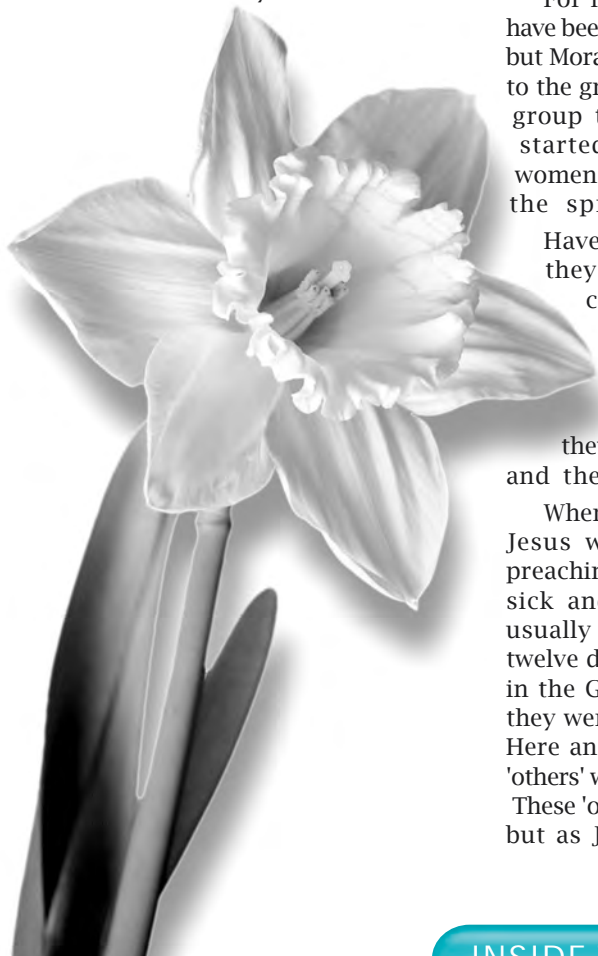




Br. Thom Stapleton's

## Easter Meditation

For nearly 300 years, Moravians have been gathering in graveyards on Easter morning amongst tombstones and signs of the reality of death, to confess faith in the risen Christ - Jesus, who once was dead, now lives for evermore. Even in congregations where there is no graveyard, talk of death and the remembrance of those who have died is very much a part of the Easter Sunday celebration.



It is a bold statement - to stand in the face of that which seems to have power over us all and to say with confidence:

*O Death, where is your victory?*

*O Death, where is your sting?*

*Thanks be to God!*

*He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

For nearly 300 years, Moravians have been making that bold statement, but Moravians were not the first to go to the graveyard on Easter. The first group to do so, the group which started this tradition, were the women who went to the tomb with the spices they had prepared.

Have you ever wondered where they came from? or how they came to be involved in the story? I don't want to make too much of the inclusion of the women in the Easter story, but the truth is that they do figure very prominently and they play an important role.

When we read the stories of how Jesus went from place to place, preaching and teaching, healing the sick and feeding the hungry, we usually picture just Jesus and the twelve disciples. But here and there in the Gospels there are hints that they were not alone in their travels. Here and there we find mention of 'others' who travelled along with them.

These 'others' aren't clearly identified, but as Jesus moved from place to

place and as the news about him spread, there must have been many others who left their nets and ploughs and jobs behind to follow him. And amongst them were women.

Given the social conventions and gender expectations of the day, I reckon that Jesus and the Twelve would have needed some women along to take care of them, seeing as how they probably weren't prepared or trained to do it themselves. Although we only hear a hint of a reference to the women now and again in the Gospels, it's clear that there was an entourage of them travelling along with Jesus and the disciples, quietly serving in the background.

So it's not surprising that on that first Easter morning, while the disciples had gone into hiding out of fear, it was a group of women who first went to the tomb... and not because they just happened to show up at the last minute with a handbag full of spices.

They had ministered to him while he was alive and they were there to minister to him in his death. It was all they could do for him now. On Good Friday, the disciples had scattered, but the women had come and stood at the foot of the cross - stood, helpless to do anything to ease his suffering and pain. Even as they walked through the graveyard that Easter morning, they were not sure that they would be able to move the stone which blocked the tomb.

*continued inside...*

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## Easter Meditation continued

What they found in that graveyard was not what they expected. The massive stone had been rolled away and a messenger from God waited where they expected to find the lifeless body of Jesus.

Mark's account is slightly different from the others. He records the astonishment of the women. There are no crowds of joyful people processing about in triumph, no loud trumpet blasts announcing the Good News. Instead, it is a quiet moment - in the stillness of the cool morning before the busyness and the heat of the day... a quiet moment with birds singing their morning songs and bees buzzing amongst the blossoms... and the atmosphere is heavy with astonishment... all because of what God had done in raising Jesus from death.

Lent and Holy Week prepare us for this day. Following our Lord's journey through suffering and pain to the cross, watching as his body was beaten and his blood poured out for us, waiting while his body lay in the grave, we come to a better understanding of the astonishment the women felt that first Easter morning.

There is a sense in which, apart from all the great joy and happiness we feel on Easter day, we too must simply stand in awe and silence before the empty tomb, for we stand on holy ground. What has taken place here, what we celebrate today is God's own doing.

**Thanks be to God!**

**He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.**

## A word from the Editor

As I write this, it is Ash Wednesday, and we begin the well travelled road to Holy Week and Christ's crucifixion on the cross. In the garden snowdrops are bobbing in the breeze, slender and fragile and the first crocuses are in bloom - always a hopeful sign as new life breaks forth.

The Christian Church has observed a period of preparation for Easter from its very beginning. For the first three centuries, it was a few days or a week. The first reference to forty days occurs in AD 325 at the first Council of Nicea. Lent reminds us of the disciplines of the Christian life and of our need for repentance and grace. It is a time for prayer, bible-study, reflection and fasting - although this doesn't necessarily have to be from food, it can be from negativity such as impatience or intolerance. It should help us to become better Christians; less concerned with what we want, trying to listen to what God wants to say to us and thus making us more effective and better able to serve our Lord and each other.

# A Time of Refreshment and Mutual Sharing



On the front row, from left to right, Sr Gillian Taylor, Br Robert Hopcroft and Br Holger Perske. On the back row, from left to right, Br Johannes Welschen, Br Frieder Vollprecht, Br Christoph Reichel and Br Heiner Schubert (Retreat Leader)

Members of the Provincial Boards of the British and European Continental Provinces met for a retreat, and to discuss matters of common concern, from Monday, 23rd to Thursday, 26th January, at Montmirail, in Switzerland. Unfortunately, due to other commitments, not all the members of the two boards were able to attend. Those present from the British Province were Br Robert Hopcroft, Sr

Gillian Taylor and me, and from the European Continental Province, Brn Christoph Reichel, Frieder Vollprecht, Johannes Welschen and Holger Perske.

The history of Montmirail, in the canton of Neuchâtel, begins in 1618, when the bailiff of Thielle, Abraham Tribolet, built a château, a farm and a barn on the land. In 1742, a Moravian community was established at Montmirail, consisting of 34 people.

*continued on page 32*

Holy week is always a time of mixed emotions for we know the story of the passion and yet we continue to crucify Christ time after time when we allow the innocent to suffer. Christ experienced the pain we feel and a very public and humiliating death, but with that agony came resurrection and new life. Easter speaks of the triumph of life over death but only when we have stood at the foot of the cross and realised the terrible cost of that new life.

On Easter Sunday the congregation at Brockweir will move from the church to God's Acre and we will name those who have moved on to higher service. It is always a solemn time with sadness amidst such breathtaking beauty and under the hedges wild primroses will be in flower. They are a reminder of the beauty of God's creation and of the new life erupting around us. May the way of the cross lead us to the joy of Easter.



## PYCC report from February 2012 - a new members perspective

Last year I was elected as District Youth Officer for the Lancashire District. Being a Primary School Teacher in a central Manchester school and a regular Summer Camp leader,

I felt I could contribute to the youth work in the district and in the province as a whole. Over last half term, I and the other PYCC (Provincial Youth & Children's Committee) members met at University Road Belfast to discuss and organise events across the province.

The meeting started at 10 in the morning and ran right through till 4.30pm with a short dinner break in the middle. What surprised me first was how much the PYCC actually covers. We discussed international events, Summer Camp, Youth Camps and 18+ events in the morning alone. After dinner, we discussed the updates to the child protection and safeguarding policies and much more. It was a lot to cover in just one day. In my job as a school teacher, we can spend a whole day discussing child policies alone, never mind organising the various camps and events that occur across the province.

An encouraging aspect to the day was to see how much youth work is going on around the province. The district reports were full of fantastic events for children and young people to attend and take part in. It is vitally important that children are drawn into churches and the community that surrounds them.

Too often I see children in my day to day work who lack the community cohesion that can play such a vital role in their lives. I remember being a child and feeling a sense of support, fellowship and friendship at my church in Westwood (now Royton). Not only this, but it provided me with opportunities that I would have otherwise missed. I

remember organising a table top sale to raise money for a Blue Peter appeal at Westwood with the support of the older people, which made me feel a valid member of the community. It was then Summer Camp that gave me the confidence to spend time away from my parents. Without that I may have not had the courage to move away from Manchester to pursue my teaching career at St Martins' College up in Lancaster and travel to Ghana to volunteer as a teacher over one summer. It was the foundations of the church and my parents that helped me to get where I am today. By joining the PYCC, I feel I can repay that favour the church gave me by helping the committee and other volunteers in the province organise valuable opportunities for the young people of our churches and communities.

The meeting also highlighted how much fundraising the province does to help our young people access events. For example the MWA raise 500 pounds every year for the annual Summer Camp. The district reports also pointed towards other fundraising events that occur across the province. It is great to see that although we are a small denomination, as a group we are very generous in helping not only people in our own church, but people in the wider community.

The day was very uplifting and a lot of events were organised and discussed. I am looking forward supporting the youth work in my district and the province in the year ahead. There are some fantastic events coming up that I strongly encourage anyone to take part in any way they can. The youth is not just the future of the church, but they are the present too. After all, it was the youth of the past that has created the church of today, which is a church full of support, faith, worship and fellowship.

*Ben Cooper*

## Fulneck and Gomersal Youth Group

This group met for the first time at Fulneck on 19th February for a games and planning evening. They meet on the 3rd Sunday of the month and have planned activities up to July, and have now extended to include all the churches in Yorkshire.

More details from Sr Lorraine Shorten.



## Summer Camp 2012

**Where:** Fulneck School, Yorkshire

**When:** 18-25th August

**Who:** Any person age 9-17 on 31st August 2012.

**Cost:** £250 includes all food and activities  
Discounts: £30 if you book before 31st May.

**What is it?** A chance for young Moravians to get together and spend a week having fun.

The activities will include bible study and worship, games, crafts, outdoor activities, and an outing.

**Why come?** It is an opportunity to make friends or meet up with friends made in previous years, refresh your faith, try something new, experience living with other young people from across the province and learn what it means to be a Moravian.

Booking forms and information will be posted out to all previous attendees or can be obtained from your minister or Joy Raynor youth@moravian.org.uk 01753 553549  
Theme to be confirmed soon.



# A Time of Refreshment and Mutual Sharing *continued*

Some years after the closure of the community, the Moravian Church opened a boarding school for girls' in 1766. At its peak, the school had nearly 150 girls and teachers. Then, in 1988, the school closed and the property was leased to the Don Camillo Community.

The Don Camillo Community is a Christian community, founded in 1977, in Basel, by a group of young people within the Reformed Church, and the community remains part of that church today. The leasing of Montmirail enabled the Don Camillo Community to fulfil its desire to receive guests and offer accommodation to people going through difficult experiences in their lives. The community has an ecumenical ethos and organises specific retreats for groups. It also has an annual programme of retreats/events, which people from outside the community can attend. Most of the community members are based at Montmirail. However, there are a few members of the community based in Basel and in Berne.

Our retreat was led by a member of the Don Camillo Community, Heiner Schubert. The retreat began after supper, on the Monday, with a presentation by Werner Weiss, about the Don Camillo community. During this session, we were also introduced to Claudia Kohl Reichback, who led our meditations each morning, and the form of those meditations was explained.

Finally, we ended the day by attending the community's Holy Communion Service, led by Marianne Bertschi. Like all the other community's prayers that were held each morning, lunchtime and evening, the service included liturgical responses and chanting.

On Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, attending the community's morning prayers at 6.30am was optional. Our official programme of activities began each morning with a meditation, led by Claudia Kohl Reichback. These meditations used St Ignatius' method of meditation, which involved reflecting on a short passage of scripture, in silence, for half an hour. When our programme of activities allowed, we also attended the lunchtime and evening prayers of the community.

During the retreat, we shared in two Bible studies, both of which were led by Heiner. On the Tuesday, the topic of the Bible study was entitled, "Mission Today". Heiner helped

us reflect on the question of how we share the Gospel in a post-modern, fast changing world, where people are more concerned with shame than guilt. The Bible study on the Wednesday was entitled, "Growth and the Kingdom of God". During this session, Heiner retold The Parable of the Great Feast (Luke 14:16), using cartoon drawings, which he drew himself as he retold the parable. Each of us was then asked to choose one character from the story, go for a walk with another member of the group, and explain to each other why we had chosen our particular character.

On the Tuesday afternoon, we visited the city of Berne. While in Berne, we had the opportunity to meet the minister and a member of the Moravian fellowship in Berne, Br Hartmut Hass and Sr Pia Moser. We were also able to hear about the House of Religions Project, which the fellowship is very much part of. The project is to build a centre where five world religions will have their own room or space to hold their religious services and ceremonies, and also a place where dialogue between different religions can take place through conferences, discussions, exhibitions and festivals.

On Wednesday, Gabriel Bader, the President of the Reformed Church in Neuchâtel, gave a talk on the future of the church and how the church needs to adapt to modern society. He spoke about the separation from the church of politics, health and education; the individualistic nature of modern society; a paradigm shift in values; religious pluralism; and the developments in information technology.

On Thursday, the two Provincial Boards had an important and worthwhile meeting, at which matters of mutual interest were discussed. Also, on Thursday, we shared in a workshop, where we were introduced to some new songs from Tiazé, Iona, etc.

For me, this retreat was a valuable time of spiritual refreshment. It was a precious time to reflect, contemplate and pray for my own ministry, the two congregations I serve, the British Province and the Unity as a whole. It was good to spend time with members of the European Continental Provincial Board and to be able share common experiences, concerns and interests.

*Phil Cooper (PEC)*



*This is a picture of the communion table in the chapel. The communion table consists of an oblong stone, which had been split in two. The top of the table is a rectangular sheet of dark glass. When I first saw the table, it conjured up three powerful images in my mind. One image was the curtain in the temple at Jerusalem being torn in two, immediately after the death of Jesus on the cross. Another image was my own brokenness, which Jesus came to heal. The third image was my own fractured relationship with God and*

*with other people which Jesus came to mend. When I asked Heiner about the communion table and its symbolic meaning, he gave me a fourth interpretation. He explained that the broken stone represents our own incomplete and, at times, distorted understanding of God. The dark sheet of glass represents the passage in the Bible, from 1 Corinthians 13:12, where Paul writes that what we understand now about God and his ways is like looking at a dim image in a mirror, but one day we shall understand fully.*



April is always a fabulous month for sports fans, and one which I thoroughly enjoy.

The month marks the overlap of the ending of the winter season in some sports and the beginning of the summer season in others. Classic events take place; heroes and villains emerge; and the sun shines (hopefully), bringing a great atmosphere to each occasion.

In football, we have the semi-final matches in the FA Cup, the Scottish FA Cup, the UEFA Champions League and Europa League, and the conclusion of the Football League fixtures before the play-offs begin. The fixtures over the Easter weekend often make or break the hopes and ambitions of clubs aiming for titles or promotion, or avoiding relegation.

There are two Formula 1 Grand Prix in April, as the new season revs up; the Superbikes season also gets under way. In cycling, numerous road and track events occur, as teams warm up for the major tour events and the forthcoming Olympics.

In horse racing, April marks the end of the National Hunt season, and the start of the Flat season. The Grand National will be run at Aintree on the Saturday after Easter; and Good Friday is the only day in the month of April this year when there is no race meeting of one discipline or the other taking place.

In rowing, on Easter Saturday, on the River Thames in London, there will be the 158th University Boat Race. Will it be Oxford or will it be Cambridge?

The first matches of the 2012 Cricket County Championship take place; you know that summer is on the way once you hear the sound of leather on willow.

Over the Easter weekend, the world's top golfers assemble in Augusta, Georgia, for the US Masters. Can Rory get it right in all four rounds this time?

And in many sports, participants are carefully and painstakingly building up to the big event of the 2012 sporting calendar - the London Olympics. Slowly getting into form so that they will peak at the right time, and doing all they can to stay free from injury that might blight all their efforts over the past years to reach this pinnacle of performance.

## April - sporting heaven!

In that list above are two very British sporting events that attract huge national and world-wide TV audiences.

The Boat Race turns a nation into experts on rowing; it draws millions of people into a world that for 364 days of the years the vast majority would never enter or engage with. Is that what makes it so very British? And you do at least have a 50/50 chance of correctly predicting the winners of the race.

The Grand National also turns millions into experts.

How many people watch the race who would never ever otherwise watch horse racing? Even if they don't have "a flutter" on the outcome, many still look at the runners and riders and choose their horse - perhaps because of the name, or the jockey, or the colours, or even sometimes because they have actually studied the form. In offices, staffrooms, shop floors, and factories throughout the UK, there will be the annual sweepstake when many who would never dream of betting on the outcome of a horse race join in the communal spirit of the occasion. (Why did I always seem to draw the donkey at the back in the school staffroom sweep? And did you know that the first ever winner of "the National" in 1839 was a horse called Lottery).

The names of Grand National winning horses, jockeys, trainers and owners go into the nation's memory. Red Rum and Ginger McCain; Foinavon; Aldaniti and Bob Champion; A P McCoy. Just occasionally, the losers achieve lasting fame. Remember Dick Francis and Devon Loch, the Queen Mother's horse, in 1956.

What is it about these two sporting events, the Boat Race and the Grand National, that capture the imagination of people who are not otherwise great fans of rowing or horse racing - or even of sport?

I think it is something about the spirit of human endeavour in two sporting events that require courage and endurance.

The effort that goes into the 6.8 km (four and a quarter miles) pull up the River Thames leaves all sixteen oarsmen exhausted at the finish. At the Olympics, there is the consolation of a silver medal for finishing second; in the University Boat Race, you either win or lose.

In the Grand National, there is the spectacular sight of horse and jockey in harmony. It is a gruelling race: four and a half miles and thirty jumps over some of the highest and most dangerous fences in National Hunt racing. For the winner, there is glory and a place in history; apart from Devon Loch, it is rare for anyone to remember for very long after the race the "also ran's".

Endurance, battling against the gruelling odds, driving oneself to the limits to achieve victory; qualities that we admire in people in all aspects of life.

Qualities that we see in abundance and supremely exemplified in the Passion of Christ. And no need to "lay a bet" - follow him and you're on to a "racing certainty" in the victory of the resurrection.

Enjoy your Easter - may your faith in Christ be strengthened, and may your hope in your local team never be diminished!

*David Newman*  
[david.newman@moravian.org.uk](mailto:david.newman@moravian.org.uk)



# The Finance Committee

There are four ministers and four lay members of the Finance Committee, elected by Synod for a four year term, plus the four members of the Provincial Board. The duties and powers of the committee are summarised in Section 5 of the Book of Order. The main function is to advise the Provincial Board in regard to the purchase and sale of property and investments, and to monitor any requests for loans or grants from church organisations. It also recommends to Synod the level of stipends and the rate of assessment on congregations for the next inter-synodal period.

## Stipends:

At Synod 2010, a resolution was passed to link stipend increases to the Retail Price Index. Stipends were therefore increased (in January 2011 by 4.6% and in January 2012 by 5.6%) to £21,792 per annum. A commitment was also made to monitor the level of Moravian stipends against other churches, in particular the United Reform Church. URC stipends were increased by 2% at 1st January 2012 to £23,700, but, bearing in mind that URC ministers contribute 7.5% of their income to a pension fund, the net difference is relatively small.

## Assessments:

Annual Stipend Assessments cover stipends, employer's national insurance contributions, travel expenses and a contribution of 5.5% towards pension costs. All other central costs, including 'pensions in payment', are met out of investment income, donations and income from the Bates Trust.

Sr. Gillian Taylor, the Provincial Treasurer, has already informed congregation treasurers that the stipend increase, plus the effects of a reduction in total membership from 1310 to 1,273, has been offset by three retirements. Assessments for 2012 have, therefore, been reduced by 7.3%. However, bear in mind that we are fortunate to have three candidates in training and their costs will have to be met when they are called into service.

## Pension Scheme:

The non-contributory pension scheme for ministers was changed, at Synod 2010, from a 60th to an 80th Final Salary Scheme, and new ministers would join a stakeholder scheme.

We are aware that this discretionary benefit will not qualify under new government legislation. The National Employment Savings Trust Scheme (NEST) will require all employers to implement a minimum Defined Contribution Scheme, similar, in many ways to a Stakeholder Pension. Major employers will have to implement this new scheme in October 2012. Organisations with less than 50 employees

will have to enrol by August 2014, at the earliest. We continue to seek advice on this issue.

## Age Profile:

An Age Profile of the province was undertaken, as at 1st January 2011, and the following data emerged.

- **63% of members are 60 and over (including 16% at 80 and over)**
- **12% are under 40**
- **70% are female**

It was pointed out that many congregations have active teenagers in their ranks who consider themselves to be 'almost' members, but would not want to commit themselves in terms of membership and contribution. A request has been made, by the Faith and Order Committee, for a review of the membership rules, as young people must not be discouraged from taking the important step of Confirmation, preferably before they move into higher education.

## Investments:

The United Bank of Switzerland continues to manage the major share of the church's investments, but steps have been taken in recent years to broaden the portfolio. With this in mind, investments have been made with Vestra Wealth Management and The Charities Property Fund. We monitor progress through regular reports and meetings.

Capital values have been under pressure, but income yields have remained positive.

## Book of Order:

Times are changing, and a review of certain paragraphs in the Book of Order is being undertaken. A number of amendments will be presented for approval at Synod 2012.

## Involvement:

Two ministers and two lay members of the Finance Committee retire at Synod 2012. They are Sr. Kathryn Woolford, Br. Kenneth Evans, Br. Terry Cross and Br. Graham Mallinson. They may seek re-election, if that is their wish (Sr. Woolford has already indicated that she will not be seeking re-election). New members are always welcome, so, if you are minded to apply, or if you know of a suitable candidate, please approach your minister as soon as possible, or contact a member of staff at Church House for a Nomination Form.

Also, if you wish to comment on any issue in this report, please write to the committee or contact your Synod Deputy, so that your views can be expressed at Swanwick in June.

*This article will form part of the Finance Committee Report to Synod.*

# Around the District Conferences

## IRISH DISTRICT CONFERENCE

The autumn meeting of the Irish District Conference was held at Kilwarlin Moravian Church on the morning of Saturday 28th October. Sr. Patsy Holdsworth welcomed the representatives and led the worship.

Sr. Sarah Groves, attending her first IDC since becoming the minister of Gracehill, presented the latest PEC report, which elicited various comments and questions from the floor of conference. It was noted that if there was to be another Enquirers' Day in the Irish District then there would have to be better follow up if it was to happen again. There was a discussion about student ministers and how it would be helpful to have all future students trained at Northern College in the future and the possibility of team ministry in the Province was discussed. The new Lay Training Course is being prepared by Br. Len Broadbent in two parts and will soon be rolled out in the Irish District. The hope was expressed that the pieces in the Messenger on books of the Bible could be put together in a book. Questions were asked about the web site and the work being done by David Bull. More people with access to the site are needed so that updates can be done more efficiently.

Br. Broadbent presented his combined congregation reports, compiled from the reports of all five congregations. This is great work that he does for conference and makes the sharing of the life of the congregations extremely efficient and effective. The overall report reflects a very active and busy district, with many members who are very committed to the work of the Lord, both inside and outside of the congregations. Sr. Eunice Hoey gave her Social Responsibility report, which concerned addiction to prescription drugs and so-called legal highs. There followed a lively debate about the topic, with delegates sharing their experiences and thoughts on this emotive subject. Sr. Lizzy Hoey then spoke about renewal and her role as the Renewal Secretary, a post that she had taken up earlier in the year. She told conference of the various ideas that had come up in discussions that she had had with the ministers of the district, including a district bowls night, Summer Camp Reunion, a fun night and retreats, both in the Irish District and over at Holy Island in England. There was also a general discussion about what renewal actually means and there were a lot of different definitions put forward.

Br. Paul Holdsworth offered a youth report to conference and added a few details, including a brief reflection of this year's Summer Camp, the money that Irish District Youth

had given to the buses run to Summer Camp from the Eastern and Yorkshire Districts and the up and coming ID Youth and 18+ Weekends which were to be held later in the autumn. Youth work in the district is in a fairly healthy state, with all manner of media being used to arrange activities, such as texting, emails and even Facebook. Once Br. Holdsworth's report had been accepted, with thanks, Sr. Lizzy Mewha gave a verbal report on Moravial 2011, which had been held at two venues in the district in August. She said that it had been a wonderful event with young people coming together from five different countries for a time of fun and fellowship together. All five Moravian congregations were involved with the various activities and the delegates led Sunday morning worship at Gracehill. Moravial was a great success and it was a great honour and pleasure for the folk of the Irish District to host such a wonderful event.

In the ecumenical section of the conference news was shared about meetings of the Irish Council of Churches, the Church of Ireland Conference and the Methodist Conference. Br. Derick Woods brought a Christian Aid resolution to IDC, which called for more transparency in business tax and was passed unanimously by IDC. The ministers of the district also told IDC about the ecumenical work at the local level with the individual congregations. Ballinderry plays an active part in the local community forum, runs a local community youth club and plays a regular part in the Crumlin Ministers' Meeting. Cliftonville is part of the BT14 Group of ministers, which organises four services a year and cross community events in North Belfast. Gracehill has good relationships with local congregations, shares ecumenical services and takes part in joint trips to places as far afield as Londonderry. Kilwarlin has close links with the local Church of Ireland congregations, a youth club open to all and local congregations support the bowls club. University Road is part of three ecumenical groups, namely Sandy Row Clergy, South Belfast Clergy and Belfast City Clergy. Br. and Sr. Holdsworth also reported about their work with the Seymour Hill Fellowship, which is situated between Lisburn and Belfast and meets to worship regularly.

The conference closed with the Grace and a lovely meal served by the sisters of Kilwarlin, a fitting end to a good day's business.

*Joan Brown*



# Open Book

## AMOS

The Jewish Scriptures are divided into the Torah, the Former Prophets, the Major prophetic books, The Minor Prophets and The Writings. Amos is listed among the Minor Prophets in spite of the fact that he didn't claim to be a prophet at all but simply a keeper of sheep and a dresser of fig trees (Chapter 7, 14.). We would describe him as a layman today because he was not a priest or a professional prophet. The book that bears his name is thought to be the earliest record of the utterances of a prophet and has the general structure of other prophetic books namely, the announcement of impending judgement, a call to repentance which is usually ignored by most people, the consequent inevitability of punishment, closing with the assurance of salvation at some future time. Most of the book of Amos is about the calamities that are about to overtake the people of Israel and it is only in the last five verses of the final chapter that he holds out any hope of better times to come eventually. All of the prophets were accomplished orators, able to arrest the attention of passers-by and able to choose the right place and the right time to have the greatest effect on the largest number of people. Amos was born in Tekoa, a town in the Southern kingdom, more or less on the border between the kingdoms of Judah and Israel but his warnings were delivered mainly against the inhabitants of the Northern kingdom. His favourite preaching place was in Bethel, one of the royal sanctuaries, where he was able to address everyone who came to worship, particularly at the religious festivals, and also get the attention of the religious authorities, much to their annoyance eventually.

The book opens with a brief introduction of the man Amos, stating the time and place in which he lived and the fact that his prophecy is the result of having had a vision. Throughout his prophecy, the words, 'Thus says the Lord' appear over and over again as if to emphasise the fact that he is not himself responsible for the warnings he is giving - eight times

in the very first chapter for example. This form of introducing an oracle is used by other prophets as well. Another recurring phrase in the opening chapters is 'For three transgressions and for four'. This is simply a way of saying, 'Time after time' or 'for crime after crime' as it has been translated in some modern versions. The judgement begins with Israel's neighbours and gradually involves Judah and then Israel. The punishment for wrong doing is exile or captivity and this too is repeated several times. It is not just ingratitude for all that God has done that Amos condemns but the social injustice that prevailed at the time as outlined in chapter 2 from verse 6 onward. Those who lived in luxury did so by selling the poor, sometimes for the price of a pair of sandals. The picture is one of exploitation of the needy by the unscrupulous wealthy in a way that would be counted as shameful in the surrounding nations.

**'LET JUSTICE ROLL DOWN LIKE WATERS AND RIGHTEOUSNESS LIKE AN EVER-FLOWING STREAM.'**

In chapter 4 it is the pampered women who are specifically addressed because they were living in comfort at the expense of the poor, indulging in too much drink among other things and hoping to cancel out their misdeeds by observing the religious rituals at the worship centres in Bethel and Gilgal. Amos called them 'Cows of Bashan', beasts being fattened for the slaughter. Their impending punishment is that they will be led into captivity with hooks through their flesh, an Assyrian practice at that time apparently. The rest of the chapter recalls the various ways in which God tried to persuade his people to return to him but to no avail. They are

therefore advised to 'prepare to meet your God.'(verse 12).

Chapter 5 begins with a lament in the first three verses and this is followed by a call to repentance - 'Seek me and live', (verse 4), 'Seek the Lord and live', (verse 6), 'Seek good and not evil that you may live' (verse 14). But this is not to be done by worshipping God in the religious centres but rather by 'establishing justice in the gate. It may be that the Lord, the God of hosts will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph.'(Verse 15).

Verses 18 to 24 are sheer poetry, oratory at its finest, ending with the words, 'Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.' The same may be said for chapter 6, particularly from verse 4 to verse 7 - 'Woe to those who lie down on beds of ivory etc.' Here are words designed to grab the attention of any passing people and once again they are a condemnation of those who live in luxury and supposed security, unaware of the fate about to befall them. In chapter 7 we get the impression that Amos was able to get the Lord to change his mind about punishing Israel on two occasions but that the next time God would not relent. This was too much for the priest at Bethel to swallow and he sent a message to the king accusing Amos of treason. The result was even further outbursts from the prophet, directed this time against the priest and his family. The closing two chapters contain a vision similar to those seen by Ezekiel, a list repeating the evils being perpetrated by the rich against the poor and a description of the punishment that is about to be meted out. After nine chapters of almost complete doom and gloom, the book ends on a high with the promised restoration of Israel after all the trials and tribulations through which it will go. It is quite a short book and worth reading, particularly since in some societies, nothing appears to have changed after all these years and in spite of the warnings contained in it.

*Peter M Gubi*

# O Love of God!

PAUL GUBI shares the wonder and joy of this hymn by Horatius Bonar (MHB 36)

The words are simple; the message profound. Indeed, the substance of this hymn is captured in the exclamation with which it begins. Is there a more arresting thought than this which, to my mind says: Go no further - hold this thought and let it just flow over you.

***O Love of God! how strong and true, eternal and yet ever new; Uncomprehended and unbought, beyond all knowledge and all thought.***

The affirmation of faith offered in these lines is one that is strong and enduring, and also comforting, not least in moments of grief, which, at the time of writing, is the context in which I last sang it: truly the spring of water welling up to eternal life, of which our Lord spoke (John 4). Our throw-away society is constantly looking for something new and new ways of marketing established products. This hymn points us to the Divine love which is eternal yet ever new; ever breaking upon us in its unfading freshness. "Uncomprehended and unbought", because such love seeks a heart-response ahead of any intellectual discourse, and offers enrichment of the soul that has nothing to do with the depth of the pocket. "Who fathoms the eternal thought?" asks JG Whittier in one of his hymns. "The Lord is God! He needeth not the poor device of man". Such love is felt, not explained. It is the gift of God to all, which takes us to the next verse.

***O wide-embracing, wondrous love! We read thee in the sky above; We read thee in the earth below, in seas that swell and streams that flow.***

In the new book this has been tinkered with and "We see you" is inserted for "We read thee". There is of course a difference between seeing a situation and reading the situation; between seeing and perceiving. One of William Wordsworth's poems (I don't remember which) contains the lines: "A primrose by the river's brim, a yellow primrose was to him, and nothing more" - which says it all about the difference. I shall therefore bypass this unnecessary piece of meddling and stick to Horatius Bonar's original, which really is better. Sky and earth, the ebb and flow of the tides, the life-sustaining streams flowing through the valleys, have so much to say to the soul that is able to read these things, as opposed to merely seeing them in passing. They speak about the presence, the power and the care of a loving God.

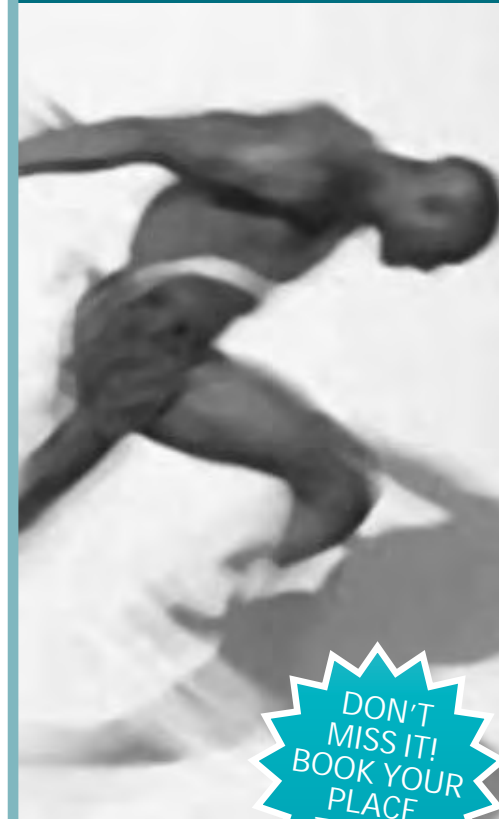
***We read thee best in him who came to bear for us the cross of shame; Sent by the Father from on high, our life to live, our death to die. We read thy power to bless and save e'en in the darkness of the grave; Still more in resurrection light we read the fulness of thy might.***

This reading time is best rewarded in the contemplation of the gift of God in Jesus Christ. Nature's sounds and sights can be truly awesome and tell us a lot, but none of it compares to this gift which is the foundation of all our faith. Christ's humanity is the pattern for our life. His suffering and death for us is our source of hope, our peace, and our light in the darkness. The bearing of the cross and the conquering of death are not merely sights to be seen but signs to be recognised - God's gift of salvation to be celebrated to the end of time. Those passers-by at Calvary, who were only there for the spectacle, were the ones who were jeering. So to the final verse where we reap the fruits of our contemplation of that beautiful thought that wants to stay with you - and why would you want it to go away!

***O Love of God! our shield and stay through all the perils of our way; Eternal love, in thee we rest, for ever safe, for ever blest!***

Enjoy this hymn, whether you are reading it or singing it, and may the peace of the Lord be always with you.

# Fellowship Weekend



**DON'T MISS IT! BOOK YOUR PLACE TODAY!**

**13th April to 15th April 2012**

**THEME: RUNNING THE RACE**

TO BE HELD AT SHALLOWFORD HOUSE STAFFORDSHIRE

Cost of the weekend £110 per person.

If you would like a place reserving please complete the Booking Form (overleaf) and return to:

**Paul Greenhough, 150 Hunsworth Lane Cleckheaton, West Yorkshire BD19 4DR**

**Tel: 01274 872633**

**E mail: Paul.Greenhough @moravian.org.uk**

PLEASE USE THE BOOKING FORM OVERLEAF

BOOKING FORM

FELLOWSHIP WEEKEND

13th April to  
15th April 2012

(please specify)

Twin Room

Single Room

places

Please reserve me

Please specify any special diet

Name:

Address:

Tel:

Congregation:

Signed:

# Notice Board

## Change of Address

Br. Richard Ingham's new address is as follows:  
11 Fulneck, Pudsey, West Yorkshire LS28 8NT  
Tel: 0113 236 0450

## The Sea of Life

*Steely grey reflecting the leadened sky  
rippling surging, crashing, boiling  
onto the coast and gently, ever so gently  
carving new shapes of caves, then arches then stacks.  
Cold, dull, uninviting and yet  
one night serene and dazzling the full moon  
bathes its pale light, transforming the scene to one of tantalising beauty.*

*Days lengthen; sun dapples the tops of the waves, birds return skimming  
the surface  
and diving and screaming bring the blue water to life around the coasts.  
People come to see foaming water, turquoise blue and sparkling.*

*The sun is overhead now, clear azure sky reflected in lapping sea  
that each day reveals a playground.  
Long lazy days of sandcastles, trenches and sculptures.  
Cricket, football and children splashing.  
Surfers glide skilfully over the waves.  
Boats cut through the blue waters, sails aloft.  
Men stand on the rocks and piers for hours, to catch the spoils of the  
deep.  
People flock to recharge flagging batteries  
and explore the ever changing playground  
created by each new tide.*

*Winds strengthen, days shorten,  
rain batters the shore as well as  
the dashing sea. People leave,  
birds long gone to warmer climes  
are safe from the roaring sea  
that once again turns grey and un-tempting.*

*Each day the sea surrounds our lands  
reflecting the sky above and reminds us  
gently of the one who surrounds our lives  
with love.*

Claire L. Summers

# Congregation News

## Salem, Oldham

After a very cold start to 2011, when various activities were cancelled due to the weather, it was good to be hosting the local Churches Together Womens' World Day of Prayer Service. The suggested format involved all the congregations, so there was a good turnout, and everyone enjoyed the service and refreshments afterwards. The weather was kind on Easter Sunday, and part of the early Communion Service was held in the Garden of Remembrance. Unfortunately, we found out very late that our speaker for Sisters' Sunday in May was not available, so Br Cooper stepped in to take the service for us.

During the summer two of the organisations who use our Church Hall, a Pre-school and youth Drama Group either finished or moved to other premises. Fortunately another Pre-school has taken over and we have a Zumba Dance Group that has started. Along with our Community Theatre and Craft Group, as well as a different youth drama group, the hall provides a good community service. We tried to promote these activities with a Community Activities' Service in October, delivering over 300 leaflets locally, but it seems that 10.00am on a Sunday is too early these days for most people; we can only hope that they use the activities during the week. However, the Reunion Service we held the previous week was a success, almost doubling the congregation. There was a lot of reminiscing during the refreshments provided in the hall after the service.

We were very pleased to welcome Br James Woolford to Salem in September. He will be working with Br Cooper in the Royton and Salem congregations for the remainder of his course in Manchester. He has quickly made his mark in the congregation, taking services when Br Cooper has not been available, and taking over a part in the Community Theatre's autumn production at short notice, due to a member's illness. He is a breath of fresh air, and has lots of ideas for fund raising.

This has become necessary as during a very wet summer both flat roofs on the Church Hall started to leak badly, and were subsequently replaced in the autumn.

We also had some lead stolen from the church roof, as so many churches seem to have suffered.

We held a Christmas Fair on the Saturday of our Anniversary weekend, which was well attended and produced a record sum, and on the Sunday we welcomed Br Colin McIlwaine to take the morning service. The Christingle service was held as usual on Christmas eve with an increased number of children, and the service was conducted by Br Woolford. So ended 2011 with the hope that we can continue provide a welcome at Salem for the local community in 2012.

Anne Broadbent

## Fairfield, Droylsden

On the 14th September 2011, a number of ladies from Fairfield Wednesday Fellowship visited the Town hall in Ashton-under-Lyne, to have afternoon tea with the mayor of Tameside, Councillor Susan Quinn, in the Mayors Parlour- at her invitation. On our arrival we were warmly greeted By Councillor Quinn and made to feel very much at home. She chatted to us all whilst we enjoyed tea and cakes, and then we were taken into the Council Chamber, to see where all the decisions are made concerning Tameside. It was very interesting, and we were able to ask Councillor Quinn lots of questions concerning various aspects of her work.

We then returned to the Parlour and the Mayor's Attendant told us about the framed paintings on the walls of the Parlour. I was delighted to learn that two of the paintings had been done many years ago, by my cousin's husband, Jack Hopper, who now lives in Victoria, on Vancouver Island in Canada. He and his wife were very thrilled when I contacted them later, to tell them that his paintings had been chosen by Councillor Quinn, for display during her year of office.

The time then came for us to return to Fairfield, having had a very enjoyable afternoon.

Kathleen. E. Openshaw

## CONGREGATION REGISTERS

### BAPTISM

20th Nov.  Andrew Frank McCormick.  Gracehill

### MEMBERSHIP

16th Oct.  Christopher Jones.  Gracehill  
19th Feb.  John Clarke.  Gracehill  
19th Feb.  Betty Greer.  Gracehill  
19th Feb.  Billy Greer.  Gracehill  
4th Mar.  Peter John Howard.  Leominster  
4th Mar.  Dilys Anne Howard.  Leominster

### DEATH

26th Nov.  Leslie Bell.  Gracehill  
29th Feb.  Mary Ann Edwards.  Harold Road  
7th Mar.  Eira Smith.  Sparkhill  
8th Mar.  Elwaldo Francis.  Sparkhill  
18th Mar.  Bryan Harris.  Brockweir



## FROM CHURCH HOUSE

Unity Prayer Day 2012; please would congregation treasurers send in any Unity Prayer Day money to Church House as soon as possible.

Church House will be closed on Friday April 6th, Good Friday and will re-open on Tuesday 10th April. The Provincial Board and all the staff at Church House would like to take this opportunity to wish the readers of the Moravian Messenger a blessed Easter.

## Provincial Diary for April

### April

- |       |  |             |
|-------|--|-------------|
| 17/18 | PEC, BMB, Unitas Estates Meetings                                    | The PEC     |
| □ 20  | Final day for reports, proposals and nomination forms for Synod 2012 |             |
| □ 21  | MWA Away Day at Lower Wyke   |             |
| □ 30  | Ockbrook School Governors  | Br Hopcroft |

### May

- |       |  |             |
|-------|--|-------------|
| 9/10  | PEC, BMB, Unitas Estates Meetings      | The PEC     |
| 11/12 | Irish District MWA Retreat             |             |
| 30    | Western District Conference, Kingswood | Br Hopcroft |

## PRAYER NOTES

- 1st April - Palm Sunday (Christian)
- 1st - 8th April - Passion Week Readings (Moravian)
- 2nd April - Maundy Thursday (Christian)
- 6th April - Good Friday (Christian)
- 7th - 14th April - Pesach/Passover (Judaism)
- 7th April - Lazarus Sunday (Orthodox Christianity)
- 8th April - Easter Sunday (Christianity)
- 8th April - Palm Sunday (Orthodox Christianity)
- 14th April - Baisakhi New Year (Sikh)
- 15th April - Easter/Pascha (Orthodox Christianity)
- 23rd April - St. George's Day (Christianity)
- 30th April - St. James the Great Day (Orthodox Christianity)

### A Prayer for the end of Lent

*Dear Lord, as we come to the end of this special time of Lent, we ask you to help us face temptation as you did in the wilderness.*

*We ask for your help against greed, war, cruelty and intolerance.*

*Lord, we give these prayers to you - Please hear us.*

*Loving Father, we bring before you our community, our children, our elderly people, our sick and bereaved, thinking particularly at this time of . . . .*

*Lord, we give these prayers to you - Please hear us.*

*Help us to use our time and talents for the benefit of others by listening, giving of ourselves or money, visiting, comforting others, and using any other talent that we have to offer.*

*Lord, we give these prayers to you - Please hear us.*

*Living God, breathe your spirit upon us and surround us with your love, as we remember the words Jesus said: Lord, not our will, but your will be done.*

*Lord, we give these prayers to you - Please hear us.*

*In your glorious name, Amen*

### How Blessed Is The Day

How blessed is this day, when earth and heaven are joined and humankind is reconciled to God!

May the light of Jesus shine continually to drive away all darkness.

May Christ, the Morning Star who knows no setting, find his light ever burning in our hearts.

He who gives his light to all creation, and who lives and reigns forever and ever. Amen.

*Adapted from the Book of Common Prayer -1979, the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America.*

### A Litany For Easter

Blest are you, Lord Jesus who came to us a little child one of us, flesh and blood to share in our humanity For God so loved the world - That all might have eternal life

Blest are you, Lord Jesus who came to us as carpenter and yet in whose creative hands a world was fashioned For God so loved the world - That all might have eternal life

Blest are you, Lord Jesus who came to us as fisherman and yet pointed to a harvest that was yet to come For God so loved the world - That all might have eternal life

Blest are you, Lord Jesus who came to us as teacher and opened eyes to truths that only the poor could understand For God so loved the world - That all might have eternal life

Blest are you, Lord Jesus who came to us as healer and opened hearts to the reality of wholeness For God so loved the world - That all might have eternal life

Blest are you, Lord Jesus who came to us as prophet, priest and king and yet humbled himself to take our place upon the cross For God so loved the world - That all might have eternal life

Blest are you, Lord Jesus who came to us as servant and revealed to us the extent of his Father's love for human kind For God so loved the world - That all might have eternal life

Blest are you, Lord Jesus, who rose from the ignominy of a sinner's death to the triumph of a Saviour's resurrection For God so loved the world - That all might have eternal life

God so loved the world that he gave his only Son for the sake of me and you and other sinners too God so loved the world Blest are you Lord Jesus, our Saviour and Redeemer

### A Prayer for Easter Morning

O Lord Jesus Christ, who upon this day did conquer death and rise from the dead, and who are alive for ever more, help us never to forget your Risen Presence forever with us. Help us to remember,

That you are with us in every time of perplexity to guide and to direct; That you are with us in every time of sorrow to comfort and console; That you are with us in every time of temptation to strengthen and to inspire; That you are with us in every time of loneliness to cheer and befriend; That you are with us even in death to bring us to the glory of your side.

Make us to be certain that there is nothing in time or in eternity which can separate us from you, so that in your presence we may meet life with gallantry and death without fear.

You turn our darkness into light, in your light we shall see light.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer. Christ the Lord is risen today! ALLELUIA

*Adapted from ThisIsChurch.com*

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