

South Cliff Methodist Church

MINISTER: Rev. Peter Cross

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CONTACT

October/November 2014 Issue 6



There's the wonder of sunset
at evening,
The wonder as sunrise I see;
But the wonder of wonders
that thrills my soul
Is the wonder that God
loves me.

George Beverly Shea

Included in this issue:

From the Manse
What's on
Bible Study
Special Services
My Meeting with God
Mission News
The Invitation
Teach us to pray
Thoughts on Autumn

From the Manse:

Dear Friends,

Three things have occurred in my family in the past three weeks which have proved annoying and frustrating, and all three incidents have involved something that we rely on breaking down. First it was my wife's car which let her down late one night about five miles out of Scarborough. Its timing chain broke and the resulting repair bill would have been three times what the car was worth, so after only six years it will have to be consigned to the scrap yard. Putting aside the financial implications, this has caused much inconvenience to my wife in her work and her responsibilities to her ageing parents.

The second item to break was my computer. It tells me that the hard drive has become corrupt and I have lost access to all my files and important documents. (They are all backed up so I will be able to restore everything eventually, but it takes a huge amount of time which I cannot spare at the moment.) Again, it is only three years since I bought it brand new and although computers were unheard of when I began in ministry 25 years ago, it has become an essential piece of equipment and its loss has caused me immense hassle and annoyance – I am typing this letter on a borrowed computer which feels a bit like using someone else's toothbrush!

The third thing to break down was our toaster. This is by far the most difficult to accept. I can accept having to walk instead of ride in a car, and if I have to go back to pen and paper to write my sermons and keep my records up to date then so be it, but ask me to do without my slice of toast for breakfast and I'm in a bad mood all day.

These wearisome experiences are due in each case to something called "planned obsolescence". Put simply, that means that if you have ever heard yourself saying "They don't make things like they used to!" you are absolutely right. Whatever you buy now, be it a car, a computer or a toaster, it will be designed to last for a limited period of time after which you will be forced to go and buy another one. In the process of buying a replacement you will become aware of another feature of our consumer society: the sheer mind boggling volume of choice that you have.

Looking for a new toaster, I picked up an Argos Catalogue where I counted exactly 100 different toasters over fifteen pages ranging from under £5 to £200. They all do exactly the same thing, namely make toast – why does it have to be so complicated? Today, my wife takes delivery of her new car. She could have bought a Ford, a Vauxhall, a Toyota, a Honda, a Volkswagen, a Kia, a Suzuki, a Peugeot, a Citroen etc.etc. And each manufacturer offers dozens of different models, and each model offers a choice of engines and trim levels. In the end they all do the same job which

is to get you from A to B. Do we really need such a lot of different choices? I am all in favour of variety and choice but I think that part of the reason people get so stressed these days, is because you have so many decisions to make. The more options there are the bigger the chance of getting it wrong.



In life there is really only one choice that matters, and it is a choice that each of us has to make every day of our lives. It is the choice to live for God or for me. To live God’s way may be a bit inconvenient to us, and it may be costly or involve us having to put others first. Sadly, as I observe the world today, I see more and more evidence that people are choosing to focus on self rather than God. “My comfort is what matters, my rights and my beliefs!” Sadly this is the wrong choice. The Bible is unequivocal in emphasising that our responsibilities and our duties to others, specifically, the widows, the orphans and the foreigners in our midst – in other words the poor and the disadvantaged – must be paramount. This is not an easy choice to make, not because of the variety but because of the cost but make the right choice and, unlike computers or cars or toasters, the benefits will last for ever.

Peace and Joy,
Peter

TEACH US TO PRAY: Matthew 6:9-13

HIS PERSON..... Our Father
HIS POSITION..... Which art in heaven
HIS PRE-EMINENCE..... Hallowed be Thy Name
HIS POWER..... Thy Kingdom come
HIS PURPOSE..... Thy will be done
HIS PATTERN..... On earth as it is in heaven
HIS PROVISION..... Give us this day our daily bread
HIS PARDON..... Forgive us our debts...
HIS PROTECTION..... Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil
HIS PRAISE..... For Thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and glory, forever. Amen.



David Ravenhill

MUSIC & MESSAGE SERVICES



Sunday 26th October 6:30 p.m.

led by Rev. Mark Haynes

Sunday 16th November 6:30 p.m.

led by Dr. Margaret Pawson

Soloist: Malcolm Peart

The Life of Charles Wesley



Sunday 30th November 6:30 p.m.

led by Mrs. Anthea Purdy and
Northstead Singing for Fun Group

Advent Theme

CLOSER

Sometimes, we walk hand in hand
with God through lush green
pastures.

Sometimes, we walk heart to heart
with God through a vast wilderness.

In both, God is near.

In both, God is active.

In both, God is working all things
for our good and His glory.

Feelings are fickle. Circumstances
change. But, our God - our God is
always near.

God is closer than you've ever
imagined.

In Christ, we are. . . closer than we
sometimes feel.

Heartprints of God

Sierra Leone

There is really no further news I can
give. The well is finished and all
expenses are covered, but Marion
does not make it clear whether or
not, because of difficulties in
communication, she has actually been
able to pay off the debt and see the
well opened. In the few weeks
between her last emails the losses in
her community had risen from three
to over twenty with others infected
and we must feel deeply concerned
for the way the situation is
developing. Marion again asks for
our prayers and I'm sure we all
continue to offer them for Lalehun,
Kenema and all infected regions.

Joyce Dark

Muston and The Methodist Chapel

Edith and I recently went to the Scarecrow event which is annually held at Muston near Filey. As always it was very popular with coach loads of people arriving by the minute. As we walked along the main street, I happened to notice a wall, part of a farm building, I noticed that there were number of different phases of building, a regular patchwork stone and different types of brick. It struck me that it must be very old indeed. This set me wondering if Muston had an early history.

Later, feeling a bit tired of walking we went into the parish church, there were refreshments, and an art exhibition etc. more importantly-somewhere to sit for a while. On our way out I noticed that there was a booklet on sale "A History Of Muston by Kenneth Clegg," so I bought a copy. Later at home I started to read it, unfortunately it didn't really show a history dating prior to the doomsday book. However, I did come across a most interesting connection to South Cliff Methodists. I now wonder if it refers to a predecessor of the building we have today?

I tried to contact Kenneth Clegg and learned that he has died since writing the book, however, his wife has kindly given permission for us to reproduce an extract here.

The Methodist Chapel

The final service was held in October 1953 with the Harvest Festival on Sunday October 4th, followed by the Harvest Home Meeting on Monday the 5th. At this last Meeting the Chairman was Mr. Plumb of Hunmanby, Mr. Bradshaw of Reighton and the Rev. Arnold Cooper were the speakers with Mrs. Winter playing the organ. The wooden building was removed, and all that remains of this structure is the brick work which formed the foundations. They can be seen beneath the privet hedge of the garden of The Cottage.'

The man responsible for Muston gaining a Methodist Chapel was the Rev. J. V. Shrewsbury. He retired to Filey in 1885 after spending many years in Hull in charge of the Hull Circuit. At the first quarterly Meeting he attended, the Rev. Shrewsbury asked the question -"can anything be done to secure a chapel for Muston?" Methodists had

been meeting for some years at West House Farm by courtesy of Farmer Bayes, "in the largest room in the farm-house". At the next quarterly Meeting an un-named local butcher suggested that they should try and purchase a disused wooden chapel that stood on the South Cliff, Scarborough, having been replaced by an imposing Gothic structure. (This un-named butcher could have been Thomas Moore of Hunmanby Street, Muston.) He backed up his suggestion with a promise of a subscription.

The owner of this wooden chapel lived at Hunmanby. He was an active Methodist, an excellent speaker and he was much in demand for Sunday School Anniversaries. The Rev. Shrewsbury must have been very persuasive. At his second meeting with the chapel owner he was given the chapel for the use of the Muston Methodists. This worthy group were now faced with two problems - How to transport the chapel to Muston, and to find a suitable site.

The site they preferred was near to the church. The Rev. Shrewsbury with Captain Huntley the Circuit Steward and Mr. John Simpson, the farmer at Pilmoor went to see the owner of the site, a Churchwarden! After considering their request, the site owner told them - "It's too gain the church." - but he promised to call a Village Meeting to try and obtain for them a piece of common land opposite Muston Lodge. At this meeting the villagers voted 5 to 1 in favour of the Methodists, with the Primitive Methodists voting with the majority - but - it was all in vain. On taking legal advice they were told that only the Lord of the Manor could grant the land. A letter was sent to Col. J. Osbaldeston Mitford at Morpeth (Hunmanby Hall had been let since Admiral Mitford died in 1870). The letter contained details of the village meeting. The reply was a curt refusal !

The Muston Methodists then tried to buy part of a sand pit at the other end of the village, but the asking price was too high, and made agreement impossible. They had a chapel, but nowhere to put it!

They only course of action seemed to be to go back to their original choice. Mr. Foster of Weir Bridge Farm eventually agreed to rent them the land but as it was used as a cottage garden they had to gain the consent of the cottager. Fortunately he agreed. The next problem was to move the chapel from Scarborough to Muston.

The Rev. Shrewsbury and others held a prayer meeting in the disused chapel before they started to make plans to move it to Muston. They agreed that it would cause too much damage to try and dismantle the chapel. Captain Huntley suggested that it would be better to lift the chapel bodily off the ground, place it on a specially prepared carriage, then transport it by road to Muston - all agreed !

A Mr Gardiner, described as "a worthy Methodist wheelwright" was asked to prepare a carriage. The chapel was lifted on to its carriage - "with mechanical applications, the house of prayer was raised and deposited, unharmed with consummate skill, upon its novel carriage." One wonders what these 'mechanical applications' were jacks, levers? The chapel was now on its carriage - now it had to be hauled to Muston!

Mr. Coleman of Flotmanby provided a team of horses and they were yoked to the carriage. Then disaster !

Just as the carriage started to move a number of bystanders broke out into a loud cheer. This demoralised the horses which pulled in different directions, and the axles snapped.

This first attempt to move the chapel was abandoned and the horses were returned to Flotmanby. This breakdown occurred at the side of the road, so traffic could pass, but, snow began to fall. The Local Board ordered that a man had to be with the carriage night and day. The resourceful Rev. Shrewsbury turned the order to advantage and wrote - "for the next six weeks our caretaker's fire and night lamps advertised us well."

After the snow had melted a traction-engine was brought to haul the carriage which presumably had been repaired. Halfway on the journey the traction-engine broke down. It was repaired the next day and Filey was reached without any more trouble. The Rev. Shrewsbury tells us that "a doxology was sung at the base of the hill leading past the Station. The hill had recently been macadamised, and the engine showed signs of failing power, immediately a number of fishermen brought powerful hawsers and attached them, and many willing hands, my own included, helped the engine onwards until the destination of the chapel-on-wheels was reached." (The word 'Station' suggests going up Muston Road and Mill Hill, which in 1886 was much steeper than it

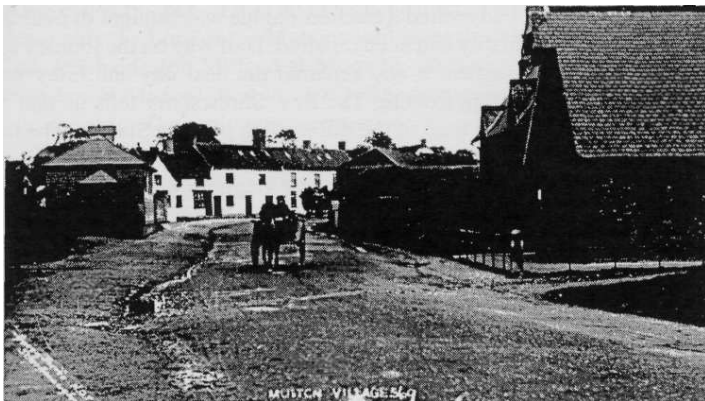
is today - or - did it refer to the signal-box at Muston Crossing?)

On arriving at Muston, the Rev. Shrewsbury jumped on to the carriage and held a short, outdoor service. We can only guess at how the chapel was removed from its carriage. Mrs. Shrewsbury and the Misses Coleman covered the seats that had formerly been at Scarborough Spa, new lamps were installed and -"the little place looked as smart as a drawing room."

The Opening-Day was cold with snow on the ground. The chapel was crowded in the afternoon and afterwards all went to Mr Bayes granary to enjoy a sumptuous tea that had been prepared by Mrs. Coleman. So many attended that they had three sittings to do justice to the tea. Afterwards, in the dimly lit granary, the subscriptions were added up. The total was enough to cover all the expenses and £5 was given to the Filey Methodists towards the cost of the clock on Trinity Church.

The final act of the Rev. Shrewsbury was to write to the Lord of the Manor, Col. Osbaldeston Mitford and in a triumphal letter informed him that the Muston Methodists had found a better site than the one the Colonel had refused them, and he finished off the letter expressing his belief that "the time was not far off when the law would allow them the right for chapel sites !"

The annual cost of running the chapel was about £6 a year. The Rev. Shrewsbury said that attendance was excellent, Tracts were distributed weekly, all seats were free, and a large Band of Hope was formed with a "Class full of Holy power."



King Street, c 1900 -
Wooden Chapel on
the left, roadman's
hut and shop beyond,
the school on the
right. Note the road
surface.

My Meeting with God

In July 2011 whilst suffering a breakdown for which I was being supported by my minister, I had attended a meeting at the church. I had many questions and was troubled, so went down to walk by the sea, about 7 pm on a lovely sunny evening.

I stood watching the waves when I noticed the lighthouse and cliffs went very gloomy, the sky went very dark and the sea went black. I remember saying out loud, 'I've never seen the sea so black!' I felt someone touch my left arm, I felt the hand and looked around but nobody was there. I felt someone standing very close to me and I was unafraid.

Suddenly out of the sea came a loud voice that said to me 'Whenever things look dark and gloomy I will be there by your side.' I stood there, for how long I do not know, when I felt the sea over my feet and looked down and everything was as it was, sunny and warm.

I told my minister, Rev. Jason McCullagh, the next day and it was then it really came to me that it was God who had come and spoke to me and he has been by my side in the dark and gloomy days as promised.

I am well now and praise God.

Margaret Gray

ALL WE CAN

Consolat is a member of the Batwa of Burundi, one of the world's poorest countries with over 80% of the population living on less than £1 a day.

The Batwa are a nomadic people of the forests marginalised and ostracised even from the mainstream of this poor country. Consolat, like many women of her community, is a skilled potter but the availability of cheap plastics has virtually destroyed the demand for her goods. All We Can's partner in the area, Christian Union for Education and Development, has been working with All we Can since 2011 to find solutions for the Batwa's problems. Now Consolat's village has received training in farming methods and is helping the Batwas to claim their legal right to lands so that they can confidently invest in them. 'Now' says Consolat, 'I have my own house, my own plot and I can dig my own toilet. I grow cassava and bananas. I have left the place of slavery in which I was'.



Methodist
relief and
development

Joyce Dark

What's on at South Cliff Methodist Church

Sunday 5th October

10:30 a.m. Morning Worship - Mrs Christine Herbert

6:30 p.m. Evening Service - Rev. Ann Staton

Sunday 12th October

10:30 a.m. Morning Worship - Major Norman Armistead

6:30 p.m. Evening Service - Rev. Peter Cross

Sunday 19th October

10:30 a.m. Morning Worship - Mrs. Kath Charter

6:30 p.m. Evening Service - Rev. Denise Free

Sunday 26th October

10:30 a.m. Morning Worship - Mrs. Patricia Mollon

6:30 p.m. Music and Message Service - Rev. Mark Haynes

Sunday 2nd November

10:30 a.m. Morning Worship - Mr. Bruce Clark

6:30 p.m. United Service at Westborough

Sunday 9th November

10:30 a.m. Morning Worship - Rev. Nigel Spencer

6:30 p.m. Evening Service - Rev. Rosie Coles

Sunday 16th November

10:30 a.m. Morning Worship - Rev. Peter Cross (HC)

*6:30 p.m. Music and Message Service - The Life of Charles Wesley
led by Dr. Margaret Pawson and soloist - Malcolm Peart*

Sunday 23rd November

10:30 a.m. Morning Worship - Rev. Bruce Russell

6:30 p.m. Evening Worship - Rev. Denise Free

Sunday 30th November

10:30 a.m. Morning Worship - Rev. Peter Cross

6:30 p.m. Advent Music and Message Service

led by Mrs. Anthea Purdy and Northstead Singing for Fun Group

REGULAR WEEKLY EVENTS

Wednesday at 9.45 a.m. Holy Communion

Thursday at 9.30 a.m. Prayer Meeting at Flat 2, 9-11 Granville Road

Thursday at 2 p.m. Thursday Friends

Friday at 7 p.m. Indoor Short Mat Bowls

Calendar of Events

October 2014

Tuesday 7th October	2:30 p.m.	3D - Ruth - OT Heroes Rev. Peter Cross
Monday 13th October	7:30 p.m.	Monday Night is Music Night
Tuesday 14th October	2:30 p.m.	3D - The Rainbow Centre Margaret Arnall
Saturday 18th October	10.30 a.m.	Church Gift Day Coffee Morning
Tuesday 21st October	2:30 p.m.	3D - Where I've been and where I'm going. Rev. Clare Stainsby
Tuesday 28th October	2:30 p.m.	3D - Community Payback Sheila Johnson
Wednesday 29th October	10:15 a.m.	Church Coffee Morning

November 2014

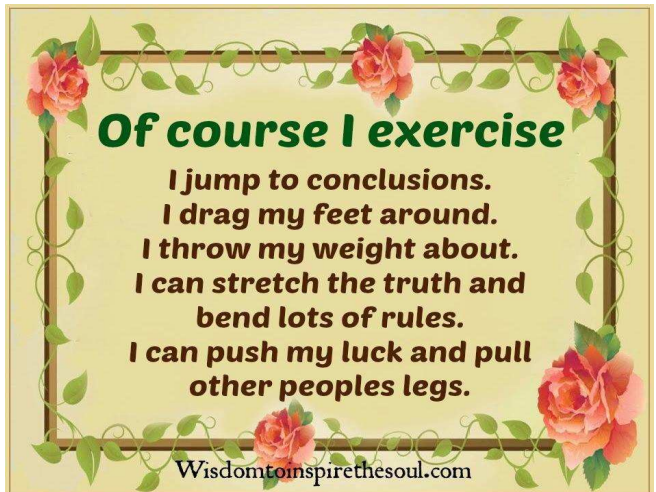
Tuesday 4th November	2:30 p.m.	3D - Nehemiah - OT Heroes Rev. Peter Cross
Tuesday 11th November	2:30 p.m.	3D - 'My Music' Frank James
Wednesday 12th November	10:15 a.m.	Church Coffee Morning
	7:30 p.m.	Stewards Meeting
Monday 17th November	7:30 p.m.	Monday Night is Music Night
Tuesday 18th November	2:30 p.m.	3D - Working in Guyana Brian Heap
Tuesday 25th November	2:30 p.m.	3D - 'Change me Lord' Angelo

Bible Society



Mrs Lorn Oun Moun Ta, a Cambodian village elder, writes 'The Bible transforms communities – I've seen it! I see people stop relying on themselves and instead learn to trust God'. She runs a children's literacy class and enables children to read and understand the Bible. Through projects like this, Bible Society plans to reach 20 million children across the world by 2020, enabling them to discover the scriptures. This is The Big Mission and it includes England. Our project is Open the Book. It means taking Bible stories to primary schools and it now reaches ¼ million children throughout the country on a weekly basis.

Joyce Dark



20. HUNTING
19. BACON
18. TROUBLE
17. TONE
16. STOOL
15. SHORT
14. POWER
13. FAR
12. HEAVEN
11. DRESSING

10. HEALTH
9. SMILE
8. BOY
7. ROLL
6. BOAT
5. TAKING
4. ENGLISH
3. LINE
2. MAGIC
1. COCKTAIL

ANSWERS TO FIND THE COMMON DENOMINATOR:

Worship is a way of living, a way of seeing the world in the light of God . . . to rise to a higher level of existence, to see the world from the point of view of God.
A. J. Heschel

THOUGHTS ON AUTUMN

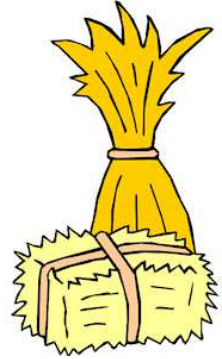
'Winter's Ahead' we are heard to sigh,
Summer has faded, and Autumn is nigh.
In woods and fields, and gardens too,
The shades of Autumn come into view.



Brighter colours, disappear fast,
Gone for a while, not here to last.
Now it's yellows, and golds, on trees and hedges,
Gardens dry over, plants taken from ledges.

For as with all life, changes abound,
Different scenes, all around to be found.
And as we prepare for that late season
Others too, make change for that reason.

Birds fly away, to find summer elsewhere,
And creatures store food, as they too are aware.
Mice, dormice and squirrel, all making room,
And hoard their food, as cold days start to loom.



Our fields have been ploughed,
Their yields have been stored,
With barns that are full,
We will reap the reward.

But as we prepare let us not forget,
Those less fortunate, who may not get
A warm cosy home, or even a meal,
And that touch of friendship we all like to feel.



So as days grow darker, and we close the door,
Don't close it completely to those who need more,
For remember, a smile too, can play a part,
And keep the sunshine of warmth in your heart.

by Carol Beamson



THE INVITATION

Certainly, one of the most compelling aspects of the Bible is the personal invitation to come to God through his Son, Jesus Christ. The invitation from Jesus himself to every person is one of the Bible's most powerfully comforting messages.

The images connected with these invitations are deeply significant in and of themselves. The hungry and thirsty are invited to come and be satisfied. The guilty are invited to come and be forgiven. The broken and weary are invited to come, be lifted up and made whole. The sinner is invited to come to Jesus and be saved.

Christianity is not first a philosophy or a comprehensive worldview. It is an invitation from God to individuals. "If anyone..." Jesus said. Anyone is invited. All are invited. All are addressed in "Come to me..."

Behind this is the gracious love of God for those who feel unloved and deserve justice, not forgiveness. The invitation is not to a way of life or a system of theology. The invitation is "Come to me." Directly into the heart of the Father himself. He invites you. He has made the way. In this invitation is the guarantee of God. Come, and "I will..." Come and drink. Come and be saved to the uttermost.

We are invited by God himself, to God himself to receive from God himself a salvation that is God himself. All that is asked of us is to come. We cannot add anything to the simplicity of this invitation.

To come to Jesus is to hear the Gospel and believe it. Blessings to the one who takes all that the Gospel demands and means and refuses to hear it apart from clearly saying, "First, we must come to God, by faith, through Jesus."

There is no invitation to salvation except the invitation from Jesus, to come to Jesus. The Lord Jesus Christ, the incarnate God, the one mediator who is our salvation says "Come to me." To those of us who believe that in Jesus crucified, risen and exalted, God embraces us without reservation, this invitation is the heart of the Good news.



Michael Spencer

FIND THE COMMON DENOMINATOR

e.g.	FLAT	(FISH)	BONE
1.	PRAWN	()	PARTY
2.	BLACK	()	MOMENTS
3.	BORDER	()	DANCING
4.	BROKEN	()	APART
5.	BREATH	()	MUSTARD
6.	GRAVY	()	TRAIN
7.	ARCTIC	()	OVER
8.	PAGE	()	WONDER
9.	WINNING	()	PLEASE
10.	GOOD	()	FARM
11.	FRENCH	()	DOWN
12.	SEVENTH	()	SENT
13.	SO	()	FETCHED
14.	FLOWER	()	POINT
15.	CUT	()	SHRIFT
16.	FOOT	()	PIGEON
17.	SEMI	()	DEAF
18.	STOMACH	()	SHOOTER
19.	SMOKED	()	SANDWICH
20.	FOX	()	LODGE

submitted by Joan Taylor

Out of the mouths of babes...

My granddaughter, Elsie (7), was treating us to a rendition of 'My Favourite Things'. Concerned that she was in too high a key I told her she needed to be lower. Still singing she sank to her knees. She wondered why we were laughing.

While travelling on an aeroplane with her 4 and 2 year old daughters, a young mum worked at keeping them busy so they would not disturb others. When the pilot's voice came over the intercom for an announcement, Catherine, the younger girl, paused from her activities and put her head down. When the pilot finished she whispered 'Amen'. Perhaps because there had been a recent disaster, she thought the pilot was praying.

When my son Dan was two, he went to stay at his Nan's. For tea they had sugar snap peas and Dan asked what they were. His Nan explained 'they are just peas, love, you like peas.' Dan turned up his nose, then said, 'I prefer them when they have just been born.' We did smile.

When I was a pastor of a church early in my ministry, my daughter, Libby, asked me 'Dad, are we famous?' 'No Libby, we are not famous.' She thought for a moment and then said rather indignantly, 'Well, we would be if more people knew about us.'



submitted by Rosemary Kidd

CHRISTMAS CONCERT

by

The Staxton Singers

Monday 1st December at 7.30pm

Admission £5

Seasonal refreshments included



Mission Matters

Recently the World Mission Fund gave a grant of £1,032 to the United Church of the Solomon Islands to enable nurse aides at the Helena Goldie Hospital to upgrade their nursing skills. This hospital was the first in the islands and is owned and run by the United Church with some government help. We have two mission partners working there, but most workers are 'aides' without recognised qualifications who will soon be phased out so Jenny and Graham, our mission partners, are



providing some basic education to prepare the aides to apply for the nursing diploma. Eleven have now passed the basic writing test. 'Access to education and training is a great liberator' says Steve Pearce, our partnership co-ordinator for Asia and the Pacific. 'Often it only takes a small amount of money or an affirming word to bridge a chasm and make that access possible'.

Touch of Hope is helping people in the Balkans still suffering from the losses and bitterness of the 1991-2001 wars to find reconciliation and peace. It is an ecumenical project comprising skilled and trained peace workers, one of whom is Clive Fowle, a minister in the Rugby and Daventry Circuit. Ljubica's story shows what can be achieved. Her husband died in 1988 and she and her two daughters were just adjusting to the situation when war broke out. She speaks of the scars which remain, the sorrow for friends lost, the poverty, their town destroyed and their home totally wrecked. But Touch of Hope runs workshops which bring together Serbs and Croats and gives training in reconciliation skills for church leaders and local communities so that Christians are empowered to become channels of healing and reconciliation in their communities. For Ljubica these workshops are a joy. She meets new people and finds new understanding and she can face life again.

Joyce Dark

Never be in want while you have a God to go to; never fear or faint while you have a God to help you; go to your treasure and take whatever you need – there is all that you could want.

C. H. Spurgeon

Bible Study - Mark's Gospel

Reading: Mark 1:5-8

Last time we met John the Baptist and considered the importance of his message and ministry in the Salvation Story that Mark is about to unfold. As we read on in the first chapter, we discover that his appearance caused quite a stir and though his message



was hard and uncompromising, the people were ready to listen to him. *(Mark 1:5 And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins)*

There could be many reasons why they were so open to his preaching. Firstly he told them what they knew in their hearts to be the truth. They recognised that through John, God had broken his silence. Four hundred years had passed since the last of the prophets had spoken and there was a real hunger among the people for the authentic word of God. They recognised this in John's message and even though what he said was uncomfortable and difficult, they were more than ready to listen. John gave them what they needed, not just telling them what they should do, but giving them a sign, Baptism, through which they could declare their desire to serve God and express their repentance.

Perhaps Mark got a bit carried away when he said *all* the people of Jerusalem came to see John, but clearly something wonderful is happening here and John's ministry has triggered a major return to God by the people. For Mark, this indicates the arrival of the special time of Salvation, and opens the way for the ministry of Jesus. For all his success and for all the appeal of his message, John never saw himself as anything other than the one who prepared the way for God's Anointed One, the Messiah. *(Mark 1:7-8 He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.")* Mark is very clear about John's position in relation to Jesus. Given all the fuss around him, no doubt some of the people would think that John must be the Messiah, but John never leaves any doubt that this is not so. John likens himself to the humblest and lowest slave of Jesus. Caring for a man's sandals was a dusty

and dirty job reserved for the lowest of the low, but John does not even consider himself worthy to do that for Jesus.

John lifts the expectations of the people by promising that when Jesus comes he will not only match his own ministry but will far surpass it. As John has baptised with water, Jesus will baptise with the Holy Spirit. This is a phrase which has many levels of meaning. We can understand water baptism as meaning immersed in water, but in what sense can a person be immersed in the Holy Spirit? When Pentecost came three years or so after this, the disciples were “immersed” in the Spirit, but it is unlikely that would be in John’s mind at this time. To understand his meaning we must compare the passage with the same story told by Matthew in Matthew 3:11. *“He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire”* mention of fire turns our thoughts towards judgement. Given that the word for Spirit can also mean wind or storm, the whole thrust of John’s meaning was that Jesus was coming to Judge. If this were so, that would explain his earnest plea for repentance in order that the people might have no fears at the time of judgement. Perhaps that is why by Matthew 11:3 it seems that John is beginning to wonder about Jesus because he hasn’t turned out as John was first expecting. *Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another? Matt 11:3*

With the benefit of hindsight we can understand the Baptism in the Holy Spirit through Jesus which John promises here as God’s great gift to us. It does in some way judge and refines us, because it holds up our life against the ideal of Jesus and we see how far short we fall of God’s will. But Holy Spirit Baptism is more to empower us, to recreate us, to give us new birth and new life in Jesus. Jesus will overwhelm us, fill us, and permeate every part of our entire being with the Holy Spirit. That is the promise, and that Baptism will initiate the world wide proclamation of the Good News.

The preparations are made, the scene is set and we wait with bated breath for what will follow.

Peter

Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, there's just something about that name
Master, Saviour, Jesus - like the fragrance after the rain
Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, let all Heaven and Earth proclaim
Kings and kingdoms will all pass away
But there's something about that Name.



Bill and Gloria Gaither



Don't shrink God!

Aslan says to Lucy: 'every year you grow, you will find me bigger.'

God says this to us. We can never reach His limits because He has none.

Think about the 'OMNI'S'

Omniscient – there's nothing he doesn't know.

Omnipresent – there's no place where He isn't there

Omnipotent – there's nothing He cannot do.

When our problems seem to get bigger, God does not get smaller?

NO NEVER!

Nothing is too difficult for him - Jeremiah 32:17

Faith is the key that unlocks all the great things God has for us.
Don't let's under-trust Him.

Stopping to help

A little girl came home late for supper. Her mother made the expected irate parent's demand to know where she had been.

The little girl replied that she had stopped to help Janie, whose bicycle was broken in a fall.

'But you don't know anything about fixing bicycles' her mother responded.

'I know that' the little girl said. 'I just stopped to help her cry'.

Not many of us know anything about fixing bicycles either. And when our friends have fallen and broken not their bicycles but their lives, none of us knows how to fix that.

We simply can't 'fix' someone else's life, even though that's what we would like most to do.

But like the little girl, we can stop to help them cry.

*'Rejoice with those that rejoice, and weep
with those that weep' Romans 12:15*

Murray Lancaster

