single day's collections is no easy task. And when one thinks of what that sum represents in thought and sacrifice, it gives cause for the deepest thankfulness and the surest hope. It was a real Church offering – an offering not of the few but of the many, and as such it represents the spirit of the whole Church. We are grateful for the generosity of our wealthier members, without whose assistance it would have been impossible to attain the figure which was reached. But we would remember also the love and sacrifice which went to the offering of the smaller gifts. The spirit of the day was just what we all desired it to be, and it was given a touch of completeness by Dr. and Mrs. Jowett's participation in it.

The result attained exceeded the expectation of most of us, and the debt is now completely cleared off; for the first time for some years we have a small balance in hand at the bank, and that means we are free to go forward. I cannot help dropping the editorial "we" and saying what a relief it is to me to know that as a Church we are free from debt.

The Sunday School

In reviewing the work of our Sunday School for the year 1913, we find we have many pleasant scenes to look back upon. One of the chief items that has rejoiced the hearts of the superintendent and teachers is that our attendance has been steadily improving. We have a number on the books from all departments of Sunday meetings of 464, with an average attendance of 305. Our teachers on the roll number 24, together with the officers, and an average attendance of 22.

Many children still look back with pleasure to the happy time spent at the Carrs Lane Anniversary, when about 80 of them took part in the singing of the hymns at the Town Hall on June 8th, and the following Sunday our own Anniversary was held at the Mission Hall. Owing to our Sunday School outing being held on Wednesday August 23rd, it was not attended so well as we should have liked it to be, but those that did go spent a very enjoyable day, about 90 children and 13 adults being present.

A hearty invitation is given to all the friends who read this, who can spare the time, to come and help us as teachers.

From the Carrs Lane Journal – February 1964

As we hear of high levels of hopelessness and despair among young people, there is a great need to understand and help. But what do the helpers get out of it? – some thoughts from 50 years ago – the era of 'You've never had it so good'.

“Tell me straight!” *(by a helper at St. Basil's)*

In a recent conversation, a teenager at St Basil's Sunday Club questioned the motives of one of the voluntary helpers. “Why do you come here? Tell me straight. There must be something you get out of it or you wouldn't come.” I don't think he got his answer and in any case the real answer would only have been received with ridicule and disbelief. Why do a band of helpers, whose homes may be anywhere from the prosperous suburbs to the city's back to backs, regularly devote Sunday evenings to this club?

There are pleasanter places than the drab cold rear of St. Basil's on a Sunday night. There are pleasanter jobs one could do than watching over the antics of some small unruly section of club members with their long hair and ugly faces and winkle picker shoes. What good does it do helping to run a club where the main activity is rock and roll dancing?

In case this presents too much of a one side of the picture it is only fair to say that quite 80% of the teenagers who go to St. Basil's Sunday Club are normal, pleasant and well-behaved. They love dancing: they adore the teenage band and behave just as we think one should in the church and at the club. The fact remains, however, that a lot of money and much time – on the part of the curates of St. Martin's, the assistant ministers of Carrs Lane and other helpers – are needed to run this club.

Is it worthwhile? There are commercial dance halls in the city. Why do we not leave them to cater for these teenagers? The only answer that I can suggest is that St. Basil's shows the teenagers *that the Church cares*. But to repeat the question, “Why do we care?” Putting it straight – there must be something we get out of it or we wouldn't care.

Do we really care? Do we care for the show off, the smart Alec who climbs the gate if he can get away with it to avoid paying admission, and the very accomplished liar? It isn't easy to care for these. What can we do then? Ignatius Loyola must have pondered this problem when he prayed that “we might be taught to labour and not to ask for any reward save that of knowing that we do Thy will.”

It has been an inspiration to be able to work with some of the helpers at St. Basil's. I believe they do care and can see the need for helping, above all, these difficult types. But how sometimes, in the face of discouragement are they able to carry on? They can do the work, I believe, because they have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and they do it for him.

Contributed by Wendy Firmin

Room Hire at Carrs Lane

Carrs Lane Church Centre 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 at Carrs Lane 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, or you may call the conference team on 0121 643 6151 if you have any questions or email booking@carrslane.co.uk.



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Carrs Lane Regular Activities

SUNDAYS

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

WEEK DAYS

Carrs Lane Lived Community meet for Prayers -

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

Lunchtime Healing Service	Every Wednesday 1.15pm
Prayer Group	First Wednesday at 7.00 pm
Discussion Group	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
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
Fair Trade Shop	First and Third Sunday after morning worship and Tuesday - Saturday 10.30 am - 2.30 pm
Counselling Centre	Monday - Friday 11.00 am - 1.30 pm and Monday to Wednesday evenings 7.00 - 9.00 pm

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