

Moravian messenger



September
2013

Sisters in Albania

How can I best relate, to those who didn't experience it, the wonderful time had by the twenty-seven sisters who travelled to Albania to the European Women's Conference 2013, held from 30 May to 3 June at Durres, a resort on the Adriatic Sea ?

The U.K. sisters made their own travel plans to Gatwick and flew to Tirana together. We were met by the delightful Leona Mandro, and despite a delayed flight and arriving in a thunder storm (which meant we missed the opening service), we soon felt the warmth of Moravian love as old friends were reunited and through smiles and gestures new friendships forged.

The morning and evening prayers were led by sisters from some of the different countries represented and the text for the day was often read in as many as 5 different languages. The

whole conference was conducted in German and English with sisters Anna Schmitt and Katharina Goodwin translating.

The conference theme "Celebrating our Differences - Together in Christ" was the focus of our Bible Study and following discussion groups.

Sr Beth Torkington, our Bishop of the Unity, led us wonderfully through three gardens in the Bible. She highlighted our differences as in the variety of plant life found growing side by side but underlined and stressed the beauty of a garden together in full bloom. Each plant needs to be nurtured in a different way and under different conditions, but united, as we are in Christ; each one reaches their full potential, bringing glory to the gardener - our Lord.

Sr Patricia Gardener, co-ordinator of the Unity Women's Desk gave an excellent presentation of the work already done mainly by the sisters in the USA. Many scholarships have been awarded to girls and young women throughout our Moravian Unity to enable them to achieve their full potential through offering more opportunities in education.

Don't think that the conference was without its lighter side! Being on the coast there was time for a swim or paddle in the sea and time to sunbathe round the pool even if it was a little windy!

Having to cope with different sanitation systems was, if nothing else, cause for a laugh but in all situations we were offered the best Albania had to offer and for that we were extremely grateful.

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The Moravian Women's European Conference

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Sisters in Albania continued

Afternoon workshops again gave us a chance to "Celebrate our Differences" when we could experience Albanian singing and dancing, learn about the position of women in Albania, develop our artistic talents in stone painting and paper craft, or meditate with Sr Merita Meko.

Traditionally, each country gives a short presentation and this year our German sisters treated us to a mini Lovefeast served in full costume. The Albanian sisters had a special surprise! They served us all with an Albanian doughnut like a dessert followed by a small glass of Raki - a locally produced spirit distilled from grape skins. Then came baskets of brightly-coloured scarves, one for each of us as a memento of our visit.

The 2013 EWC celebrated two important things. Firstly it celebrated the 10th EWC started by Sr Gudran Schiewe helped by Sr Roberta Thompson and Sr Libby Mitchell. Its expansion and significance in the Moravian sisterhood has grown and developed to what it is today, overcoming problems of travel and language and enabling sisters to meet freely in the name of religion.

Secondly the Conference celebrated with the Albanian sisters 20 years of Moravian work in their homeland. In 1993, following a meeting with Ankjaer Poulsen in Denmark their church in Tirana was officially started. From there the strength, determination and passion of many but especially three women Merita Meko, Viola Grillo and Vjollca Mazi, has made the church a recognised part of the Albanian Christian Church and at the 2010 Synod officially became part of the Moravian European Province.

The organising committee for EWC 2013 consisted of Sr Conchita Landbrug, Sr Sussanne Gartner and Sr Wendy Hopcroft and they worked hard with the Albanian sisters in the months leading up to the conference to make it run smoothly and be a success which it most surely was.

Monday 3 June saw much hugging and kissing as some sisters had to leave for the airport to return home but others, however, were able to stay on for a further four days and see more of Albania and our church work there.

Albania may be a poor country but it is very beautiful. Seventy per cent of the land is mountainous, and we enjoyed a picturesque drive following the River Mat to our next hotel, just outside Pogradec on the shores of Lake Ohrid.

En route we visited Burreli where the Moravian Kindergarten meets weekly on Saturdays. Four groups between the ages of 3 and 16, totalling 60 children and young people, meet throughout the day, in a small building with very few resources. The leaders of these groups are some of the children who were part of the first churches back in 1993. While in Burreli we met the mayor - a young modern woman. She is the first woman mayor in Burreli and one of only three in the north of Albania. She is working very hard to bring the community together - another example of a woman leading the way.

The following day we were taken to see the kindergarten and small congregation in Pogradec. A lively group of children was learning through play, learning letters and numbers in preparation for school. Br Boytler goes every three months to the Christian centre in Pogradec to conduct special services such as baptisms.

Through their close relationship with Albania, the Moravians in Denmark provided funding for the new camp centre which was our next port of call. Completed last year, this is a wonderful purpose-built summer camp in beautiful surroundings. Here we were served with byreks - pancake-like snacks eaten warm. Br James Woolford spent time at the camp during his placement in Albania in 2012, and Sr Kathryn was glad to hear how everyone had enjoyed his time with them.



Some of the Albanian Church family

Our drive through the mountains to Elbasan on Wednesday was again spectacular. Here we met Maylinda - a social worker and the leader of the children's and women's church work in Elbasan. At the moment the meetings all take place in her home as properties are expensive and difficult to purchase. She, like the other

women we met, is happy to work tirelessly for the church. Later in the day we arrived in Tirana and met in the church there. The church rooms are on the second floor of a building in the middle of town and they sport a large emblem of the Lamb and Flag on the outside walls. The Moravian spirit was there as it had been in all the places we visited.

Our last meal together was one of typically Albanian food, shared outside under trees lit with fairy lights, in Tirana. It was a chance to eat, drink and reflect on our week together - a week when we learned much, shared much, gave and received, all in His name.

Our flight wasn't until evening so we had plenty of time in Tirana to move from one coffee shop to another, sing in the Catholic Church and visit the new and extremely impressive Orthodox Church, a truly ecumenical way to get our last flavour of Albania.

As the plane left the ground at Tirana airport, a few fluffy white clouds were just visible above the mountain tops and the sun was low in the sky. We all knew that we were taking with us the love of the Albanian sisters - a few brave, strong and passionate women who over the last 20 years have worked tirelessly to spread the gospel and let the love of God be known and felt by the people around them. They ask that we all remember them in our prayers in the months and years ahead.

The special memories of EWC 2013 will remain with us for a long time to come and we look forward to 2015 when the conference will be closer to home, being hosted by our sisters in the Emerald Isle.

Diane Thornton

A word from the Editor

August started here with blazing hot days interspersed with coolness and thunderstorms. Hopefully, many of us got to enjoy the summer.

Following up on the social justice issues highlighted in the last issue, and the many ways in which church-goers have been seeking to support people in need, have been powerful experiences.

We see the urgent need to address the real problem of scrounging - the multi-nationals that tax-dodge and cause untold suffering in countries that need the money they should be contributing.

We have heard the churches speak out nationally - to politicians telling lies about people on welfare, and to businesses that make money at high profit from the misery of those who need loans until payday.

Messenger correspondents often mention how their congregation is supporting a foodbank. Such efforts add up in ways we cannot imagine. And our international contacts remind us of the diversity of the world and the ingenuity of people who may have little in material terms.

There are, of course, those to whom this is all new - businesses that don't realise the logistics of foodbanks, and have no idea of the inventiveness of the voluntary sector in working to tight budgets. There are investors who don't mind that some big companies dodge the tax, and politicians who avoid the evidence on poverty in the pursuit of votes. There is sometimes a huge naivety among the comfortably-off: one food-bank, I was told, received a large bag of carefully dried used teabags 'for the poor'!

I think the most powerful statement of prayer from absolute poverty has come to me this month from a correspondent on Death Row in Arizona:

I'm sure God had a purpose for making insects and rodents, that's why I try to tolerate all of them. My personal worst for giving compassion is flies. Being confined to four walls, especially 'these prison walls' has taught me to pray - give thanks for the simplest things. I often find myself thanking God for this shelter; protection from the hot summer; the little rain we get, the dust storms, cool winters, and even all these twisted personalities.

Please keep sending in material. It shows the richness of church life, and the subjects and places that need our prayers, of thanksgiving or petition.

We get to congratulate two of this issue's writers, Brothers Fred Linyard, a former editor, and Peter Gubi senior, on 60 years of church service.

What do you do with the Messenger?

After reading it, do you file it, bin it, donate it to the dentist's waiting room? Or something else? The editor would be pleased to hear from you!

Congratulations

Celebrating 60 years of ordained ministry in the Moravian Church.

Brother Peter Gubi Fairfield on 13 September 1953

Brother Fred Linyard Westwood on 14 October 1953

Who started college together in 1947, along with others now deceased.

May God bless your Diamond Jubilee and continuing service.

Art and Faith

Emily

She dusts each day - it keeps her going -
robed in a lilac nylon coat
she practises her priestly rites.
Holding aloft a wooden wand
tufted with rainbow fleeces
she reaches every secret place
in the shrine of her devotion.

Hum of a cordless hand-held vac
accompanies her worship,
Gliding along the massive bulk
of her sculpted velvet altar,
its padded triptych fringed
in awe-inspiring grandeur
attained by years of serving.

Once laughter had filled her home
but now alone and three ops on
she tots up again, adds the DSS,
and mentions sheltered housing.

'You might need to let this go',
I say in unthinking sacrilege -
then I see her loving look bestowed
on the depths of a plushy seat -
I'd forgotten the divine decree:

Thou shalt not abandon
The three-piece suite.

Margaret Connors

Soon after we retired and came back to live in Ockbrook, our then minister handed me a letter she had received: "This might interest you!" It was from the Derby Hospital, asking for volunteers to work with the hospital chaplaincy. I went for an interview and was accepted and fifteen years later I'm still at it.

A large group of volunteers, working in a variety of jobs, helps out the team of full and part-time chaplains employed by the Trust. The largest group is made up of ward visitors who spend two or three hours a week visiting patients in an assigned ward. Other volunteers accompany patients in A & E, others bring patients in wheel chairs to the Sunday morning service while others are Eucharistic Ministers, taking Communion to patients who are not able to come to Chapel.

I'm what is called an associate chaplain. My involvement has been as a visitor and, once a month, taking the Sunday morning Communion Service. I also take some bed-side Communion and occasionally do an "on call" session in the evening or at a week-end, ready to answer any emergency calls. Olive also became a volunteer, working for a time in A & E, and continues as a Eucharistic Minister.

Chaplaincy visiting is very different from a minister visiting members and friends of her/his own congregation when faith is shared and strengthened. We are there for all patients and their families (and sometimes members of

staff), not to be evangelists, not necessarily to talk about religion but to support people in a time of difficulty, to listen and to help them with their spiritual and pastoral needs, and always motivated by our own Christian faith.

One of the things that has surprised me is how welcoming and accepting people have been. Occasionally it's necessary to explain what a chaplain is but most patients know where chaplaincy visitors are coming from and what they represent. Hardly ever does anybody say "go away!" They may say "I'm not really religious...", but are still pleased to talk, sometime just an ordinary chat but sometimes at a deeper level. In our hospital there are often a number of patients from other faiths. They too usually welcome a friendly visitor. It's very humbling that so many patients, at the end of a visit, say "Thank you for stopping to talk."

Looking back on a contact, you may often wish you had spoken or responded to someone in a different way. But to share, even briefly, in the lives of so many people, to share in the life of a big hospital, to have opportunity to put faith into action in reaching out, however inadequately, to folk in their need is both a pleasure and a privilege. At a personal level, working and worshipping with people from so many different churches has strengthened my belief in the ecumenical ideal and has given me many new friends. Thank you Hilary for showing me that letter!

A Greeting from the Christian Churches to the Muslim Communities in the UK

Br. Phil Cooper writes:

This year, along with many other Christian churches in the United Kingdom, our own Moravian Church has sent a greeting to the Muslim communities in this country, to mark the Muslim feast of Eid ul-Fitr or Eid al-Fitr. This has been organised through Churches Together in Britain and Ireland.

Eid ul-Fitr marks the end of the holy month of Ramadan, the ninth month in the Muslim year, which Muslims worldwide observe as a period of fasting. Ramadan lasts either 29 or 30 days, and ends with the sighting of the new crescent moon.

This year, some Muslim communities in the UK celebrated Eid ul-Fitr on Thursday, 8th August, and others on Friday, 9th August. This is due to the fact that some communities celebrate Eid ul-Fitr on the same day as Saudi Arabia.

Here is the greeting:-

The Christian churches send greetings of peace and prayers for God's blessing on our Muslim neighbours on the

occasion of 'id ul-Fitr (Eid). We recognise this as a day of good news and celebration - the fast has been completed and the feast begins!

We have been encouraged by two key initiatives this Ramadan - the 'Big Iftar' (<http://thebigiftar.wordpress.com>) and Channel 4's Ramadan Season (<http://www.channel4.com/programmes/4ramadan/articles/ramadan-homepage>). These have enabled many people to experience the hospitality of UK Muslims in mosques around the country as well as raising awareness positively of the meaning of Ramadan.

As representatives of the main Christian traditions in the UK we assure you of our goodwill towards you, and our commitment to peace and justice in the society that we share together. Aware of the recent attacks on mosques and Muslims, we want to stand with you against any discrimination or violence targeting any community or person because of their faith. Instead, we want to work for more positive interaction between Christians and Muslims, demonstrating the love for God and neighbour to which we are called.

'Id Mubarak! [Blessed Eid]

Summer Camp 2013 - What Next?



On Saturday 27th July 31 young people and 11 adults gathered at Fulneck school for a week of sharing time together. The young people were put into Juniors and Seniors with a little movement between the groups to ensure everyone was in a group to suit them. Paul Holdsworth and his team of Andrea, Phil, Phill and Roberta led the Seniors, and Zoe Ferdinand with her team of Hannah, Ben, James and Debbie led the Junior camp.

During the week camp shared worship, meals and various activities including the ever-popular trip to a theme park - this year to Flamingoland, bouldering, the Media Museum, rifle-shooting and archery, and the Olympics. The evenings included a service led by the leaders for the Yorkshire District, crafts and sports, an eventful campfire, pizza bought in, the talent show and on the final evening a disco.

Each camp had its own programme of Bible studies, sports, games, activities and

walks. The ice cream shop was a popular walk with both groups, although the weather could have been a little better.

The lower numbers changed the feeling at camp slightly but those that attended did not miss out on any of the usual fun and friendship-building. The atmosphere was one of a family, complete with the slight disputes and irritations, a caring place for everyone with the young people looking out for each other, and the adults, as well as the adults caring for them.

The weather varied from a hot day with blazing sunshine to heavy showers, sometimes on the same day, but generally didn't affect the programme too much.

Fortunately the days we needed to be dry were, and the wettest day was the visit to the Media Museum.

Many thanks for all of you who prayed for the camp, for those who sent donations to help with the extras and most of all to the leaders who gave a week of their time (with minimum days of 17-18 hours) to make the camp a success. Special thanks to Paul who has been doing camp for many years but still comes up with an inspiring programme, and to Zoe who has led Middles and then Juniors for the last 5 years and has decided 2013 is her last year for the moment. You are both amazing, the young people are fortunate to have leaders who care for them so much and want the week to be memorable.

Please continue to pray for the young people and the leaders, for the friendships made, for faith strengthened, renewed and inspired and for the future of all the participants.

Joy Raynor





Spotlight on Fulneck

Fulneck Moravian Church is at the heart of Fulneck Moravian Settlement, overlooking the Tong Valley near Pudsey. Moravians came to Yorkshire in 1742 to continue the work of the preacher Benjamin Ingham who had

weekly Family Worship there is a Lovefeast and Communion service on the first Sunday of the month. There are additional services for festivals and other occasions, including reflective midweek services in Lent. Every Thursday morning there is a short prayer service which is led by different lay people as well as the minister. For the children and young people there is Junior Church on Sundays and Baby Church for 0-3 years on the last Sunday of the month.



set up a number of societies. At first they were based at Smith House near Halifax, but in 1743 the settlement was started and was originally named "Lamb's Hill". The foundation stone of the present church building was laid in 1746 and it was completed in 1748. Shortly afterwards the Choir Houses for the Single Sisters and the Single Brethren were built either side of the church. The settlement was virtually self-sufficient, with its own blacksmith, bakery, shop, tailor, shoemaker and doctors. The sisters worked as spinners and later embroiders. The brethren wove and dyed cloth.

The history of Fulneck is recorded in the church archives, which are extensive and well used, and in Fulneck Museum. The museum opens on Wednesday and Saturday afternoons between Easter and the end of October, and relies on volunteers and donations. Afternoon Teas are served on Wednesdays when the Museum is open. Historical tours can be arranged for groups, and the settlement also takes part in the annual Heritage Open Days on the second Saturday in September.

Today the church is still at the heart of life in Fulneck. As well as



The MWA meet monthly in members' homes, and the History Group and Ladies' Social Group meet every couple of months. Fulneck Dramatic Society put on three productions a year. Social Events are organised regularly, and most take place in the old Boys' Brigade HQ. During Lent there are lunches which raise money or charity. The Youth Group is run jointly with the Gomersal congregation and meets monthly on a Sunday evening at one of the two churches.

Music is a big part of life in Fulneck. The organ was installed by the great Johann Snetzler in 1748, and was rebuilt by J.J. Binns in 1930. There are Organ Recitals by Dr Simon Lindley on the first Thursday of the month, and on the August Bank Holiday weekend there is a Baroque Music Festival including a concert by St Peter's Singers. Last year there was a performance of The Messiah at the beginning of Advent which will be

repeated this year. The Yorkshire District Choir, known as the Moravian Singers, rehearse at Fulneck on Thursdays from September until Christmas.

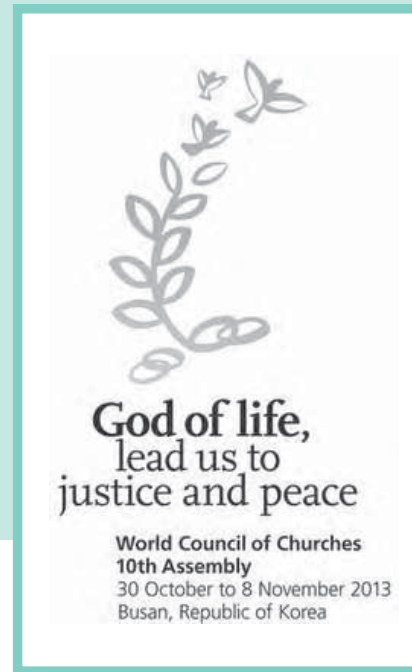
The Boys' School began in 1753 and the Girls' School in 1755. These were established to care for the children of church labourers who moved around congregations or went overseas. Fulneck School today is co-educational with day pupils and boarders. During term time the boarders attend church every other week, with the minister helping to lead an assembly for them on the other Sundays. In Advent and Lent the congregation run activities in church at lunchtime for the Senior School pupils, while the Junior School has a weekly chaplaincy group run by one of the congregation members. The minister also leads assemblies in both the Senior and Junior schools and is involved in school services.



The Fulneck congregation appreciate their heritage and make the most of it to draw people into the settlement and the community. We are seeking to live out the prayer set for Mondays in the Daily Watchwords: "May we conserve what is good in the past and reach boldly to the future. May our light so shine that your glory is seen."

For more information about Fulneck check out our website: www.fulneck.org.uk

Br Michael Newman



World Council of Churches 10th Assembly

Brother David Howarth writes about this forthcoming international meeting

Between 30th October and 8th November this year, the World Council of Churches will be holding its 10th Assembly, in Busan, South Korea, under the working title of 'God of Life, lead us to Justice and Peace'.

As its website states, 'The theme of this Assembly was inspired by the diversity of Asian contexts and by a growing sense of urgency to care for life and seek justice. It is both a prayer and statement of faith, calling Christians to engage with God's vision of justice and peace, so that all may have life in fullness.'

The logo for the Assembly places the theme into a Biblical context and is an artistic interpretation of Isaiah 42: 1-4, 'Here is my servant whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations. He will not cry or lift his voice, or make it heard in the street; a bruised reed he will not break, and a dimly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice. He will not grow faint or be crushed until he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands wait for his teaching.' (NRSV)

Alongside the prayer, reflections, Bible study and sharing of personal experiences, the Assembly also acts as the highest governing body of the World Council of Churches (WCC), of which we are a member. The Assembly meets every seven years, as does our own Unity Synod, and our Province and the European Continental Province share representation. On this occasion it is our privilege, joy and responsibility.

The WCC is a massive organisation and the Assembly has the responsibility to review its activity, make public statements and determine the policies adopted. Other tasks include the election of presidents and a Central Committee. The Central Committee acts in much the same way as our Provincial Board, overseeing and managing the WCC between Assemblies.

At a recent briefing meeting, delegates and advisors were informed that, although there will only be approximately 875 voting delegates, the current estimate of all those attending stands at over 8,000 people. Many of these are advisers, representatives from partner organisations and those who are contributing to the running and worship life of the Assembly. All in all, this makes the Assembly a very diverse gathering, and gives those attending the wonderful opportunity to aid the Church that send them to reaffirm its commitment to further deepening visible unity and common witness. As the Assembly website states, 'Sharing from the diverse spiritual experiences of churches around the world is a powerful expression of unity shared in Christ.'

Please remember the work of the Assembly in your prayers, not only during the days the Assembly meets, but also in the days and months leading up to it and the work in the future that will be inspired by its meeting.

Further information can be obtained on the Assembly website: www.wcc2013.info.

Choosing to Die

Open Book

JAMES

On the day I am writing this the Court of Appeal has upheld a ruling that two chronically ill men did not have the right to ask doctors to end their lives. The judge said that it is up to Parliament to address the laws on life and death issues and the courts to apply the law. It seems inevitable that such cases will continue to occur.

Life is a gift from God and all human beings are valued individuals. Because of these beliefs it is often assumed that Christians are against an individual being able to choose to die. But is this necessarily the case?

I recently read a book by John Shelby Spong called 'Eternal Life: A New Vision' (Harper Collins 2009). Spong was the Bishop of Newark in America before his retirement in 2000. In all his books Spong challenges Christians to take a fresh look at our faith in the light of contemporary knowledge, and as someone with a scientific background I find them very interesting. He writes this particular book aware that he is approaching the end of his life and asks questions about what happens next. The epilogue to the book is entitled, "Defining the choice to die."

Spong begins by stating that "one of humanity's most enduring characteristics is the tendency to run from, deny and ignore death, and even to pretend that death is not inevitable." Earlier in the book he looks at how the emergence of self-consciousness in early human beings was a significant event in our evolution and how religion originated as a response to feelings of isolation and mortality. He goes on to show how religion has evolved into something new as we rediscover our connectedness and share in the eternal life of God, and how this new relationship is particularly represented by the Jesus of John's Gospel.

Throughout the time that humans have been living on the earth, far more people have died from disease or war than through old age. In the Bible the story of Adam and Eve suggests that death was punishment for them eating the forbidden fruit, and Paul argues in his first letter to the Corinthians that death is the last enemy that has been defeated by Christ. To our ancestors the idea that anyone might choose to end their life was unthinkable.

In recent years the boundaries of death have been moved

significantly. Old age is now viewed as another stage of life, which can be studied and prepared for. Death looks very different when it comes not in the prime of life but as the quality of life slowly declines. When is the prime of life? Physically it may be in the twenties, intellectually it is much later, but most of us will live far beyond these peaks.

The ageing process is inevitable, but many of the symptoms of ageing can be managed thanks to medical advances. What happens when medical science crosses the boundary between expanding life and simply postponing death? Expanding life should be celebrated, but postponing death raises questions. Spong argues that "human life becomes whole and free when we transcend the drive to survive and discover that we can lay life down gracefully and give it away freely." Choosing to embrace death, rather than prolong a pale replica of what life was intended to be, is a decision that honours life. There is a big difference between suicide which expresses abandonment of hope, and the kind which is based on the judgement that it is time to relinquish ourselves back to God.

Spong makes a strong case for individuals being able to choose when the time has come for them to die. He acknowledges the practical problems around making that choice, but I agree with him in principal when he says, "I do not think that we should refrain from making laws... because of potential abuse that might occur. We should rather seek to minimise the opportunity for abuse." (It should be noted that in all discussions about changing the law to permit physician assisted suicide it has been clear that decisions must be made by the individual, and that doctors are not obliged to carry out their wishes.)

The epilogue of 'Eternal Life' ends with a paragraph which includes the following quote: "If in life we have touched the transcendent and the eternal, and have shared through self-consciousness with the life, love and being that flows through the universe, then I believe that we can find the courage to lay this phase of that journey down when it is appropriate to do so and to enter what is to come."

Br Michael Newman

The letter of James is one of seven letters in the New Testament that were written to Christians generally instead of being addressed to the church in a particular place. It is not known who this James was, but there is a tradition that he was the brother of Jesus. The list of brothers is mentioned in Matthew chapter thirteen, verse 55.

James doesn't describe himself in that way, nor does he claim to be an apostle, two of whom were called James. (Matthew 10, verses 2 and 3). He introduces himself as 'a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.'

It is also worth noting that the term 'brother' need not mean a literal brother in Hebrew and could also be applied to a nephew. (See Genesis 14, 12 - 14 where Lot is described as Abram's nephew and then as Abram's brother in the Authorised Version, or 'relative' in some modern translations).

The writer of this letter was probably the James who is mentioned in Acts 12, verse 17, the leader of the church in Jerusalem. He is mentioned again in Acts 21 verse 18, and also in other New Testament books. He was known as James the Just and regarded as a very good man who spent so much time in prayer that his knees resembled those of a camel.

The Jewish historian, Josephus, records that the Sanhedrin commanded James, 'the brother of Jesus who was called Christ' to announce from the temple that Jesus was not the Messiah. Instead, James cried out that Jesus is the Son of God and judge of the world, whereupon he was stoned to death while he asked God to forgive them 'for they know not what they do'.

The letter of James was described by Martin Luther in the 16th century as an epistle of straw because it gave the impression that one could earn salvation by good works instead of by faith. Paul, in his letter to the Romans and also to the Galatians uses the words, 'The just (or the righteous) shall live by faith,' a quotation from the prophet Habakkuk in the Old Testament. The letter of James doesn't deny the need for faith but emphasises that there must be good works in

addition to faith. It is also possible that James was not familiar with Paul's letters and that he may have been writing, quite independently, very early in the church's history.

There are also those who claim that this letter was written at a later date because it was not included in the recognised books of the New Testament until the fourth century in the Latin Church and the sixth century

"Every species of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed, and has been tamed by the human species, but no one can tame the tongue."

in the Syrian Church. The earliest mention of this letter is in the Greek Church in the third century, but its acceptance as scripture was not until the fourth century. The name of Jesus is mentioned only twice, at the beginning of chapters one and two, and the coming of the Lord is mentioned in the last chapter. There is no mention of the resurrection and apart from the above references to Jesus, there is nothing in this letter that would be unacceptable to a Jew.

It is clear that the writer was very familiar with the Old Testament, and the reference in chapter one, verse 17, to good gifts coming down from the Father of Lights, is thought to be a quotation from Greek literature.

Chapter one begins by stating that it is written to the twelve scattered tribes. This may mean all Jews who lived outside of Palestine and who had become Christians or it may mean what Paul, in some of his letters, described as 'the true Israel' or 'the Israel of God', that is, Christians who couldn't necessarily trace their descent from Abraham but who, like Abraham, had possessed the faith to entrust

their future to God, but this time, through faith in Jesus Christ. Today James would probably address his letter to the church throughout the world, encouraging his readers to rejoice in times of affliction or persecution because trials produce steadfastness which in time leads to perfection and completeness. James's definition of pure religion in the last verse of chapter one is worth comparing with the words of Jesus in Matthew chapter twenty-five, verses 31 to 46.

Chapter two deals with a perennial problem that exists, not only in the church, but in societies of various kinds, and that is the tendency to discriminate between the wealthy and those not so well off financially. In the early church, the members had all things in common, (Acts 2, 44 - 45) but as time went on, wealthy people also became members and something of a class struggle developed. It is this which James addresses and it is followed by the faith and works issue which Luther found so distasteful.

A careful reading of the chapter will show that there is no real contradiction of Paul's teaching in his epistle to the Romans. Chapter three deals with the damage that can be done by saying the wrong thing at the wrong time and James stresses the need to control what is said. "Every species of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed, and has been tamed by the human species, but no one can tame the tongue."

The chapter ends with a definition of wisdom which is from above and which is pure, peaceable, gentle, impartial and full of mercy. The closing chapters deal with some of the issues raised previously but emphasise the need for prayer, particularly when dealing with those who are ill. The book ends with the words, "Whoever brings back a sinner from wandering, will save the sinner's soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins."

All quotations are from the New R.S.V.

Br. Peter Gubi

Prayer for peace

Recently, the following was prayed at Sunday worship across the denominations in Belfast. The people of God united their voices in prayer for peace.

God of love, whose love streams unceasingly and relentlessly to all, we cry to you for our city.

We pray for peace on our streets, for economic well-being, for understanding across our differences.

Build us as one community, though diverse, that being reconciled to you we might be reconciled to one another.

Lord, turn our hearts to you that your glory might dwell in this city.

We pray this in the name of Jesus who is Lord of all. Amen.

Fellowship Day 2013

Sat
5th
Oct

The Provincial Fellowship Day this year will take place on the 5th October at Carrs Lane Church Centre Birmingham B4 7SX.

The cost is £5 payable on the day.

We have engaged a guest speaker Rev. Eva McIntire from the Green Blade Theatre.

Eva will be presenting 'Mind your Head'. This presentation is being taken all over the country, see Green Blade Theatre and you will see our booking. From reports received it is very thought provoking and entertaining.

The day will start at 10am with Registration, tea and coffee and end at 4pm. Please bring your own lunch. Drinks will be provided.

Contact: paul.greenhough@moravian.org.uk

Please make sure you book your place!

Telling the truth about Poverty update

A reply has been received by the Churches in response to the Letter to the Prime Minister regarding concerns on how people in receipt of State benefits are portrayed by politicians and the media.

The churches intend a joint response, which should be ready for the October Messenger.

On a related matter, the BBC Trust has upheld part of the complaint brought by Child Poverty Action Group and a further anonymous individual complainant on the programme *The Future of the Welfare State* with John Humphreys, ruling that the programme broke rules on accuracy and impartiality.

See full details through this link:

<http://www.cpag.org.uk/content/bbc-programme-welfare-reform-broke-rules>



Ockbrook

We were lucky with the weather for our Garden Party. The Saturdays before and after were cold and wet but we had a warm sunny day and the crowds came out to enjoy the various stalls and competitions and of course, food! Opened by our minister, David Howarth, we raised a good sum for our needs.

The Well Dressing always attracts people and, although this a community project, we are privileged to have it installed in our grounds where there are wells. The children did their own Well Dressing, and money thrown into the wells was donated to Christian Aid and to things needed in Sunday School.

We had a Street Party to celebrate the anniversary of the Queen's Coronation. This was well supported by friends and members with simple but healthy food which would have been served in 1953.

We have had many activities - usually involving food, all good fun but disastrous for the waistline. We enjoyed a BBQ on a warm sunny evening (more food) and our Sisters' Festival followed by a buffet lunch (!) with the speaker telling us about her work as a hospital chaplain.

We hosted a United Christian Aid service with a hunger lunch afterwards and many of us delivered and collected Christian Aid envelopes, although sadly these are not always so well received these days. We supported a Christian Aid Coffee morning in the local Methodist church. We played our part in the Unity Prayer Watch.

The Settlement Singers held a concert in church (with refreshments!) to raise money for Treetops Hospice and we took part in the Women's World Day of Prayer. We enjoyed the Mothering Sunday service when the youngsters presented us with daffodils.

The MWA held its AGM and the Women's Fellowship had their annual outing which included Fish and Chips (food again).

We are planning Heritage Weekend for September 14th and 15th and hoping for lots of visitors.

We keep busy in Ockbrook but we enjoy ourselves!

Marie Rose

Congregation News

Lower Wyke

2013 has again been a busy year. The services and social events battled through the long winter and the beauty of Lower Wyke rose to greater heights when covered in a blanket of snow, as it was on many occasions.

The Women's World Day of Prayer service this year took place at Lower Wyke, and was particularly appealing. It was put together by our French Christian sisters and it was wonderful to hear during our trip to Albania how much the financial support received from this organisation was appreciated by our Albanian sisters.

In May our annual Spring Festival and Art Exhibition welcomed visitors young and old. The Wayfarers, a singing duo, were especially welcome the following weekend as they entertained us with '60's music during a three-course meal that was served to 80 people. In June we once more enjoyed the music of Clifton and Lightcliffe Band at our Proms in the Paddock - we were outside and it did stay dry! The congregation trip to Scarborough this year had the added bonus of a fantastic half-an-hour display by the Red Arrows, as part of Armed Forces Day - how lucky was that?

The Strawberry Fair proved to be the start of a wonderful period of summer weather and the Hog Roast event too basked in the sun and was extremely successful.

We were delighted to welcome James and Annette Woolford in July and hope that their time of service with the Wellhouse and Lower Wyke will be happy and fruitful.

Royton

Looking back over the last two years, we have been saddened by the deaths of six dear members, Srs. Madge Shaw and Joan Higgins and Brn. Derek Geary, Kenneth Potts and Kenneth Hufton. But we have been gladdened to welcome by Baptism three new babies and also to hold in church two lovely and happy weddings.

We feel very much a part of the church community in Royton. We are part of "The Churches Together in Royton" and we have a close relationship with the nearby Methodist church. Our Christmas Fair was a busy and successful event. Even though there were other events held in the area, we raised £1,331 42p.

For many years now the M.W.A. have held a Market Stall to raise money. However, as no one is getting any younger we all agreed that perhaps in the future we should seek a less strenuous way of raising funds! This led to reminiscing and looking back through our records. Since our first in 1986, we have held 52 Market Stalls, raising a grand total of £9,874.26, all raised for M.W.A. projects and charity.

The Sunday School children organised a home-made

Their District Welcome Service was very well attended as was the buffet lunch served to Lower Wyke members, after the Café Church on 21 July.

The Yorkshire District's ordained ministers will continue to conduct Communion services and Sr Kathryn will officiate at several of these - keeping it in the family!

We are back into full swing in September with the resumption of weekly meetings, the MWA Service and Sunday School Prize Giving. All are welcome to the Safari Supper on Sat 14 September - please buy a ticket first.

Soon we will be thinking about harvesting the crops and thanking God for another year of fruitful work in this place. Long may it continue!

Diane Thornton

Heritage Open Days

Once again the congregation at Lower Wyke will be opening its doors to welcome visitors to have a look round the church, search through records and see the displays of photographs on the life and work of the congregation over the years. This national event is taking place over the first weekend in September and the Church in Lower Wyke will be open on Saturday 7th. September from 10am to 4pm and on Sunday 8th. September from 1pm to 4pm.

Peter Walker

cake stall in aid of Christian Aid, and this raised £150 which will buy 30 mosquito nets. We have also been collecting for the "Foodbank" in Oldham, a very worthwhile and much needed charity.

Through the help of donations and a very welcome legacy, we have been able to purchase new hymn and liturgy books and a Multi-Media System. This is, of course, a good asset to our Services.

Br. Cooper has been taking a group, studying "The Essential 100". This is a journey through the Bible from Genesis to Revelations in 100 readings. The group meet approximately once a month, and have found this to be an interesting and learning journey.

Sunday 9th June was Br. James Woolford's last Service. In the time that James has been with us we have grown very fond of him and we are grateful for all that he has contributed to the congregation at Royton. To him and Annette every good wish for their future life Yorkshire

Annie Geary

CONGREGATIONAL REGISTERS

DEATHS

13 April Sr. Joan Higgins Royton

Dates to Remember

8

Sept

Racial Justice
Sunday

FROM CHURCH HOUSE

Provincial Diary for September

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

1st September [Trinity 14] - Luke 14:1,7-14

Carpenter's Son, who left the glory of heaven to live a life of humility and obscurity here on earth, teaching that the greatest is the servant of all. Grant that we may not only follow your teaching but also your footsteps, seeking the lowest place, remembering that those who exalt themselves will be humbled and those who humble themselves will be exalted. Give us that blessing reserved for those who serve the outcast and marginalised, looking for no reward till resurrection day, content to take the lowest place until it please you to call us higher. Amen

8th September [Trinity 15] - Luke 14:25-33

Wisdom of God, whom to know is life eternal, grant that counting the cost of our discipleship, we put you first, before the closest of our loved ones and before our very own lives. We are called not only to believe but also to suffer with you; help us bear our own cross after you, able to complete what we began, willing to renounce all that we have in order to be your disciples. May we not cling to earthly things, but love the heavenly so that whilst we are placed among things that are passing away we might hold fast to those that last forever. Amen

15th September [Trinity 16] - Luke 15:1-10

Friend of tax collectors and sinners, we give thanks that there is joy in heaven over each sinner who repents, when the lost is found and the wayward brought home. We confess that we too, like sheep have gone astray, each having turned to their own way. Deal with us not as we deserve but open to us the arms of your compassion so that what we have lost by our offences we might recover through your kindness. Grant that we may walk from now on in your way, not presuming upon your mercy, but living always as those who have been forgiven much, considering how we have fallen in times past and might still fall again. Amen

22nd September [Trinity 17] - Luke 16:1-13

Lord of Lords, who taught that no servant can serve two masters, we confess that there are times when the problems of the day seem to us more solid and real than the words of your promises.

Strengthen our wills that we may pass beyond intention to action. Calm for us the worries that we cannot still. Take us, and do for us what we cannot do and make us what by ourselves we cannot be: sons and daughters of light; inheritors of eternal dwellings; faithful in all things, little or much; servants only of the Lord, in whose name we pray. Amen

29th September [Trinity 18] - Luke 16:19-31

Son of God, who overturned the tables of the money changers and drove from the temple those who were preoccupied with making money; keep us from being obsessed with material things; to be good stewards of what you place into our hands so that neither affluence nor hardship may hinder our discipleship. As we remember the Rich Man and Lazarus, help us to understand the purpose and place of money in our lives; to see the danger of loving it and the need to make it our servant and never our master, that neither poverty nor wealth may prevent us inheriting your kingdom. Amen.

Richard Ingham

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