

Moravian messenger



May 2013



David Howarth considers

Whit Walks - growing up with the tradition

to carrying the Sunday School banner, and eventually on to a rope on the church banner and finally on to carrying a pole.

During the years I carried a banner pole, I became very much aware of the links between such a task and that of living out a Christian life in today's society. For the most part, the going was relatively easy: the streets were straight and wide enough for the procession to make its way along them without too much trouble. But there were occasions when corners had to be turned or where we crossed streets coming in from the left or right, and it was then that the wind would blow and try to drive you off course. Then it was a matter of having confidence and trust in those other sisters and brothers who had control of the banner ropes. For it was their job to stabilize the banner and keep in upright. But even here there was a problem, for as the ropes were pulled tighter to stop the wind from blowing you off course, the added pressure bearing down on the poles and their cups was difficult to take.

One other part of the route involved a narrow road that was criss-crossed by low hanging telephone lines. These cables were a real nuisance, as each time we came upon one we would have lower the height

Growing up within the Wheler Street congregation the annual Whit Walk was one of the highlights on the church calendar, and my first experience was probably as a babe in arms - although having been born only a couple of weeks before my first one, I don't remember it.

The tradition of the Whit Walks is believed to have started in Manchester not long after the birth of the Sunday School Movement in the latter part of the 18th century. Adults and children from local churches and their Sunday schools would process around their local community as a witness to their faith, often with the children in new clothes bought especially for the occasion.

Such walks were a very big part of my early life, first walking with the Sunday school, later being promoted

It is easy to look back on each year's walks through rose-tinted spectacles, especially as it has been some years since I was involved in them, but I do have a number of lasting memories. Firstly the weather; it seemed to be always warm and sunny, and if you were involved in carrying the banner it was hot and exhausting work. Secondly, the sense of occasion; the Sunday school scholars would be dressed in their finery, often with the girls wearing new white dresses and we boys a shirt, tie and shorts. Thirdly, the sense of witness through our walking and worshipping on selected street corners. And finally, the link between the whole congregation, including the uniformed organisations and scout band, walking as a witness to faith amongst an ever-changing post-Christian community.

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A word from the Editor

During Holy Week I travelled to Hereford to listen to a performance of St. Matthew Passion at the Cathedral as I do most years. It was bitterly cold with snow on the high ground and dusk was falling when I saw thousands of starlings whirling and twisting through the air in a marvellous murmuration. I thought about the starlings as the music of Bach soared around the Cathedral as soloists, choir and orchestra joined together to tell of the events of Passion Week each leading in turn before subsuming to the whole. It was glorious, as was the spectacle of nature I'd witnessed earlier. I left Hereford feeling elated but it was tinged with sadness as only Easter can engender. The next day I received Sr. Claire Summers poem 'The Starlings' (found on the Notice Board) and this added a new layer of insight to the feelings I'd experienced.

And it is with mixed feelings that I write my last editorial and the baton is handed over to Sr. Rosemary Power. There have been a number of editors of the Messenger and it has appeared in different formats over the years. I would like to thank all those who help with the production of the magazine. Firstly, David Bull for setting out the material and making it look as attractive as possible. He is extremely helpful and I always look forward to seeing his illustrations when he is called upon to do them. Thanks are also due to Graham Walkden and the printers who try to ensure that the Messenger

goes out in time to be with congregations for the first Sunday of each month.

I must also thank the many contributors to the Messenger who have volunteered their services or have agreed to have their arms twisted over the last five years. The magazine if used correctly can be part of the Church's outreach and I would humbly remind ministers and others to seize the opportunity and submit articles. So thank you, to those who contributed regularly; David Newman, Joy Raynor, Paul Gubi, Peter Gubi Snr., the late Dennis Monger and 3 Prayer Note contributors. Thanks must also be given to the congregation correspondents who have submitted articles over the years and have not complained when their articles have been cut due to shortage of space.

I would also like to thank the P.E.C. for allowing me to 'plough my own furrow' and for not interfering in any way. I passionately believe that the editor must be independent if he or she is to be effective. I'd also like to thank Br. Bob Hopcroft for the few occasions when he hasn't needed a reminder for Church House News and the Diary!

This is my 57th edition of the Messenger and it is time for a change and I look forward to seeing the magazine evolve in style and content in the capable hands of Sr. Rosemary Power. I have enjoyed being editor and it has been a privilege to serve the Church.

Welcome Introducing the new Editor

It's always good to see an organisation from the outside. Some people do it by working overseas, something that is particularly fruitful in church work. It gives us different angles on how God works with people and circumstances.

In my case, after five years in urban Swindon, I've spent five very different years in the west of Ireland, working for the Methodist Church to develop a series of new prayer ministries across the county.

There was a small ecumenical congregation at Shannon, but it was largely a very rural ministry in a part of the world where the Protestant churches are very small. There is also a great mixture, with traditional members and the newcomers from western and southern Africa, who were invited here during the years of the "Celtic Tiger" and are now walking with us through the economic crash.

Moravians were not unknown here, though there was

only one living in Clare when I came - the ruins of Clare's only Moravian church in a picturesque site excite a fair amount of curiosity and discussion.

Over these five years, there have been the services in Dublin, and indeed Belfast (and becoming a member at University Road, opposite the flats where I once lived). Also helpful was getting instalments of Moravianism through the Messengers as a copy arrived each month. It has made me understand how valuable it can be for isolated Moravians, or those who cannot get out, and how we can make it a tool for the better understanding of the Gospel in this tradition.

I look forward to the privilege of serving in this role, and to working with the many sisters, brothers and friends who contribute.

Rosemary Power

European Youth Leaders Conference - March 2013

On the 12th March a small group of Moravian youth leaders gathered in Northern Ireland to spend a few days sharing experiences and expertise of working with young Moravians. David Simon Reeb works overseeing the work across the European Province supported by Anna Kellerova who looks after Germany and Deborah De Graav who does the same for The Netherlands. The British/Irish contingent consisted of Zoe Ferdinand who leads one of the groups at Summer Camp, Roberta Hoey who works with children and young people in Northern Ireland and myself, Provincial Youth and Children's Officer.

The group stayed at the Lorne Guide Centre, self-catering in the Coach House then the Ranger Lodge, sharing non-traditional recipes like pasta and cheese, stir fry vegetables and fruit salad, although the continental visitors were introduced to apple crumble and custard - a great hit.

During the time together the discussions extended from sharing games and ideas, to discussions about why young people leave the church, what safeguarding is, Moravian, how to make church more



accessible for young people and children unused to attending services, training volunteers, the problems of isolated churches and travelling distances to meet up, and the problems of time pressures not just on volunteers but also on the young people involved in church. One overriding issue was the importance of communication between the church and the youth leaders, between youth leaders and between the generations. No easy solutions were found.

Visits to Moravian churches were included in the programme with a tea and visit to Kilwarlin, a visit to Gracehill for a service, tour, and lunch in the restaurant, and a visit to University Road. An afternoon in Belfast was interrupted by a hail stone storm but included a visit to City Hall and shopping, as well as a meal out and a visit to the 'pub'.

The hospitality of the Irish was much appreciated, and the weather showed everything from snow to bright sunshine and of course rain! The visitors really seemed to enjoy visiting Ireland and all went away wanting to see more of Ireland.

The conference was stimulating and encouraging, as well as supportive, and delegates who came together as strangers went away as friends. A commitment to meet next March in Berlin was made.

Joy Raynor

Whit Walks - growing up with the tradition *continued*

of the banner, and especially the top of the poles to allow enough clearance to walk underneath. I lost count of how many cables there were, but my failing memory thinks there were hundreds. In reality: may be twenty.

But the parallels between the reason for the walk and the walk itself were there for me to note. Just as the obstacles that faced the walkers were sometimes difficult to overcome, Christians face many challenges in today's world; poverty, injustice, inequality to name just a few. Then there is the sense of witness as being something much larger than the

individual and the fellowship shared in that witness.

As I look back on my childhood, teens and twenties as part of the annual Wheler Street Whit Walks, I have to say that I would not change a thing. Yes, the going could be quite difficult at times; the sunshine making carrying the banner a hot and sweaty job; the wind doing its best to blow the banner off course and the telephone cables ensuring that you had to be mindful of the height of the top of the poles. But all this was done as a witness to Christ and to demonstrate that even in spite of the

hardship that many within the local community had to endure, someone cared enough about them to share something of their faith and the love of God.

To me, the Whit Walks are a demonstration that God is in the world, and that the church is not a place that people go to, but a place where people come from. And the 3 mile sacrifice on the afternoon of Whit Sunday is nothing compared to the one made by the one to whom we were witnessing.

To be a Pilgrim?

What do you think about when you hear the word 'Pilgrimage'? Do you think of Lourdes, Santiago or perhaps the Muslim Hajj? Perhaps it brings to mind the well known hymn by John Bunyan?

Pilgrimage is enjoying a huge revival with an increasing number of people walking old and new pilgrim routes, visiting ancient pilgrim places. These people come from all backgrounds, Catholics, Protestants and those who prefer not to use denominational labels.

It (Pilgrimage) can be described as 'a departure from daily life on a journey in search of well-being. It involves leaving home, making a journey, arriving at a destination that usually has some religious significance, and then returning home'. Most 'pilgrims' talk about how the experience has changed them, how they perhaps have learnt more about God, definitely how they have learnt more about themselves.

You don't have to travel abroad or walk hundreds of miles to 'do' a pilgrimage. In fact there are many routes in

the UK and I would like to invite a small number of people to join me in journeying together to Lindisfarne, also known as Holy Island. The provisional plan is to meet up on Friday 12th July 2013, walk part of the St Cuthbert's Way on the Saturday and then walk across the sands to Holy Island on the Sunday. People are free to stay or leave on the Sunday dependent upon their commitments etc. There will be the opportunity to share in worship together (both formal and informal) as well as time for personal reflection, as people choose.

There is a variety of accommodation available and this will be booked subject to numbers and peoples requirements. As this is a popular time of the year, it is necessary to book as soon as possible, so if you are interested or would like to find out more, please feel free to contact me.

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The Enthronement of Rev Dr Justin Portal Welby as Archbishop of Canterbury

21st March 2013

Shortly after the announcement that Justin Portal Welby had been elected to become the 105th Archbishop of Canterbury, I received an invitation to attend the enthronement as Chairman of the Moravian Church. Although I am not a great fan of pomp and circumstance I felt it was an honour to be able to represent the Moravian Church on such an auspicious occasion and gladly accepted the invitation.

On a seriously cold and windy March morning I arrived at Canterbury and, as instructed, made my way to the Cathedral Crypt. This huge vaulted room was to be the place where over 300 people from all faiths and major religions from all over the world were to gown up. For more than an hour processional guests began to arrive including Muslims, Jews and Sikhs, as well as senior figures from the Roman Catholic and orthodox churches. As the crypt began to fill the noise level began to rise and it reminded me, rather irreverently I admit, of the crowds that gather beneath the stands at a football game just before kick-off with all the excitement and expectation of what was to come. Although from the crypt we could neither see nor hear what was going on in the Cathedral the sense of anticipation of what was drawing very near was palpable.

At the prescribed time the vergers gathered the groups of guests together in readiness for the procession into the Cathedral. Everything ran like clockwork and we soon found ourselves making our way, with vergers, taperers, crucifers, lay clerks and sheriffs, into the Cathedral to join the other 2,000 guests including the Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall as well as the Prime Minister, David Cameron.

The inauguration began at the West Door with the Archbishop knocking the door 3 times and asking to be let in. A young member of the Anglican Communion, Evangeline Kanagasooriam asks "who are you" and "why do you request entry" and following the appropriate responses The Archbishop was led to the Nave altar where the first part of the service took place. This included prayers to remind us of the anniversaries of the death of Thomas Cranmer, former Archbishop of Canterbury, whose Book of Common Prayer shaped the worship of the Church of England and the anniversary of the death of St Benedict of Monte Cassino, a significant figure for both Canterbury Cathedral - which was a Benedictine Monastery a thousand years ago - and Archbishop Welby, who is an oblate of the Order of St Benedict. (Oblates are people who have affiliated themselves with a monastic community of their choice. The Archbishop was then asked to make a Declaration of Assent by the Archbishop of York, Dr John Sentamu. The Archbishop was then presented by the Dean of the Cathedral, the Very Reverend Robert Willis, with the Canterbury Gospels, brought to Britain by St Augustine in 597, on which the Archbishop



swears an Oath of Faithfulness followed by an act of commitment to strive for the visible unity of Christ's Church.

The procession then moved to the High Altar where the Archdeacon of Canterbury, the Venerable Sheila Anne Watson, installed the Archbishop to the Archbishopric of Canterbury after which the Archbishop was led to the marble chair of St Augustine where he was installed by the Dean of Canterbury as Archbishop of Canterbury and Primate of All England. Upon which the newly installed Archbishop was greeted with warm applause.

The new Archbishop then brought the sermon in which he spoke about Jesus calling through the storms and darkness of life saying "Take heart, it is I, do not be afraid".

He quoted the new Pope Francis's call to come in humility and simplicity to be protectors of each other and the natural world, as well as the poor and vulnerable and to take heart and not be afraid. He said that many Christians around the world are martyred now, as in the past but that despite this there is every reason for optimism for the future of Christianity around the world and in this country.

The service concluded and the processions made their way out of the Cathedral to share in a typical English afternoon tea and an opportunity to talk informally over a cup of tea.

Throughout the service the music was wonderful, particularly the choral pieces and the hymn singing was spine tingling. I do not imagine that I will ever again sing 'the Church's one foundation' and 'When I survey the Wondrous cross' with such an august body of people ever again.

I left Canterbury uplifted and in great heart and honoured to be a part of the enthronement of the new Archbishop but yet strangely comforted by the simplicity of our Moravian Tradition. Let us hope and pray that Reverend Dr Justin Welby will have the strength of faith to face the tasks that surely lie ahead.

Rev Robert Hopcroft

Notice Board

The starlings

The sun was low over the Solway

Leaving a rich orange glow in the sky.

They gathered in their thousands on the wires

Then suddenly

Like a large ribbon, all rose together to begin their aerobatic display.

The flock soared heavenwards in perfect harmony

The ribbon seemed to wave

Dancing in ever changing patterns

Gliding, curling, swirling

The huge mass moved majestically

Turning this way and that

Never colliding; taking turns to lead.

This was repeated in an undulating performance, many times

Then the mass rose upwards and in a flash, descended towards the night perch

Once down in the pine trees, they chattered and hopped in the artificial light

A huge population all moving in unison

Does not God see his world like this?

Like

The starlings?

Claire Summers

Kathmandu Calendars

Congratulations to Sr. Maureen Colbert for raising £316.80 by the sale of calendars (the profit once expenses were covered). The money has now been sent to Revs. Vani and Shanti Pradhan for use at the International Kindergarten in Kathmandu, Nepal. Many thanks to all who supported this project by buying calendars - Sr. Colbert hopes that the pictures are being enjoyed as the months pass.

"Amen" to a dying thief!

A look with Paul Gubi

at a well-known James Montgomery hymn **MHB 536**

During my student days at Fairfield College, the Principal (Br Jim Lewis) once told me "If you want to know what Moravians believe, look at our Communion hymns". It is a view that I share. I also think that the Holy Communion is deserving of the central place in our congregation worship. As Moravians, or members of any other "School of Christ" (Zinzendorf's expression), it is a reminder of who we are. In much the same sort of way, Jewish scriptures contain frequent reminders of the divine deliverance from bondage in Egypt.

James Montgomery (1771-1854) is recognised as one of the more poetic of English hymn writers, and among the many hymns that form his legacy to us, there is this lovely piece of contemplation, in which the key word is "remember".

*According to thy gracious word, in meek humility,
This will I do, my dying Lord, I will remember thee.
Thy body, broken for my sake, my bread from heaven
shall be;
Thy testamental cup I take, and thus remember thee.*

That gets straight to the heart of it all: the gracious invitation of our Lord and the realisation, in quiet wonder, that this is for us and is about Christ's gift of his life for us and to us. Nothing trivial - no falling crumb that we might bother to catch if so inclined, but our soul-sustaining Bread of Life - it is the willing act of remembrance which accepts this costly and precious gift. This new Covenant relationship with God, signified here in token, is something else to remember, making it special.

*Gethsemane can I forget? Or there thy conflict see,
Thine agony and blood-like sweat, and not remember thee?*

Those who know me reasonably well, know of my aversion to unnecessary tinkering with words, but in this context the word 'bloody' has become unsuitable, having been degraded into a form of invective, so I have substituted it with 'blood-like' which, as it happens, is truer to the (English) Biblical text. It is a description that underlines the intensity of the agonizing conflict faced by our Lord in Gethsemane, probably harder for him to bear than the physical pain on the cross, as he wrestled with the fierce temptation to give up on those last terrible steps in the

journey to our redemption. Yes, our redemption - how could we not remember that!

*When to the cross I turn mine eyes, and rest on Calvary,
O Lamb of God, my sacrifice, I must remember thee.*

There is a compulsion about the contemplation of the Cross - so much to think about in the offering of innocence that we see before us, and with Holy Week readings fresh in the memory as I write. Having read or heard the events of Good Friday once again, it is the meaning in the phrase "My sacrifice" which enables us then to burst into song such as "When I survey the wondrous (?) cross". The cross stands at the centre of all Christian symbolism because, abundant good works and loving words notwithstanding, faith in what that cross stands for is the thing that matters most. To remember this is a 'must'.

*Remember thee, and all thy pains, and all thy love to me;
Yea, while a breath, a pulse remains, will I remember thee.
And when these failing lips grow dumb, and mind and
memory flee,
When thou shalt in thy kingdom come, Jesus, remember me.*

So much to remember, giving purpose to each breath and pulse all the way to life's last gasp. Montgomery at 54 years of age when he wrote this, nearly 190 years ago, would be looked upon then as getting on a bit (though he went on to 83). For him the reassuring thought that in spite of the prospect of failing speech, muddled mind and dodgy memory - no strangers to our contemporary society - the one thing we can rely upon is the enduring love and mercy of God. And even as the penitent thief on a cross near Jesus gasped out as life slid away from him, we from a position of deeper faith can pray with that faith's assurance: "Jesus, remember me when you come to your kingdom" and know his gracious and merciful answer to our prayer.

I find the restful flow of the tune "Stracathro" fits the contemplative style of this hymn beautifully. May these words of Montgomery reach across another couple of centuries, to inspire and uplift many more generations. Oh yes, and Amen to that thief's prayer.

The Cup of Covenant

Gesangbuch der Evangelischen Brüdergemeine

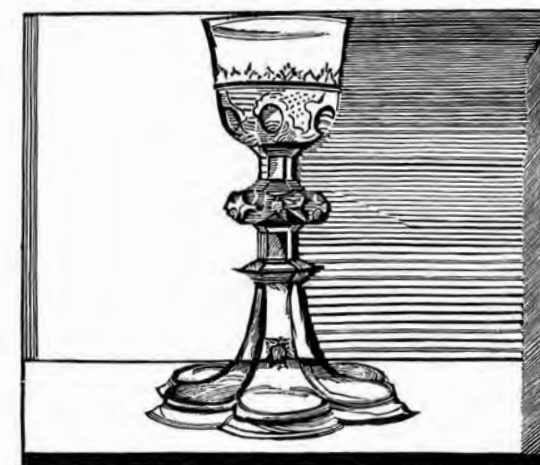


Image: from the German Moravian hymnal of 1967.

The celebration of the cup of covenant is a tradition that goes back to the early years of the Renewed Moravian Church in Herrnhut, Germany. On August 17, 1733, a lovefeast was held in Herrnhut before the departure of a group of missionaries on their voyage to St. Croix. Following the lovefeast they continued to Zinzendorf's room where the cup of covenant was celebrated. This celebration did not remain a one-time event. In the Moravian Church the cup of covenant became a liturgical celebration during which the entire congregation or a specific group within the church renewed its unity and commitment to the service of Christ. In 1735 Christian David described the ceremony as follows:

"After the address an elder gives a blessing to all the brethren who are present. While the cup is being passed around and we drink from it, everyone gives a personal blessing to his neighbor, after which we give one another the kiss of peace." In the Moravian liturgical tradition the cup of covenant is not to be confused with Holy Communion, although terminology and form remind us of Communion. Whereas the cup that is shared during the celebration of the Lord's Supper is based on the cup that Jesus took after the meal, the cup of covenant goes back to the cup that was shared by Jesus and the disciples at the beginning of the Passover meal (Luke 22:17). The cup of covenant is not a sacrament, such as Baptism and Holy Communion, but a sign of the renewed commitment to service of those who partake in it.

The resolutions of the 1775 General Synod state the

Sources: *The Moravian* (Sept./Oct. 2006); *Jahrbuch der Brüdergemeine* (1937/38).

This article first appeared in *This Month in Moravian History*, a monthly email newsletter published by the Moravian Archives in Bethlehem - see www.moravianchurcharchives.org/thismonth.php for more information

following: "The intention [of the cup of covenant] is to praise God for particular displays of mercy as well as to unite together in new faithfulness in serving Jesus and adhering to the principles of the church. This intention is to be explained clearly to the group that shares this cup of covenant." The cup of covenant was not celebrated very frequently.

Traditionally, the "workers of the church" (such as the ministers, the local helpers and the teachers in the Moravian schools) would join in the cup of covenant once a year. Today the cup is sometimes celebrated with individual boards or at youth conferences, but it is mostly the ordained clergy that gather for the cup of covenant. It is customary to

do this is on or around September 16th, the festival for the servants of the church.

The cup of covenant is a simple gathering; usually an explanation of the event is given and a cup of wine or grape juice is passed around, during the singing of hymns. Traditionally, in order to avoid confusion with Holy Communion, white wine was used. The Book of Order of the Southern Province calls it "a specially good opportunity for them [to] mutually strengthen the consciousness of their opportunity for the leading of the Divine Chief Shepherd and Elder, Jesus Christ, and therewith of their high and holy calling and of their common debt of service" (par. 1364).

Paul Peucker

Open Book

HOSEA

In the Jewish Scriptures and also in the Christian Old Testament, the book of Hosea is placed before the book of Amos and although both men were contemporaries, and both prophesied in the same places, Hosea was the younger and Amos prophesied first. The places where they prophesied were Israel and Judah and it was before the exile in Babylon, an event that both men predicted. But the picture that they painted about how God would deal with his wayward people was very different and there is much to be gained by reading the book of Amos before reading the book of Hosea. Amos prophesied doom and gloom, the only hope for a brighter future appearing in the closing verses of the last chapter, whereas Hosea's prophecy was all about the love of God for his wayward people. The book of Hosea has been described as the saddest book in the Bible while other commentaries describe it as amazing. Unfortunately, in a large part of the book, the text has been corrupted over the years and the translation in many instances has had to be guessed at, otherwise the book would be even more amazing. An example of this may be found in chapter four from verse 15. That verse is translated in the Authorised version as, 'Though thou Israel, play the harlot, yet let not Judah offend; and come not ye unto Gilgal, neither go ye up to Bethaven, nor swear, the Lord liveth.' In the New English version that verse is translated as, 'They are a mother turned wanton. Bring no guilt offering, Israel; do not come to Gilgal, Judah, do not go up to Bethaven to swear by the life of the Lord'. Many other parts of the book appear to be a series of unrelated statements. Although other prophets such as Ezekiel and Jeremiah made use of audio visuals in their prophecies, Hosea used his entire domestic life as an illustration of God's dealing with his unfaithful people.

The kingdom was divided into Judah and Israel. The Hebrew people had occupied the land of Canaan where the worship of Baal was the established religion. There was much

about Baal worship that appealed to the newcomers and eventually many of them lost sight of their religion as it had been known in the time of Moses and his successors, and they had assimilated certain aspects of the Canaanite religion into their own. It is this turning away from the true worship of God that both Amos and Hosea condemned. For Amos, the people were a nation of transgressors who would be punished for their transgression, while for Hosea, they were an unfaithful people who would be severely punished for their unfaithfulness but would not be cast away altogether because of God's great love for his people. In order to demonstrate this, we read in chapter one that Hosea felt that God had called him to marry a prostitute, an order which he obeyed. All went well at first and Gomer, his wife, bore a son. He was named Jezreel as a prophecy that God would avenge the massacre that

THE BOOK OF HOSEA HAS BEEN DESCRIBED AS THE SADDEST BOOK IN THE BIBLE WHILE OTHER COMMENTARIES DESCRIBE IT AS AMAZING.

had taken place in the valley of Jezreel. (For details see 2 Kings, chapter 10.) The second child was a daughter who was called, 'She has not received mercy', to signify that God would show no mercy to the houses of Israel and Judah when the time for punishment came. The third child was another son. He was named 'not my people', as a sign that God had temporarily disowned his people but that one day they would once again be called the 'Children of the living God'. It is possible that Hosea was not the father of the two children born after Jezreel and that Gomer had returned to her former ways. Certainly chapter two states that she left her husband for someone who could better provide

for her, and this Hosea uses as an illustration of what God's people had done to him. In chapter three Hosea discovers that his wife has become a slave, and because he still loves her, he buys her back for about 160 grams of silver and 330 litres of barley. Normal marital relations are not restored for some time, signifying that normal relations between God and his people will not be restored for some time after their deliverance from captivity.

The rest of the book consists of Hosea's prophecy. Chapter four states the accusation against Israel while chapter five outlines the punishment that can be expected. Chapter six is a call to repentance. Some of the words from this chapter have been incorporated into the liturgical worship of the Christian church. Verse 1 may sound familiar; 'Come, let us return to the Lord; for he has torn us, that he may heal us; he has struck us down and he will bind us up.' Or verse six, 'For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings'. Chapter seven is a continuation of chapter six. In verse eight Ephraim is described as a cake not turned or 'half baked'. Chapter eight contains, in verse seven, the words, 'For they sow the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind', an expression that has found its way into everyday use.

Chapter eleven is a useful summary of Hosea's concept of God's relationship to his people in any version. 'When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son. The more they were called, the more they went away; they kept sacrificing to the Baals and burning offerings to idols. Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk; I took them up by their arms, but they did not know that I healed them. I led them with cords of kindness, with the bands of love, and I became to them as one who eases the yoke on their jaws, and I bent down to them and fed them.' (ESV) A remarkable concept of God from two thousand, six hundred years ago.

P Gubi

Jesus' women Disciples

It's worth looking from time to time at how the original followers of Jesus, from across social and sometimes religious divides, expressed their call, and supported each other. One of the ways is to look at the roles of women.

The Gospels, written a generation or two after the Resurrection, when some of the original witnesses were still alive, contain reference to over twenty women involved in Jesus' life and ministry, as witnesses, pastors and preachers.

Leaving asides the prophets, like Elizabeth and Anna, and those who engaged with Jesus but whose ministry is unknown, twelve notable women disciples emerge.

1. **Mary**, the mother who raised him, followed her adult son on the road, told others to do what he said, went all the way to the cross, and was among the followers to whom the Spirit came at Pentecost.

2. **Mary of Magdala** followed Jesus on the road, was there at the cross, the tomb and Easter morning. Jesus overturned the requirement for adult male witnesses, and sent her out to preach the good news to the men. She and others must be the companions in the upper room when the risen Jesus appeared and commissioned his followers.

3. Also on the road with Jesus was **Joanna**, wife of Herod's steward Chuza. Herod lived a corrupt life, executed John the Baptist and mocked Jesus during his trial. Yet Joanna, who came from the same court, helped Jesus on the road, was a witness to the Resurrection, and is the likely source for much in Luke's Gospel.

4. Another of the women on the road, funding Jesus and the men out of their own resources, was **Susanna**. These women and their ministry must have enabled to Jesus debate with, and sometimes heal, other women.

5. **Martha of Bethany** is known for opening her home to Jesus and his followers. She made the Great Proclamation, that Jesus was the Christ, Son of God, when suffering the deep pain and grief of her brother's death.

6. Her sister **Mary**, sat at the feet of Christ, the formal term for a disciple. He wished her to do it even when her sister wanted help in the kitchen. She also proclaimed public faith in Jesus, and later prophetically and publicly anointed his body, a few days before he was killed.

7. The Samaritan woman, called in Eastern tradition **Photina the Apostle**, held the longest discussion with Jesus of anyone in the Gospels. She then brought a whole

village to belief in him, and may have been responsible for other early Samaritan followers.

8. The **wife of Zebedee**, the mother of James and John, was with Jesus on the road. She requested positions in heaven for her sons, which Jesus said that these were not his to give. This did not end their relationship: she was there at the cross.

9. Another **Mary, the wife of Clophas** and sister of Jesus' mother, was a witness to the crucifixion, one of the women who risked their lives and reputations to stay with Jesus.

10. Also present was **Mary the mother of James** the younger and Joset. She with others marked the position of the tomb and went to anoint the body of Jesus. A witness to the Resurrection, she and the others were presumably among the companions Jesus commissioned in the upper room.

11. **Salome** is a witness to both the death and Resurrection of Jesus in Mark's Gospel, was a figure well-enough known in the early church to be named without further comment.

12. The twelfth is a late-comer. This is **Junia** who Saint Paul, another latecomer, calls outstanding among the apostles, a former fellow-prisoner, and a Christian before him.

There are many other unnamed women who made great impact, including the Syro-Phoenician woman who argued with Jesus to get her daughter healed; Peter's mother-in-law who hosted Jesus; the woman with the haemorrhage who risked public humiliation; the woman bent double for eighteen years; the troubled wife of Pilate; the woman who washed Jesus feet with her tears, giving Jesus a model for washing feet like a slave on that last Passover. There were many others who encouraged, testified, and bore witness.

Many more emerge as prophets, leaders and preachers in the story of the early church, the Acts of the Apostles.

Jesus broke the expectations of his culture when he called women like men to minister to him and to preach to others the Good News which is for everyone, Jew and Gentile, slave and free, male and female. These women of the Gospels were at the core of Christianity, and models for people today, on ministry with service and valuing the contributions of others.

Rosemary Power

Around the District Conferences

Midlands District

The Midlands District Conference met at Sparkhill United Church in Birmingham on March 2nd for its spring meeting. The welcome and opening devotions were led by Br. Colin McIlwaine. Conference welcomed for the first time Br. Whitson Gonsalucas from the Leicester congregation.

The PEC Report was read by Br. David Haworth. The importance of congregations having a church secretary was reiterated. Both Leominster and Sparkhill United Church have members that serve in this role.

The Social Responsibility Report concerned the homeless and sheltered accommodation and the impact of national lottery funding. News from the Renewal Committee was that there was good support for the Renewal Weekend to be held in April. The Provincial Fellowship Day will be held at Carr's Lane in Birmingham on October 5th.

Mark Dixon presented the PYCC Report and he encouraged the membership to remember our young people in prayer and encourage them to be involved in congregational activities. He also said that there seemed to be fewer congregations participating in the YPMA organisation. Sadly none of the congregations in the Midlands District has a group at this time.

News from the Congregations

A sharing agreement for the property at Hall Green was signed between Sparkhill United Church and Hall Green Methodist Church on Sunday March 17th.

At Leominster the churches in the town hold an ecumenical Bible Study once per month.

The Leicester congregation are now using the new Moravian hymn book.

At Ockbrook the new electric organ was dedicated on January 2nd.

The date and venue of the next Conference will be Saturday 19th October at Leicester.

Victor Launder

Congregation News

Swindon

November and December were busy months here in Swindon. After months of preparing and wrapping our own shoe boxes for Operation Christmas child, we opened the doors once again and became the local checking depot for Swindon. During November we checked and sent some 3500 boxes to Africa and Eastern Europe.

Into December and we held a very successful Christmas Fayre, and were pleased to see new faces from the local area supporting us. Money raised was split between church funds and the Mayor of Swindon's helping hand fund, which supports local charities. The Mayor joined our Christingle service, where the money was presented to him. The children and young people (plus a few others young at heart) took part in a presentation of the nativity.

The MWA held their annual lunch and carol service, joining together to share readings and enjoy singing favourite carols. During our toddler group Christmas party our minister led a short nativity service with the children singing 'Away in a manger' in church standing around the manger.

The Christmas morning service was led by our minister, and the brass ensemble provided the musical accompaniment. On Ephiny Sunday, Reverends David and Michael Newman led a service of readings and it was a chance to sing some carols once more. A really lovely service of worship and fellowship to end our Christmas celebrations.

Sandy Mundy

CONGREGATION REGISTERS

RECEPTION

3rd Mar.	Lynda Gulwell.	<i>Tytherton</i>
31st Mar.	Shelagh Dalton.	<i>Tytherton</i>



The Dublin Fellowship

On 2nd December, the annual Dublin Christingle service was held in Dundrum Methodist Church, continuing a tradition that has been going strong since 1995. With no remaining Moravian churches in the Republic of Ireland, the service presents the opportunity for Moravians, and their friends and family, to share in Moravian fellowship in the run up to Christmas. The service was well attended and focused on the Christmas Story and the meaning of the Christingle. Following the service we had an opportunity to catch up with old friends and meet some new ones, over

tea, coffee and mince pies!

It is hoped there will be further events and meetings arranged for the Dublin Fellowship in the coming year. If you are interested in receiving further information, including the date for 2013's Christingle, I would encourage you to contact Br Derick Woods. Pictured with their Christingles are Derick Woods, Ann Monson and Robert McFadden. Ann and Robert were members of the Dublin Congregation located at Kevin Street, prior to its closure.

Linsey Kernohan

Gomersal

In September, we were pleased to welcome Sr. Jane Hutchins to Gomersal and Fulneck, as she commenced her two year Student minister placement with us. She is shadowing our minister, Br. Michael Newman, in pastoral duties and leading worship. She has made quite an impression on us already and we cannot imagine a time without her.

Wellbeing Wednesday continues to flourish and is held once a month and is run by Sr. Victoria Wright. There is something for everyone, including local walks, yoga, meditation as well as refreshments.

In October we held a Coffee Morning and Sr. Vivian Hancock displayed a wonderful set of portraits that she

had painted of members of the Royal Family and also a number of Prime Ministers.

In November Br. Simon Dunn presented a music evening. He played a diverse selection of music on the organ and this was followed by a lovely supper. It was a wonderful evening and had us all going away singing and wishing that we could play the organ like him.

Our Christingle Service included a Nativity play performed by members of Junior Church.

On Sunday 10th February, Bethany Anthony, was confirmed. We wish her well in her church life.

Norma Machell

5th May - Fifth Sunday after Easter

We have beheld your glory, O God, in the face of your Son. Enliven our faith, that through Christ we may put our whole trust in you, and deepen our faith that in him we may serve you now and always. Pour into our hearts the light of your truth, that we may know what is your holy will for us and discerning the true from the false and the evil from the good, may walk humbly in the paths of righteousness, to the glory of your name. Amen

9th May – Ascension Day

Lord Jesus, your ascension has set you free from the constraints of human existence, outside the limitations of time and space, no longer bound to a particular place or time, but with us always and able to reach to the ends of the earth. Help us to accept your going from the world not as deprivation but as the pathway to power unlimited by time and space. So grant that in the here and now we may always remember the things which are beyond. Though now we cannot yet ascend to where you are, still raise our hopes and hearts, that our discipleship in this world may be touched with the glory of heaven, and our lives be signs and promises of the fullness of the life to come. Amen

12th May - Sixth Sunday after Easter

Heavenly Father, whose beloved Son suffered death on the cross for our redemption making there a full and perfect sacrifice for the sins of the world; unite us all in love. Be present where there is tension or anger; where we find others to have faults we had not expected, or habits we find it hard to tolerate. Help us each to look upwards at Jesus, to see him in the perfection that is his alone and all the possibility of new life in him so that we might be restored in harmony and unity as heirs together of the gift of life in Christ the Lord, in whose name we pray. Amen

19th May - Whit Sunday

Holy Spirit who came in wind and fire to the apostles, come and breathe life into our souls and kindle in our hearts your flame of love. Bless us when we are together and grant that in our common life we may know your power. We have read that there will be visions and dreams but we have stopped dreaming. The first believers were together in one place but we are so divided. There were sounds of wind and sight of fire but we expect nothing to change and nothing new to happen. They spoke with new freedom but we are too tongue-tied to speak for you. Everyone heard the message but we reach only the nearest few. Holy Spirit, forgive us. May your fire rest upon each of us and make us, separately and together, witnesses of your gospel whom all the world shall hear and understand. Amen

26th May - Trinity Sunday

Lord, God Almighty, Eternal, Immortal, Invisible, the mysteries of whose being are unsearchable: accept our praises for the revelation which you have made of yourself, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, three Persons and one God. Draw us more deeply into your divine life, that we may rightly glorify you, now and for ever, Amen.

FROM CHURCH HOUSE

Provincial Diary for May

- 30April /1st May
PEC BMB and Estates
property Meeting
The PEC
- 4 Irish District Provincial
Presentation, Gracehill
Sr Groves, Sr Taylor
Br Cooper
- 8/9 CTBI meeting at High Leigh
Br Cooper
- 11 Provincial youth and
Children's Committee
meeting, Kingswood
Sr Taylor
- 13/16 In-service training at
High Leigh
The PEC
- 20 Ockbrook School Governors
Sr Taylor, Br Hopcroft
- 21/25 Unity Mission and
Development Board,
Nicaragua
Br Hopcroft
- 26 EDC District Day at
Harold Road
- 30- 3rd June
10th European Women's
Conference, Durres, Albania

Please remember in your prayers the many sisters from our Province who will be attending the 10th Anniversary of the European Women' Conference being held in Durres Albania and especially the sisters of Albania who have been making all the preparations.

