

# Moravian messenger



August  
2013

## Telling the Truth about Poverty

*"Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me." (Matthew 26: 40)*

In May Brother Bob Hopcroft signed this letter to David Cameron on behalf of the Moravian Church. The letter was composed by the Joint Public Issues Committee of the Baptist, Methodist and United Reformed Churches.

Dear Prime Minister,

We wish to express our grave concern about a number of instances in the recent weeks where senior members of the Government, including the Chairman of the Conservative Party, have given misleading and inaccurate information about those on benefits. As such, we write to you in your roles as Prime Minister and as leader of the Conservative Party.

There are three specific pieces of information that have been cited by senior Government ministers which are demonstrably and factually wrong.

We ask that these are corrected as soon as possible, and that an apology is offered to those who were misrepresented:

1. On 30 March, Conservative Party chairman Grant Shapps stated that 878,300 people had dropped claims to incapacity benefit "rather than completing a medical test" as evidence of the need for welfare reform. This gave the impression that those who withdrew their application had submitted false claims or feared that they would not be eligible for benefit if tested, something that was repeated in media interviews.

In fact, the figure refers to every time an individual stopped claiming ESA during the assessment period since October 2008. Many of these

claims were for short-term problems; others finished when a partner's income increased, removing them from eligibility. There is no evidence that people withdrew their applications "rather than" undergo a medical test, which it is implied that they would have failed.

2. On 12 April, the Daily Mail quoted the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, Iain Duncan Smith. "Already we've seen 8,000 people who would have been affected by the cap move into jobs," he was quoted as saying. "This clearly demonstrates that the cap is having the desired impact". The evidence upon which this figure was based contained an explicit warning that it was not possible to draw a link between the numbers affected by the benefit cap or the numbers going into employment and the effectiveness of the policy. Yet Mr Duncan Smith stated that these figures showed that the benefit cap was having "the desired impact".

3. In an interview with the Daily Mail on 8 April, Mr Duncan Smith said that many people were applying for Disability Living Allowance before the new Personal Independence Payment was introduced in order to avoid the new medical test. It is absolutely clear from the publically available data that this was not the case. The small amount of statistical evidence

produced to support the claim appears to refer to changes in caseload rather than the readily available new-claims data.

Details of the inaccuracies are given in Appendix 1, and samples of the misleading and widespread coverage of the inaccuracies are given in Appendix 2.

All three of these statements have drawn on high quality Government statistical data which has then been misused and misinterpreted. All serve to undermine the credibility of benefit claimants. They were all released at the same time as major changes to the benefit system, which will reduce the level of support many families receive.

It is disturbing that these three instances conform to an apparent pattern of misleading and sometimes wholly inaccurate information from the Government when dealing with the issue of social security; a practice that has added to the misunderstanding and stigma which continues to pollute the debate around poverty in the UK. We are concerned that these inaccuracies paint some of the most vulnerable in our society in an unfavourable light, stigmatising those who need the support of the benefits system. No political or financial imperative can be given to make this acceptable.

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## Telling the Truth about Poverty

Churches and Church groups have repeatedly expressed concern about the portrayal of the poorest and most vulnerable in society, writing to you personally on at least two previous occasions. In November 2010, a number of signatories to this letter wrote to ask that the Chancellor correct the October 2010 Comprehensive Spending Review statement in which he overstated by three-fold the level of benefit fraud. We are grateful that, in response, Lord Freud corrected his ministerial forward to the Government document, Tackling Fraud and Error in the Benefit and Tax Credit Systems, but note that

the error has not been corrected in Hansard or to Parliament. Earlier this year, four Churches wrote to you about their report, *The lies we tell ourselves: ending comfortable myths about poverty*, which gave numerous examples of information being manipulated in order to blame the poor for their poverty.

The signatories of this letter have different views on the changes to the benefit system being undertaken by this Government. What unites us is the belief that the debate around these reforms should be based on truthful information. As Christians we believe that all people are made in the image

of God, and as such are to be loved and valued. At the very least, the most vulnerable deserve to be spoken of truthfully and with respect.

We ask you, as Prime Minister and as leader of the Conservative Party, to ensure that the record is put straight, and that statistics are no longer manipulated in a way which stigmatises the poorest in our society. We promise to support you in efforts to ensure that debates on poverty are rooted in fact and not on assertion.

*There follow signatures from Church Leaders and their representatives from across the denominations.*

Further information can be found at: <http://www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/truthandliesaboutpoverty> This is the website of a joint committee of the Baptist, Methodist and United Reformed Churches.

*Editor's note: A response to the Churches' letter was received from the Prime Minister's office as the August Messenger went to press in July. More on this in the next issue.*

- 1 Press Association 30/03/13 <http://uk.news.yahoo.com/nearly-900-000-drop-benefit-claims-225950176.html#TKS3SMV>
- 2 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2308159/16-000-fewer-households-affected-benefits-cap-500-half-jobsrest-moved-cheaper-houses.html>
- 3 [http://statistics.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd1/adhoc\\_analysis/2013/Ben\\_Cap\\_Updated\\_Estimate.pdf](http://statistics.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd1/adhoc_analysis/2013/Ben_Cap_Updated_Estimate.pdf) & <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/benefitcap-statistical-data.pdf>
- 4 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2301735/I-bogus-disabled-DO-better-Ex-TV-host-new-Work-Minister-UKs-THREE-MILLION-claiming-disability-benefit.html> & <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2305556/Last-minute-rush-avoid-tough-new-test-disability-benefit.html>
- 5 <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm101020/debtext/101020-0001.htm#10102049000003>
- 6 [www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/truthandliesaboutpoverty](http://www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/truthandliesaboutpoverty)

## A word from the Editor

After the Watergate affair in the early 1970's and the toppling of Richard Nixon from the U.S. Presidency, the novelist Muriel Spark wrote the satirical novel *The Abbess of Crewe*. This is about the manoeuvrings of a nun to become her community's abbess, and as at the White House, the other nuns and the adviser priests were being bugged, taped, in the most unlikely situations, unaware 'that anyone more innocuous than God' was listening in.

Last month the Messenger featured both national and international poverty. Since then, we've had the G8 meeting in the Lakeland county of Fermanagh, which is thought to have cost £80 million. The IF campaign has seen a cautious move forward concerning the aggressive tax avoidance that cripples developing countries. And there is at least a recognition that world hunger should be addressed by the eight countries that produce half of the world's wealth.

Meanwhile, national poverty is hitting crisis levels in some areas, and its noticeable how many Moravian congregations are involved in supporting food banks. We have also been part of a challenge by the churches over the lies circulating about the causes of poverty.

We've now learnt the scale of surveillance and spying by the United States aided by Britain. There is outrage about the intrusion, by bodies we cannot call to account. We know how false information can be used to deadly effect against our fellow human-beings. We recall how it was used against Jesus.

Spying, which drains away the money, skills and science that could be used to end suffering, and may be cruelly destructive, is ultimately useless. A Christian has someone much less innocuous in their lives, to whom we will all in the end account. We may wonder what God thinks of tax avoidance, poverty, and our own responses

The God we worship is a God of courtesy, who enters our lives to the extent we will let him, who is never intrusive but always willing to share in the mystery of the people he has created. This is not a God of surveillance but a God of sharing, who wants us to be better than we are, to choose to be drawn more fully into the life of the Trinity, where there is justice, peace and creative love. God's interest is always benign and his information always accurate.

This is the God who knows our response through prayer and action to world hunger, tax avoidance, poverty in our own land, and the lies that circulate. As we pray for our world, we recognise the need to approach all who are poor with respect, as people made in God's image whose story is known by a God who cares.

Perhaps if we can, we might pray for another kind of poverty, that of the people caught in the webs of political and media life, or spying for the sake of power. God doesn't need to spy, never uses power to force us, and asks only for our companionship.

As a small church, we can speak out against injustice, and our prayers are precious to God.

# Church of Ireland Synod 2013

The Synod of the Church of Ireland was held over three days in May in Armagh, the ecclesiastical capital of the whole of Ireland. I attended as an Ecumenical Guest representing the Moravian Church and was pleased to be able to speak to Synod twice.

The high point of the Synod was the passing of a motion accepting interchangablity of ministry with the Methodist Church of Ireland. This motion will return to the next Synod in 2014 as a Bill and will then, if passed, enter the statutes of the Church of Ireland. This will mean that Presbyters in the Methodist Church can directly enter the Church of Ireland and visa versa; and President of the Methodist Conference will be regarded as an Episcopal Minister, equivalent to a Bishop in the Church of Ireland.

There is a real sense of 'can do' ecumenism breaking out, and the

Venerable Shirley Griffiths from the Church in Wales brought exciting news of moves towards Church unity there. The news of the talks between the Church of Ireland and the Moravian Church were also warmly received.



The new Primate of Ireland, the Archbishop of Armagh the Most Revd Dr Richard Clarke, was impressive. His Presidential Address concentrated on the need to think about more flexible forms of ministry, end-of-life issues and child deprivation. The Synod looked at the role of Bishops and their dioceses and I was able to address Synod about our Moravian Bishops.

Much of Synod was devoted to the bread-and-butter issues of running a

church, and this included a very clear presentation on the problems with the Church of Ireland Pension Fund. However there were real concerns voiced about the state of farming and the isolation of farmers and farming families. The wet summer last year led to a shortage of winter fodder this year, which was exacerbated by the terrible winter and the very slow, wet, spring. So farmers across Ireland had to deal with lack of fodder for animals kept inside when in a normal year they would be outside feeding on the grass.

Synod ended on a really positive note with an in-house competition for Diocesan and Parish websites, Parish newsletters, twitter feeds and blogs. They take a real pride in the way they communicate both within the Church and with the wider society around them - a challenge for us?

*Sarah Groves*



## Safeguarding training

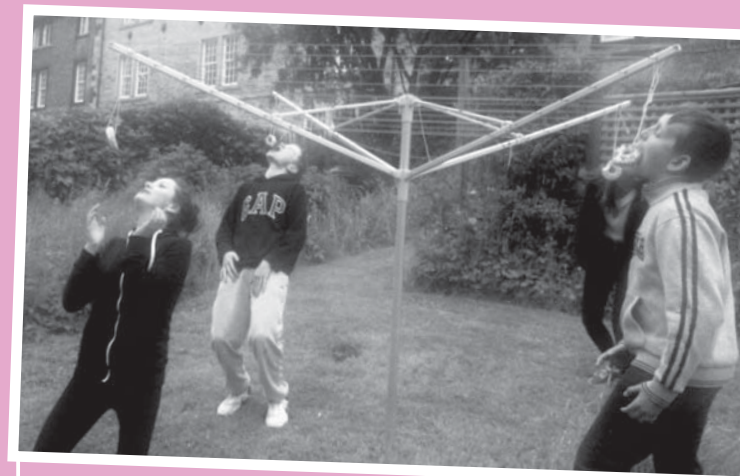
On 2nd July on a rather cold evening 12 people from the Yorkshire congregations came together at Gomersal for an evening of Safeguarding training.

The evening covered a variety of related topics including safe working practices, types of abuse, and 'What is abuse'.

The time flew by and feedback suggested the evening was stimulating and challenging, with 'homework' to look at what actually happens in the churches.

This training is available for all districts and congregations, just contact me to arrange a date.

*Joy Raynor*



*Hannah, Daniel, Alice and Ben, and the donuts*

## Fulneck and Gomersal Youth Group

Brother Michael Newman writes:

The group started in February last year and we meet once a month for a variety of activities including cooking, swimming, sledging, games nights and film nights. We also have one member from Horton and two from Baildon so we might have to rename ourselves soon! In June we had a campfire in the manse garden at which we sang songs, toasted marshmallows and played silly games including eating donuts off a string without using our hands.



# Giving and Receiving

*Deborah Rogers reflects on the reality of life on benefits*

'Take, eat, this is my body given for you.' We hear these words at the Eucharist, but how do we incorporate them into our daily lives?

We all know as Christians we are called to give, to serve others with whatever talent we have whether it be our time or our skills, or financial help. Giving is often easier than receiving, especially for Christians, which to me seems peculiar (although I confess I find it hard to receive too!) because as Christians we are receivers of the greatest gift ever, God's unconditional love to us, manifest in Jesus Christ.

Yes, we are called to be like Jesus, to give freely, but you cannot freely give unless someone freely receives! If we are all hung up on receiving the giving won't flow.

Not so long ago I was unemployed for over two years, and that was a time in my life when giving and receiving were prominent. The Government gave me benefits and I gave a lot of time and effort into finding a job. I also gave my time in voluntary work, both for the Church and in secular helping organisations. I received much pleasure from this voluntary work and it helped me to retain confidence in my abilities. At the same time my giving helped others to have confidence in themselves and to feel affirmed. This was the positive side of being unemployed, having enough time to make a difference in my community.

There were many negative aspects, as all who have been or who are unemployed will tell you. The major negativity for me was financial difficulty, trying to survive on the Jobseekers allowance over a length of time. Yes, it is possible, as so many politicians and media articles have

said, to survive on Jobseekers allowance on a weekly basis, just, but it can be done. I actually like budgeting and setting myself challenges, but I didn't like the way being a recipient of Jobseekers Allowance made me feel long term.

I struggled to keep my car going as living in a rural area my car was the passport to the hope of finding a job, and essential. The allowance allowed for bare basics only, so there were no extras for replacing worn out or broken household items and nothing for birthdays, Christmas, school trips or for simply joining in with social events.

It made me feel like an outcast, someone living on the edge of society. I could not live to the standard I would have liked to, and I'm not talking about material standards, but ethical standards. For example, there was no way I could afford financially to buy ethically produced food. There was a compromise, a forced altering of living out beliefs. Choice was taken away and I felt caged, controlled and helpless.

I asked God for help, to find a job, with budgeting my finances, from others to understand and to offer help to me. I asked for help in being patient and trusting too. Interestingly I did not ask for grace so that I could ask other people for help, nor did I ask people directly. I felt uncomfortable about asking, as if I didn't deserve it, as if it would be improper, as if I would offend them. Plus there was the risk of rejection, or worse that they would feel obliged.

The only time I asked for financial help was when my car broke down and needed major work. My then vicar suggested I ask my Deanery Welfare Fund for help. Having no choice, I

reluctantly approached them and they did pay for my car's repairs for which I am extremely grateful.

When I had been unemployed for just over eighteen months a friend from church said she felt led to give me a cheque. This was a wonderful answer to prayer as I had reached crisis point in my finances. I don't know what would have happened if God hadn't put it in her heart to help me, or if she hadn't acted on her hunch. Although I was desperate, it was still hard for me to receive the cheque.

Surely receiving shouldn't be so hard? Why is it I felt so unable to ask for help? Maybe as a society we need to rethink our attitudes to giving, receiving, asking and being asked. If we know people in our communities who are in need, whether it be in need of money, food, company or anything else, let us ask God to guide us how we can help and then act gracefully.

If you are in need, please remember to ask for grace to receive and to ask. If you receive from others, you are allowing people to give, to be as Christ to you, to do as Christ commanded, to serve one another. There is grace in receiving as well as in giving.

As Christians, we are happy to receive the greatest gift ever of God's love and the gift of Jesus, why is it then that we are hesitant to receive from one another?

In the words Richard Gillard's hymn:

'Brother, sister, let me serve you,  
Let me be as Christ to you;  
pray that I may have the grace to  
let you be my servant, too.'

*Deborah Rogers is a Member of the Church of England living in Surrey.*

Beyond the healed bones  
From 'sticks and stones'  
The pain still remains  
My Name is ...hurt

Beyond the chastity lost  
There lingers a cost  
A scarring of the soul  
My Name is...shame

Beyond the crime done  
And the repentance won  
Sorrow has not died  
My Name is...grief

Beyond the addiction broken  
And the apologies spoken  
A shattered life yet exists  
My Name is...regret

Beyond disease diagnosed  
A life's misery confirmed  
A stricken body felt  
My Name is...pain

Beyond a love mourned  
A heart left unadorned  
A dryless tears  
My Name is...lonely

Beyond all that's desired  
Belief like raging fire  
A glimmer remains  
My Name is...faith

Beyond what is seen  
And everything in between  
You push on and on  
My Name is... hope

Beyond the prayers said  
And scriptures read  
A heart full of joy  
My Name is...love

*Kevin Marinelli  
Pennsylvania [Death Row].*

*First published in The Wing of Friendship, Lifelines Quarterly Newsletter, Summer 2013, p 6. Used with permission.*

## Late Spring

Spring came late that year  
pushing blunt heads of crocuses  
through thin swathes of greying snow.  
Skeletal leaves, crisp autumn's residue  
preserved by frost, leap-frogged across  
new clumps of grass, intensely green,  
while daily there unseen  
two blackbirds  
called  
antiphonally.  
Hope came late that spring,  
gently swelling with rising buds  
on battered rain-soaked boughs of lilac.  
Hope came late and faith welled up again  
till questions trapped in the mazed  
years' reckoning slowly dispersed  
as showers fell on hidden seed  
awaiting that sustaining  
blaze.

*Margaret Connors*

*First published in the Moravian Messenger 1998.*

## Prayer of Russian Christians

*The following is derived ultimately from the Russian Orthodox Liturgy. Here, it has been translated from French and published in This is the Day II, ed. Neil Paynter, Wild Goose Publishing, 2006.*

Forgive us all  
Bless us all:  
The thieves and the Samaritans  
Those that fall by the wayside  
And the priests who pass by without stopping;  
All our neighbours,  
The villains and the victims,  
The cursing and the cursed,  
Those who rebel against you  
And those who abandon themselves to your love.  
Take us all  
Into you,  
Holy and just God.



# Some thought on Preaching

*Brother David Bunney reflects on the ministry of preaching - how we can all aim for the quality that inspires people to hear more, to return to church - and to read the scriptures*

In one of his travel journals, the writer Robert Louis Stevenson wrote: "Went to Church this morning, and was not impressed". Since retiring, I've been able to sit in the pews on many Sundays and listen to worship led by a variety of ministers, preachers and visiting speakers; I now know what Stevenson meant! I've concluded that the one thing the Church is not very good at these days is preaching the Gospel.

Stevenson's Journals were mainly early works, written after leaving his Presbyterian family home in reaction against his father's stern Calvinism. Many of us have had similar experiences in early adulthood as we sought our own way in the first years of independent life. It's one of the sad complaints of the Church today that so few young adults are members of congregations, let alone active members. If the standards of conducting worship are no better than some I've experienced recently, then that's hardly surprising.

There are many records of the high standard of preaching, and its appeal, from the later decades of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth. Huge congregations were drawn by fearless preachers, and queues would form at churches well before service times. The size of some buildings dating from those years, such as the City Temple in Holborn and the Baptist Chapel in Bloomsbury (both in London), bears ample witness to their history of outreach. Nowadays, worship leaders on the dais (rather than in the pulpit) fill an appropriate time-slot with pleasantries, anecdote and personal examples of general experience, but this is not preaching the Gospel!

We live in a society which is very conscious of standards, especially in the commercial world. Both broadcast and printed media are full of advice on what to do about dissatisfaction. If I go to the theatre or to a concert, and the performance is not up to standard, I will not readily go again. If I go to a restaurant and the meal

falls below expectations, I would want my money back. If I go to Church and I'm not "impressed", is it surprising if I choose not to return?

The minister who conducted my first studies leading to ordination was a wise and respected figure from the Congregational tradition. I well remember him telling me that in every act of worship that I led, three



*John Cennick (1718 -55), the great Moravian preacher of the 18th century*

elements ought to be clearly discernible: structure, purpose and direction. I think we've all attended services in which such qualities have not been obvious! The material to hand is not lacking in substance, for the Bible stories have held interest for millennia. The rich poetry of hymn, prayer and liturgy is part of our cultural heritage. The Gospel message is no less relevant to today's generation than it has ever been. So what's lacking?

Services - and sermons - need to be made-to-measure for particular occasions and particular settings; they cannot be hawked round and endlessly re-cycled. All I remember from one service is the preacher telling us that he thought the lectionary for the day was irrelevant - in fact saying that he didn't understand the meaning of a significant element of scripture. The Church calendar is important, guiding us through the life of Jesus Christ and

what he taught. Commentaries should be consulted, so that relevant points can be extracted to highlight the meaning of a passage. Reference can be made to world events and political developments - not on party lines, of course - and how our faith can interpret them. The Bible usually reveals the answer!

In those services I've attended, I've rarely been challenged by what I've heard. The potential is there in the material, identified in the lectionary, and supported by a far greater range of accessible material, whether printed or on the internet, to enrich what can be offered and deepen our understanding. I think my recent disappointment stems from the rather lax approach that so many preachers adopt in their wanting to be pleasing and acceptable rather than to serve the power of the Gospel. Those of you in the congregation can help by being critical of what you hear, by asking, for example, why the lectionary passage for the day was not used, or by sharing an observation that might have helped to convey its meaning. You might remember a hymn that picked up a point that was missed, or that might have been more appropriate. The more your worship leader becomes aware of such expectations, the more care will be given to meeting them on another occasion.

To bring the Word to life, it must live within us, and be given that life through prayerful study and quiet preparation, always waiting upon God. We must enable the word to go with the people when they leave and give them new perspectives, or even new questions. Look at the words of Jesus himself, quoted in Mark 7: 6-8, and echoed in the words of Peter and John to the court in Acts 4: 18-20. We should be able to boast with Paul, using the words of Galatians 2:20.

If you had to look those verses up, then I think it proves my point! We have the most exciting story of all time to share, so let's make the most of it!

# 'The lies we tell ourselves'

*Brother Alan Holdsworth reflects on the Report referred to in the letter to the Prime Minister. A copy was sent by the Provincial Board to every minister. It is also available on the website: [www.jointpublicissues.org.uk](http://www.jointpublicissues.org.uk)*



The lies we tell ourselves is a report from four mainstream Christian UK churches: the Baptist Union of Great Britain, the Methodist Church, the Church of Scotland and the United Reformed Church. It was commissioned in order to tell Christians in our country the truth about UK poverty and effectively end the untrue but comfortable myths that too many Christians believe.

The study concedes that there are too many myths and concentrates only on six.

**Myth 1** - The poor are lazy and don't want to work and that is the basic cause of UK child poverty.

The truth in fact is that the majority of poor children are from working households.

It is believed by Christians across our country that there are families in which three generations have never worked.

The truth is that examples of such families have up to now never been found. So why do we believe this?

**Myth 2** - People are poor because they are addicted to drink and drugs. Christians and the wider public cite addiction as the second most common cause of child poverty.

It is true that less than 4% of benefit claimants have an addiction.

So why have we come to believe that addiction is such a big factor in the lives of the 13 million poor people in our country today?

**Myth 3** - They are not really poor, they just don't manage their money properly. Almost 60% of the UK population agrees that, if only the poor would handle their money properly, they would be O.K.

Statistics show that the poorest of

us spend our money carefully and limit ourselves to essentials such as food, heating and lighting.

So why do we believe that poverty is caused by profligacy?

**Myth 4** - More than 80% of the UK population believe "large numbers falsely claim benefits".

This kind of fraud, according to our social security system statistics, is at a historically low level. It stands today at 0.9% which is a level that those dealing with tax avoidance and evasion can only dream of. It is a fact that if everyone entitled to benefits was paid correctly then the welfare system would cost £18 billion more.

**Myth 5** - "They", the poor, have an easy life. More than 50% of UK citizens believe that benefits are too high and Christians tend to agree. Government Ministers speak of families opting for benefits as a lifestyle choice.

It is true that benefits do not meet legal minimum standards. In fact they have halved in value relative to average incomes over the last 30 years.

We know the ill and unemployed are the least satisfied with life so why have we come to believe that a large number of families would choose this lifestyle?

**Myth 6** - "They caused the financial deficit".

The proportion of our tax bills spent on welfare has remained stable for the last 20 years. It is without foundation then to argue as some do that increasing welfare spending is responsible for the current financial deficit.

There are many reasons as to why we have our financial deficit but the 13 million poor in our country should not have it laid at their feet.

As a coalition of concerned major Christian churches this report was commissioned to discover a new 21st century story about UK poverty, one grounded in truth without the myths.

Part of our Christian calling and duty is to search for the truth which means we Christians must face up to our own blindness as well as calling others to account.

Do you recognise this story?

"We live in a broken society. As hardworking families strive to do the best for their children, there is a feral underclass which creates a disproportionate number of social problems and is a constant drain on the nation's resources. Through living off state benefits for generations, this group has developed a culture of dependency and worklessness in which vices such as substance abuse flourish. Through idleness or dishonesty, making a fair contribution to society has become alien."

This is the story that one or two of our national newspapers with a not-so-hidden agenda would have us believe. It is a story heard when listening to national political debates and also when engaging in everyday discussions and conversations. This story is a convenient myth and a long way from the daily experiences of the 13 million people including 3.6 million children living in poverty in our country today.

The differing kinds of poverty in our country can be measured in many ways. Income levels and deprivation indices tell an important part of the story. In 2010 the Methodist Church said that "those living in poverty still suffer consequences in terms of health, life chances and opportunities for their children".

In short "the poor suffer a grave lack of resources which prevents them from realising the potential which God has invested in them" and, in the words of some people living in poverty, "it means having no choice, it means if you are lucky you can buy only the cheapest of what you need, it means being given endless bowls of soup and a roll and endless cups

*continued over*



of tea and a biscuit when what you need is a proper meal. To be poor feels like being written off.”

I consulted some facts and figures relevant for the point of publication of this report, and came up with the following:

Basic numbers of us in poverty and on welfare were:

5.1 million out of work,

6.1 million are in work and on benefits,

1.7 million are state benefit pensioners. Yes, state pensions are included as welfare and part of the

benefits bill.

The total cost, in billions annually, are:

unemployment £5.2 bn,

families and children £37 bn,

low income families £19.1 bn,

housing benefit £22.7 bn,

disabilities and carers £31.2 bn,

pensions £85 bn.

This comes to a total of £200.2 billion.

The Joint Public Issues Team from the Baptist Union of Great Britain, the Methodist Church, the Church of Scotland and the United Reformed Church conclude by saying;

“We hope our report will help people to weigh prejudice and anecdote against evidence, help challenge the myths which enable the majority of us to live with the comfortable assumption that both poverty and wealth are deserved. We hope instead it will make us take a fresh look at the actual reality of life for ALL our neighbours. After all, the first stages of eliminating injustice must be an understanding of the truth.”

Moravians in this province must once again occupy the high moral ground of punching above our weight.

*Alan Holdsworth*

## Dhanybhad (Thankyou)

*Passengers in the second minibus*



For the past few months the Pre-school in Kathmandu has been enjoying the use of 2 minibuses to pick up and drop off students for school each morning and evening. Br Shanti and Sr Vani have written to say just how much they appreciate the contributions that they have received from the British Mission Board, The Men's Fellowship and the Moravian Women's Association and the YPMA.

An application was made to the Moravian Church Foundation back in October 2012. The application was received favourably but the MCF was

only able to provide funds for one bus and the funds would not be available until 2013.

Through the British Mission Board we made an appeal and the PMF, MWA and YPMA responded immediately and generously and, along with a contribution from the British Mission Board, a 10-seater bus was ordered immediately at a cost of £15,500. The bus eventually arrived early in 2013 and was immediately put into use.

When the money from the MCF was received in the spring of 2013, a second bus was ordered and it arrived

recently. It too was soon pressed into service. These two mini-buses can now be seen buzzing around Kathmandu advertising the Pre-School.

The second van is a slightly larger, Tata winger van with air conditioning, and is a 14 seater which gives more space, comfort, durability and long term benefit. We are thinking of hiring it to companies during holidays and breaks.

Thank you for all your support: it is much appreciated.

Jai Mashi ('in the name of Jesus')

*Br Bob Hopcroft*

# Open Book

## MICAH

Micah lived at the same time as Isaiah and Hosea and prophesied from the point of view of a country dweller, whereas Isaiah dealt with the transgressions of those in positions of authority, from the standpoint of one who lived in the city, and Hosea was concerned mainly with the Northern Kingdom.

Consequently, Micah has been called the prophet of the poor. He is concerned about people who are at a disadvantage and who are exploited by the cruel and the ruthless. Small holders are deprived of their land, the poor are evicted from their homes and children are deprived of their rights. This list of injustices appears in chapter two.

Amid the sometimes confusing details in this book, there appear to be three overriding concerns. The first is the confidence of the priests, false prophets and people that no harm can come to them because God's temple is in Jerusalem and therefore God is present among them. (Chapter three, verse 11.)

The second concern is found in chapter six, verses 6 to 8 in the beautiful passage which begins with the words, 'With what shall I come before the Lord?' and ends with the summary, 'What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God.' It is an astonishing claim to make in an age when observing the correct rituals and customs was considered to be an adequate expression of one's religion. Micah's definition of true spirituality must have made some people think again, or as happened in the majority of cases, fallen on deaf ears.

His third concern is that after his fellow countrymen have been punished for their transgressions, a deliverer would appear, born as a descendant of David and coming from the town of Bethlehem. (Chapter five, verses 2 - 5.)

This has been taken by many to be a prophecy about the birth and mission of Jesus as the promised Messiah.

Interspersed among these concerns are the punishments that will befall Israel and Judah and the reasons why.

The first five verses of chapter four are worth reading and then comparing with Isaiah chapter two, verses one to five, where the words are almost identical. It is the passage about beating swords into ploughshares and spears into pruning hooks. Some commentators regard this as a later insertion while others regard it as a 'valuable passage that is worth repeating' without saying who wrote it first.

*'What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God.'*

Chapter one opens with a condemnation of Samaria, the then capital of Israel, where its rulers are held responsible for the evils that are practised there, and which has spread corruption to Jerusalem in the Southern Kingdom. Israel had adopted the worship and practices associated with the gods of Canaan, Syria and Assyria. Prophets, such as Elijah, Elisha and Amos, had been sent to warn them of their evil ways but no one had paid attention. Consequently God was about to use the Assyrians to punish them, a prophecy which was fulfilled in Micah's lifetime, when Assyria carried away the population and reduced Samaria to a heap, a fate that was foretold in Chapter one, verse 6.

The denunciations mentioned in chapter two are carried on in chapter three with the emphasis placed on the rulers and false prophets. The rulers are accused of injustice and 'flaying the skin off my people and breaking their bones in pieces', an expression that means much the same as 'fleecing people' in our own culture.

The false prophets are then

denounced in verse 5, beginning with the words, 'Thus says the Lord concerning the prophets who lead my people astray'. The passage goes on to claim that 'priests teach for a price and the prophets practise divination for money.' The destruction of Jerusalem is foretold at the end of the chapter in words similar to those pronounced against Samaria in chapter one.

In chapter four, the prophet looks forward to a time when there will be no war and everyone 'shall sit under his own vine and fig tree and no one shall make them afraid.' The captivity of the people in Babylon and their rescue by the Lord, who will 'redeem you from the hand of your enemies', is foretold in verse 10. The following chapter begins with the picture of Israel under siege. A deliverer will arise, however, and he will be born in Bethlehem. Chapter five, verse 2, is quoted in the New Testament in the Gospel according to Matthew, chapter two, verse 6. This passage in Micah chapter five is the only place in the Old Testament where Bethlehem is mentioned as the birthplace of the coming deliverer. The rest of the chapter continues the theme of destruction and punishment but promises the deliverance of the 'remnant of Jacob.'

Destruction and punishment make up most of chapter six but the theme is interrupted by the short passage, verses 6 to 8, which outline what the Lord requires, as mentioned above. The closing chapter begins on a pessimistic note but ends with the promise of better times to come. It opens with the words, 'The godly is perished from the earth and there is no one upright among mankind. They all lie in wait for blood and each hunts the other with a net.' But the chapter ends with words, not unlike those of a psalmist; 'Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over transgressions.' 'He does not retain his anger for ever because he delights in steadfast love.'

*All quotations are from the English Standard Version.*

*Peter Gubi*



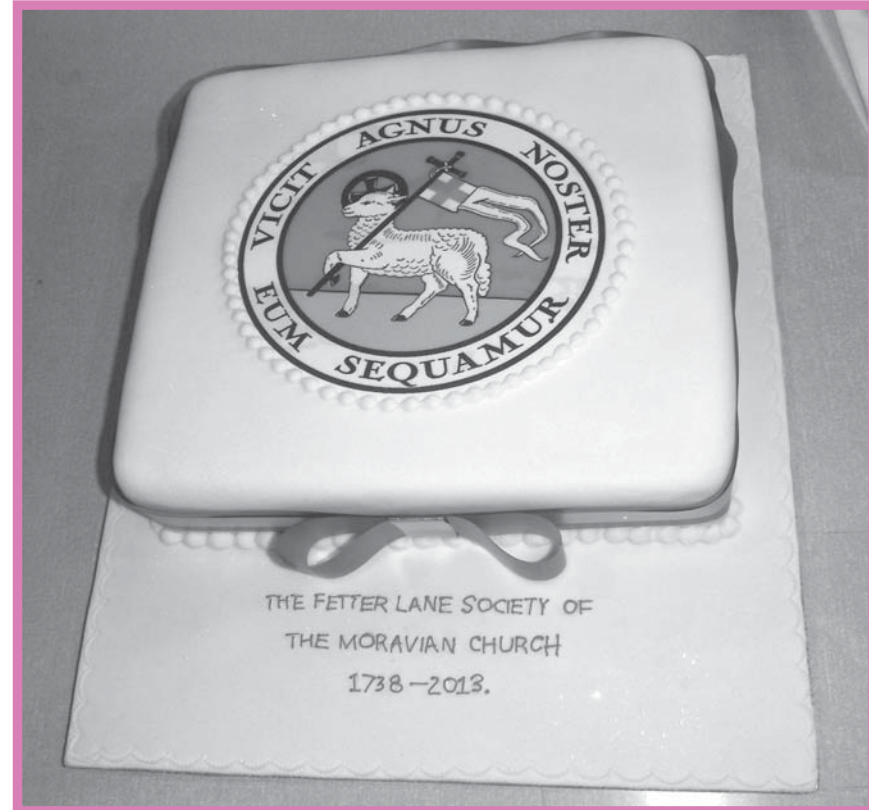
# Around the District Conferences

## EASTERN DISTRICT

On Sunday 5th May 2013 a service of songs of praise, with bible readings and historical readings reflecting the first Moravian-influenced Society, which started 275 years ago. A number of Brothers and Sisters from the Eastern District, attended the service.

The cake showing in the attached photo was lovingly prepared by Sr Louise McCarthy (of the Harlesden Congregation) and given to Fetter Lane Congregation for the special celebrations.

*Edwin Quildan*



## WESTERN DISTRICT CONFERENCE

The Conference was held at Kingswood on the 22nd May at 7:00 p.m. and was preceded by a fish and chip supper. Numbers attending were sadly depleted due to illness but it was a friendly and interesting meeting nonetheless.

Br. Paul Gubi queried whether retired ministers should be included in the pulpit exchange as they are helping in the District. Conference also requested that the contributions to the Church and to the District of Br. Gerald Farrar, Sr. Edna Bunney and particularly Br. John Dennis Monger be recognised and placed on record.

At Bath Weston, Br. Paul Gubi said that the boiler needed replacing and that there are concerns about the building. The lunch fellowship and 'Love Weston Cafe' are flourishing.

At Kingswood the church hall has been renovated with a new roof incorporating sunlight tubes, wheelchair-friendly glazed doors, low energy lighting and new chairs.

At Brockweir, the church has become a collection point for Chepstow Food Bank and the food collected is desperately

required. On Sunday 19th May, the congregation celebrated their 180th Anniversary and the church was packed with villagers, well-wishers and representatives of other churches.

Tytherton are grateful for the ministry of Br. David Newman and they are now entering a period of interregnum. The congregation has just celebrated their 270th Anniversary.

Br. Philip Ashton was elected as District Chair and the post of Treasurer was abolished. Sr. Sue Groves was elected as the Provincial Youth Committee Representative. Two posts remain vacant, Renewal Secretary and Social Responsibility Secretary.

The 2013 District Rally will be held at Kingswood on August 18th, commencing at 3:00 p.m. It will take the form of a 'bring and share' Lovefeast. The Autumn District Conference will be held at Kingswood on Saturday November 2nd commencing at 10:30 a.m.

The meeting closed with the Grace.

*Judith Ashton*

# Congregation News

## Salem

We have been busy in the last year. First, the building is now watertight, we hope. We had to replace two flat roofs on the church hall last year and we have recently received a Lottery Grant for £10,000 to rebuild the front wall of the hall, which was bowing out dangerously. Now that is completed, the Pre-school who use the hall every weekday will be able to use their garden again, as it has been roped off for the last six months.

We have been busy fundraising for the flat roofs. Stuart Brierley has hosted two Sunday lunches at his house and is to have a garden party in August. James Woolford has also been wonderful with fundraising, giving two concerts and two Quiz Nights. We will be very sorry to lose James and Annette this month when

they move to Lower Wyke and Wellhouse.

He also helped us set up Messy Church, as we now have no children attending church, and we have had three services. These have been great fun and have been attended mainly by grandchildren of church members, but we have had one of two children from the locality, and hope that by advertising we may get more.

We have had three baptisms and gained three new members this year, although two were regular attendees, but it is a move in the right direction. We held a Reunion Service again last year and are to move it to Back-to-Church Sunday in September this year.

*Anne Broadbent*

**The Fulneck Settlement**  
**Heritage Open Day**  
**14<sup>th</sup> September 2013**  
**10am-4pm**

**Learning from The Past**

11am a period re-enactment of the arrival of the first schoolchildren to Fulneck in the 1750's

Displays related to Comenius who is regarded as the founder of modern education, along with Settlement Tours. Organ Recitals, Museum, Art Gallery, Children's Activities, Slide Show, School Archives, Historical Walk Displays and more.

**Admission FREE**

[www.fulneck.org.uk](http://www.fulneck.org.uk) Post Code LS28 8NT

## Dates to Remember

**13**  
Aug

Manifestation of  
the Spirit, 1727

**21**  
Aug

Beginning of  
Moravian  
Missions, 1732

**24**  
Aug  
to  
**27**  
Aug

Greenbelt Christian Arts Festival.  
[www.greenbelt.org.uk](http://www.greenbelt.org.uk)

## FROM CHURCH HOUSE

### Provincial Diary for August

#### August

20th-21st PEC, Mission Board,  
Estates Property  
The PEC

#### September

1st-3rd European Mission  
Conference,  
Christianfeld  
Sr. Taylor

6th-8th M.W.A. Retreat,  
Cliff College

9th Renewal Committee,  
Hall Green  
Sr. Groves

14th Heritage open Day

13th-14th CTE Enabling Group,  
Cambridge  
Br. Cooper

16th-17th PEC, Mission Board,  
Estates Property  
The PEC

18th Free Churches Group incl.  
AGM, London  
Br. Cooper

18th-22nd Unity Board, Bethlehem  
Br. Hopcroft

21st PYCC, Ockbrook  
Sr. Taylor

## PRAYER NOTES

### 4th August [Trinity 10] - Luke 12:13-21

Lord of Glory, by whose providence we have been granted gifts that our ancestors could never have even dreamed of, help us not to be so occupied with material things that we forget the spiritual, that having gained the whole world we lose our own soul. Save us from being so taken up with the possessions and pleasures of daily life that we forget that our true citizenship is in heaven. Teach us to set our hearts not on things which pass away but on those which last forever; that we may know you and possess you; that we may lay up our treasures not upon earth but in heaven. Amen

### 11th August [Trinity 11] - Luke 12:32-40

King of Kings, who taught us that all mankind will one day see you as you are, and every person be seen for what he or she is; keep us steady as the world reels about us and ready when your kingdom comes with great power and glory. Keep us alert in waiting for your return so that when you stand at the door and knock you may find us, not sleeping in carelessness and sin, but awake and rejoicing in your praises; that we may not stand outside your kingdom, but enter in with thankful hearts. Whether you come at midnight or at dawn or in the morning may we be found as faithful servants, living as those who wait for their master, ready with lamps burning so that we may not be ashamed before you at your coming but may enter into your eternal joy. Amen

### 18th August [Trinity 12] - Luke 12:49-56

Man of Sorrows, who called your followers to shine like lights in a hostile world, teaching that their greatest opponents would often be found under the same roof. We pray for all Christians who bear their witness in difficult situations, confronted by threats and opposition. Give them the spirit that can sing your praise even in a dungeon and call down blessings on those who persecute. Grant them strength so that their love does not grow cold in your service. Uphold their faith, bless their testimony and cause your gospel to speed on and triumph in your name, who was silent when nailed to the Cross and by pain triumphed over pain, our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen

### 25th August [Trinity 13] - Luke 13:10-17

Lamb of God who bore our griefs and carried our sorrows, who had compassion on all who suffered in body, mind, or spirit and went about doing good; healing every disease and affliction among the people. We give thanks for all the wonderful things which you did and glorify God as we read of the woman disabled for eighteen years who was made well on the Sabbath day. We thank you for your love which inspires men and women today to care for the sick and work for their healing and for every evidence you give us that people can still be made whole through the power of your Name. Amen

*Richard Ingham*

## THE MORAVIAN MESSENGER

Official Journal of the Moravian Church in the British Province. Published monthly by the authority of the Provincial Synod. Advertisements and all communications concerning distribution and supply should be sent to the Moravian Book Room, 5 Muswell Hill, London N10 3TJ, and NOT to the Editor.



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Contributions for the Messenger should reach the editor by the 3rd day of the preceding month.