

# MORAVIAN WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION

Devotional Notes

September 2012

## Theme: Following in Christ's Footprints

In the July edition of the Saga Magazine there was an article entitled 'Spiritual Journeys'. The author writes about our British landscapes and how we relate to them. He suggests that when we explore the highways and byways, it is not just what we see today which impacts on us; what has happened in these places in the past also has a 'spiritual effect' on us. He mentions 'the spirit of the place', ley lines, Neolithic tombs, Celtic trails, Roman roads, drovers' routes, ruined castles, deserted prehistoric villages, old mineshafts, barren landscapes and ancient woodlands. We could also perhaps add to this list: ancient wells and stone circles. He speaks of the landscape as 'a repository of folk memories, war and peace, life and death, fire and rain, sorrow and joy', as well as being 'a constant source of literary inspiration'. He closes the article by saying 'I do believe that when you follow an old drovers' road or pilgrims' trail, those footprints that went before you, although long gone, leave a legacy'.

This year we in the MWA are setting out on a pilgrims' trail, following in the footprints of Jesus around his native land, and we are going to think about the legacy which he has left for us. We begin right at the start of his ministry at his home town in Galilee. **Please read Luke 4:14-30.**

On 'Look North' on BBC1 this last week, we have watched Olympic medallists returning to their home towns. One day it was the Brownlee brothers, welcomed by a rapturous crowd in Millennium Square in Leeds; two days later in rather wet conditions, Lizzy Armistead travelled through the crowded streets of Otley in an open top bus followed by a posse of cyclists; then on Friday Jessica Ennis returned to a civic reception in Sheffield, was given the freedom of the city and was rapturously welcomed by an estimated crowd of 20,000 people.

It was a bit different for Jesus, wasn't it? Yes, he was starting to be recognised locally, and there was quite a buzz about him, so when he came home to the local synagogue on the Sabbath day all eyes were on him to see what he would do there. At first they were impressed and greatly surprised that the local carpenter's son could be doing so well. Perhaps the rumours which had reached them were true after all. But their initial reaction soon changed drastically. He did nothing for them, they didn't like his message, and they tried to do away with him.

Jesus chose his home town to make his mission statement. He had just come back from that life-changing experience in the desert, where he had spent 40 days and nights preparing for his work for God, and now at Nazareth he laid before his neighbours his plan of action, and they didn't like it, even though this way forward was quoted from the scripture they knew so well. They didn't want to hear it, because it was revolutionary, it disturbed their comfort zone. Jesus was intending to reach out to people not only on the fringe, but to people beyond the margins of their society, people whom they despised, people with whom they could not and would not mix. It was totally unacceptable, and they rejected him and his mission statement.

This looks like rather a bad start to any journey, but Jesus accepted the rejection and moved on. He certainly did not change his mission statement, as we see that being fulfilled wherever he went. What a difficult footprint that is for us to follow, because none of us likes to feel rejection of any kind, and it is certainly difficult to pick ourselves up and carry on when we meet such a reaction to what we are doing and what we believe.

Hilary Smith

1. Have a look at the mission statement of the British Province, which is found on page 17 of the Almanac at the back of the Daily Watchwords (Text Book). How well are we as an MWA circle or as a congregation living up to our mission statement?
2. If any member of the circle has ever experienced a feeling of rejection, they might like to share it with the group and speak of how they have coped with it and moved on.

