

# Moravian messenger



*Sr Beth Torkington writes:*

## The First Commandment

"I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other gods before me."

Exodus 20.1 - 3



It might seem topsy-turvy to come towards the end of a series on the Ten Commandments with the very first commandment of all, but it's an ending on a high, on an imperative, because this is the ultimate commandment to consider and attempt to live, for it will affect our whole life.

Obviously this commandment came from a time when many people worshipped many gods, perhaps household deities made by human hands, like the golden calf, or aspects of nature like the sun or stars or even animals. Reading those words today we can feel smug. Obviously we know better than that! But even a few minutes of reflection reminds us that if we were to be judged on where we put our money, our time, our love, our effort - and therefore what we consider of true

worth, ('worth-ship' = worship); God might not make it to the top of the list.

And in this evaluation of where we place our true worth, although it might seem counter-intuitive for a bishop to say so, don't confuse God with the church. The church is a human institution and therefore sometimes gets things wrong; God is totally other, the basis for the existence of all things, the overarching principle that defines and predicates the universe, the ground of all our being. St. Anselm, in the eleventh century, said God is 'that which nothing greater than can be conceived'. In other words, God is off the scale to anything we mere mortals can conceive or think.

But if God is so great and beyond our human understanding, and not totally represented by the church, how on earth are we to perceive and worship him with

all our heart and soul and strength? We could get lost in the fascinating, difficult worlds of theology and philosophy as they struggle to express the concept of God; or we could simply recognise our otherness to God and throw up our hands in agnosticism. Or we could look at Jesus. The man who did not claim to be God but of whom so many said 'this is truly the Son of God', 'of one being with God'.

Our first question is how do we even begin to encompass God enough to begin to worship? And then what kind of worship does God require? The prophets wrestled with that too; Isaiah in Chapter 58 is thinking about fasting and the prophet thinks deeply about what kind of worship God requires, he shows us that empty ritual is not enough. It is really worth turning to the whole chapter, but here I'll just quote from verses 9 and 10 about what God requires from us: 'put an end

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## The First Commandment *continued*

to oppression, to every gesture of contempt, and to every evil word.... give food to the hungry and satisfy those who are in need'. Don't we hear so many echoes with all that Jesus teaches us?

So we focus on Jesus. During this month of March in our church services as we progress from Passion Week to Eastertide, we will follow Jesus to the cross, watch his humiliation in Jerusalem, watch his refusal to save himself, watch him die. Recognising, in that apparent weakness and submission to human fallibility, his complete and formidable integrity and strength. And then the resurrection....

My words cannot do this justice but look at the women and men who knew Jesus and who were transformed utterly by their encounter with the Risen Christ, and look at what happened to them all next. It is in Jesus that we too can encounter God, inasmuch as it is humanly possible to comprehend God. Which is why when I consider the first and greatest commandment I think of Jesus and his words: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind". This is the greatest and the most important commandment. The

second most important commandment is like it: "Love your neighbour as you love yourself". The whole Law of Moses and the teachings of the prophets depend on these two commandments.' Matthew 25. 37 - 40

Jesus in his answer to: 'What is the greatest commandment?', links loving God with loving your neighbour as yourself. That seems of paramount importance to me. I fear religious zealots of all faiths declaring what they do to be in the name of God. That is an enormous and terrifying claim, and sometimes downright blasphemous. The way Jesus phrases it, 'the second is like it', gives love and concern for others as of equal importance to loving God, and it is that which enables us to judge whether something is of God or not. And on the night before he dies, listen to Jesus as he tells us and the disciples: 'This is my command: Love each other'. John 15.17.

This Eastertide as we rejoice in the commitment, love and power of God in Christ; may we honour God in all that we do, may we truly worship Him as we kneel at the foot of an empty cross - for 'Hallelujah, the Lord is risen'.

**Beth Torkington**

## The Commandments series - a belated introduction

Since last summer the Messenger has run articles by different writers on the Commandments. This month, as we move through the preparation of Lent to Holy week and then the joy of Easter, we have a reflection on the First Commandment, by Sister Beth Torkington.

The original idea was to take the Commandments backwards, to start with the 'social' ones we need to demonstrate in a modern secular society. We tried this approach in Dukinfield and Fairfield Bible Studies, and had so much discussion that we never got back to the start! But the order in which the commissioned articles came in showed that each of the Commandments is part of a circle, and we can start anywhere. Each has something linked to the one before and the one after, and they are part of a continuous whole. They are a baseline for trying to love God and love our neighbour, with the Commandment to keep the Sabbath holy linking the two.

Two other points have come across strongly.

Firstly, the Commandments are meant to free us - they are the liberation of the desert and basic self-knowledge after the slavery of Egypt. They are an aid to us in taking part in God's world, working under God's law and with God to bring order out of chaos. They are not a demonstration of God's power over us, but guidelines for redemption, for us, and for the world if we are able to become a channel for God's love. They say: place God first and then your neighbour, and you will find this a recipe for happiness.

Secondly, they are personal. They are also addressed to each of us individually, male female, rich poor, in the singular 'thou'. We have lost this distinction in modern English, but it is an important one. God is speaking to each of us separately about how important each of us is to God. We are called to find our way to God in community with our neighbours, so that one day we will be drawn into God, in the community that is the Trinity.

**Rosemary Power**



## Holocaust Memorial Day Service 2016

Ockbrook School Choir was very honoured to be invited to sing the anthem and to light the candles at this year's Holocaust Memorial Day Service in Derby Cathedral on 27 January.

Under its Director of Music, Mr Edward Swindell, the choir performed 'The Lord Bless You and Keep You' by Rutter. Given the multi-faith nature of the service this was a particularly fitting and moving piece as the words are those of the Aaronic Blessing, which God gave to

Moses for the Children of Israel.

The service was attended by the Lord Lieutenant of Derbyshire and leading representatives of various local faith communities; there were readings from the Qur'an and the Bible, and the Jewish prayer Kaddish was read out in Hebrew.

The moment when the Precentor read out the shocking Genocide List - a Roll of Holocausts since the beginning of the twentieth century - was especially poignant; it was during this point in the

service that some of the Ockbrook Choir, ranging from sixth form to Year 7, solemnly lit the memorial candles.

This was the Choir's second visit to the Cathedral in January - they sang Evensong on Saturday 23 January - and all the students felt extremely privileged to have taken part in this Service of Commemoration, Remembrance and Hope.

**T M Brooksby**  
*Headmaster*

## Ockbrook School Expedition Team Take On Nepal

This summer, eleven students and their teacher from Ockbrook School will be joined by an expedition leader as they embark on an adventure of a lifetime half way across the world, in Nepal.

Our journey will begin on 05 July, marking the beginning of a three-week adventure. Our team's journey to Nepal will consist of two coach journeys, two long-haul flights and a lot of walking. And that is just the beginning.

The first phase of our expedition is the Project Phase, which will occur in Pokhara, which is West of Kathmandu, the capital of Nepal. During the project phase we plan to help rebuild structures, teach local children and make friends. As a team we hope to improve, in some small way, the lives of the local people, who have been affected by the recent earthquake.

The second phase of our adventure is the trek. For four days we will be trekking in the Annapurnas, the foot hills of the Himalayas. During the trek we will be staying in a variety of different types of accommodation, including tea houses and tents. The trek will be a challenge for all of us as we will have to face the possibility of altitude sickness and strains both physically and mentally. However, we are all sure that the amazing views we

will see and the sense of accomplishment we feel afterwards will make it all worthwhile.

In our final stage of our expedition, we will enjoy an elephant safari, in Chitwan National Park, and a tree top trail. Before we travel to Chitwan, we are going to visit a lake in Pokhara, where we will row boats out to a temple in the middle of the lake, and will experience the cultural side of Nepal, which we may not have fully experienced yet. As well as going on a safari in Chitwan, we are going to visit Sunset point, which has beautiful views, and we will also visit a local village where we will be shown around by the local people. Our tree top trail will consist of climbing ladders, walking in the canopies and experiencing Nepal from another level.

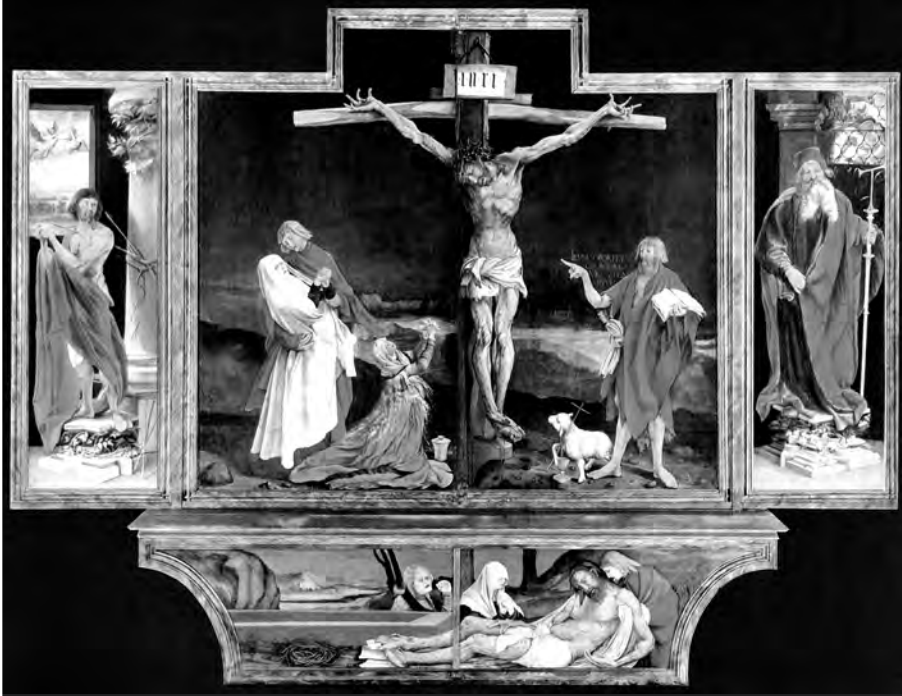
Our final days in Nepal will be spent in Kathmandu. Whilst in Kathmandu we plan to visit more temples, shop for souvenirs and take in as much of the atmosphere and local traditions before we have to leave.

We will arrive back in the UK on 26 July. When we arrive back we plan to share all our memories and experiences with family, friends and school.

**Hannah Moore and Millie Lewis (Year 11)**

# Matthias Grünewald

## The Isenheim Altar



Lent is a time of penitential preparation for remembering the events of Holy Week and, of course, of Easter. Over the course of Christian history, many artists and composers have been moved to give expression to what Our Lord suffered at the hands of the authorities.

The first symbol to represent the Christian faith was the fish. Early Christians used the letters of the Greek word *ichthys* as an acrostic to show the words Jesus Christ Son of God. It's found in paintings and mosaics in the catacombs where Christians were buried following the 3rd century persecutions. The ambiguity of the sign as an acrostic or as an indication of food was useful.

After the conversion of Constantine the cross became the universal symbol of the Christian faith. The night before the battle of Milvian Bridge (AD 312) Constantine had a vision in which he saw a cross with the words *In hoc signo vinces* (In this sign conquer). He won the battle, and the Edict of Milan in 313 proclaimed the cross as the mark of the Roman empire, replacing the eagle. The first representations of the crucifixion then appear in the 4th century, symbolic rather than representational, for devotional purposes.

During the Middle Ages the cross became a focus in art. Certain patterns became standard as the scene of the crucifixion appeared increasingly in mosaics and altar-pieces. Such representations became stylised, with increasing sophistication. There is also a vast heritage of sculpted work both as statues and bas-relief. Numerous styles

developed in the various provinces of Europe and beyond, but there was a core content which is instantly recognisable.

To many, the most outstanding painting of the crucified Christ dates from the early 16th century, perhaps the earliest one to show the immense physical suffering that Jesus endured. The so-called Isenheim Altar was painted by Matthias Grünewald in 1512-16 as an altar-piece for the Antonine hospital at Isenheim near Colmar in Alsace. The hospital was built in about 1300 by members of the Order to care for victims of *erysipelas*, a form of cellulitis caused by eating rye-bread contaminated by a parasitic infection, common in those days among the rural poor. The only known cure had been brought about by prayer to St Anthony, hence the disease becoming known as St Anthony's Fire. As the Order became increasingly prosperous, several works of art were commissioned. The Isenheim Altar was created for display in the ward in which those suffering from *erysipelas* might be moved to contemplate the suffering of the crucified Christ and thus to pray for recovery, or for mercy in death.

The disease was unpleasant indeed. The skin became inflamed with painful red patches which swelled and enlarged, becoming very tender and causing fever. In the painting the body of Christ is covered with these patches, as well as with thorns and splinters left there by the scourging. The body is riven with pain, its weight forcing the horizontal beam of the cross to sag. The hands and feet are graphically twisted in paroxysms of pain, the lifeless face still encircled by the crown

of thorns. It's a startling and cruel picture. To the left the artist shows Mary Magdalene; her hands, tightly-gripped in prayer, reflect the hands of Jesus. Mary his mother is held in a swoon in the arms of St John the Evangelist. To the right stands John the Baptist (he'd been executed by Herod before the crucifixion took place); at his feet is a lamb, remarkably similar to the one used in the Moravian symbol; its blood is caught in a chalice, an obvious reminder of the symbolism of the communion. Panels either side portray St Sebastian and St Anthony. Other panels could be opened to illustrate different seasons, but the central picture of the crucified Christ is the most important

I knew little of this painting, and when I suddenly found myself in front of it I was stunned. I didn't know quite how to react: should I kneel and pray? Should I worship? I remember being reduced to tears, and wanting to be alone and silent. It's a moment I'll never forget. That in itself has value: so much of the reflection of Christian experience today is shallow - we've edited out the unpleasant bits and made today's expressions of faith unconvincing. St Paul often regretted this in his letters, longing for people to realise the depths of what Christ suffered for us. Until we did so, we would never really comprehend just what this means.

It might be useful during our own Lenten experience to seek this and, hopefully, find it. As Paul wrote in 2 Cor 12:9: My grace is all you need; power is most fully seen in weakness.

David Bunney

# A lawyer writes

## The trial before Caiaphas

The story is well known.

'The Chief priests and whole council were looking for false testimony against him'. Matthew 26:59

Everyone has the right to an unbiased trial. The Human Rights Act reinforces this, saying:

'Everyone is entitled to a fair and public hearing within a reasonable time by an independent and impartial tribunal established by law.'

The principles of natural justice, recognised centuries ago, are so glaringly obvious that one rarely sees reference to them. They are that everyone should have an opportunity to present his case and be heard, and that no one should act as judge in his own case.

The 'chief priests and whole council' if investigating an offence should not also be conducting the trial. Policemen and judges must be different people, independent of each other.

The Human Rights Act

Everyone charged with a criminal offence shall be presumed innocent until proved guilty.

Everyone charged with a criminal offence has the following minimum rights:

- to be told promptly, in a language which he understands and in detail, the accusation against him;
- to have adequate time and facilities for the preparation of his defence;
- to defend himself in person or through lawyers of his own choosing or, if he has not sufficient means to pay for legal assistance, to be given it free when the interests of justice so require;
- to question witnesses against him and call evidence himself;
- to have the free assistance of an interpreter if he cannot understand or speak the language used in court.

'But Jesus was silent'

At the beginning of every interview a suspect is cautioned. He

is told of his right of silence, but warned that it might harm his defence if he does not mention when questioned something which he will later rely on at trial. The fact that a jury may be told that they can draw such inferences from his silence 'as appear proper'.

Blasphemy Matthew 26: 65

The Blasphemy Act 1697 used to make it an offence to:

- deny any one of the Persons in the Holy Trinity to be God
- assert or maintain there is more than one God
- deny the Christian Religion to be true
- deny that Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are of Divine Authority

The Act was repealed in 1967.

Until 2008 there was an archaic crime of 'blasphemous libel'. This was the:

'contemptuous, reviling, scurrilous and/or ludicrous material relating to God, Christ, the Bible or the formularies of the Church of England, published in such a way as tends to endanger society as a whole, by endangering the peace, depraving public morality, shaking the fabric of society or tending to cause civil strife'.

Blasphemy is no longer itself a criminal offence in England, but a very public denial of the tenets of Christianity, or any other religion, at the wrong place and time, could attract allegations of causing public disorder.

'He deserves death' Matthew 26:66

It is the job of the judge, not those in the public gallery, to decide what sentence should be imposed after a criminal conviction.

Judged by modern English standards the trial before Caiaphas was not well conducted. A person convicted in such a trial would be able appeal successfully.

Paul Mitchell



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# A Minister Reflects

*Kit Shorten transcribes the final sections of the diaries from the First World War and its immediate aftermath*

## March 1919

Saturday 29th March 1919: At 7pm a Social Gathering was held to welcome the returned Soldiers and Sailors, also one who had been away on Munitions work. A quiet whist drive for those who liked to join and games for the rest occupied the time till Supper was served at 9pm. After supper, songs, recitations and a sketch brought a much enjoyed evening to a close.

This was possibly one of the last events Reverend Stooke was involved with. It was around this time that, having survived the war and celebrated the return of the surviving servicemen, Walter Stooke fell ill with influenza. He died a few weeks later, in May 1919, leaving a widow, two sons serving in the forces, and six other children under the age of eighteen (the youngest child being only three years old). He is interred in the Moravian Burial Ground at Gomersal.

## After the War

In some aspects, this story does not have a happy ending. The jubilation of the Peace Celebration; the hope for a new, better future and a return to normality soon dissolved. Sister Charlotte Louisa Stooke suffered as much as any war widow. Her two eldest sons were still in the armed forces. As a grieving mother of another six children, all under the age of eighteen, with the youngest being only three years old, she would soon have to find alternative accommodation.

The Church also continued to have problems. The lack of men and the apathy of people towards attending Church services, which had so frequently been observed and commented upon by the minister during the war years, did not show signs of recovery following the Armistice. Rather, it was further compounded by the minister's sudden death, which left an air of uncertainty over the whole future of the Moravian Church in Gomersal; such had been the strength

of his presence. There was further uncertainty as the replacement minister was not yet ordained, and it wasn't until late in September 1919 that Brother Handel Hassall received and accepted the official call to ministry at Gomersal. Just how close Gomersal Moravian Church came to ceasing to exist at this time, the depth of love felt for Brother Stooke, and the uneasy mood prevalent in the country, is best recalled in the church Memorabilia for 1919 and 1920.

## Memorabilia for 1919

From the Memorabilia for 1919, read at the Lovefeast on January 4th, 1920.

It is fitting that we should begin our survey of the past year's work with an acknowledgement of the Divine Goodness which has been given to us throughout the year. In many departments of life it has been a very difficult and trying period. The great hopes with which it began have not been realised. To look back, it seems to have been a year of disappointment. What should have been the bright and prosperous beginning of our era of peace has only produced ill will, bitterness, suspicion and distrust in many hearts. Whilst we can thankfully say that this lamentable state of affairs has not affected us as a congregation to any great extent, it would be idle to deny that we have altogether escaped. One feature of our life, the absence of a due proportion of young men at our services is certainly not altogether due to this, but without doubt, is so in some measure. We are not alone in feeling these effects. In a greater or lesser degree they have been felt by all the Christian communities of the country.

As we turn to specifically congregation matters we must first give thanks to God who has brought us safely as a congregation through another year. Moreover the congregation is, humanly speaking, in a better position than it was twelve months ago. Its separate existence which was

threatened then now seems to be assured, at any rate for some time. May we so use our opportunities during the coming year that never again will the question of its amalgamation be raised.

The most obvious change in life of the Congregation is the change of ministry. Our late Brother W.G. Stooke died on Sunday May 18th in Bradford Infirmary and this congregation lost a beloved pastor and the Church a most devoted and faithful servant. His epitaph has been written already in the diary by another hand. May God grant that when our time comes we may deserve such a one!

## Memorabilia for 1920

Read at the Lovefeast on January 2nd, 1921.

We cannot review the events of the past year, even in the briefest fashion, without being reminded at every step of God's goodness towards us as a congregation.

1920 has been a very difficult year to characterise. It began thirteen months after the Armistice, which ended the fighting in the greatest war of history. But as experiences during the twelve months of its predecessor warned us, 1920 was not likely to be a year of untroubled peace. The war changed our common life in many ways and it would be as difficult to go back now to the conditions of 1914 as to return to the age of Queen Elizabeth. For over a year the country has been trying to settle down, to find its feet, to take up the broken thread of its old life - whatever metaphor we like to adopt. In a few directions life has gone back, not to pre-war conditions but to conditions that compare to them; in other directions it has diverged altogether from the standard of 1914. This applies to our Church life also. The Christian Church has been profoundly affected by the war, perhaps more than any of us realise. Some effects are only just becoming apparent, even now; some of them perhaps have not seen the light even yet.

## Out of This

*Out of this confusion;  
this interminable tangle  
of uncertain days  
I call you.*

*Out of nights ghosted  
by insidious whispers  
of past transgressions  
I call you.*

*Out of this chaos;  
my token resolutions  
broken again and again  
I call you.*

*But when I see  
black buds break through  
On battered branches  
I hear you.*

*As aconites rose  
brave above the last drifts  
of greying snow  
I hear you...*

*and slowly  
I begin to know  
a personal resurrection.*

*Margaret Connor*

# Stewardship

## The Moravian Covenant for Christian Living

*Our sister paper in North America, The Moravian Magazine, has run a series of articles about doctrine. This section, by Br Craig Atwood, explores some of the background, and relates to our own journey.*

In early days of the Moravian community of Herrnhut there was a danger that the fledgling community would collapse because of conflict. People were divided over theological opinions, religious ceremonies, organizational matters and ethnicity. Under the leadership of Count Zinzendorf, the residents of Herrnhut discussed their many differences and began to recognize that what they had in common as followers of Christ was more important than their divisions. They also saw the need for some guiding principles to help organize their life as a community. The result of this discussion and prayer was the Brotherly Agreement that was signed on May 12, 1727. *The Moravian Covenant for Christian Living* is the modern version of the Brotherly Agreement.

The Moravian Covenant for Christian Living is part of the Book of Order of both the Northern and Southern Provinces in the Americas, and is therefore an official doctrinal statement of the Church. It has been changed many times through the centuries in an effort to express more clearly the Moravian understanding of Scripture and Christian living. It includes guidelines for individuals, congregations and the denomination as a whole. Although it is not binding on people, it is a statement of what the Moravian Church most values. It is intended to guide our decisions as a community of faith.

The original Brotherly Agreement included rules for living together in a community as well as specific economic instructions and legal matters in Herrnhut. All of the Moravian settlements, such as Bethlehem and Salem, developed their own Brotherly Agreements. Since these settlements were closed communities rather than congregations in our sense of the word, their Brotherly Agreements also included economic and legal matters. With the dissolution of the communities in the middle of the nineteenth century, the old Brotherly Agreements were obsolete. There was a sense that the church should have some type of statement and in the 1860s both of the American provinces established new Brotherly Agreements to guide their members. There were slight differences between the two Brotherly Agreements, but they were similar in most respects.

The Northern Provincial synod of 1946 proposed that the Brotherly Agreement be recast in a more contemporary style with a closer conformity with Scripture. The Sunday nearest 12 May each year was to be a day for educating congregations about the document. Few changes were actually made at that time, so the issue came up again in 1961 in a proposal to the Synod. 'It is the feeling of many in the Church that the present form of the "Brotherly Agreement" has lack of organization, no particular thought being given to an organized statement of the Christian life and discipline, but rather items being added on as they were felt necessary. It is also felt that some of the language used is outmoded and that some of the thought expressed reflects attitudes of the 19th century.' A committee consisting of bishops, pastors, theologians and laity was assigned

to compose a new Brotherly Agreement. Their work was approved, with some revisions, by the Northern Provincial Synod of 1966.

In 1986 a number of revisions to the Brotherly Agreement were made by both provinces. Most of them related to the use of non-sexist language. Thus 'mankind' became 'all people', 'Brethren's Unity' became 'Moravian Unity', and 'brotherly love' was changed to 'Christian love'. Most significantly, the title of the document itself was changed to *The Moravian Covenant for Christian Living*. The last revision to the Covenant came in 1995 when the statement on Scripture was changed to conform to the revised *Ground of the Unity*.

### Part One: Called Into Fellowship

#### Paragraph 1:

We are called into a Christian fellowship by the Lord Jesus Christ, according to the eternal purpose of God the Father (Ephesians 3:11) by the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:18-21), and as members of Christ's Body, the Church, to serve all people by proclaiming the Gospel and witnessing to our faith by word and deed.

The opening paragraphs of the Covenant conform closely to the *Ground of the Unity* in order to emphasize that we are part of a worldwide church. It is also appropriate that we are reminded that this Covenant is not based on our desires but on our calling. We believe that our church, as imperfect as it is, exists because the Lord has called us together to serve the world. Within our fellowship we offer a model of Christian community for the world to see. Outside the walls of our church we reach out in love to our neighbors. It is important to recognize that our fellowship is worldwide and so is our outreach.

#### Questions

- What does it mean to be called by Christ?
- What does it mean to you that your congregation is part of the Body of Christ in the world?
- Why is it important to see our connection to all followers of Christ?
- What does it mean to serve people by proclaiming the Gospel?
- Why do we say we do this in "word and deed"?
- How do you proclaim the Gospel? How does your congregation?

*Note. The word Covenant is a biblical word for a solemn agreement or contract. Israel's relationship to God is defined in Scripture as a Covenant. A Covenant is a voluntary bond that holds us together even when we fail to meet all of the obligations of the Covenant.*

*Abridged and reprinted with permission*

# Isaiah 66:13

God says, 'As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you.'

I need comfort, at least sometimes - when (as a child) I fall or my pet dies, when I have worked hard but have not seen positive results, when my health fails and I feel frustrated and helpless, when I'm getting older and I can't do what I used to do. I need comfort when I feel sad, when a relationship is falling apart, when I lost someone who meant so much to me... The list is long.

And I can't even begin to imagine how someone must feel who lost everything - their possessions, loved ones, their entire livelihood. There are millions of people in this world who need an enormous amount of comfort.

The prophet Isaiah allows us to have a look into the situation of the people of Israel. Having spent decades in exile, away from their home, away from the temple that meant so much to them, they were exhausted in every way - physically, mentally and spiritually.

Eventually, when some of them were allowed to go back to their land and they had high hopes, they were crushed again, facing further hardship: famine, political instability and oppression.

They knew that they were responsible for some of the hardship, but surely not for all.

How much is too much? When would they be pushed over the edge?

God's word spoken through the prophet Isaiah must have been like a lifeline, 'As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you.'

Comfort does not change the situation right away. But knowing that I'm not alone in a difficult situation can make a tremendous difference. It can give a new perspective and the ability to cope so much better.

God is compared to a mother. In most cases a mother just knows best what her child needs. But sometimes it may be someone else who knows best, maybe the father, the grandparents, the spouse, a friend or a professional.

Often the best comfort is someone's quiet presence, maybe some encouraging words, but not many, maybe a hymn or a smile or a hug.

When we read on in Isaiah we notice that the prophet doesn't stop here. He envisages that all nations will come together before God, and that God will create a new heaven and a new earth.

God is not only comforting but also giving a new vision for the future and setting out his ultimate goal: bringing death to death, overcoming destruction and restoring the whole earth to what it was meant to be - a place of peace and love and life.

In a world with so much destruction, can we as a church and as individuals keep this vision alive and allow God to use us for bringing healing to the nations?

*Joachim Kreuzel*

## Unity Women's Desk

### Sr Janet Cooper writes:

I heard about the work of the Unity Women's Desk at the recent European Women's Conference and felt that knowledge of this important work should be more widespread. I volunteered to be the Unity Women's Desk (UWD) co-ordinator for the British Province.

The UWD began its work in January 2011 but the idea of such an organisation came into being in 1995 when it was realised that the problems and issues facing women around the world were the same, no matter where they came from and also that a one-off event was not going to be sufficient to address these problems.

The UWD has six priorities: education; violence against women; employment and overcoming poverty; health issues;

parenting for justice; and framing its work with Biblical imperatives. The UWD engages in many activities, but one important part of its work is to grant educational scholarships around the Unity to provide women and girls with the opportunity to continue their education, particularly when this education will benefit women.

The UWD is also responsible for the organisation of the Unity Women's Consultation which by the time you read this will have taken place from 18 to 24 February in Paramaribo, Surinam. Srs Norma Maynard and Roberta Hoey are the representatives for the British Province. The theme of the Consultation is: 'Am I my Sister's Keeper?' and will hopefully produce proposals for the next Unity Synod.

The UWD office is in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, USA and is headed by Sr Patricia Garner. There are representatives from each of the four regions of the Unity; Africa, America, Caribbean and Europe. Sr Erdmute Frank is the European representative.

If you would like more information, I recommend you visit the website: [www.unitywomensdesk.org](http://www.unitywomensdesk.org). There is a monthly prayer list which is available on the MWA page of the British Province website but if you would like to receive a copy by email then please contact me on [janet.cooper@moravian.org.uk](mailto:janet.cooper@moravian.org.uk).

If I can be of any other assistance then please do contact me, although as I am new to the work of the UWD I may not yet have all the answers!

# Congregation News

## Coronation Avenue

### Second Bath Girls Brigade Celebrate Golden Anniversary at Coronation Avenue

At the beginning of December the members of the Second Bath Girls Brigade and the Bath Coronation Avenue had a big birthday to celebrate as it was 50 years since the company was founded. They even had some of the original members there to take part in the celebration. First there was a celebration service on the Sunday afternoon (which was the actual anniversary) followed by a special version of the annual display on the Monday evening. During all this time the company has had only two Captains (Sr Joan Greening and Sr Sandy Smith). Sandy (nee Pitman) and her sister Mary, who was also present on both days, were some of the founding members back in 1965 and Sandy took over the company from Joan in 1987 when Joan had to retire, with Sandy fortuitously returning to the Bath area that year (who says that God is not working out a plan).

The service on the Sunday was led by Coronation Avenue Minister Br. Paul Holdsworth who was also present on the Monday evening in his capacity as Company Chaplain along with Br. Paul Gubi who was the chaplain for over 25 years, the Girls Brigade Regional Team Leader (Julia Traill) and the District President (Valerie Humphries).

For both events a presentation had been created showing pictures and certificates from the five decades and many people who attended were able to relive many happy memories. At the Sunday service two ladies from the Gideons



came along and presented the girls with special Girls Brigade versions of the Gideon bible with one of them also having a special reunion with a lady who came along because she had seen the local press publicity about the Girls Brigade Anniversary. Both of these two ladies had been doctors and had not seen each other since their University days.



The items at the display ranged from a feature with some of the girls wearing Uniform through the ages (which also covered the entire period) to a demonstration of self-defence training but also included some of the more

usual marching and parachute games.

The display concluded with the presentation of prizes and certificates including the presentation of a Brigader Brooch to Becky Cruse. The Brigader Brooch is the second highest award that a Girls Brigade member can achieve (only the Queens Award is higher) so this was a very special award on this very special occasion. Also present at the display were some of the 'Old Girls' who brought along their daughters and the Girls Brigade gained new members.

**Sandy Smith**

## Dukinfield

### Update On Our Food Hamper Outreach Project

Reflecting on the past year and planning our new year ahead, I feel we have moved in so many directions since starting our project at Christmas 2012.

We have held many events to fundraise and have gone out into our community and used the facilities offered to us. Last year also we acquired two grants which were given to help in our work with needy families.

Our food hampers are tailored to the number of people in each family, and by supplying the basics, allow the families to focus on solving some of the other problems they face, and hopefully to give them a better future.

It is not just food that we supply; we have also passed on children's clothing, bedding, baby items and household goods, which have been kindly donated by our congregation members and community friends.

We are starting to build a small group of community friends, who want to help families in the community around our church. Maybe this is the way we should go. Let's see what the Lord has in store for us this year 2016.

**Christine Storey**  
(Food hamper coordinator)

For further information, Christine can be reached on 01457 875 713 or at [Christine.storey@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:Christine.storey@hotmail.co.uk)

## Lower Wyke

Lower Wyke continues to be a very active congregation enjoying good relationships with the other Moravians congregations in Yorkshire. Four members sing in the Yorkshire District Choir which sang at the ordination of Br James Woolford and will be singing at the Memorial Service at Lower Wyke in February 2016. The four Lay Preachers regularly conduct services throughout the district as and when necessary. New ministerial arrangements in the District mean that Br Woolford does not conduct as many services as in the past but Lay Preachers and congregation members at Café Church readily 'volunteer'.

The annual social events including The Spring Festival and Art Exhibition, Craft Fair, Strawberry Fair, Proms in the Paddock, Talent Evening and Christmas Gathering once more were enjoyed by many visitors, friends and community residents. The Silver Tree Social held before Christmas was aimed especially for the young and proved particularly successful. Games, music and dancing and hot food were enjoyed by 100 children, young people and family groups.

Saturday morning 'Messy Churches' continue to meet with a mixed reception but the organisers don't give up! The monthly community lunches are enjoyed by a growing number of people and it is a great form of outreach. The MWA and Provincial Men's Fellowship both held fund raising events early in 2016 and the ladies of the church celebrate their special weekend on 12/13 March when Sr Beth McOwat will be the guest speaker. The weekly prayer meeting, bible study, snooker and table tennis and Adventurers groups mean that our buildings are used almost every night which is wonderful.

Relationships between the different churches in Wyke remain firm. Each denomination takes its turn to host the monthly prayer meetings and twice a year a joint service takes place. In June this service will be held at Lower Wyke.

Despite the aging process, hard work and effort in the name of the Lord does not diminish in this special place

**Diane Thornton**

## Tytherton

In May last year we were delighted to welcome our new minister Patsy Holdsworth and hope she and her husband will be very happy in the Western District.

Over the past 12 months we have sadly lost two of our oldest members, Winnie Hobbs and Betty Hussey, who both contributed so much during their long lives. Winnie will be remembered in particular for her flower arrangements and her love of orchids and Betty for her 'light' sponges. We also lost Brenda Higgs, who joined us almost every Sunday since the closure of the church in Malmesbury; and Dorothy Pocock, who often came to church when visiting her daughter in the village until ill-health prevented her.

Our thoughts have also been with Barbara Conway (nee Mann) who lost her partner Mike Smith, in September.

Unfortunately our lovely old building has needed some major repairs. The work has been completed and we hope to re-let the upper flat shortly. Of course this kind of work

is very expensive, so we plan to raise money with various events this year.

In December we had one of our best attended Christingle services. Our beautifully decorated church was packed and £190 was donated.

A small group of us decided to go carol singing. Patsy accompanied us on her trumpet and Paul and his father kindly came along to support us and provide two strong male voices! We were lucky enough to have chosen one of the few dry evenings in December and made almost £70.

Although we have challenges we are confident that we can continue to flourish, with Patsy's guidance, our enthusiasm and the continued support of Peter Gubi. We also continue to be grateful to Paul Gubi and David Bunney who are always willing to take services.

**Anne Waldron**

## Congregational Register

### Baptism

**Fairfield**

Olive George Davies - 24 January 2016

### Death

**Fairfield**

Chris Brown - 20 December 2015

## Noticeboard

### Watchwords amendment

Baildon Moravian Church - Secretary - Mrs Sylvia E Bentley, 4 Strathmore Drive, Baildon, Shipley, West Yorkshire, BD17 5LP

### Correction!

The article in the last Messenger, 'Moravians and Peacefulness', page 20, omitted the author's name. It was by Br Craig Atwood.

## Dates to remember

Fairtrade  
Fortnight  
[www.fairtrade.org.uk](http://www.fairtrade.org.uk)

29  
Feb

13  
Mar

1  
Mar

Founding of  
Unitas Fratrum 1457

4  
Mar

Women's World  
Day of Prayer  
[www.wwdp.org.uk](http://www.wwdp.org.uk)

6  
Mar

Unity Prayer Day

7  
Mar

13  
Mar

tbc Climate  
Week  
[www.climateweek.com](http://www.climateweek.com)

25  
Mar

International Day of  
Remembrance for the  
Victims of Slavery and  
the Transatlantic  
Slave Trade

[www.un.org/en/events/  
slaveryremembranceday/](http://www.un.org/en/events/slaveryremembranceday/)

25  
Mar

Good  
Friday

27  
Mar

Easter  
Sunday

## From Church House

1st March  
Church Service Committee,  
Church House - The PEC

2nd March  
Faith and Order, Church House  
- Sr Groves, Br Hopcroft

5th March -  
Midlands District Conference,  
Leominster - Br Howarth  
Lancashire District Conference,  
Dukinfield - Sr Taylor

8th - 9th March  
PEC, BMB and Estates Property  
- The PEC

15th March  
Estates, local agents meeting

19th March  
Irish District Conference, Kilwarlin  
- Sr Groves

# Prayer Notes

Richard Ingham

## Sunday 6th [Lent 4] Luke 15:1-3; 11b-32

Friend of sinners, who taught of a Father's love that rejoiced in the return of the prodigal, and even in the hour of death gave a penitent thief the promise of your continual presence. We ask that as we grow in understanding of your cross, we might draw nearer to our Father's home. We come to you from the far-off land of our miseries and sins. Let no sorrow keep us away and no loneliness or desolation of soul make us afraid. Come to us now - that the lost may be found. Fall on the neck of your poor prodigal, with the kiss of peace. Amen.

## Sunday 13th [Lent 5] John 12:1-8

Merciful Saviour, who loved Martha and Mary and Lazarus and blessed their home with your sacred company. Bless our homes; that your love may rest upon us and your promised presence be with us. May we grow in grace and in the knowledge of you, our Lord. Teach us to love one another as you have commanded. Help us to choose that better part which shall never be taken away from us; until you come to take us to your Father's house: the true home of us all. Amen

## Sunday 20th Palm Sunday Luke 19:28-40

King of Kings, who on this day entered the holy city in meekness. Even at the last turn of the road there were those who, though they understood but dimly, sought to honour and receive you as their King. To their glad hosannas we would add our song of praise. Knowing our hearts to be the city you would enter now, we fling wide the gates and pray that the King of glory will come in. Accept our praise and adoration, our worship and our love. Grant that we, who now confess you with our lips, may never fail to yield you the service of our lives. Yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen

## Thursday 24th Maundy Thursday

Blessed Lord Jesus who, when about to depart out of this world, hallowed bread and wine to be a perpetual memorial of your passion and a never-failing means of fellowship with you. Make us so to thirst after you that through these holy mysteries we might be filled with all the fullness of your divine life and partakers of your heavenly glory. Look upon us with those eyes of yours which looked on Peter; that with Peter we may repent, and by the same love may be forgiven and restored. Amen

## Friday 25th Good Friday

Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. In humiliation revealing your majesty. Set forth as a spectacle despised, derided, and scornfully arrayed, yet by whose condemnation we are acquitted, by whose stripes we are healed, by whose death we have life and by whose cross we gain our crown. Grant that those whom you have redeemed with your precious blood may evermore rejoice in your victory. By the thorns pressed upon your head you have drawn the thorns from the sorrows of this world and given us a crown of joy and peace. Amen

## Sunday 27th Easter Sunday Luke 24:1-12

Son of Man, our living Lord, who rose again on the third day and whose astonished disciples found the stone rolled away from the tomb. Grant that we too might marvel at what has happened and no longer seek the living among the dead. The tomb could not hold you and you are not there, but risen. Thank you for overcoming death and opening to us the gates of life eternal. Thank you that where two or three are gathered together in your Name you are there in the midst of them. Grant that being raised with you we might seek the things that are above, where you are, seated at the right hand of God, until we appear with you in glory - to the inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for us. Amen

## The Moravian Messenger

Official Journal of the Moravian  
Church in the British Province.  
Published monthly by the  
authority of the Provincial Synod.

Advertisements and all  
communications  
concerning distribution  
and supply should be sent  
to the Moravian Book Room  
5 Muswell Hill, London N10  
3TJ, and NOT to the Editor.

Editor: Rosemary Power  
[rosemary.power@moravian.org.uk](mailto:rosemary.power@moravian.org.uk)  
Messenger Editor, 5 Muswell Hill,  
London N10 3TJ  
Contributions for the Messenger  
should reach the editor by the 3rd  
day of the preceding month.

Design & Artwork  
David Bull  
[dave@redragdesign.co.uk](mailto:dave@redragdesign.co.uk)  
Printed & Distribution  
G. R. Walkden  
Tel 01931 716703