

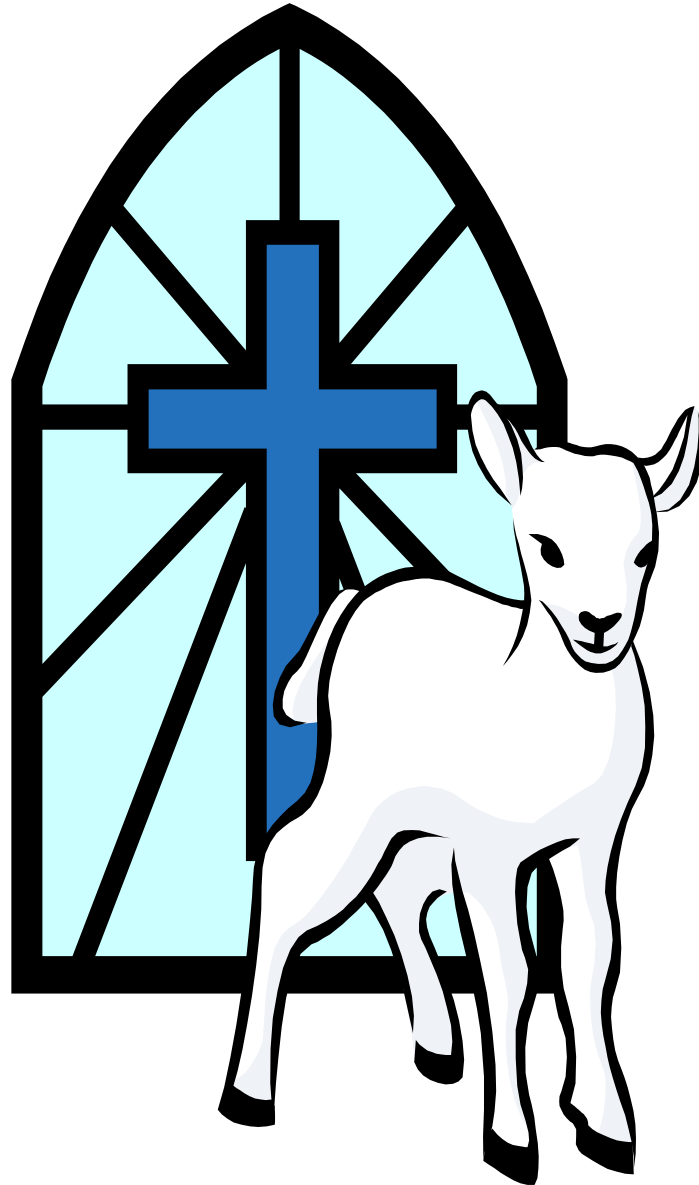
UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

Kingston upon Thames

CHURCH NEWS



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Church Diary

- Sun. 18 Feb. 10.00 Traditional Worship
11.30 Interactive Worship
18.30 Reflective Worship with Communion
- Wed. 21 Feb. 13.10 Lunchtime Service
14.15 Women's Fellowship – Olive Springham
- Sun. 25 Feb. 10.00 Traditional Worship
11.30 Interactive Worship with Communion
18.30 Reflective Worship
- Wed. 28 Feb. 13.10 Lunchtime Service
14.15 Women's Fellowship – Gloria Miller
- Fri. 2 Mar. 10.30 Women's World Day of Prayer, St Peter's, Norbiton
19.30 Women's World Day of Prayer, Tolworth URC
- Sun. 4 Mar. 10.00 Traditional Worship with Communion
11.30 Interactive Worship
Copy date for April Church News
18.30 Reflective Worship
20.00 Holy Space
- Wed. 7 Mar. 10.45 Men's Forum – Shirley Lecky – Latchmere House Resettlement
13.10 Lunchtime Service
14.15 Women's Fellowship – Devotional – Finlay Forbes
- Sun. 11 Mar. 10.00 Coffee
11.00 Combined Service
12.00 Church Meeting
17.00 Membership/Confirmation Meeting
18.30 Commissioning Service for Street Pastors
- Wed. 14 Mar. 13.10 Lunchtime Service
14.15 Women's Fellowship – America – Pat Brooks
- Sun. 18 Mar. 10.00 Traditional Worship
11.30 Interactive Worship
18.30 Reflective Worship with Communion

Dates for your Diary

The 'Training' Afternoons this year will be held on Sunday, 15 April and Sunday, 16 September, both at 3.15 for 3.30 pm in the Sanctuary

15 April - 'Supporting the Bereaved'

16 September - 'Talking about our Faith' (this session had to be postponed last year due to a bereavement in the Charlton family)

ALL ARE WELCOME AT ONE OR BOTH

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Minister's Letter
Do you want to be HAPPY?

Dear All,

There are passages in the Bible that you know would have been better delivered if you could hear the sound. Passages which, if read in certain ways, make you laugh out loud. One such passage is 1 Kings 22 v 1-28.

It is the story of Ahab and Jehoshaphat and their desire to hear a word from the Lord about a military campaign. A number of prophets tell them that all is going to go well. Yet somehow Jehoshaphat has an idea that there is more to be said. He asks Ahab if there is anyone else he can ask. 'Yes, there is Micaiah', replies Ahab, 'but he never tells me any good news'. 'Oh well, let's give him a try'. 'So Micaiah, if we go into battle will we win?' 'Yes definitely'. 'Now look, I have told you before - stop lying. Tell me the truth. Will we win?' 'No, you are going to get wiped out'. 'See I told you he never says good things about me'.

There though the humour ends. The prophet tells Ahab that he is to be overthrown and killed. And he is.

Do you have a friend who can tell you the difficult thing that you need to hear? Have you ever heard yourself shouting at the TV - 'why did someone let you go out dressed like that?' Or why didn't someone tell you that you did not need more plastic surgery? Why? Simple, for the same reason that you cannot tell your friends difficult things either. People get hurt and they do not like it.

Are you up for the challenge of listening to people who have truth to tell you that you do not want to hear?

What about making a start that we need to read our Bibles more and with more imagination?

Best wishes, Lesley

Derek's Comment

The Elders spent their annual day together on Saturday, 13 January. While we call it an "Away Day" we were, in fact, once again in our very comfortable and well equipped Training Room. We had time to spend with each other as Elders, share views, pray and worship and think about the future in various areas of the Church's life.

The Rev. Nigel Uden (our Moderator) joined us for our bring-and-share lunch, making a presentation and then leading a discussion in the afternoon on the role of Ministers in the URC. This was very helpful as it enabled us all to think again about what we expect of our Ministers and the many facets of the job. I think this made us all realise - yet again - that all of us, as members and friends, are in partnership with our Ministers and we must each share some of the responsibilities. For instance, how do we communicate with people who have not been long at the Church? Do we really try to get to know them and involve them in our activities?

During the morning we divided into our Core and Support Groups. You will recall these have recently been reformed following the Elders' election. Lesley suggested specific topics for each group to discuss and hopefully resolve. For instance, the Pastoral Support Group discussed our support for the bereaved and those without major life-changing events. In contrast, the Communications Group was asked to think again about the plasma screen in the Foyer Lounge and how we can ensure it is fully utilised.

So where do we go from here? We're all agreed that we need to improve our various means of communication with one another and also the community around us. The Community Ministry Group are now working to a plan based on a book called "Beyond the Good Samaritan" by Ann Morisy. The Youth Support Group has probably got the greatest challenge ahead. We are living in a town with a wide range of people, and it is time for us all to think again on how we can meet the needs of some of the categories of people who currently just pass us by.

I think 2007 is going to be a great year for the Church - if we can all pull together and be prepared to change. Kingston town is in a process of change and we need to keep in step with the times.

Derek Winsor

Pastoral News

Michael Burgess is in Kingston Hospital at the time of writing.

Olive Springham has had a cataract operation and is recovering well.

Hilda Tunley remains in the West Middlesex Hospital.

Heather Bly is now home from Tolworth Hospital.

Hugh Mayall has returned from Edinburgh and has totally recovered.

Mary Williamson is home from Kingston Hospital.

We think of **Winifred Green** and **Kathleen Clegg** who are both having ongoing treatment.

Our thoughts are also with **Jane Butcher** as she continues with her chemotherapy at home.

We pray for **Lesley** in her support and dedication to our congregation.

Our thoughts and prayers are also with those on our regular prayer list: Philip, Olwen and William Sawney, Malcolm Levy, Muriel Adam, Ken Trigg, Robbie Robertson and Rose Oming-Bali and Joshua.

Maggie Arnold



Thank You

After many years as a Church Neighbour, Brenda Parkins has decided to 'retire'. We are grateful to and thank Brenda for so faithfully looking after Area 9 (Surbiton/Portsmouth Road). It is good to report that Sue Watts has kindly agreed to take over from Brenda.

Joan Thompson
on behalf of the Pastoral Co-ordinators

Lesley's Address at Violet Singleton's Funeral

Violet has not had an easy life in many ways right from the start of it. Her life was shaped by her experiences in the home of her birth and from the war where she lost both of her parents and then raised both her brothers. She married and had four children - Madeline, Malcolm, Gerald and Anthony.

But she was not a home person. She liked to be out visiting friends, going round the shops, getting to the Church. It was there that her great determination was shown. Maybe more than that - you have to say - she was bloody-minded. I have never heard a physiotherapist say to someone 'do not walk' but I heard two say that to her. She did not like being on her own. She was without a partner for the last 40 years of her life. When she had worked outside the home she was a grafter. The references are still there that speak of her honesty and punctuality.

She was well known in Kingston with her routine and the shops that she regularly called in, including Paine's to check on her funeral plan. She had her routine and you could set your watch by it. People recognised her with - yes, it had to be mentioned, her trolley which gave her liberation.

She had a vivid imagination and her own definite views on events. Indeed 'definite' is a word that describes her well.

For Violet the last phase of her life, in some ways, has been a time when her best characteristics have come out. Her strength. This was the time when she showed commitment to others. Up 31 stairs every day by will and the strength, not of her legs, but her arms. The way that she faced her last illness was amazing. She was brave, but she was also worn out.

Now her life is over. The certainty is that the suffering of this age is behind her. No more pain. The Christian hope which was hers is of life begun again. She was rock certain of the presence of God beyond this life. She was a woman of very strong faith and not afraid to die. Indeed, if you raised it with her, she obviously thought you were a bit of an idiot. For some people that is more than they can believe. And it is clearly a matter of faith.

A woman who was always on the move, has now come to a full stop. She leaves us some lessons. As well as having something to teach us about determination, she also has something to teach us about being content to be still; something about the challenge that we need to work out our religion in our close and friendship relationships. Christianity is not just about faith, it also requires loving action.

Could it be that death is the opportunity for her to find a place where she can rest and be at home? That would surely be our prayer.

*A Tribute by Nigel Atkinson at his Father's Funeral:
Wilfrid Garrett Atkinson 1922 - 2007*

It's a privilege to be able to say a few words about Dad. We will inevitably feel sadness at his passing, but today should not be a gloomy occasion - rather it should be an occasion on which we can celebrate Dad's life with joy and give thanks to God for him.

For me, Dad was a true role model and I count myself fortunate to have had him for a father. When I was growing up he was always there for me, rarely too busy to spend time with me. I particularly enjoyed the violin and piano sessions that we used to have several times a week - indeed I'm sure that when I was preparing for violin exams he always did far more practice than I ever did, even though the accompanist got no certificate at the end of it!

Dad was not one to be swayed by the latest trends. I well remember hearing the click-click of his ancient typewriter as he typed out minutes of Esperanto committee meetings. However, he did eventually succumb to the latest invention - a "computer" that could do word processing! And that Amstrad word processor was still in regular use some 25 years later - which must be some sort of record. Among other things, he used it to compile the various drafts of his long-awaited book on Einstein's theory of relativity. It had long been a desire of his to show that relativity is something that can be readily understood through means of pictures and diagrams rather than equations; and what better, in his view, than to write it in the universal language of Esperanto. It is fitting that his book was finally published this year and, although he did not see the final print copy, he did complete all the work on proof reading and correcting it.

Of course, Esperanto was a big part of Dad's life, and he served the Esperanto movement, and in particular the London Esperanto Club, for nearly 60 years. At different times he took on the jobs of committee member, secretary, president, exam marker and choirmaster. He and Mum also made the most of seeing different parts of the world and visiting Esperanto friends in different countries. He will be much missed by all their friends in the Esperanto community.

Dad was by profession an engineer, and he always had a systematic approach to anything around the house. You could guarantee that whenever he designed and put up a set of shelves, for instance, it would never bend or fall down, the only drawback being that it might take a few years to get done! Similarly, whenever he acquired a new gadget, a new household appliance or even a new car he would do something that is quite rare these days... he would thoroughly read the instruction manual! He was always methodical. This was a characteristic that

would stand him in good stead when seven years ago he suffered kidney failure and had to start doing home dialysis four times a day. Not a task that any of us would relish - indeed a less methodical person would not be able to do it. But Dad simply did what was necessary, accepting his circumstances and never complaining about any of the treatments he had to undergo.

He was, of course, extremely grateful for the constant help and support of Mum - as nurse, cook, companion and much much more. She worked tirelessly, and we are all grateful to her for everything she did, especially in recent years when things were not easy. Thanks to her, Dad was able to enjoy a good quality of life right to the end.

Underpinning all of Dad's life was, I believe, his Christian faith. He was not an extrovert, but was a loyal member of the United Reformed Church - latterly in Kingston and before that in New Malden. He always tried to attend Sunday services whenever he could, even when getting into and out of the car was difficult. I think he was quite pleased to be able to try out the disabled facilities in the new URC building in Kingston just recently. St Paul wrote that the fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control - and I think you will agree that these characteristics were very evident in Dad's life.

So as we say farewell to Dad, let's follow his example as we ourselves run the race of life, secure in the knowledge that those who follow Christ will never be disappointed.



Beyond the Good Samaritan - A look at Chapter 2

This is the second part of the series about Ann Morisy's book "Beyond the Good Samaritan". Chapter 1, summarised in the January 2007 Church News, is about Mission through Community Ministry. Chapter 2 discusses Community Ministry (CM) and Discipleship.

Ann suggests most Christians (like me for example) have conservative horizons in expressing our discipleship. To give up a well paid job and suburban living to embrace authentic discipleship is a tall order. Some Christians seem to do it, but most of us just stay where we are expressing our commitment to our local Church, expressing commitment to neighbourliness and limiting ourselves to limited pleasures. Such "domesticated" private faith reduces our efforts for the Kingdom of God to the assemblage of modest virtues over and against equally modest shortcomings.

The real measure of Christian discipleship and of being a Church is the active expression of what Ann describes as "venturesome love". Typically, emphasis gets placed in our Churches on forming disciples who pray more frequently, read their Bibles more thoroughly and this, together with regular financial giving, are seen to suggest the key elements of discipleship. These activities, however, seem remarkably puny for those who claim to be the followers of Jesus who took himself to the cross.

Ann argues that the task of the local Church is not just to give Christians the opportunity to worship, but also to create opportunities for Christians and others to engage in public action. Church leaders need to give more attention to helping Church members with this aspect of their calling.

Involvement in *CM* provides a way of expressing "venturesome love" in a gradual way. It does not call for heroics, but does require us to take some risks and to 'put ourselves out' on behalf of others.

Affluence, even modest affluence, can have the subtle effect of making us less likely to be part of the community. We are inclined to buy ourselves out of a situation rather than contribute to the pattern of obligation, which is essential to community life. *CM* endeavours to take account of how trapped we are by our cultural mores and the seduction of affluence. *CM* enables a modest commitment to the struggle for the Kingdom of God. It is possible that through the grace of God we are transformed in the process.

In order to achieve this, Ann suggests that *CM* requires:

- The willingness to make a regular commitment of time (within one's capacity)
- The willingness to be alongside those who have had a different experience of life to one's own and are likely to see life differently
- The willingness to reflect on this experience.

The preoccupation and commitment of Church members to the internal life of the Church and its buildings do not feed a theological imagination. Ann says that preparing rotas, rehearsing for children's plays, working on an architectural survey etc. are not likely to generate themes which provoke stirring theological reflection. Our congregations need to take risks in faith more frequently. Most of us avoid risk - don't get involved, don't go out after dark, 'if you give an inch, people will take a mile', and so on.

Involvement in *CM* provides a supportive structure to rise above these psychological barriers, and it is an essential that the mission strategy of the local Church provides opportunities for people to learn that people who are

different from themselves can be trusted and provides opportunities for not always being in control!

CM can provide important stepping stones. Crossing the threshold of the Church can be a cause of anxiety, such that a stranger will not come in. Much of Sunday worship is completely inaccessible to those with a low level of religious literacy, and can require a steep learning curve in which only the highly motivated are likely to engage. CM provides a stepping stone which can make the local Church and, more importantly, the Gospel more accessible to people.

Ann describes a project where two local Churches, a Catholic and Anglican, advertised for helpers for a Sunday Centre for homeless people. Over 200 helpers from outside the church responded. The churches were totally unprepared for this outside response! Ann considers that outsiders will respond if there is something worthwhile, non-threatening and the Church is prepared to work with outsiders.

Ann winds up this chapter by saying that Christians concentrate on the 'text' of the Gospel without taking full account of the 'context'. CM enables Christians to respond to issues of the day by the linking of 'text' and 'context' by:

- Creating 'structures of participation' which encourage Churches to take discipleship seriously
- Provides a series of experiences which can enable people to break through conventional thinking
- Provides a focus which can attract the involvement of those outside the Church.

Community Ministry aims to promote discipleship rather than belief. In contrast to evangelistic endeavour, which begins by calling people to belief, CM seeks to encourage dialogue so that a sense of shared search and openness to each other's perspectives is achieved.

Next time the 3rd chapter is about "The link between Pastoral Care and Community Ministry".

David Richards

Sunday, 11 March, at 5.00 pm there is a meeting for all those who are interested in being confirmed/becoming church members.

It might be that you have already been in church membership/confirmed in another place and you will not need all the classes. Please speak to Lesley.

It might be that the timing of these classes does not work for you - again speak to Lesley

Some Thoughts from Suk In

A Korean living in England has some amusing and interesting experiences! For example, last week I was thirty minutes late for an appointment because of the traffic in our town. This week I arrived thirty minutes early to make up for it. Why was my hostess surprised? In Korea we do not make so much fuss about the exact time of appointments. It is more an upper social class custom. To me it feels a bit too perfect to always arrive exactly on time. I understand that in Victorian times in England it was correct for the lady to come late and the gentleman had to wait. The most important person would come late and show how important he was by how late he arrived.

In Korea when a group of people go out for a meal together, one person will pay for the whole table. The oldest or the most senior person or the one who issues the invitation will pay the bill at the end of the meal. It is my experience that here each person pays for him or herself. I find this rather embarrassing. It doesn't feel very friendly for each person to search for the correct money to pay for his own meal and not pay the whole table's bill. Perhaps it is a good plan in the English way because it means it does not make a burden for one person.

Another thing that is very different in this country is the lack of respect for each other. In my country we are careful to be polite in the way we address each other. I find it hard to call older or more senior people by their first name. We even have a special pronoun to address an older or more senior person. Even in school the children have to address their older colleagues with the polite title. I think this is something that English people could think about because it feels to me like a symptom of a lack of respect for each other that we so casually reduce even the oldest and most venerable people to the level of young children. Older people, to whom I have spoken of my feelings, tell me that it feels as if they are being stripped of their dignity when a young nurse, for example, calls them by the familiar first name instead of addressing them with the more formal courtesy.

When we first came to this country we found the people in the Church were calling the minister by her/his first name and this frightened us. We had never heard a minister spoken to with so little respect.

Thoughts on a Non-Event

It is interesting how the most depressing items of news may, if one thinks about them a little more, turn out not to be quite so bad as at first appeared. Let me make it clear straightaway that I never watch Big Brother and - apart from one time when I had a quick glance to see what it was all about - I have no desire to do so. The non-event which took place there a month or so ago more or less passed me by. One of the contestants (Jane Goody) was alleged to have made racist remarks to another. In fact, when the relevant news clip was shown *ad nauseam* for some days afterwards it became clear that the girl was too ignorant to be racist. She called an Indian contestant 'a poppadom'. And that was the extent of it. She used the expression because her vocabulary did not allow anything better (or worse, depending on your point of view). And she came across as a singularly nasty arrogant bully

whose victim just happened to be of a different ethnic origin. A really unpleasant role model for the thousands of youngsters who watch it, but hardly racist. But the media got hold of it (nothing like an allegation of racism to boost the circulation) and before you could say 'Sambo' (can one still say Sambo?) there was a full scale row. And this is where it gets encouraging. The main sponsor of the programme withdrew, Jade Goody's contract to advertise some sort of cosmetic was cancelled, the board of Channel Four 'considered their position' and the victim (Shilpa Shetty) said that she was not aware of being racially abused. She subsequently won the competition. It was great to see that the bad behaviour which had been encouraged because it was said to be good for the viewing figures was, in the event, seen to be counter-productive. **Fred Randall**

Feeling fit? We have been asked to include this advert from Oxygen: Ain't no mountain high enough: Oxygen on Three Peaks

There are a few places available on a team set to climb the Three Peaks (Snowdon, Ben Nevis and Scafell Pike) 27-29 July 2007 to raise funds for Oxygen. The cost is £349 per person including pick-up and drop-off, accommodation, food, a trained mountain leader and transport during the trip, and the trip is organised through Maximum Adventure.

www.maximumadventure.com/TheThreePeaks.htm
<<http://www.maximumadventure.com/TheThreePeaks.htm>> .

For more details contact: Elizabeth Man Rey - nameranon@yahoo.co.uk

or 07913 036 074

CHRISTIAN PEACEMAKER TEAMS (CPTs)

CPTs arose from a call in 1984 for Christians to devote the same discipline and self-sacrifice to non-violent peacemaking that armies devote to war. You will remember that Norman Kember was a CPT member when held hostage in Iraq.

In our visit to Palestine last year, we were privileged to spend a few hours with the CPT in the 'hotspot' town of Hebron - home to many Hamas supporters - on the West Bank; ostensibly Palestinian territory.

Our main contact was 78 year old John Lynes, one of the small team of five or six covering Hebron and surrounding villages, who daily risk injury and possibly death, in their attempts to transform lethal local conflict through the non-violent power of God's truth and love.

John's main role in the team is to walk Palestinian children to school and walk back with them at the end of school, reducing the risk of abuse and stone-throwing or attacks by Israeli settlers who live in the expanding settlement on the high ground above the town.

Conflict works both ways, with the need for strict security provided by the Israeli soldiers to prevent attacks by Hamas on the (illegal?) settlers. The CPT works generally to keep the peace and to mediate. The following are extracts from a routine report:

Friday - The team has observed that the new brigade of soldiers have implemented the school patrol order poorly. Each day the CPT between early morning and late afternoon accompanied local shepherds in nearby areas.

At around 5 pm soldiers were at the bypass road 317, preventing a villager from bringing his sheep into the village. Jack and two others responded. On the way down they could see the shepherd walking on the road into At-Tuwani with his sheep. The soldiers had held him for 15 minutes and threatened him. The CPT members waited near the soldiers' jeep until it left around 6 pm. In the evening a village meeting discussed a demonstration against a proposed low wall along the bypass road 317 the following day. They agreed there would be no violence against people or property and that they would not block the bypass road.

Saturday - The children were 45 minutes late for school as the police arrested two villagers and three Israelis; soldiers and police injured two other villagers who received treatment in Yatta.

Sunday - A quiet day with shepherds staying close to the village.

Monday - A villager from Sisiya reported that soldiers had asked his father where the young men of the family were. As it happened, they had spent the night in Yatta. The soldiers searched the tents of that family and one tent of another family. Mid-morning Janzen documented soldiers blocking the road to Yatta. A large front-end loader was scooping up dirt and dumping it on the intersection of the Yatta road and bypass 317. They left as soon as the internationals (inclg. CPT) arrived and a way was cleared for two tractors to go over.

Some children were playing in trees by the school route and wandered close to a field of settlers' trees. Janzen asked the children to play further away. Six settlers came running down, yelling at the children. Janzen and a colleague ran to stay between the settlers and the children, and got the children to go to the village. Janzen asked the settlers why they were scaring small children. The settlers screamed angrily up close to Janzen. Villagers arrived and there were heated exchanges until the security police and the army arrived. Later, a settler was spotted breaking branches of trees (to support their claim that the children had been causing damage). Later, shepherds reported that 17 olive trees had been cut down fairly close to the ground in a valley near At-Tumani.

The above, covering just four days, gives the flavour of the continued tension in the area, and how the CPT is greatly involved in protection and keeping the peace. I am not sure that I would have their sort of courage!

Philip Crump



Flowers for March

- 4th Pat Brooks & Family
- 11th Virginia & Ken Trigg
- 18th Roy Cullum
- 25th Brenda Ives



The Editorial Committee asked me to write an article on John Wycliffe. As I occasionally do an interview with people connected with the Church, I thought why not combine the two! Ed.



John Wycliffe (1324 - 1384)

- Ed. First of all, thank you for agreeing to this interview. It can't have been easy for you. I know we are greatly indebted to you for the first translation of the Bible into English, but can you tell me a little bit more about that?
- JW Well, I felt passionate that the ordinary people did not have access to any of the scriptures as the language of the Church was Latin. It is probably novel to you, but in those dark ages it was revolutionary.
- Ed. There were no printing machines, so how did you achieve your ambition?
- JW I gathered a few friends round me and set to work to translate the Latin Bible into English. I concentrated on the New Testament, which was completed in 1380, while my good friend, Nicholas of Hereford took on the Old Testament. I was at Oxford at the time, where I spent a large part of my life, both as a student and Master of Balliol. I then found some eager students to make copies of the books. Hundreds of copies of the New Testament, or parts of it, were made and passed around. If people couldn't read, they would listen and learn passages by heart and were in great demand for secret meetings. I have to say all the forces of the Church and the might of the Pope were against me, but the circulating and reading of the scriptures continued.
- Ed. I believe the Churches were seldom open and the services that were held were in Latin. No doubt this also troubled you.
- JW Most certainly. I selected my best students and sent them out as Jesus did of old "two by two, without purse or scrip". Their work affected the whole course of English history and inspired a spiritual revolution.
- Ed. I read you were in trouble with the authorities a few times. Tell us about one of the controversial issues.
- JW In 1381 I declared that the Act of Communion was symbolic and that the wine and bread did not actually change into the blood and

body of Christ, as previously preached, claiming rather that Christ was spiritually present at Communion. I'm afraid these ideas were too radical for many to support and I was excommunicated towards the end of my life. I went back to my vicarage at Lutterworth and worked harder than ever.

Ed. You may be interested to know that 150 of those handwritten copies survive to this day, some of them still beautifully illustrated. You will also be pleased to know that your ground breaking work continues; the founding of the Wycliffe Bible Translators in 1934 was a milestone and the pace of Bible translation is accelerating as it never has before with 1,941* languages now in progress across the world by all agencies. At the current rate, Bible translation will continue in every language group that needs it until 2038*.

You truly were a man of vision, well ahead of your time. Thank you for an insight into what you were able to achieve nearly 700 years ago.

** source Internet - too difficult to explain to JW! Ed.*

Help for Homeless People

Each year we fulfil a pledge to support Kingston Churches Action on Homelessness (KCAH) and the Kingston Churches Housing Association (KCHA) to the tune of £750 each - both doing marvellous work on our behalf.

Traditionally, the collection taken at the 10 am service on Homelessness Sunday (28 January this year) goes towards meeting this commitment. This January, however, the collection was not specifically dedicated to homelessness, with the result that only the normal amount was collected (£157).

There are some members and friends who like to support the Churches' work with homeless people, in which case they may like to make a donation. Monies and cheques (to Kingston URC) can be passed to Georgina Forbes or Brenda Parkins, or put in the collection bag if clearly labelled for Homelessness.

Phil Crump

The God Delusion

No, not a statement of unbelief, but the title of a book by the Oxford University Professor for the Public Understanding of Science, and true-blooded atheist, Richard Dawkins. I bought a copy cheaply on-line from Amazon just before Christmas, and couldn't put it down. The book has achieved a great deal of notoriety among Christians, particularly those of the evangelical wing, and some of my church friends have expressed surprise that I should have anything to do with the book. I am desperately sad to hear such surprise from Christians in the 21st century, for if ever there was an age in which the Christian faith has to stand up and answer its critics, it is the present age. I commend the book to you wholeheartedly, not as something to read and accept, nor as a book to read and regret, but as a challenge to be met and given a response.

Of course Dawkins is having a bit of an atheistic rant against religion in general, and the notion of God in particular. Belief in God, he says, is irrational, and in the philosophical sense I agree with him. There is nothing in the universe that constitutes any rational evidence for a belief in a super-natural God sitting, as it were, beyond the universe and operating it like a child with a complicated toy. Dawkins sees the God of the Old Testament as "the most unpleasant character in all fiction" and I can understand how he reaches that conclusion, and so would any Egyptian, for example, who reads about how his forbears got drowned in the Red Sea in pursuit of Moses and the Children of Israel. However, I might challenge the term 'fiction' and want to discuss how much of the Old Testament is myth, legend and historical truth.

However, I do not get the impression that most Christians in the 21st century really believe in a punitive God who uses plagues to smite the ungodly. Medicine has moved on a long way from that literal interpretation. Certainly most of the non-Christians whom Christians try to attract into the Church will find it hard to believe in that sort of a God. If our understanding of God has not moved on from the image of the old-man-with-a-beard-sitting-on-a-damp-cloud-dispensing-justice/retribution, then Dawkins has serious grounds to complain. But we cannot know God in the sense of having met God and having received a signed photograph from Him. Perhaps it is about time that we developed a concept of God

that more fittingly expresses the creative force that we all recognise and marvel at, that is in and around us, just as we have always believed God is.

Perhaps such a concept of God is what thousands of people are seeking, and are increasingly deciding that the Church does not offer them. Ken Bartlett challenged us, in his sermon on New Year's Eve, to re-think our faith and re-think what we do with it and because of it (yes, organists do sometimes listen to sermons!!). If you want something on which to sharpen your faith, try Richard Dawkins' book. If it doesn't do anything for your faith, you will be brought face-to-face with some valid criticisms of the not-so-Christian Church, and some useful and interesting bits of science on the way. Try this one for size: think of "an experience from your childhood. Something you remember very clearly, something you can see, feel, maybe even smell, as if you were really there. After all, you really were there at the time, weren't you? How else would you remember it? But here is the bombshell: you *weren't* there. Not a single atom that is in your body today was there when that event took place."

You are more than the parts that make you, and, I suggest, so is the universe. And that extra 'something' that is the power of creation and is beyond creation perhaps deserves to be worshipped as God. Read Dawkins and think through your own responses.

Tony Wenman



Handbook Amendments

Please make the following amendments to the 2007 Handbook:

- Page 10 Area 9 Delete 'Vacancy' and insert Sue Watts
- Page 28 Delete details for Jane (Ji Eun) LEE. (Jane is now permanently in Cambridge)
- Page 40 Andrew & Matthew WATTS - change 'M' to 'F'
- Page 42 Nicola WOOKEY - e-mail to read:
nicola.wookey@googlemail.com

Some Thoughts on Same-Sex Unions

The love that (once upon a time) dared not speak its name now apparently finds it necessary to shout it from the rooftops. This, I feel, is a great pity because, whatever one's views on the subject, there are some things (and a person's sexual orientation is one of them) which are quite properly private matters. For years I believed I did not know any homosexuals and then, one day, I realised that I must do; they just did not make a song and dance about it. We are now asked to consider whether they should be married in Church. It should be recognised that for years they were discriminated against and it was not until the Wolfenden Report in the 1960s that they were free to 'come out of the closet'. It was absolutely right that such discrimination should be lifted, if only because thinking about such matters was changing, and it was recognised that homosexuality might well be inherent. And if this was ordained by God, who were we to gainsay it? But we have now gone a step further and want to insist that all forms of sexual orientation are equal. I'm sorry. I see a difference between the sexes and go along with the French (*vive la difference*). I see marriage as a sacrament - and pseudo-weddings as an insult to the marriage service. But what about the blessing of a single-sex union? Well, yes. I can see that two people who are in love may well want their union blessed, and the Church should be seen to be as well disposed as its creed allows it to be. Doing things in the name of equality is, of course, trendy. It has resulted in proposals for a law which will insist that Catholic adoption agencies should go against their conscience and their Church's teaching, and put children for adoption with homosexual couples. How long before our political (and politically correct) masters insist that the Catholic priesthood should be open to both sexes? (And don't think it couldn't happen here.) Oh, and by the way, whilst I am quite happy, on the principle of live and let live, to refrain from condemning homosexuals for their views, I find it difficult to forgive them for taking the lovely English word 'gay' and giving it a new meaning.

Fred Randall

**WOMEN'S WORLD DAY OF PRAYER Friday, 2 March,
10.30 at St Peter's Church, Norbiton and 19.30 at Tolworth URC**

More Food for Thought from Suk In

When I first came to Britain I was amazed by the double-decker buses. They seemed to me to be a bit like the Disney style or Alton Towers or World of Adventure. I was amazed by their red colour and I liked to go upstairs and excitedly sit at the front like a small boy to see the world. I was surprised that the cars drove on the wrong side of the road, and waited for a bus at the wrong bus stop so that I went the wrong way! The driver sat on the wrong side of the car or bus and it was so dangerous to cross the road because we were looking in the wrong direction to see what was coming.

In the house the electric plug has three prongs for the three holes while in Korea we have plugs with two prongs. The washing machines open at the front instead of at the top. I could not believe that the water would not spill out. I could not believe the radiators on the wall because we have under-floor heating. Carpets on the floor look luxurious, but it seems to me they are not hygienic because they hold the dirt. People wear shoes in the house that they have worn in the street! Perhaps you are uncomfortable when we ask you to take off your shoes in our homes. We are uncomfortable when we don't take off our shoes in your house.

The language that you speak is very difficult for our tongues. The script is different and the syntax is strange. For example, in Korean the verb always comes at the end of the sentence and because the object is important it comes at the beginning. Koreans have no "th", "v" or "f" sounds. You may have noticed that it is hard for us to distinguish between "l" and "r"! A minister has problems with playing and praying! The long vowels are horrible and do you realise the same word is pronounced differently if it has a different meaning and some words which look different sound the same when they are spoken? The minister's husband is a lay worker in our Church. But his name is Ray. We live in New Malden but our lives are different here.

Visiting is different. In my country when you want to visit a friend you just turn up on the doorstep. If it is a meal-time, then you have some of the food with the family. Here, I must make an appointment and it has to be exactly at the appointed time. Not just in the morning or the

afternoon, but at 10.30 am or 3.00 pm. In the 21st century this is a good way of protecting our private space, but it breaks the human contact that comes from spontaneous visits. Even in the family you have to make an appointment to visit the homes of brothers and sisters or even your children. To me this seems like a joke.

Uneducated people are superstitious and believe in luck. They touch wood when they need protection and will not walk under a ladder. Now we have a high level of scientific knowledge, we should not believe these old wives' tales and yet we do. To satisfy their inner spiritual yearnings, many still reach out for supernatural ways to protect them from life's problems. In this there is no difference. We are all human and we all fear what we do not know.

The truth is that the differences do not matter. Since we are all human, we are all united in our need of faith in the living God. Love covers everything.



Thank you, Emily

A big thank you to Emily and her helpers, particularly You Sing, for providing a delicious lunch which was enjoyed by 28 people on Christmas Day. Thanks were expressed at the January Church Meeting, and we have had many thank-you's from people who enjoyed the meal and the opportunity to meet with other people on Christmas Day. Thank you, Emily, for making all this possible.

The Elders & Church Members

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**A WARM INVITATION IS GIVEN TO ALL WHO READ THIS MAGAZINE TO
COME AND SHARE IN OUR SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES**

Sunday Services:

Traditional worship	10.00 (communion on the first Sunday monthly)
Morning worship	11.00 (replaces 10.00 and 11.30 services on the second Sunday monthly)
Interactive worship	11.30 (communion on the last Sunday monthly)
Evening worship	18.30 (communion on the third Sunday monthly)
Contemporary worship	20.00 (on the first Sunday monthly)

Tea and coffee are served between the 10.00 and 11.30 services, before the 11.00 service (second Sunday monthly) and after the 18.30 service.

During the 10.00 service there are optional activities for young people who may wish to leave the service after the second hymn. Visiting children are welcome to join them.

Private Prayer The Sanctuary is open daily from 11.30 until 13.30.

Coffee and Tea Our foyer is normally open **every weekday and Saturday** from 11.00 until 14.00 for coffee and tea.

A Listening Ear If you would like to talk with someone about a matter of concern in the foyer between 11.00 and 14.00 on **every weekday and Saturday**, you should find someone wearing a badge who will be pleased to help.

Normal Activities:

Monday:	10.00 Parents & Toddlers (during school terms) 19.00 International Friends' Café
Tuesday:	10.00 Parents & Toddlers (during school terms) 16.00 The Room (during school terms) 20.15 Badminton
Wednesday:	10.00 Parents & Toddlers (during school terms) 10.45 Men's Forum (first Wednesday monthly except August) 13.10 Lunchtime service 14.15 Women's Fellowship (weekly except August) 19.30 Prayer meeting
Thursday:	16.00 The Room (during school terms)
Friday:	from 17.30 Girls' Brigade (during school terms) from 17.30 Boys' Brigade (during school terms)
Saturday:	from 18.00 Youth Club

**Kingston United Reformed Church
is a member of the Local Ecumenical Project
in Kingston Town Centre with its partners
All Saints Parish Church, in the Market Place
and Kingston Baptist Church, in Union Street**

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