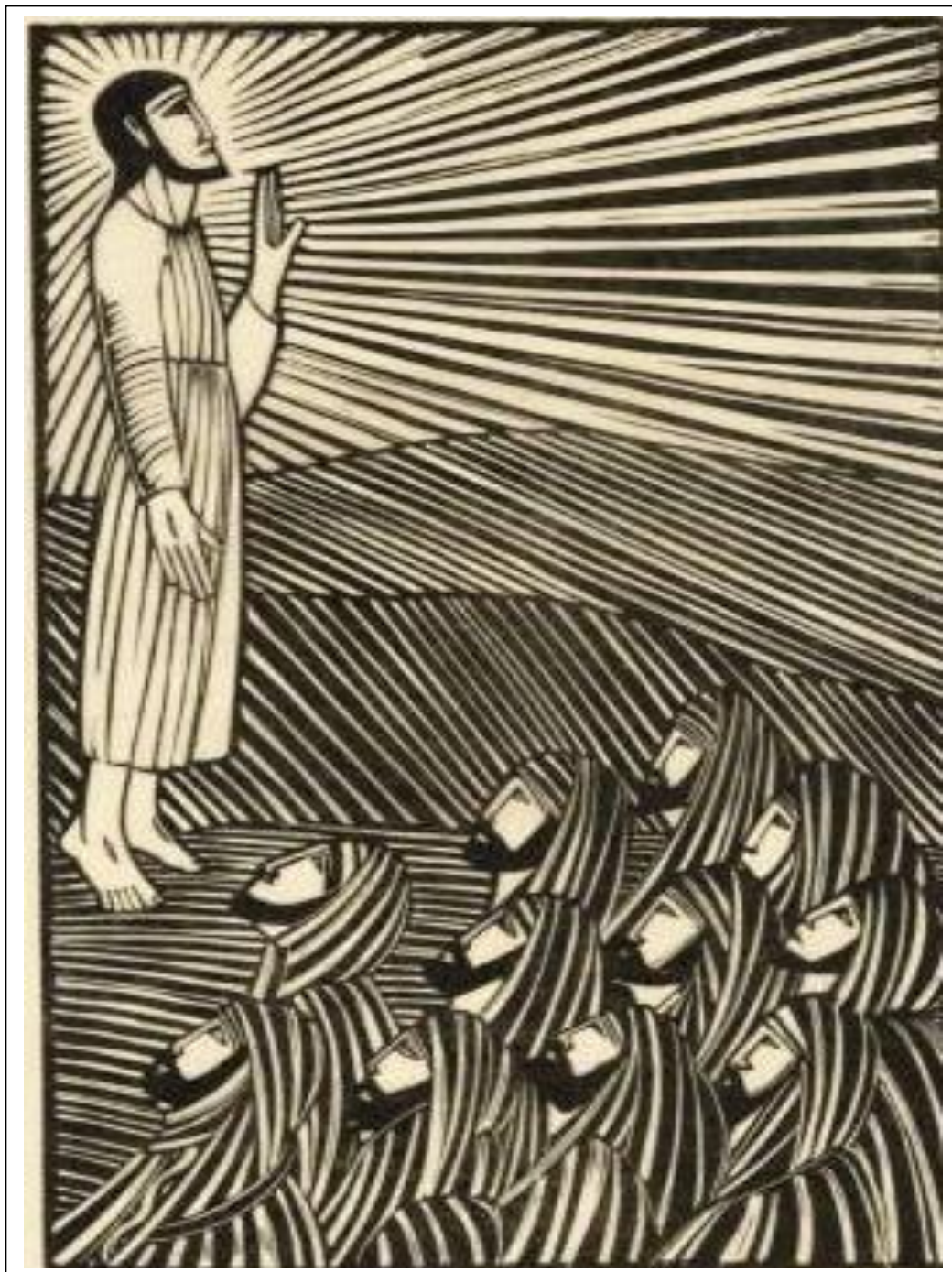


Journey



The continuing story

of

The Church at Carrs Lane

June 2014

Minister's Letter

Dear friends,

For a number of reasons, the significance of church **names** is on my mind at the moment. I am aware of the fairly complex journey at Carrs Lane which led to the comparatively modest changes which led to 'The Church at Carrs Lane'. I note the continuing journey at Hall Green Methodist Church/Sparkhill United Church...and the issues to which this continues to give rise, not least the potential importance of the inclusion of the word 'community'. So far as Trinity URC and Hall Green Baptist Church are concerned, we haven't even *started* to think about this yet – this is an issue for much further down the line. And yet...well, it is something which intrigues and interests me.

Simon Jenkins' article in the most recent issue of 'Reform' – the URC's national monthly magazine – spends time in consideration of the importance of church names. He recounts his early days preaching in the valleys of South Wales, despatched thence by a city Baptist church in Cardiff: *'...it was the names of these churches which always impressed me: forbidding names such as Tabernacle and Ebenezer; mountain names such as Moriah, Hermon and Carmel; names of places where prophets and patriarchs had met God, such as Ararat, Bethel and Zion. The Welsh revivalists who named these chapels were very taken with Old Testament encounters with God and wanted their grand and grumpy buildings to deliver the same experience'*. Many of you will know why this resonates with me – and I know, too, that it will resonate with other readers of this magazine. Go online if you want to read Simon's full article, with its pertinent observations on preaching in the chapels of South Wales!

He moves on, though, noting the changing 'fashion' for church names: *'The bearded, sandal-wearing 60s gave us: Vineyard, Mustard Seed, Icthus, Potter's House...some churches named after saints went hip and trendy by resorting to nicknames. The Church of Saints Philip and Jacob in Bristol, took on 'Pip n Jay' as its name...'* Moving to more recent times, he notes that it is perfectly possible to worship in a church called, *'The Edge, Ikon, The Pursuit, or Empower'*. Casting his gaze further afield, he notes that in Nigeria it is perfectly possible to worship in the, *'Guided Missiles Church...and the Happy Go Lucky Church of Almighty God in Jesus Name Amen'*.

It is an entertaining article, but there is nothing light-hearted or trivial in what he is saying about churches and their names. Church names sometimes say more about the prevailing human culture of their 'times' than they do about the nature of their ministries; hip and trendy today may result in giggles or disbelief tomorrow. Don't muddle the concept of 'church' too much by attempting too many explanations or definitions or aspirations or whatever in the name itself...

With much love in Christ,



Sunday Worship during June

Sunday 1 June

10.30am Morning worship, including the Lord's Supper, led by Neil Riches
Key passage: John 17.1 – 11

Worship will be followed by First Sunday Lunch – a light meal to which everybody is invited

Sunday 8 June PENTECOST

10.30am Morning worship – a service of celebration to acknowledge the diversity of the life of The Church at Carrs Lane, focused on story-telling
Worship will be followed by a 'bring and share' lunch to which everybody is invited

2.00pm Children's Church outing to the National Sealife Centre (a response to a whole year of worship and teaching which has 'water' at its heart!)

5.30pm Circuit Praise - including modern worship songs and hymns, and a time of openness to the Holy Spirit. Party food and drink at 5.00pm

Sunday 15 June TRINITY SUNDAY

10.30am Morning worship led by Pat Rowley

1.00pm Lunchtime concert – Cristi Bacanu (violin)

Sunday 22 June

10.30am All-age morning worship led by Neil Riches

Key passage: Matthew 28.16 – 20

3.00pm Service of celebration organised by The Girls' Brigade in Birmingham
There will be no 'radical worship' in the evening, since a planning meeting is taking place

Sunday 29 June

10.30am Morning worship led by Neil Riches Key passage: Matthew 10.40– 42



Notices

Future events at the Windermere Centre 2-5 June Nordic Noir. 9-12 June Cycling Retreat. 16-18 June Church Publications. Contact Anne Veitch for more information.

Monday 2 June Restore's Annual Celebration 7.30pm - 9.30pm at Oasis Church, Lee Crescent, Edgbaston, Birmingham, B15 2BJ. All welcome
Thursdays 5 June Restore Training Sessions for those interested in asylum issues or becoming befrienders 7.15pm at Carrs Lane. Contact Jeremy Thompson 0121 236 0069, befriend@restore-uk.org.

Saturday 7 June Birmingham Methodist Circuit World Church Celebration 'A-cross the World Church – active worship' 10.00am – 2.00pm at Lozells Methodist Church, B19 2AH. Beginning with a buffet style meal with various foods from around the world. For further information please contact Neil Johnson on 0121 616 1800 or email njohnson@birminghammethodistcircuit.org.uk

Events in Refugee Week

Saturday 14 June Lozells Faith and Community Festival 1.00-4.00pm at George Park, Wills Street, B19 1QA. Food stalls, music, live performances and more. Free. Call 07813 038756
Saturday 21 June a big musical event at the MAC, Cannon Hill Park 10.00am-6.00pm. Please contact me if you can spend an hour on our stall talking to others about our aspirations to become a City of Sanctuary....and getting them to pledge support. Adrian Randall, info@birmingham.cityofsanctuary.org.

15-29 June Chaplaincy Fortnight

Thursday 19 - Saturday 21 June Encountering God in... The URC Retreat Group and Westminster College invite you to share in a time to explore some of the ways in which we encounter God and God encounters us. Be amongst the first URC groups to enjoy the completely refurbished building at Westminster. Amidst prayer and hospitality share opportunities for dwelling upon the Bible, creativity and silence.

Saturday 12 July Synod Roadshow at Carrs Lane exact details to follow. Much of the time will be spent in small groups looking at some of the areas covered by workshops at the October synod (Finance/TRIO/ Season of Invitation/Back to church Sunday/ radical welcome/Fresh Expressions/ Local Church Leaders/ Church Growth/How can liberal churches grow?) and any other areas that you would like included - Contact Revd Jacky Embrey, 0121 451 1441, email jacky.embrey@gmail.com

Saturday 12 & Sunday 13 July Open Gardens in the Parish of Nether Whitacre, from 1.30-5.30, tickets from Nether Whitacre Methodist church B46 2EH, £5.00 per person, children free.

Sunday 20 July Birmingham Methodist Circuit Family Fun Day at Earslwood Methodist Church 2.00-5.00pm. Fun and games for all the family.

Pilgrimage to the Holy Land.

St Columba Church in Moseley is arranging a trip to the Holy Land from 14-23 April 2015. £1,129 for 10 days, 3 star hotels, half board. Booking forms available from Mr Elvins 0121 777 2628, email info@allsaintstravel.co.uk.

Beautiful Creation Exhibition

Firstly I would like to thank everyone for their time, effort and support for the Maundy Thursday exhibition celebrating the diversity of the life at the Church at Carrs Lane finishing with a meal in the upper room.

There were many displays from a variety of groups meeting or associated with Carrs Lane. There were places of reflection and places to interact. The exhibition was a living and transforming display. Things were being added continuously, drawings, knitting squares, badge making and rehearsals by the Choir With No Name added a wonderful accompaniment to conversation and reflection.

The beauty of community was expressed in many ways, people for whom it was a first visit, those who are long-standing members of different groups, and those new to the life at Carrs Lane Church. All were welcome and all added something to the day through conversation and sharing.

I have spent a lot of time reflecting on the exhibition, on my own and with others, exploring what it means for the family of the church. Was it a stand-alone event, or was it a stepping stone to other things? The conversations I have had with others have included a number of reflections: positive reactions to opening up eyes to diversity and creativity within the church community; thoughts about understanding the needs of, and welcoming newcomers to groups and on Sunday mornings; how can we help each other to journey with God in new and/or creative ways as we recognise not everyone finds Sunday morning services accessible? What is the context, the community that we are part of in the city centre and how do we minister to people's needs?

Perhaps the three hardest questions are: 'How do we embrace discipleship?' 'How can we create opportunities for conversation?' 'What do we need to do now?'

I leave it with you to ponder!

Stephanie



To be a Pilgrim

As we approach the end of the Easter Season, Holy Week already feels a long time ago, and reflecting on it perhaps a little out of place; but a passing reference to Student Cross in last month's magazine prompted me to think it might be worth saying something about it in this one.

I spent Holy Week "walking towards Easter" on this annual pilgrimage where groups walk across England, converging on Walsingham for Easter weekend. I set off already feeling exhausted: not an auspicious start for a week of long walks interspersed with significant sleep deprivation ... nonetheless, it felt exactly the right way to both commemorate Holy Week and Easter, and reaffirm my vision of what Christian Community and the church might look like.

When it comes to encouraging others to join, Student Cross is a hard sell. We walk most of the day, carrying heavy wooden crosses. In between we stay up late and sleep on hard church floors. Showers are rare; blisters frequent. And yet it successfully encapsulates something of the community I crave and, I suspect, holds important lessons for the wider church.

We have chosen a challenge which no individual can complete alone, forcing us to become a mutually-interdependent community, united by what we do together, not by what we say, think or believe. We find strength in the willingness to push ourselves because we care enough for the rest of the group to do so, and in the knowledge that when we think we can't continue, others are carrying us who affirm that we can. There is also a paradoxical importance in walking towards a shared destination while knowing that we are here for the pilgrimage, not the arrival.

Perhaps more important still, is that a combination of physical exertion and sleep deprivation quickly leaves everyone exhausted to the point where we do not have the energy to put on the masks we so carefully construct to protect our vulnerable true identities. We become a community that is too tired to pretend its emotions aren't real, its faults can be hidden, its uglier sides concealed. We become a community that sees each other in our moments of weakness and vulnerability: and quickly discovers that we are able to love and be loved anyway.

This is, I believe, what we, as church, are called to. To walk towards a shared vision, not of belief but of action for which we are all equally responsible. To be mutually supportive communities where we depend on each other and dare to be vulnerable to one another. To be spaces where we can be who we really are and be loved regardless. This is where we discover glimpses of the Christ-like love we are called to offer to one another, in order to be able to offer it to the world around us.

Too often, though, in my experience, churches, like society, are places where we neither need to, nor dare to take off the masks we hide behind. Places where we continue to hide our precious true identities from one another. Places where we present to God the 'me' we would like to be.

Allowing ourselves to be vulnerable is, I acknowledge, a scary prospect. Society has

taught us to hide our true selves from the fear of ridicule and rejection and I would not deny that vulnerability almost inevitably invites pain. But I suspect that if we dared to be who we really are a little bit more, to acknowledge our vulnerability to one another; then yes, we might find pain, but in its midst the love we would discover just might empower us to create something truly beautiful as the co-creators with God we are called to be.

This, perhaps, is the cross that allows the new life of resurrection. This, for me, is Easter.
Stephanie Neville



Palm Sunday in Dresden

In April I enjoyed a two-week holiday in Germany, the primary purpose of which was to indulge in a steam locomotive gathering in Dresden. I took advantage of an invitation to visit them again by the people who hosted me for the 2011 Kirchentag.

My original intention had been to go to church with my hosts on the Sunday morning, where I have a standing invitation to sit in with the choir. However the choir were not down to sing that morning so my host suggested that we attend the Frauenkirche instead. In the end, I attended on my own as my host was suffering from a bad cold.

The Frauenkirche is a protestant church and is not dedicated to Our Lady but to women, collectively, although it may be that they are women in holy orders. It was severely damaged in the Dresden bombing and the subsequent firestorm but has largely been restored. The difference between old and new stonework is clearly evident on the outside. Inside, some parts have not been completely restored; in a couple of instances one sees plain walls where details of the fenestration have been painted on. Otherwise the restoration is so thorough that to someone who knew nothing of what had happened the church would appear to be almost in original condition. The nave of the church is circular with a small apse for the choir and organ. Most of the paintwork is white and there are plenty of windows, so the interior is light and airy.

The altarpiece and organ-case above are decorated with an explosion of gold leaf. To a common or garden protestant the effect looks very catholic but Catholics take the view that by comparison with their churches the Frauenkirche is very restrained!

When I arrived at the church the centre of Dresden was busy already with tourists and there was a queue to attend the service. However, I got in without difficulty and got a seat in one of the semicircular pews fairly near the front. As befitted a church of some importance the service matched the occasion and was enhanced by excerpts from the St. Luke Passion by Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, son of J.S. Bach and no mean composer, himself. There were a choir, four soloists and a small orchestra, as well as the organ.

The service began with the introductory chorus "Now is He here. So much for the bloodshed, you murderers! His blood willingly flows for you and us for atonement..." Then followed the Greeting and the first hymn, "Lord strengthen me, to think on thy sorrow" to the tune Herzliebster Jesu. Then followed the introductory sentences; Gloria, Kyrie etc. but in German of course, and then a prayer. The next hymn was actually French "Rendez à Dieu" but in a German translation. The Gospel reading was John 12, 12-19, the Entry into Jerusalem.

The next excerpt from the Lukas-Passion recited the events of Jesus' passion on the Mount of Olives, a duet on His words "Watch and Pray" and then the description of the events when Judas Iscariot turned up mob-handed for the arrest of Jesus. The narrative then moved swiftly to Peter's denial in the temple. This was followed by an aria "Yes. Peter. Go out and weep, weep bitterly. Think back indeed on your fall then think also on the sight of Jesus' face. In even a glimpse of the his face there shines the light of grace for you."

The text of the sermon was Hebrews 12, 1-3, "And what of ourselves?..... We must run the race., our eyes fixed on Jesus etc." Sadly my German was not good enough to follow the sermon but there is plenty of meat in the text. Read it yourself!

Another hymn was followed by the Creed, or "Glaubenskenntnis" and then the prayers of intercession and Vater Unser.

The choir then sang another aria and chorus "When your sins oppress you, come, the Lord will quicken you, and taste and see how gracious he is..."

The final hymn, just one verse, was followed by the dismissal and blessing and a piece of organ music by Gottfried Augustus Homilius (1714-1785).

After the service ended we all trooped out. In the thirst after righteousness I looked for somewhere for lunch and was pleased to spot an outpost of the "Augustiner" restaurant with which I was familiar from many visits to München. Here I was able to avail myself of Rahmschwammerle mit Semmelknödel, otherwise known as Bread Dumplings with Mushroom Sauce, washed down with a glass of Bavarian Weißbier.

Then from the sublime to the ridiculous. I spent the afternoon enjoying a steam-hauled rail excursion up the valley of the Elbe through the area known as the Saxon Switzerland to Decin in the Czech Republic. Altogether a very satisfying day.

Donald Payne

Chaplaincy Fortnight

“How are you?” I asked as I walked into the store. “Well, my mom’s just had a brain tumour removed, my boyfriend has just dumped me and my house is on the market” she replied. Well at least things can’t get any worse!” I replied. With that we both managed to laugh. I spent the next 35 minutes listening to the difficulties, pressures and fears this lady is facing. As I leave I asked if I could pray for her and her present situation. “Yes please,” was her response.

I would never have been able to say that to this assistant if I hadn’t built up a relationship through chaplaincy. I will not be able to change the present situation for this lady whom I’ve chosen not to name - not because she’s not important... far from it, but like the woman at the well, in John 4 her anonymity enables the reader to identify and relate to without fear of exposure. We all can relate to pouring our heart out to a total stranger on the bus or the train, someone we may never see again, someone who doesn’t know us. The beautiful encounter with Jesus and the woman at the well, only lasts for a few moments, and the conversation doesn’t seem to gain momentum, but it’s enough for the woman to feel affirmed, valued and to see her worth. And with chaplaincy that’s all it takes - a moment, a few words, a listening person - to make all the difference

Some of us are fortunate to have friends, family members or we belong to a church that offers a safe space to say how things are. We think that everyone has the same support mechanisms but they don’t! I encounter people in my role as Chaplain who have never shared some of their deepest pain or trauma with another person; they’ve not known who to turn to. I meet many women at the well in Chaplaincy... and men for that matter, whose lives are filled with pressure, like bereavement, family breakdown. Who come into the workplace and have to deal with a bombardment of internal pressures, sale targets, low footfall, staff redundancies. That’s without the blessed general public!

So I count it a real privilege, to journey alongside folk in the workplace, not just to affirm individuals or to bring the good news of Jesus, but to also discern the signs of the kingdom in the workplace. Because God is already there! Doing amazing things! As I share with you, I’m pointing them out transformative signs of the kingdom - love, joy, equality, justice and hope, all happening in the workplace. Sometimes you have to look very hard to see it, other times it’s so blatantly obvious. There are too many to mention as I come up to the five years of the work of the retail chaplaincy and they continue to happen - these signs of Emmanuel, God is with us.

There’s a real need to engage with the place in which we’re called to serve, a real need for those beautiful encounters and conversations to take place. Chaplaincy can be an opportunity. The work of the Chaplaincy to the retail sector continues to flourish and grow. It has its challenges and pressures, but we continue to be well received by retailers and traders. I pray and hope that the chaplaincy fortnight will give a sense of the work and value of workplace Chaplaincy and possibly get churches more involved in this wonderful ministry.

Elaine Hutchinson; City Centre Chaplain

Chris Upton Trophy...

... is undoubtedly one of those things which I enjoy most during the course of my service within Boys Brigade/Girls Association Birmingham during a particular year! This competition is open to all those who are over 11 within the movement, working within individual companies. It is overtly spiritual, encouraging a shared, creative and thought-provoking response to a particular title or theme: this year, the title was, 'The Power of the Parables'. A significant chunk of the marks is awarded for, 'input by the young people': this is not something which is dreamt up by the leaders...this is about a shared response by young people to a Christian idea or challenge. The theme is deliberately left as open as possible...and I have an opportunity to talk to the youngsters at the end of the presentation, to find out how they have moved from initial notice of the competition to the end result. The standard of the entries – and the sheer, heart-warming variety of the entries – means that I am a little uncomfortable treating it as a competition. All are winners; all demonstrate understanding of, and appreciation of, the Christian faith – all appear to have grown through the process of taking part in the 'competition'. It is very, very encouraging.

What to say specifically about 2014? Seven companies took part; I saw effective drama, listened to dialogue, witnessed conversations and enjoyed good music, well-performed. In a significant number of entries, *all* the young people of a particular age within a company took part. No prizes for guessing that by far the most popular parable which received consideration was...the parable of the good Samaritan. Everybody appeared to grasp the key point of this – and other – parables. The competition provides a good opportunity to visit a relatively large number of companies in a very short space of time...though the evening which started in Quinton, moved on to Kingstanding and ended up on the edge of Chelmsley Wood was a very full evening indeed.

We celebrate on-going youth work in our churches; we pray for those who provide faithful leadership week by week.

Neil





TRAIDCRAFT
Fighting poverty through trade

You can call me Indiana Joe

Traidcraft's Sourcing Director, Joe Osman, recaps the last stage of his journey through Latin America. As the trip draws to a close, it's clear things have been a bit more adventurous than expected.

The factory that makes our instant coffee is close to the Mexico/Guatemala border, which can be a pretty dangerous place to travel. Carlos and Joe from CIPAC join us for a quick tour and then we move on to Guatemala by car. We mention to a couple of folk that we were taking the overland route. This causes quite a stir! One 'crosses' himself, the other exclaims 'don't do it!' But I think that's maybe something more to do with reputation... Anyway, I trust my colleagues!

Apart from one security check and a fairly rustic border crossing, we arrive in Guatemala and carry on to CIPAC without incident. CIPAC is a small cooperative of around 120 farmers who supply us with coffee beans for our freeze dried instant coffee and also honey which we sell as squeezey honey and as an ingredient in Geobar. We spend the next few days talking to CIPAC staff, coop officials and members and visiting some of their farms and homes, hearing about some of their issues and discussing ways that Traidcraft can give support.

Farmers are proud to show us their hives and Moncho invites us to see his. It's a bit of a trek and we descend to the valley floor to be confronted by a river with a small 'suspension bridge' made of wire and planks. Moncho's hives are across the bridge. It's like something from an Indiana Jones film!

So we conduct a quick risk assessment and cross, not wanting to disappoint our host. This bridge is used regularly by farmers carrying bags of coffee beans on their back – so I think it will take my weight!

But this is mainly coffee country, rugged and mountainous but with an ideal climate and elevation for coffee growing. The 4x4 vehicle is king here, manoeuvring its way around the winding, rough mountain roads with impossible inclines. And even after all that there is more walking.

I did some Cumbrian hikes in February which turns out to be good preparation for visiting coffee farms. Think fell walking surrounded by coffee bushes and you get a picture of what coffee farming is all about – only the back pack is a heavy sack of coffee beans. This is hard work!

We find out more about a major problem for coffee farmers, not only here but throughout Latin America. Coffee rust, a fungus so called because it looks just like that. It has led to unproductive bushes, high costs of prevention, and ultimately the need to replace the bush. This means high costs for farmers and loss of income - since a new bush will take three years to yield coffee cherries.

We discuss a potential project in which Traidcraft can support CIPAC to assist their members in this problem.

Next, we ascend to almost 6,000 feet to visit the farm of Jeronimo. He has a small patch of coffee and around 40 bee hives. The air is a bit thinner here so the fell walking is a bit slower. But this is his home and one with the best views imaginable from the front door. We are invited to lunch with Jeronimo and his family which is a treat. A special occasion also for them which causes one of their ducks to be the main course and followed by a perfect cup of coffee made from their own beans.

His coffee bushes produce a high grown, best quality bean – too good for instant coffee so maybe we should find a way to introduce to our roast and ground range? One to consider for next year.

So now we're leaving Guatemala with some good experiences, and more importantly some good outcomes from our discussions with CIPAC, a key supplier to Traidcraft. Investing time in these relationships is what Traidcraft does and is an important part of the way it practises Fair Trade.

Some people in the UK may think there's no difference between a Traidcraft fair trade product and one from one of the mainstream brands. I know differently though – I've seen the difference on this trip. I hope that our supporters will continue to support brands like Traidcraft where partnerships and direct links with producers are at their heart.

From Traidcraft website blog

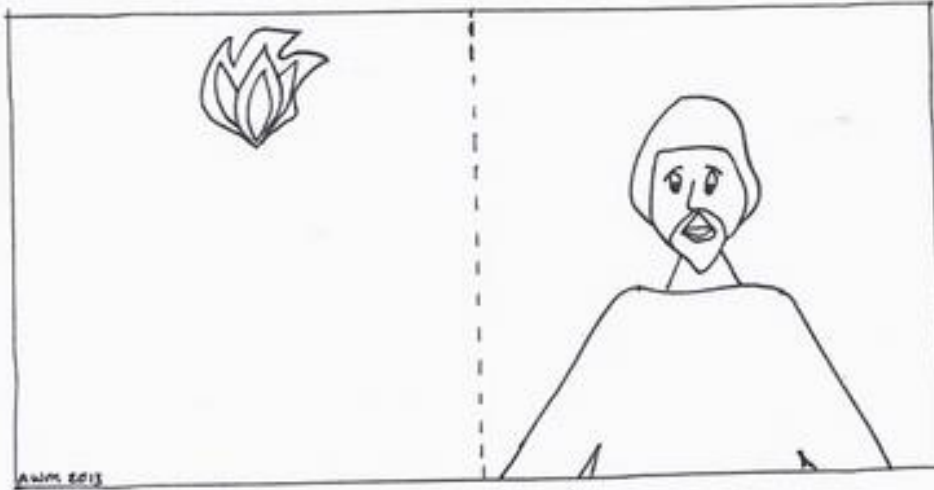
Hopefully the medium roast freeze dried coffee will be available again when you read this. Why did Traidcraft run out of this? It's because they have to buy a year's worth of beans at a time and you can imagine how difficult that is to forecast and Traidcraft sold more than they thought they would which is excellent in one sense!

Joan Davies

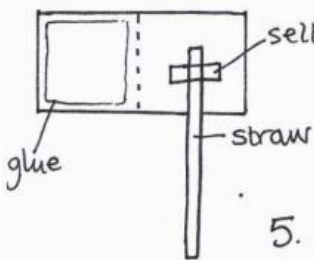
Happy Birthday Traidcraft!
Traidcraft Week – 16 to 24 June –
marks 35 years as the UK's leading
Fair Trade organisation

Kids Page

Pentecost Spinner.....



1. Cut out the rectangle above and colour it in.
2. Fold along the dotted line
3. Turn the rectangle face down

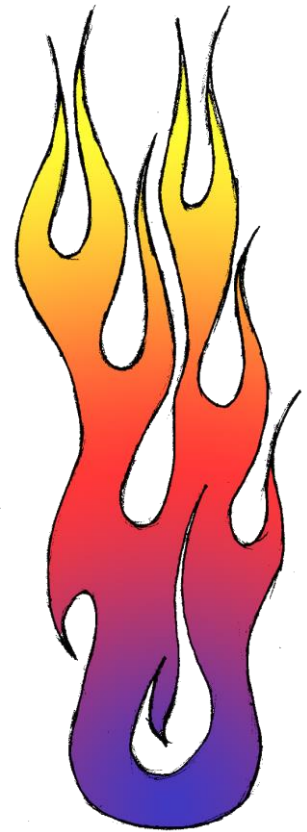


4. Stick a straw to the middle of one half and glue all round the other half
5. Stick the glued side on top of the straw side

6. Twizzle the straw between your hands to make the sound of the wind



7. Watch the flame appear above the disciple's head!



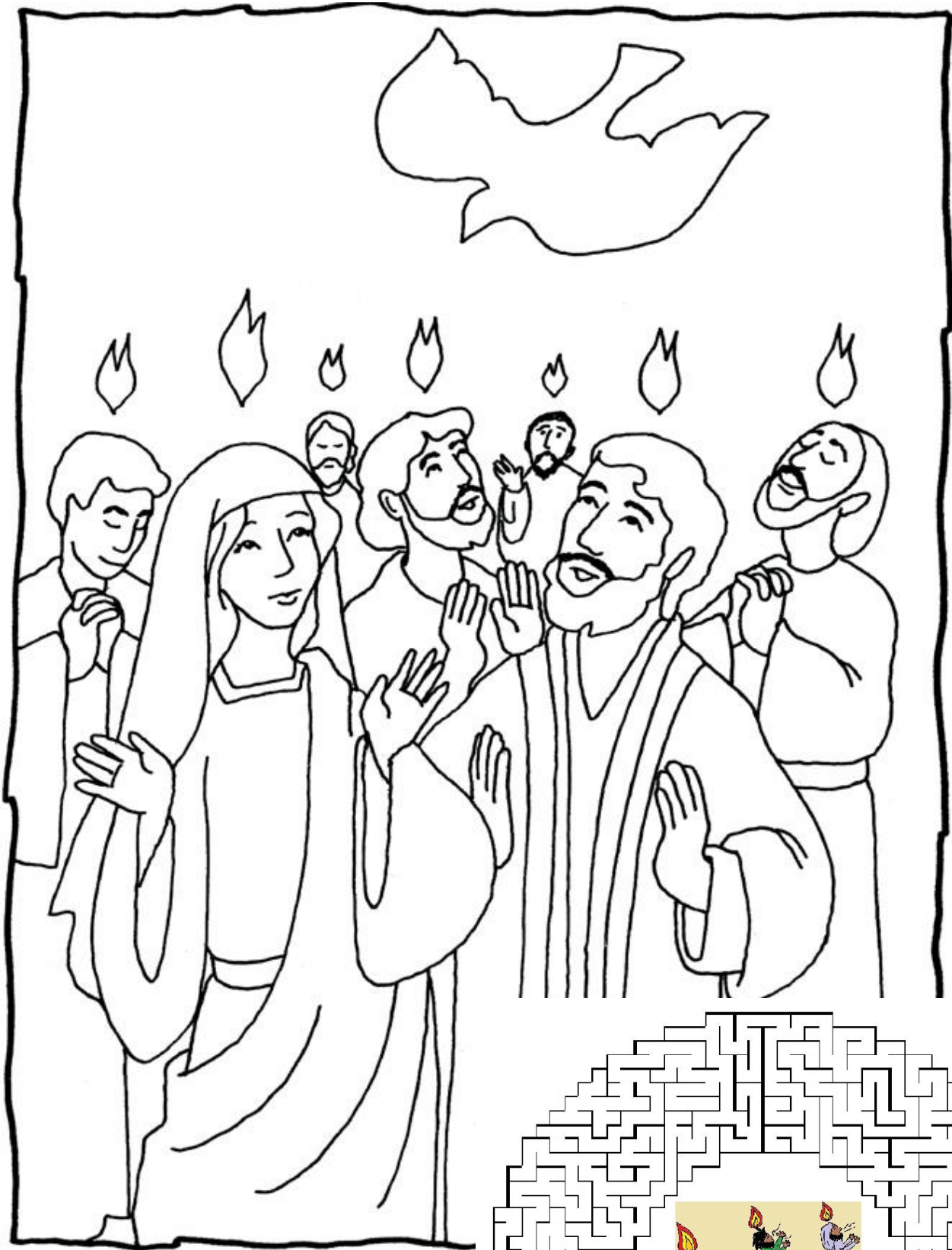
....a Pentecost word search....

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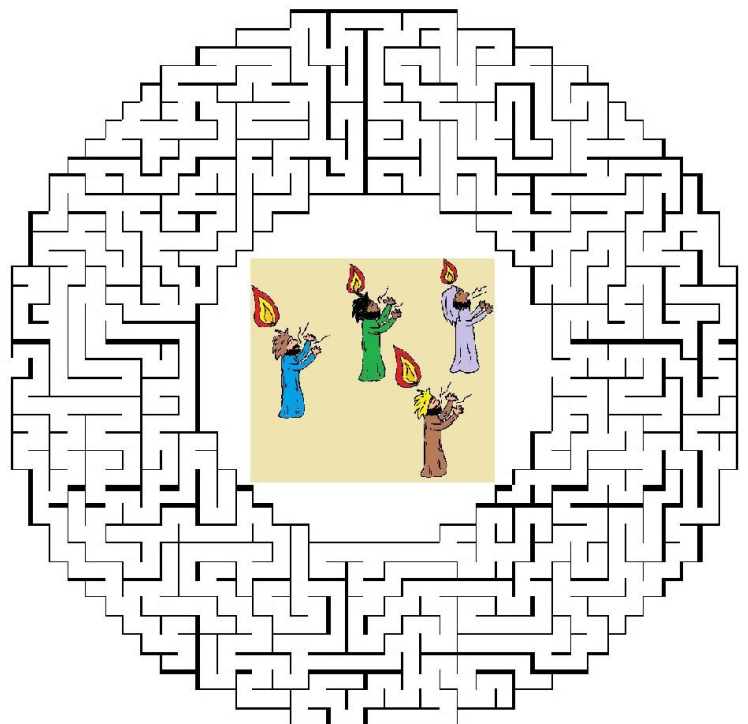
PENTECOST
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PARTHIANS
ELAMITES
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CYRENE
JEWS
CRETES
DAVID
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TONGUES
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REPENT
BAPTIZED
SINS
PETER
THREE
THOUSAND

....a picture to colour.....



...and a Pentecost maze..



Jesus is a Super-Hero?

A few weeks ago, during Sunday morning worship we sang a new hymn. It was an action song, as we sang about Jesus having the characteristics of various super-heroes we were encouraged to display the appropriate action for that super-hero. As a song it was perhaps simply a bit of fun.

And yet it got me thinking. There is a strong tendency within present-day Christianity to look upon God as if he were a superhero. Much of our prayer is formulated around our belief that an all-powerful God is present to us and is able to grant our requests. We often imagine God in the position of a benevolent king or of a just ruler. We imagine a God who is set apart from our reality, looking down on us from above. This God, like a super-hero, is able to fly in to help us, or to grant us super-natural favours.

If we believe in this image of God, then this belief will inevitably be reflected in our worship and in our practice. We will develop forms of worship which are about offering business deals to God; we will attempt to exchange worship and praise for help and assistance. If we believe in a super-hero God then this will be lived out in our models of leadership; we have pushed God away from our reality into a faraway heaven, and so we will push our leaders away, onto an elevated pedestal, we will emphasise their superiority, their difference from ourselves, their set-apart-ness. In the act of pushing both God and our leaders onto a pedestal we infantilise ourselves, pushing away our own importance and agency.

When I look at the Church of 2014 I see this 'Jesus is a super-hero' theology all around. Such theology has the potential to be very dangerous. How can such a theology deal with human failure? Or with human pain? How can we understand an all-powerful God who chooses not to heal our friend's illness? Who chooses not to prevent deadly earthquakes and typhoons? This image of God can draw us towards an unhealthy relationship, God is our master and we are slave, this super-hero God is someone we must obey, not a person we can get to know.

At the beginning of the bible we meet a very primitive understanding of God who gives us the impression that he is a super-hero. Then gradually, as we read on, the bible takes us on a long journey of incarnation. The all-powerful image is slowly unmasked, humanity comes to see that God is weaker and more vulnerable than we could have imagined. This God is not a shouter but a whisperer. God is not sat on a heavenly throne directing Kings and Generals, no; he is whispering love into the souls of the excluded, the hungry and the exploited. In the Gospels we meet a God who is not a super-hero, he is human, just like us; he is exposed to the same weakness, temptation and fragility as are we. This God approaches us from below, offering to wash our feet, inviting us into a relationship of love and friendship, not servility and domination. Each of us is invited into friendship, we are invited to follow.

A Church which worships the 'super-hero' God will always remain at a distance from those it is called to serve. It will give to others only out of its surplus. Just as the

'super-hero' God lives in heavenly comfort so will we. We will emulate the one we worship, and think of ourselves as generous while doing so!

A Church which attempts to follow the 'incarnated' God knows that it has received all it has as gift; that which has been received is there to be given in turn. This Church will know that it is no different from those it is called to serve. Just as God gets down and washes our feet, so it too will get down on its hands and knees to wash the feet of others. Just as God became like a slave; so as it will humble itself to be alongside those who are excluded and exploited by our society. This Church will give generously, not from its surplus, but rather from the very best of what it has, because it knows that everything it has is gift.

Worshipping the 'super-hero' God seems attractive because very little is asked of us, while it seems to offer so much. In truth, I believe, such worship only offers us an illusion. It is in following the 'incarnated' God that we are enabled to enter the heart of God; it is only there that we will find the inclination to give deeply of ourselves and to discover fullness of life.

Matthew Neville



What's in a word...or words?

κατενύγησαν την καρδιαν

Phew! If nothing else, I have to tell you that it took a while to insert the above, character by character! Why have I done it? Apologies to those of you have heard this 'story' before (in Wednesday lunchtime worship at Carrs Lane).

In the weeks following Easter, we have thought about reactions to the Risen Christ...not only those who encountered him personally in the days following the resurrection, but also the response of those who heard the Easter message proclaimed early on, by those who had met Jesus and who sought to encourage others to share in this experience.

The above fragment of Greek is taken from Acts 2.37 and details something of the response of those who listened to Peter's wonderful, dramatic sermon delivered on the Day of Pentecost. So far as I am concerned, there have been some downright dodgy translations of these words: the Good News Bible notes that those who heard Peter's words were 'troubled'...and this is what got me rooting around for truth here in the first place.

Acts 2 does *not* say that the early listeners were troubled. The NEB, NRSV and NIV are much closer to the truth when they say that the hearers were, 'cut to the heart'. I think that Luke wants to go much further – and wants us to go much further, however: the key word is taken from the verb **κατανύσσω**, which is best translated as, 'to pierce through' – 'to pierce with compunction and pain of heart'.

For me, this resonates powerfully with the events of Good Friday – and it may well be that this was the intention of Luke. There is deliberate wordplay going on here: when we hear the Easter message proclaimed effectively, it is as though a 'mini-Easter' is re-enacted within us. Something within us dies – is pierced through – to make way for the transforming life offered by Jesus. Something very powerful is being proclaimed about the way in which people can respond to the message of Easter – and, I believe, this continues to challenge and inform both people of faith and people of no faith.

We may well be 'troubled' as we consider the events and message of Easter, but, at best, this is only half the story. This is one of those occasions when we may need to grapple with the text rather more vigorously than usual. How *do* we read the Bible? How *should* we read the Bible?

*PS Since writing this article, a member of the Wednesday lunchtime congregation has told me that the translation in the Complete Jewish Bible is, 'they were **stung** in their hearts'. Hm. Another very powerful rendering of the text. Are you aware of places in Scripture where very differing translations have raised issues/questions for you?*

Neil

Commitment for Life

Positive development *(from Moving Stories 171)*

When you first hear that a group of farmers have an income generating scheme involving sticks you would be forgiven for thinking of a small enterprise cutting up sticks that support growing plants, but you would be wrong. Working with PARC, supported by Christian Aid, the farmers' co-operative in Kufrallah (old Arabic word meaning village) has set up a very successful business making wooden planks which are used to hang the plastic over the metal frames of their greenhouses. This is the only place in the West Bank where these planks are made and the business is growing. Using one of their greenhouses as a work area, the co-operative take delivery of whole trees and cut them up into planks about 6cms square. They have purchased a large electrical saw which makes the work easier. The sticks are put into bundles of 50 and sold for 50 NIS. The ones they used to buy from Israel were 60 NIS a pack and of an inferior quality.

Although the farmers in this co-operative are well organised with irrigation, rainwater collection and organic farming, the need to diversify was crucial. Markets for their perishable produce are limited because of the restrictions of movement across the Security Fence. These restrictions significantly impact the daily lives of Palestinians through trade, employment and healthcare.

From small beginnings this business now has a yearly turnover of 150,000 shekels. This has meant that they can help each other with loans and are looking to extend this facility to other farmers in the area. Indeed this is a positive story of good business acumen succeeding in a region where positive stories are often in short supply.

For more information see OCHA Report - West Bank Movement and Access Update Sept 2012 <http://www.ochaopt.org/reports.aspx?id=105>.

What price peace?

Visiting Israel and the occupied Palestinian Territories is a painful experience, and not only because I'm in the place where Jesus lived and taught. The situation in Gaza and the West Bank today is desperate. All around me I see grief, loss, hate, prejudice, suspicion, despair and fear. As a Christian I strive to know how to respond. My instinct is to respond with anger - apportioning blame, pointing a finger, criticising, shouting about the injustice and violence at the top of my voice so that the whole world will hear and take notice. **But is that what Christ is calling me to do? What is the answer?**

I sit in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem one evening, near the place where it is said that Jesus was crucified, and his words from the Sermon on the Mount come to me, and fill me with hope and the Holy Spirit.

"You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbour and hate your enemy.' But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be

children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

On the cross, Jesus put these words into action, loving those who crucified him, and asking his Father to forgive them. The Sermon on the Mount sets out clearly the foundations of our faith. Our duty as Christians is to love, try to understand, forgive, reconcile, help the poor and the oppressed, and to be light in the world. It is not for us to criticise - Do not judge so that you may not be judged by God. We need to take the log from our own eyes first, in order to see clearly the speck in the eyes of others, and each of us surely has more than one log in our own eyes.

Cathrin Daniel, Head of Christian Aid in Wales www.christian-aid.org

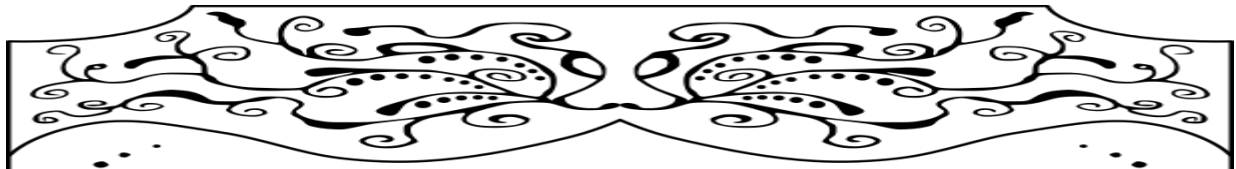
Council briefing on the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement

As noted below, the Methodist Conference in 2013 directed the Methodist Council to ensure that a briefing was prepared for the Methodist People upon the arguments for and against the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions Movement.

Following intensive work since the Conference the Methodist Council has directed that the briefing is made available online here.

<http://www.methodist.org.uk/mission/public-issues/peacemaking/israel-palestine>

Contributed by Wendy Firmin



On This Day ...

Fifty years apart, the first piece for each date this time reflects concerns about how we live our lives which are just as relevant today as they were all those years ago. The second item in both cases has a relevance to Carrs Lane today, one through the long-standing connection with the Boys' Brigade, now maintained through Neil R's involvement, the other reflecting this congregation's concern for issues in the Holy Land expressed through its support for Commitment for Life.

From the Carrs Lane Journal June 1914

Mr. J.G. Hurst's Address to the Congregational Board (by "H")

Mr. J.G. Hurst delivered his presidential address to the members of the Birmingham

Congregational Board at a meeting held at Saltley Chapel on May 4th. The writer of these brief notes cannot remember any previous address during the last ten years which was more intently listened to, or which provided more food for thought and, he would like to hope, for subsequent discussion.

After referring to some of the "signs of the times," particularly the disappearance of the conventional view of the "respectability" of attendance at church and the alleged indifference of the working classes to religion, Mr. Hurst pointed out that both these apparent difficulties carried within themselves the seeds of a deeper and more real church life.

The speaker then reviewed some of the aspects of modern religious life and thought from the layman's point of view.

1. The good impressions produced by the sermons and services in many of our chapels were often neutralised by the atmosphere of unseemly bustle and unintentional irreverence which follow the close of the service. He pleaded for some rearrangement, if necessary, of the stereotyped order of service if thereby the seed sown at such cost of preparation and prayer could be ensured a better chance of taking root.

2. Was sufficient use made of the ability and Christian experience which lies latent in every large congregation? It is not enough to make a very few members deacons or deaconesses. There are gifts which the Church ought to recognise and utilise for the general edification.

3. The unscientific and often obsolete conditions under which so much of our Sunday School work has to be done was then mentioned, and an urgent plea presented for the same zeal and reforming energy in this department that the leaders would exercise in the conduct of their own businesses.

4. An outstanding need of the Church today is that the old evangelical doctrines, and especially the relation of one to another, should be restated in modern terms of living speech, and freed from the conventional and antiquated phraseology that does not come home to the modern man.

5. In conclusion the president called upon the members present to enlarge their conceptions of God. Different phases of His attributes dominate our thoughts for periods, and at the present time there seems some danger lest an excessive toleration of an unwise and unworthy kind may obscure the more austere vision of God's holiness and majesty that are necessary to form a complete conception of His nature.

Inspection of the Boys' Brigade at Digbeth

The inspection of the 23rd and 24th Companies (Carrs Lane and Digbeth) was held at Digbeth on Friday evening, May 22nd. Captain Barnsley was inspecting officer and carried out his duties very thoroughly. In his speech he gave several useful hints to the boys regarding their uniform, and concluded with a strong appeal for a wise emphasis on the spiritual side of the boys' lives.

Mr. Berry was in the chair, and in a short address reminded the boys of the need of their loyalty to the Brigade, their school, and their church.

We want to record the very striking progress that has been made in this work.

Captain Beckett, Captain Reynolds, and their officers, are to be congratulated on the

results of their hard and often depressing work. The boys appeared smart, keen and capable, and the Companies have been formed less than a year. There was only a small attendance, which is a pity, because this is a work that is deserving of every possible encouragement.

From the Carrs Lane Journal June 1964

Conference: Truth (1) Sunday, April 26th How can the Bible be a guide for life? (by Dorothy Rumsby)

The Rev. George Caird considered first what the Bible was *not*. It is *not* a book in which we can find ready-made rules for living, though this is the way it has been treated through the centuries.

The Pharisees used it as a guide for life, getting 613 “comments” from it; for instance, they drew up 13 rules on what constituted work, which was therefore forbidden on the Sabbath. Jesus denounced this kind of religion.

It is dangerous to use the Bible like this, as it can be a two-edged sword. Though the source of a good and sincere religion, it can also be responsible for the opposite, the grossest superstition. It has inspired music and the arts, but the Puritans were inspired by it to destroy the beautiful. In some, it has encouraged the development of science; others it has inspired to attack scientific advancement. Though to some it has represented a true morality, by it others have committed much evil, justifying persecution and wars of religion from its pages. Even Apartheid is thus justified. What then is the Bible? It is essentially a history book about people who lived in bygone days. These were real people, with real problems, which may still be relevant for us today, though we must examine each incident as it occurred and its meaning at that time.

The Bible is also a book about God. It was written by men who were fallible, but they were convinced of the reality and power of God. The Bible tells us what God did with the lives of ordinary people. David, in the O.T., is honest about his failings, but God could work through him. This is the central message of the gospels, that “while we were yet sinners, God sent His Son to die for us.” Jesus could have written His teaching down, but He was prepared to entrust it to men.

The Bible is thus a guide to life only in that it brings us into contact with men who knew God. We can know God through it. But how are we to know when we have the true answer to our problems? Paul says if we have the mind of Christ – if we truly love God – we shall know the right thing to do. Jesus also says, if we will to do God’s will, we shall know what comes from God.

Dr. Caird suggested we read the Bible to get to know God, but with our critical faculties awake. We must use our own God-given judgment.

In answer to questions, he said the Bible gave the answers to personal but not political and social questions. Jesus did not want to be the head of a political movement, and could not influence such social injustices as slavery in the Roman Empire. We must make a stand for the God of the Bible, but not be arrogant to people of other religions. We should show humility, but point out that in Jesus of Nazareth, God has done something in which we want to share. With regard to the importance of interpreting the facts of the Bible, Dr. Caird thought we should treat it sensibly as a historian does his sources. The O.T. was history written with a slant.

The writers were anxious to teach theology and this led sometimes to an unconscious bias. In the N.T. there are contradictions and inconsistencies but these do not matter. There is a common core which is indisputable. This we can accept as history.

The Christian Movement for Peace in Israel (by Gillian Hunter)

The idea to go to Israel first came to me whilst repairing mountain paths at a C.M.P. work camp in Switzerland last summer. The aims of the C.M.P. work camps are to offer an opportunity to young people to work for communities in need and, by joining together in work, leisure, worship and discussion with people of other countries, increase international and inter-denominational understanding. It is still a small movement in England, consisting of about 150 members, mainly students. The camps are mostly held in Europe during the summer months, but two camps each of three months' duration are held in Israel from January to June.

"The C.M.P. condemns any form of anti-Semitism, and supports attempts to reach a better understanding and co-operation between Jews and Christians." This declaration is the basis of the work in Israel. A new country, now 16 years old, is being built there, and though it is fascinating to help in the work and follow its growth, that is primarily a task for the Jews. What they need from us is our support, our friendship and our understanding.

One cold, frosty day, 35 of us congregated in Berne for a day's talks before setting off towards the sun. The group was mainly Swiss as the Israel camp is organised from there, and more widely known in that country. The six day cruise down the Mediterranean with half day stops at Malta, Crete and Cyprus was a perfect opportunity to get to know each other.

On arrival at Haifa we split into groups to work on three different kibbutzim. A kibbutz is a communal agricultural settlement in which there is no private property nor individual wages. Each member works according to his ability and receives according to his needs.

My kibbutz was Nahshonim, in the neighbourhood of Tel Aviv, and only 3 kilometres from the Jordan border. C.M.P. groups have been going to Israel for about 6 years now, and always to the same 3 kibbutzim. I never expected the warm reception we received at Nahshonim. Gifts of fruit, sweets and cake awaited us in our rooms in small wooden cabins, two to a room.

The people of the kibbutz, numbering about 120 adults and 100 children, come from about 25 different countries – a great many from Egypt and a group of young people from Zionist youth movements in Belgium, Holland and England.

We had to work only 5 days each week compared with the 6 days worked by the rest of the kibbutz. Our main task was to pick the citrus fruit – extremely pleasant work with almost as many oranges consumed as exported! As we worked side by side with the kibbutzniks, there was an endless buzz of conversation, broken only by snatches of songs from every corner of the world. Other jobs we did were scrubbing pans in the kitchen and serving in the communal dining hall, ironing endless shirts in the laundry, cleaning out the hen house, weeding in the gardens and stripping the banana plants. The boys of the group, mainly farmers, helped with the cows, either in the dairy or taking the beef herd out to graze. The latter was a glorious job on a

sunny day, but not so funny during the frequent thunderstorms. It was the wettest and coldest winter for many years.

At 4 p.m. all work is stopped, and the next three hours are devoted to the children. They are brought up from birth in special children's houses in groups of 6 to 12 by specially trained nurses and teachers, and just go home for three hours each day and all day Saturday. This enables the mother to work an 8 hour day and so leads to the "equality" of the sexes. The parents still play an important part in the life of the child. The upbringing and education are left to trained people, the parents providing the child with love. The children are the most important part of the kibbutz, and everything possible is done for their welfare. It is through them that the kibbutz movement can continue. The day of the immigrant is over, and many young people are leaving the kibbutz for the more gay and comfortable town life.

5 p.m. was our favourite time. We never ran out of invitations to visit members in their rooms for coffee and a good chat. The older members of the kibbutz told us a great deal of Israel's history and of the origin, life and ideals of a kibbutz. The younger people gave us the less idealistic viewpoint, and I could drop in on any of the English people and talk as if they were a group of my friends in England. After a meeting of the group for a short act of worship, the evenings were spent having talks about all aspects of kibbutz life and slide-illustrated talks on the geography of Israel, singing and, of course, dancing whenever we got the chance. The Israeli folkdancing has a character all its own, and whenever there was a Jewish festival the rest of the night was spent dancing.

The kibbutz organised two main excursions for us, with all three groups joining together and riding in a lorry. The three-day trip in the Negev Desert was the most impressive, with fantastic scenery. We swam in the Red Sea and the Dead Sea, and spent a night out in the sand under the stars. It poured with rain all the time when we made an excursion up into the rolling hills of Galilee. For a country only the size of Wales the variety in scenery is almost unbelievable.

Our two days off each week enabled us to hitch-hike all over the country. Thus we were able to make friends in all fields of life in Israel, and everywhere we went we received wonderful hospitality.

Not all the kibbutzim are as welcoming as Nahshonim. The C.M.P. group in the Negev Desert kibbutz found mixing with the kibbutzniks very difficult at first, and the group in the old established one were lost in the crowd for a time, but in the end they made friends.

My only regret was that I had to leave immediately after the 3-month camp. Many of the group are staying in Israel, visiting other types of settlement such as a religious kibbutz. (Ours was non-religious, as are most of them.) In June there is also a C.M.P. camp working with the refugees in Jordan. This camp, I believe, is even more important than the Israel one. In Israel we learnt a great deal and gave the Jews our friendship and understanding. In Jordan, C.M.P. can do even more to lessen the gap, especially the German members. It is only they who can tell the young Arab refugees that Hitler was wrong. The Arab people are so full of hatred for the Israelis for "stealing" their land that it is essential to hear the Israeli side of the story first. Yes, altogether it was an extremely interesting, worthwhile and rewarding experience, and jolly good fun into the bargain!

Contributed by Wendy Firmin

Christian Faith under Fire

The authorities in this country at both national and local level have invented a new religion – it's called "Diversity". Apparently, Britain is no longer a Christian country; we are a diverse country. In spite of the fact that the vast majority of people living in Britain would be comfortable with the "Christian" tag (being largely ignorant of what a Christian is!) the authorities seem to see it differently.

Take the example of the Somerset nurse who offered to pray for an elderly patient. When the authorities heard about it, - and in the words of one reporter - all hell broke loose. The nurse was reminded bluntly that she must "demonstrate a personal and professional commitment to equality and diversity."

It seems that few people would get upset at the thought of being prayed for. Many people who have no apparent church connections nevertheless seek and appreciate prayer when they or someone they love is ill or in difficulties. In the case of the nurse, the reporter said the authorities could "draft in a Red Indian to do a rain dance at the end of my bed if it meant I got home earlier." Most people would probably sympathise with this view.

Many people, whether they are practising Christians or not, have long felt that the power of prayer plays an important part in healing. It is both sad and worrying, therefore, that in the eyes of some people, following a Christian lifestyle doesn't seem to sit comfortably with the "Diversity" agenda. Is it only Christianity which comes under fire in circumstances like these?

There have been other reported incidents which underline the fact that there are forces at work in our country that want to see Christians keep their faith to themselves or risk being persecuted for sharing it, while allowing those of other faiths to "do their own thing" unhindered.

When you discover what the Christian faith is built on, it is hard to understand why it should arouse such hostility. Everything about the message that Jesus stood for was based on love and concern for other people. But he warned his followers to expect hostility and persecution if they were faithful to him and obedient to his commands. Christ's followers don't just listen to what he says - they put their belief into action.

From ACE Ideas Forum

In my role as a chaplaincy volunteer I often mention to people – patients or staff – that we pray for everyone in the hospital daily at noon. I very rarely get an adverse reaction to this statement – from people of all faiths or none. Pat D

A Poem for Pentecost

*Today we feel the wind beneath our wings
Today the hidden fountain flows and plays
Today the church draws breath at last and sings
As every flame becomes a Tongue of praise.
This is the feast of fire, air, and water
Poured out and breathed and kindled into earth.
The earth herself awakens to her maker
And is translated out of death to birth.
The right words come today in their right order
And every word spells freedom and release
Today the gospel crosses every border
All tongues are loosened by the Prince of Peace
Today the lost are found in His translation.
Whose mother-tongue is Love, in every nation.*



Answers to May puzzle

a. Day; b. Fly; c. Pole d. Queen e. Flower f. Blossom

1. Dumpling; 2. Apple; 3. Yorkshire pudding; 4. Fig; 5. Lettuce; 6. Yam; 7. Pear; 8. Onion; 9. Lasagne; 10. Escargot; 11. Quince; 12. Ugli; 13. Edam; 14. Éclair; 15. Nectarine; 16. Fruit; 17. Loaf; 18. Oats; 19. Wholemeal; 20. Egg; 21. Rice; 22. Banana; 23. Lemon; 24. Orange; 25. Sugar; 26. Spice; 27. Olive; 28. Mango.

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.

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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www.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

Thinking Allowed First Thursday at 10.15 am

Harborne House Group Fourth Tuesdays 2.00pm (various locations)

Central House Group at Carrs Lane Third Wednesdays at 6.30pm

Carrs Lane Choir Practice Fridays at 7.00pm

Carrs Lane Players (drama group) Fridays at 7.45 pm

Charity Knitting Circle First Tuesday 10.00 am - 1.00 pm

Carrs Lane Walking Group usually meets monthly, see notice board

Fair Trade Shop First and Third Sunday after morning worship
and Tuesday - Saturday 10.30 am - 2.30 pm

Counselling Centre Monday - Friday 11.00 am - 1.30 pm
and Monday to Wednesday evenings 7.00 - 9.00 pm

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