



Christmas and New Year

There is something appealing about Christmas that attracts people of many different faiths, and in “Christian” countries like ours we find that Christmas is enjoyed by Sikhs, Moslems, Hindus, Jews, Buddhists and people of no faith at all. This is perhaps because it is a time of public holidays and our friends keeping other faiths enjoy the holiday but do not observe it as a time of welcome to the Christ child.

To visit a supermarket in the weeks leading up to Christmas is an eye-opening experience. There does not seem to be any shortage of money as people appear to be buying as if for a siege, and it is not just the Christians. One wonders how much of the perishable food will actually be eaten?

Now I like my food and enjoy special meals and occasions and I do not call myself a congenital misery guts but how can so many people have got it wrong. For example just see this advertisement which says “discover the wonderful city of xxx - dressed in its Yuletide finery, enjoy the atmosphere of Christmas, as well as wonderful evenings full of fun and entertainment”. How I wish to shout out loud that there would be no Christmas at all if the Christ child had not been born. There may be learned arguments about the time of his birth and there may be questions about the veracity of the birth stories but without Him the holiday is just X-mas.

For Christian people Christmas is a very special time and I believe that there is change in the atmosphere which seems to happen every year with the softening of hearts and the promptings to forgive and forget past wrongs (as our Liturgy says). The pace of life slows a little and there is a more relaxed feeling abroad. We do our best to remember and help those for whom the joys of this Christmas season will be shadowed and take pleasure in the happiness of little children. Would that this spirit might continue into the New Year.

May I wish you all a truly blessed Christmas and a very happy New Year.

John McOwat Ep. Fra.



Moravian star in the church at Königsfeld
in the Black Forest

Who invented the Moravian Star?

See inside on page 138

The darkest midnight in December

Some years ago, I worked briefly in part of southern England where local people were up in arms over a suggestion that the old naval college be made into accommodation for refugees. In vain local Christians pointed that they would be far less rowdy at weekends than the previous occupants. Householders with their children marched with placards, chanting: "No room at the inn".

Perhaps the parents heard the phrase at a school nativity play - they didn't know the context, and thought it justified rather than condemned them. The saddest sound was the children joining in.

There are many ways to experience Christmas. We know the story better than those who casually misuse it. We also know that this year again, there will be people who are not wanted - those penalised by benefit cuts, those who are sick, children in poverty, people far from home. Food banks and homeless shelters will be stretched still further; and our concern will be tested as we try to keep up with our commitments to overseas work as well. Jesus, our model, was born into a family of skilled tradespeople, but the couple were far from home and

the larger support network did not work when their need was urgent. Perhaps they were condemned for not having planned or kept down the day-job. Perhaps they were told to go back where they came from.

The recession has bitten deep where I have been living. But the Christmas tradition still followed in rural Ireland is to leave a lighted candle in the window and the door on the latch to guide the couple and their Child to shelter should, they, or any other, need it that night. It is a reminder that God entered creation on the edge of society, to become like us. As we are God's people planned before time began, to be joyful and fulfilled in the presence of the Creator.

Christmas, since the incident with the old naval base, has been for me a reminder that this is a time when followers of Christ can set expected wisdom on its head, raise their voices and say "Welcome, there is room. Come in and share our meal". My own experience is that Christmas shared with strangers is far more fun as well.

Thank you for all the comments I've received in this new role. **Happy Christmas.**

'Telling the Truth about Poverty' update

The following comes from a press release concerning a follow-up letter sent to the government, and signed by Br Hopcroft on behalf of the Moravian Church

Nine senior representatives from Churches and Christian organisations have written to Lord Freud [Minister for Welfare Reform] after he failed to affirm that steps would be taken in order to ensure that the poor would no longer be misrepresented by the government.

"We do not wish to live in a society where personal responsibility is demanded of the vulnerable but is not required of those who exercise power," their letter states. "All people are valued creations of God who deserve to be treated with dignity and respect. An essential component of this is to be spoken of truthfully, including benefit claimants."

The Church leaders' letter dated 6 June expressed concern over government ministers making demonstrably untrue statements stigmatising the most vulnerable in society. However, Lord Freud's reply "neither attempts to answer nor even mentions any of the points raised" in their letter. Church leaders criticised this neglect as "both surprising and disappointing".

April saw some of the most controversial and wide ranging changes to the benefit system in a generation. In March, the Baptist Union of Great Britain; the Church of Scotland; the Methodist Church in Britain and the United Reformed Church launched a report - *The lies we tell ourselves: ending comfortable myths about poverty* - confronting the most common myths told about people who are in poverty or in receipt of benefits as well as highlighting some of the most abused statistics.



Moravian Summer Camp 2014

26:07:14 - 02:08:14
Fulneck School, Pudsey, Yorkshire
Cost £260
(£30 discount for early booking)
Ages 10-17
More details and forms available January 2014



Kilwarlin reaching out

Kilwarlin has always had a small congregation in a rural setting, however that has never held us back, and our youth work is no exception. We have a small but dedicated bunch of young people who want to come together to have a lot of fun and fellowship. Our new Sunday School has been renamed 'KMC Youth Café' and each Sunday where we meet for about an hour to learn, catch up, have some cake and coffee/hot chocolate! From September to January we are studying 'the Kingdom' and getting ready for our Christingle service.

Each week we have between 4 and 8 young people, along with two new young leaders, Stuart & Katie Walker, who have brought a lot of energy and ideas to our new Café. We have a lot of plans for the next year, including several trips

out and about in the area, providing the opportunity to spend time together. Over the Halloween half term we went ice skating at Dundonald Ice Bowl, and invited young people from other Churches in the district. Along with three leaders, we had 21 people on the ice, and had a fantastic day! It is hoped that we will be able to invite the district to our other events, strengthening friendships throughout our congregations. Please keep KMC Youth Cafe in your prayers as we continue to meet each week, no matter how small we may be!

Roberta Hoey

Young People's Missionary Association

The following are the congregations and those who contributed to YPMA in 2012. For individual awards see YPMA page on web site www.moravian.org.uk

Total collected in 2012
£9025.10

Gracehill £2676.10

Katy Bell, Robbie Bamber, Aaron Carlisle, Jamie Armstrong, Cameron Harper, Craig Simpson, Owen Johnston, Jessica McCullagh, Katie McCullagh, Emma Thompson, Vicky Greer, Amy Barr, Harry McClintock, Ruby McClintock, Erin Barr, Clara Dunlop, Emma Erwin, Josh Erwin, Anna Wray, Ellie Butler, Jake Butler, Adam McCahon, James Martin, Ella Dunlop, Ashley Johnston, Joshua Barr, Clara Simpson, Beth Andrews, Alice Frazer, Harry Frazer, Ben Hoffin, Alex Hoffin, Peter Hoffin, Mark Johnston, Lee O'Connell, Lyndsey Simpson, Adam Mcpeak, Josh Mcpeak, John Heggarty, Anna McClintock, Jessica McCahon, Paul Heggarty, Zach Barr, Johnny Booth, Hanna Boyd, Matthew Boyd, Danielle Douglas, Lucy Douglas, Ella Henry, Jemma Tranter, Gary Tranter, Lara Tranter, Holly Tranter, Kristian Tranter, Samantha Hamill, Hunter McCormick, Grace McCandless.

Bath Weston £782

Lilie Burchill, Freya Burchill, Michael Tugwell, Gemma Tugwell.

Projects supported

An Electric Generator for the school at Matho Ladakh
Contribution to Scholarship Fund Leh school Ladakh
Contribution to Scholarship Fund Shey school Ladakh
Contribution to Scholarship Fund Khalaste school Ladakh

Wellhouse £100.50

Fulneck £135.55

Royton £296

Leah Osborne, Ella Wilson, Cameron Farrar, Joshua Cooper, Aeryn Corr, Thomas Backhouse.

Lower Wyke £1800.40

An all time record. Congratulations!

Adam J Slater, Leon Enright, Louis Enright, Grenville Greenwood, Derek & Silvia Mark, Amy Grace Hardisty, Julia Wood, Clair Drake, Kathrine Ward, John Greenwood, Claire Greenwood, Libby N Cooper, Lucy Horner, Julia Seymour, Ethan cElvy, Rachel Monds, Bethany Cooper, Jade E Shackleton, Georgina F Cooper, Annabell Thornton, Lucy Thornton, Ami L Dixon, Amelia Clough, Amy Kara Little, Heather Little, Mathew Little, Molly Clough.

Belfast University Road £885

Ryley Finlay, Evie Mickle, Amy Johnston, Jack Goodall, Ruth Biggart, Darcey James, Naomi Mcveigh, Olivia James.

Fairfield £20

Jack Butler

Gomersal £617.60

An all time record. Congratulations!

Angela Horsfall, Bethany Anthony, Lucy Anthony, Lauren Hare, Ben Shorten, George Rivers, Georgina Wright, Francesca Wright, Amy Rivers, Jodie Walker, Rebecca Barber.

Dukinfield £140

Kerry Clark, Maurice Barber, Archie Barber

Cliftonville £802.16

Leah Davis, Abbie Burnett, Scott Gill, Demi Walker, Aislin Trueick, Leah Lamont, Nathan Brown, Jenson Brown, Dean Brown, Aaron Ferguson, Holly Ferguson, Stewart Boreland, Holly Ferguson, Clara Lamont, Abby Lamont.

Swindon £500

Emma Mundy, Nicholas Webb, David Williams, Alice Webb, Samuel Mundy.

Hornsey £250

Contribution to the Elim home for handicapped children Cape Town South Africa.

Text Books for the Lusangi Moravian Junior Seminary at Sikonge.

Contribution to a new Dormitory at the Bishop Kisanji Girls Secondary School Tanzania.

Paul Greenhough

Hymns and poems for Christmas

The Donkey's Tale

I carried her with care and spared
her many jolts on that long ride
until we reached a warm dry place
where she could rest. I eased my side

and slept but waking to a cry
that might have been of birth or death,
I saw we'd been in time: her child
just born, was drawing his first breath.

Much later when the fuss had waned,
the skies were once again on track
and foreign kings had each gone home,
I knew then that another back -

blood of my blood - with frantic palms
would carry him at his urgent lead
but who's to say which one of us
had served the time of greater need?

Margaret Connors

HEAVEN CALLING EARTH

"Glory be to God in heaven!"
Hear the call the angels sing;
We, in Advent preparation,
Wait to greet our Saviour-King,
Worshipping in adoration
God who wrought this wondrous thing!

Hear the word of peace to cheer us,
Peace that comes to heal our strife;
See Emmanuel, God come near us:
Word of Hope and Joy and Light;
Love Divine thus laid before us:
Christ the Way, the Truth, the Life.

"Gloria in excelsis Deo!"
Let the bells of earth now ring
praises to our heavenly Father
for the news the angels bring:
With the angelic anthem glorious
"Come in, Earth: Rejoice and sing!"

Music: "St Helen" (GC Martin)
Words: Paul Gubi, 2013

OUTBURST OF PRAISE

Praise the Lord, all people!
Praise His goodness, show His love:
God the ever merciful,
Who will all our sins remove.[]
Bow in awe before Him
Whose grace is all-sufficient;
Know that God is near you:
We're His people; He's our King!
Lift the song of love
for all the world to sing:

"Gloria in excelsis,
in excelsis Deo!"
Glorious heavenly echo -
Angel chorus here below!
Hail the Lord of heaven and earth,
and give to God all glory!
Father, Holy Spirit, Son,
One in Three and Three in One:
Endless be the praise
we raise in love to You.

Music: 'Love changes everything' (A Lloyd-Webber)
Words: Paul Gubi, 2000

Will the judgement of the poor keep us from the stable door,
Hopeless and condemned outside, clutching tattered rags of pride,
Seated, in the bitter cold, on our freezing stacks of gold,
Stranded in the howling rain, till we pass some test of pain,
Set by the avenging plain?

Let the vigil, then begin. Face the consequence of sin,
Ponder who may be within.

Business women, lads in suits, blasted shepherd boy recruits,
Dazed fanatics, staring round at the company they've found,
Chechens, Uighurs, resting there, from a journey through despair,
Forest People, small and shy (they have seen Creation die),
With forsaken Christians stand - victims of some wrathful land,
And, abruptly freed from hate, mobsters off a Sink Estate,
Gathered at the Angels' call, rapt in peace and wonder, all
Watch the baby in the Stall.

Now the rain has turned to snow. Should we just get up and go?
True, we also saw the star...Each of us has travelled far...
We can love him where we are.

Godfrey Meynell is
an Anglican who
lives in Derbyshire.

Mystic Circle

The agony that tears the womb
is magnified three decades on
in the dark prelude to the tomb

yet with the tokens of rebirth
implicit while the twisted flesh
lies cradled in the rocky earth.

So birth and death, our joy and pain,
are seen within the wider view
to form a self-renewing chain.

Now that this Eastern Star has lit
the beacon of our Easter hope
those missing links begin to fit.

till kneeling at an infant's feet
we greet the risen one again
And find the mystery complete.

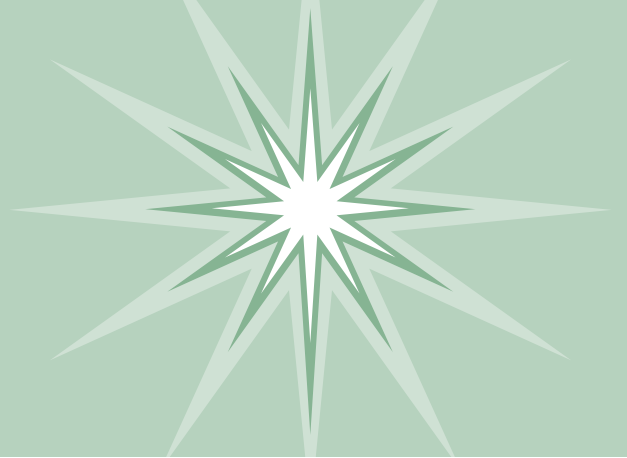
Margaret Connors

So what is the roar like a rumble of thunder?
and who are these travellers a-tremble with wonder?
old blinkers are blown from men's eyes without warning,
the bad dreams of earth are dispelled in the morning,
the bankers and Business Advisers are staring,
to see competition make room for some sharing,
spin, torture and Growth Economics redundant,
wolves, elephants, earth-worms and songbirds abundant.
The floods are receding from island and isthmus
our children can hope to toboggan at Christmas,
the world is alive, and once more people know it,
the mad millionaire turned as sane as a poet.
Flat-earthers and Dawkinsites felled with a feather,
the priest and the physicist gobsmacked together-
for that's where religion and science are heading,
the King is expected at Robin Hood's wedding.

Dear Child, in the perilous peace of your stable,
we want to choose Life, but we're simply not able:
call down your great angels to shake us and shiver us,
Enter our dungeons of dread and deliver us.

Godfrey Meynell

Who invented the Moravian Star?



Every year, thousands of Moravian stars decorate homes and churches during the Advent season. Although the star has become one of the most recognisable symbols of the Moravian Church, the name of the maker of the first star was not known until recently. The biggest surprise, however, may be that this discovery was not made in the archives in Herrnhut, Germany, but in the Moravian Archives in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, in the United States.

Moravian stars were traditionally made in Moravian boarding schools during the Advent season. From the schools they spread into Moravian homes and later into the churches as well. Because of the connection with the boarding schools, historians assumed that the making of stars was connected to maths lessons where students learned to draw and make geometrical shapes.

"It has been known for many years that the earliest star we know of was used as a decoration at the fiftieth anniversary of the Moravian boarding school for boys in Niesky, Germany, in January of 1821," says Bethlehem archivist Paul Peucker. The report of the anniversary mentions an illuminated, multi-coloured star of 110 points hung outside the school building. "What we did not know," continues Peucker, "was if this star was a new invention." This summer a discovery at the Bethlehem archives has brought to light new information on the origins of the Moravian star. "As one of our project staff was getting ready to organize the papers of Georg Friedrich Bahnson (1805-1869), I realized Bahnson was a student in Niesky at the time of the anniversary in 1821. I checked his diary and yes indeed, Bahnson mentioned the star in the diary he kept as a fifteen-year old boy." The diary noted on January 4, 1821: "In the courtyard the large star with 110 points from the Brethren's House was displayed."

Initially this looked like another reference to the earliest display of a multi-pointed star. Peucker: "At first it seemed to be a confirmation of something we already knew." However, a close reading of the short entry revealed new information. "Bahnson did not write 'a large star was displayed'; the use of the defined article 'the' suggested that the star was referring to something that was already

known to the author." So when Peucker went back through the diary he found another reference to the star a week earlier. On December 27, 1820, Bahnson describes how he and his fellow students went over to the Brethren's House: "In the afternoon we all drank and like yesterday, some of us went to see the star in the Brethren's House of 110 points, made by Madsen." This entry not only indicated the star was made as a Christmas decoration in the Niesky Brethren's House (and not specifically for the anniversary of the school), it also revealed the name of its maker!

Christian Madsen was born on May 25, 1800 in Herrnhut, Germany. When he was seventeen he took a job in the hardware shop in the nearby Moravian town of Niesky. As a single man he most likely lived in the Brethren's House. This is where he constructed his star of 110 points in December of 1820. When the Niesky boarding school celebrated its fiftieth anniversary the week after Christmas, it was decided to include Madsen's impressive creation in the festive decorations. Madsen returned to Herrnhut in 1834 where he married Ernestine Henriette Schreiber the next year. After his first wife died Madsen married Auguste Charlotte Bischoff in 1851. He was head of the tobacco factory in Herrnhut until 1879, the year of his death.

So was Madsen the inventor of the Moravian star? "For many years we have considered the 1820/21 star the earliest Moravian star we know of. Now we also know the name of its maker." It is possible new information will be uncovered at some point. Georg Bahnson, the writer of the diary, was called to America in 1829. He served as a minister in congregations in North Carolina (Bethania, Salem) and Pennsylvania (Bethlehem, Lancaster) and died in Salem in 1869.

Paul Peucker

Sources

Diary of Georg Bahnson, Bahnson Papers in Moravian Archives; D. Theile, Morning star, o cheering sight : the Moravian star and its history (2008).

This article first appeared in This Month in Moravian History.

Food security

Liz Dowler of the University of Warwick, the Food Ethics Council and the Iona Community, is a leading expert on food ethics and food poverty.

In the UK today, people face recessionary cuts in jobs, wages and welfare, together with food system challenges which are leading to rising food prices. These factors combine in a pincer movement to impoverish many households.

The Child Poverty Action Group and other campaigners show that the main cause of poverty is inadequate income, from worklessness, low wages, insecure jobs, and the low level of benefits. Government figures show that about 13 million people are in poverty (with nearly six million in deep poverty) and nearly two thirds of poor children are in households where one or more adults are in work. Nearly half a million people now rely on charitable food - food banks and food parcels - and the numbers are rising as benefit sanctions, errors and delays, caps, and the so-called 'bedroom tax' begin to bite, and jobs paying at least a Living Wage become scarcer. Indebtedness is growing, especially to payday lenders.

Income distribution is already highly skewed, and worsening - leading to a growing gap between rich and poor, and a rise in the number of people who are 'near-poor', at risk of falling into poverty when one more thing goes wrong.

Out-of-work benefits have long been inadequate to meet the basic costs of living, and this has got worse over the last three years. Austerity cuts in other areas aren't helping: the 2011 VAT increase was regressive - it has cost the average household with two children about £450 per year. Child benefit has been frozen, costing the average household another £400 over three years. Low-middle income households have lost their child tax credits, costing them £545 a year. Low-income households working less than 24 hours a week have lost their working tax credit, which was worth about £3,800 a year. These are just a few examples. Families with children are the worst off, and it's likely that the cuts are affecting women much more badly than men.

From 1998 to 2009, food prices rose by 33%, but average incomes of low-income households went up by much less (22%). Expenditure on food takes up 11.5% of average household income, but 16.1% for the lowest-earning fifth of households, and probably much more from those on the lowest incomes.

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation's 'Minimum Income Standard' research (MIS - www.minimumincome.org.uk) assesses the real cost of living through a consensual 'budget standard' methodology - a costed list of acceptable essentials. The costs for things which are key for poorer people (food, bus fares, council tax) are rising much faster than those on the 'Consumer Price Index' which is used by the government to uprate benefits or the National Minimum Wage. So these are increasingly inadequate to meet needs, especially food, however carefully people budget, shop and cook.

The results of all these changes are clear. According to 2010 research funded by Defra, two in five people were finding it much harder to afford the variety of foods they wanted to buy - especially those on low incomes. One in five said the cost of food was a serious source of stress. Three in five were cutting back on other things to buy food - heating, travel, clothes, holidays. All this was before the

current recession and punitive social security changes. We now know many people are struggling to put food on the table at all, and some take out payday loans just to pay supermarket bills.

Government reaction to this has so far been to individualise the problems and the solutions. Increasingly, responses fall on local food banks, which are either independent or set up by charities like the Trussell Trust; these give away food which would otherwise go to landfill, or which concerned fellow citizens buy and donate. Food banks were set up as for short-term emergencies, and try to signpost help, but they cannot keep pace with demand. The quantities of food are too small and too piecemeal to meet systematic need, and quality is sometimes variable. Sustaining the operation of such systems also takes considerable work, much by volunteers.

Institutionalising charitable food depoliticises the problem, and locates solutions at local levels, rather than tackling structural causes. It confirms the status of recipients as lower, needy and often disempowered, however grateful for the help and listening ear. There is a struggle to sustain patchy funding, logistical and volunteer skills, and to avoid filling gaps left by the state as it retreats from responsibilities.

The inadequacy of this response is highlighted in the recent report from Church Action on Poverty and Oxfam: *Walking the Breadline* <http://www.church-poverty.org.uk/foodfuelfinance/walkingthebreadline> or <http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/walking-the-breadline-the-scandal-of-food-poverty-in-21st-century-britain-292978>

We need voices from the ground, telling it 'like it is', to those with power to change things. Local churches can help here, setting up systematic monitoring of what is happening, and where.

We need people working in churches and local food initiatives to get involved with policy and advocacy where they can, as well as offering practical, ground-level response. If churches and others work together, they can share creative ideas and possibilities for action.

We need those who are receiving, or working as volunteers and partners in food banks and charitable food, to speak out about the reasons why they are having to act this way, to challenge government's avoidance of responsibility and leadership.

We need local churches and local governments to promote (and make sure they offer) the Living Wage (based on MIS) and proper work contracts.

Most of all we also need central government to take the issue seriously:

- **to set up urgent inquiry into the part benefit sanctions, delays, errors, capping and the 'bedroom tax' play in leaving people without money for food**
- **to set up proper monitoring of who is facing these problems, and being referred to food banks**
- **to roll out ways to meet people's needs, e.g. universal free school meals**

ZEPHANIAH

Zephaniah was probably born during the reign of the notoriously wicked king Manasseh. This may account for his name, which can mean, 'God is hiding'. It was a time of cruelty, idolatry and oppression when many devout people must have felt that God was indifferent to their plight. Zephaniah's prophecy appears to have taken place in Jerusalem since in verse 4 of chapter one, he identifies Jerusalem with 'this place'. When he began to prophesy, it was in the reign of Josiah, who is noted for his efforts to bring about a reformation in the religious and political life of his people. There is reason to believe that Zephaniah was of royal descent because in verse 1, his ancestry is traced back four generations to Hezekiah, possibly king Hezekiah of Judah; someone worth mentioning. Other prophets tended to mention only their father when introducing themselves. (See the first verse in chapter one of Joel, Hosea, and Ezekiel for examples.) If Zephaniah was indeed of royal blood, it is interesting to note that in verse 8 of chapter one, he condemns the king's sons. This doesn't necessarily refer to king Josiah's family and probably refers to members of the royal household, who were more likely to be indulging in idolatry, injustice and corruption. Josiah's sons would still be children at this time. To wear foreign clothing was regarded as treason against God. (Chapter one verse 8). Leaping over the threshold, mentioned in verse 9 was a superstitious practice similar to the custom of throwing salt over one's shoulder in these enlightened times.

Zephaniah lived at a time when his own people and the surrounding nations were under threat from the Scythian army which was advancing from the North and leaving destruction and desolation wherever it went. The prophet looked on this

as God's way of punishing the world, including his own people, for their unfaithfulness. He predicted what he called, 'the day of the Lord' and described it in verse 15 of chapter one as a day of wrath, a day of distress, a day of darkness and gloom. The book consists of only three chapters and can be divided into two sections of unequal length. The first section is from chapter one to chapter three verse 8 and consists of predictions of one disaster after another. The remainder of chapter three is on a more cheerful note as the messianic age is foretold without actually mentioning the Messiah. If the book, as we have it today, is all that there ever was, then Zephaniah must have prophesied in Jerusalem for only a short time before resuming his private life. The prophet Amos also prophesied for a limited time before returning to his former way of life as a shepherd.

Such teaching as there is in Zephaniah is centred round his

I will change their shame to honour and renown throughout the earth, and make you prosperous once more.

concept of the Day of the Lord. Everyone and everything, including the birds and the fishes, (Chapter 1 verse 3) will be affected and in chapter two, verse 8 to the end of the chapter, where all the nations are spelled out in detail. In chapter three, verse 8 it is stated that God's decision is to gather the nations and assemble kingdoms in order to pour out his indignation and anger and all the earth shall be destroyed. In chapter 1, verse 14, the Day of the Lord is described as being near and coming quickly. In the following verse it is described as

a day of wrath, distress, anguish, ruin, gloom, darkness and devastation. In verse 17 it is described as the punishment for sin.

Hope of a way of escape is held out in the opening verses of chapter two, for those who are humble in the land and who do what is righteous. This is continued in chapter three from verse 9 onwards, where those who survive will learn a pure speech and will be humble and lowly and shall be just in their dealings and truthful in what they say. Nor will the survivors be confined to the Hebrew people only, or Jerusalem be the only place where God is worshiped. The remnant in all the nations will be able to worship 'each in his own place.' (Chapter two, verse 11.)

In the first three verses of chapter three, there is an account of the conditions under which the people of Judah lived in Zephaniah's day. A fuller account can be found in 2 Kings, chapter twenty-three where the activities of king Manasseh are chronicled in greater detail. Injustice, corruption, luxury and extravagance existed among the wealthy while the poor were exploited as the result of the excesses of three kings in succession. The traditional worship of God had almost disappeared as the worship of Canaanite deities took its place. It was restored for a while during king Josiah's reign as a result of finding, apparently by accident, the long lost Book of the Law, while the temple was being repaired. (See 2 Kings, chapter twenty two). Zephaniah's book ends on a high note. 'I will save the lame and gather the exiles. I will change their shame to honour and renown throughout the earth, and make you prosperous once more.' The Lord has spoken.

Peter Gubi

Brother Bob Hopcroft continues the diary from his summer visit

India and Nepal diary



Boat ride to Latingkhal



The new Church building, Latingkhal



Members of the Latingkhal Congregation, Assam



The old Church, Binnakandi

Sunday July 14th Two hours back to steaming Delhi (in excess of 40 degrees) and a three hour wait for a 2 hour flight to Calcutta. I arrived in Calcutta at 23.00, due back in the morning at 03.00 for a flight to Silchar in Assam. So, just time for a few hours at the YWCA. Arrived at the "Y" just after midnight and booked a taxi for 2.30am. The fan moved ponderously as I tried to get some rest. Still 35 degrees as I arrive back at the airport to check in for Silchar in Assam. After a short flight over eastern India and Bangladesh I arrived in Silchar to be met by Br Amon Gengmei, the principal of the school and Br Kabui the pastor of the congregation. The good news is the new bridge has been opened, after a 10 year delay, which cuts at least 40 minutes off the time to Binnakandi. As the taxi bounces over potholes I am being told how much the road has improved since my last visit. Everything is relative I suppose! We arrive in Binnakandi in time for morning service, at which I am expected to preach.

Following a service, including Holy Communion, attended by more than 100 people in a very hot and humid church, I was given the opportunity to rest for the afternoon before meeting with representatives from the congregations in Assam. The wonderful news is that the work of the Moravian Church in Binnakandi is developing in the villages of Haflong and Latingkhal. A small group of Christians attached to the Moravian Church in Binnakandi have purchased a small plot of land and are busy raising funds and building a church in the village of Latingkhal. There are currently 5 families at the heart of the Church family and they have been inspired to tell others about Jesus Christ and are praying that the work will grow. The representatives from Haflong have requested financial support in the purchasing a similar plot of land in order for the Haflong congregation to replace their bamboo church building, which is subsiding down a hillside. The congregation members have been asked to identify a plot and establish the cost to see whether the Mission Board are able to assist. Following a meeting which lasted until 11.00pm we all retired to bed and during the night torrential monsoon rain poured down on the tin roof for hours.

Monday 15th Whilst I had had a disturbed night because of the downpour, Br Kabui hadn't even heard it rain! I set off with 3 brothers and 5 sisters to travel by boat to the village of Latingkhal. The River Barak was swollen and fast flowing and it took almost 2 hours to travel the 10km and reach the village against the current. It was a time to relax and enjoy the ride, especially the cool breeze as we motored along. Upon arrival we were met by the Christian families and taken to see the church plot and the new construction and then off for the obligatory cups of tea and biscuits. The brothers and sisters expressed their thanks that I had made the effort to visit their village and we prayed for the brothers and sisters in the UK. I wonder what image they have in their minds as we pray. Many in the village have probably never even visited Silchar, the capital of the Cachar District of

Assam never mind travelled to New Delhi.

The return journey, with the current, took just over an hour and after a brief rest we went on several pastoral visits in the village. It was good to meet with the people that I have got to know over these recent years. We met with Br Kalanga, who is nursing his younger brother, who has cancer of the jaw and whose older brother died recently of the same cancer. A meal with Br Rapalung, a church elder and his wife Sr Tempi, head of the school. All these brothers and sisters rejoice in being part of a world wide Moravian unity.

Tuesday 16th An early but leisurely breakfast and then off to the School for meetings with the staff. There are currently 122 pupils in the school and fifty of them reside in the hostel. A new school building is needed but, before that, a new plot needs to be purchased to accommodate it. I am told that 400,000 Indian Rupees are needed to purchase 3 biggas of land where one bigga is 816 square yards so three biggas is about an acre. A long term plan for the Mission Board is needed.

Following the meeting and lunch we set off for Silchar to visit the wife of Br Paulim Rungmei who is seriously ill in hospital and is currently on dialysis. We entered the community hospital and I was saddened to see so many patients sitting in squalid conditions waiting to be seen. Sr Rungmei was in a single room which seemed reasonably clean and even though she was very weak she was clearly uplifted to see the church members. Following extensive prayers we left to return back to Binnakandi for fish and rice.

Wednesday 17th We left after breakfast for the airport after having said a long goodbye with prayers to all the brothers and sisters. The journey is through the tea gardens which are beautiful and where many people from other districts are employed. The Naga people of Binnakandi, amongst whom the Moravian Church has its work, do not have a history of working on the tea plantations which have a reputation of worker exploitation.

Arrived in good time at the airport and said a fond farewell to Br Amon and his father Br Kabui.

Departed Silchar at 12.55 arriving in Calcutta at 15.00, not sure what the temperature is but it is oppressively hot and humid. Depart for Delhi at 17.50 and arrived Delhi at 20.05 and booked a pre-paid taxi to take me to a small hotel called the Colonel's Retreat for the night. The taxi driver got lost as he didn't know the Dwarka district and neither did I and so we battled through New Delhi traffic for more than 2 hours. His £6.00 fare won't have given him much profit. And I was relieved to get into my small room by 10.30pm. The manager agreed to call me at 2.30am but failed to do so, it was a good thing that I had set my alarm for 2.00am.

(to be continued)

Congregation News

Bedford

It is over 2 years since we last wrote and during that time two of our old members have died, Doris Bygraves and Lorna Newbould who was once one of our Sunday School teachers. As members, both were fully involved in the life of the church.

After over seven years as our Minister, we said goodbye to Sr Gloria David as she accepted a call to the Yorkshire District. We thank her for her care and ministry to us all. We organised a farewell meal during which a gift was given by the congregation with thanks for all that Sr Gloria has done for us.

We welcomed Br Derrick Purnell and family and look forward to his continued ministry with us. One of the first things that was organised was a 'Fun Day' when we invited the young people (and their parents!) from Queen's Park to come and play, Pool, Table Football, Badminton and other games. Face painting also proved to be very popular. As



the photo shows, there was a good turnout and is another way of us getting to know our community and them us!

Along with others we hosted a Coffee Morning to raise money for the Macmillan Cancer Charity. Although only a few were able to attend, we still raised over £110, which we were very pleased about.

Eric Moore

Noticeboard

Ockbrook

On 14 December 2013 the Settlement Singers (made up of congregation members and friends from the local community, directed by Angela Hughes) will give their annual Christmas Concert in the church.

It will be special this year featuring the resident woodwind quintet (flute, clarinet oboe bassoon and horn) and Settlement Singers in a combined performance of the Hosanna Anthem, specially arranged by Shaun Brown, one of the Ockbrook organists.

Bedford St Luke's

When Bedford St Luke's closed in 2008 the site and buildings were acquired by Bedford School. Thanks to a legacy from an old boy, plans for developing it into a centre for the performing arts can go ahead, to open in the Spring of 2015.

Professor Ernest Walton

This sculpture by Eilis O'Connell titled "Apples and atoms" was unveiled at Trinity College Dublin to honour Ernest Walton, whose work on splitting the atom gained him the Nobel prize in Physics. Professor Walton's daughter Sr Marion Woods of the University Road congregation was present.



Kilwarlin

We have had a good year so far and we have been busy with various activities. Our harvest was well attended. Rev. Livingston Thompson conducted the Church anniversary service. Sunday 23rd Dec was our evening Christingle service where our young people produced a modern nativity play which involved them dressing up, one as a cow and two as penguins! The service was very entertaining and very well attended by the local community.

In May we were delighted to baptise of Jessica Ellen Law the first child of Stuart and Leanne Law. We had our usual Garden Party in June, and we managed to raise over £2,000, on a wonderful afternoon well supported by the local community and district Church members.

A highlight of the year was the dedication of our new minister's board which was made by Moore Johnston the son of a member. He made it memory of his mum and grandparents. We had a wonderful service with about sixty people in attendance including his family. We invited previous ministers and Sr Molly Spencer, the widow of Kirby. The service focused on Basil Patros Zula, a charismatic minister who saved the Church when it was ready to close.

Our Sunday school seems to have new energy and enthusiasm and we sent eight of our young people to the youth weekend at Cultra; and five attended summer camp. Our bowls club continues to meet each week.

We may be small but we work hard to keep our Church and property in good upkeep. A new development is tea and coffee after the service which is a time of fellowship.

Eunice Hoey

Fulneck December events

Christmas Tree Festival

Saturday 7th December from 11am to 6pm

Sunday 8th December from 1pm to 6pm

Trees decorated on the theme of Christmas Carols

Refreshments and souvenirs available

Free entry



Handel's Messiah

At Fulneck on Monday 9th December at 7pm

Performed by St Peter's Singers and Chamber Orchestra

Retiring collection for the Organ Fund

Baildon

On March 24th we had the Baptism of Bran Edward Renshaw. Bran and his parents Janine and Paul celebrated this happy occasion with family and friends in our Junior Church Building The service was conducted by Br Derrick. Sadly we said Goodbye to Derrick, Anita and family in June as they moved to continue their work in Bedford and we wished them every blessing in their new home.

Also in June we gave a warm welcome to Sr Gloria David who arrived to continue the work in Baildon. Sr Gloria has settled in well, is getting to know everyone and is enjoying walking in the village and surrounding countryside.

Sr Gloria's first Wedding was on August 3rd. It was a beautiful day and the Bride Karen Sparrow walked down to church amidst family and friends, making a very happy atmosphere in Westgate! The Groom was James Bye.

On August 31st we had the Wedding of Emma Walker and Howard Groves-Jones. Howard being one of the many children who have grown up in the Baildon Manse. A very happy occasion and lovely for the congregation to catch up with Sarah, Chris and Debbie again.

In September the scarecrow festival was again very successful bringing lots of people to our village and church.

Jen Baldwin

Fulneck school

I have now embarked on my second year as Principal at Fulneck, and it would be fair to say that in my first year I hit the ground running. There will certainly not be time for me to get bored in this job!

As Principal I am committed to the idea that Fulneck should keep at its heart the Christian values which have been constant throughout the school's 260-year history. We are mindful of our past and proud of heritage, while at the same time looking to the future as we develop the school and prepare the current generation of Fulneck pupils for the challenges that lie ahead in a rapidly-changing world. We cannot stand still...but we should never forget what has gone before us.



The Principal and Vice-Principal

As we constantly strive to make Fulneck the best school it can be, we are seeking to develop best practice in all areas of school life: academic, pastoral and extra-curricular. We are also developing the fabric of the school, with an ongoing programme to upgrade and refurbish our buildings and facilities. A major new initiative for next year is the modernisation of our sixth-form centre, with a view to providing a facility which will meet the needs of sixth-formers for many years to come. This is but one of many strands in our rolling programme of development.

The School Governors have recently appointed my husband, David, as Vice-Principal and Head of the Senior School. We have worked closely together in other schools and it seems entirely appropriate that a school which takes pride in family values should have a married couple at the helm.

Deborah Newman Principal

CONGREGATION REGISTERS

BAPTISM

Gomersal Mabel Elizabeth Addison 7th July
Ockbrook Harriet Mary Ann Taylor 29 Sept

CONFIRMATION

Gracehill 20th October
Mark Kitson, Lucinda Douglas, Holly Tranter
Kristian Tranter, Christopher Miller

RECEPTION INTO MEMBERSHIP

Gracehill 20th October
James Mewha, Margaret Mewha, Carol Turner, Stanley Turner

MARRIAGE

Baildon Emma Walker and Howard Grove-Jones 31 August
Fetter Lane Alexandra Godfree and Andre Flemmings
(married at Dover) 19th October

DEATH

Gracehill Mary Paisley aged 87 23 September

PRAYER NOTES



Dates to Remember

1
Dec
Advent
Sunday

10
Dec
Human Rights Day
www.un.org

25
Dec
Christmas Day

1
Jan
New Year's Day

FROM CHURCH HOUSE

Church House will be closed from 5:00 on Friday 20th December until Thursday morning 2nd January.

Provincial Diary for December

2nd Ockbrook School Governors
Sr Taylor

December 1st [Advent Sunday] Matthew 24:36 – 44

Son of Man, who has promised to come on a day we do not expect, at an hour that is known to none but the Father only, grant us the wisdom to use well the time that is left to us, daily considering what sort of people we ought to be, so that we may not be ashamed at your coming but be found as your faithful servants here, ready and waiting to receive the Lord of glory. Amen

December 8th [2nd Sunday in Advent] Matthew 3:1-12

Eternal God, as you sent your servant John to prepare for the coming of your Son, help us so to follow Christ that in all our relationships with other people something of his nature may be understood and something of his love seen; that we might be your prophets for our own time and by our actions, words and prayers, forerunners for your kingdom. Amen.

December 15th [3rd Sunday in Advent] Matthew 11:2-11

Beloved Son, in whose presence the blind received their sight, the lame walked, lepers were cleansed, the deaf heard and the dead were raised up; bless those today whose faith is weak, for even your servant John, languishing in prison, struggled with doubts. Grant us that blessing reserved for those who are not offended by you, looking no further but seeing and knowing for ourselves that you are the Christ, the one who is to come. Amen

December 22nd [4th Sunday in Advent] Matthew 1:18-25

Heavenly Father, as we remember the power of the Highest that overshadowed Mary, found with child of the Holy Spirit, we thank you for the solid, background figure of Joseph providing the shelter and support for the holy family at the birth; finding refuge in Egypt and a home in Nazareth as Jesus grew up: doing vital work without much limelight attached to it. We thank you for all who serve you in obscurity and ask that you will help us to play our part in the continuing story, that others may not notice us, but see the Lord instead; content to fill a little space if He be glorified. Amen

December 25th [Christmas Day] Luke 2:1-14

Jesus, as poor men came long ago from watching in the fields to see you, a child lying in the manger; so we turn from our labour to worship our Saviour who is Christ the Lord. May our hearts leap for joy at the good news of great joy which is for all the people and join with the heavenly host praising God saying, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased'. Amen

December 29th [1st Sunday of Christmas] Matthew 2:13-23

Heavenly father, whose blessed Son shared at Nazareth the life of an earthly home: when you entrusted Him to the care of Mary and Joseph, you did not spare them the pains that touch the life of every family. Teach us to go forward into the future as people who rely on you, that in our trials and joys we may be clothed in gentleness and patience, always thankful for the blessings you give us through Jesus Christ, Word made flesh and brought at last to your home in heaven. Amen

December 31st [New year's Eve] Acts 20:13-24

Gracious God, as the apostle Paul served you with humility as with tears and trials he followed the way that was set for him, so may we enter the New Year, not counting our lives precious to ourselves, but valuable to you as we complete the course set before us. Grant that we too might be guided in all things by the Holy Spirit and although the future is unknown to us, it is known to you. Grant that like him we may not shrink from any profitable witness to all we meet, that encourages faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen

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