

Moravian messenger



January
2013

Dr. Peter Gubi writes about

Crossing the Threshold

Crossing the threshold of a New Year often brings with it expectations of opportunity for change. There is a desire to create new resolutions; a wish for something to be different in various aspects of our lives. We annually cross this threshold in hope. Yet, the reality is that often little, if anything, changes. New resolutions are soon breached as we resort to familiar patterns of being and doing, in spite of our best intentions. Default positions kick-in as we unconsciously act out well-practiced attitudes and behaviours. Our hopes wither and deflate, and we chastise ourselves with 'whatever happened to our New Year resolutions?'

Perhaps, our mistake is in thinking that something fundamental can change simply because it is a New Year! The hope of a New Year message rarely emphasises the effort and discipline that is needed for fundamental change. It is given over to God and our good-intention, with little

investment of effort, to bring about the change. Yet, change within 'self', including spiritual growth (never mind dieting!), is more like a rock climb than a fell walk.

Each 'hold' has to be gingerly sought out and tested, and invested with trust, before the full weight of a fundamental shift within our 'self' can occur. It requires building strength and fostering discipline. It is a 'working-at' process rather than an 'arrived-at' process.

If one studies scripture from many faith traditions, including our own, we find that spiritual growth often occurs through wounds and set-backs, exile and wilderness. Resurrection seems not to be able to happen without crucifixion. To move on in faith is often to experience, endure, and then transcend, the scrapes and bruises that life presents - much as a rock climber has to feel and overcome the tiredness in arm and leg, and the pain of the scratching and knocking of limbs against hard, sharp rock. Yet, it is through experiencing, enduring, and then transcending the pain, that stronger glimpses of the light and the truth of God can be experienced as healing and growth-enhancing. Spiritual growth and change requires discipline and effort: daily prayer; small acts of grace; little shifts in thinking such as gradually learning to see glimpses of Christ in all things and all people; reading scripture and applying its wisdom to personal circumstance; conversing with fellow pilgrims. These all add to the gentle ploughing of new furrows in spiritual well-being. Expectations of large leaps and strides, or the hasty ploughing of new furrows, are unrealistic. They lack the underpinning test of trust that acts as the foothold for the next small move needed to enact change.

So, this New Year, may we resolve to see the value and miracle of small, but nonetheless significant, shifts, as we work at the discipline that is required for fundamental change in our spiritual lives, and in other aspects of life. May we come to foster realistic expectation, and embrace the gingerly-made steps as being more fundamental than the large leap that carries fragile promise - but which is likely to be broken because it is fragile. For in doing that, we won't be disappointed when we cross the threshold of this New Year.

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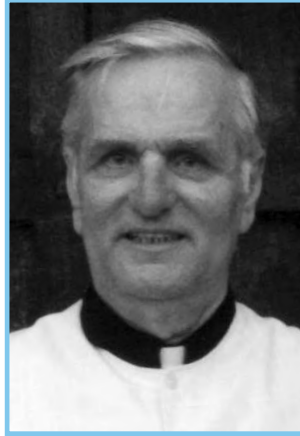
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In Remembrance Brother Geoffrey Tate

Brother Geoffrey Tate was born in Yorkshire and baptised at Horton Moravian Church. While Geoffrey was still young, the family moved to Lytham St. Annes. Although there is no Moravian Church there, the Moravian connection continued and in 1949 Geoffrey entered Fairfield College to begin training for the ministry. Study was interrupted by National Service in the Air Force but he completed his course and was ordained in 1956 when he became minister at Wheler Street in Manchester. In the same year, he married Joan Beeley of Fairfield, the beginning of a long partnership of love and mutual support. Kathryn and David, the two children of the marriage, eventually with their partners and grand children, were all added to the family and were all, naturally, a great joy to Joan and Geoffrey.

David and Kathryn wrote their own brief tribute: "It's so sad to have lost Dad after his long battle with prostate cancer. Remembering the happier days and the many people he shared his life with and supported through his ministry, let us remember him for all the good work he has done and the many lives he has been part of. A great man!"

In 1958, Geoffrey and Joan moved to Jamaica where he served successively at Springfield, Nazareth, Salem and Carmel. Each of these large congregations had a number of outstations, which meant a great deal of travelling, often over rough country roads, in some cases, hardly roads at all. In the early days he travelled on horseback. Perhaps his skill as a horseman owed something to the fact that earlier



Tates had been race horse owners! Family tradition liked to claim that one of the horses even won the Grand National. Geoffrey had a satisfying and fruitful ministry in Jamaica, perhaps with a particular emphasis on youth work, especially the Boys' Brigade.

Returning to England in 1976, he continued his ministry here, first at Queen's Park, Bedford and then a long ministry in Birmingham, helping to strengthen the relationship between the United Reformed and Moravian churches at Sparkhill and to establish a truly united congregation. Those who worked with him speak of him as an encourager, helping people to develop and make the most of their gifts and abilities. One of Geoffrey's particular interests at this time was developing a ministry of prayer and healing. This concern was also reflected in his work as hospital chaplain. His interest in working with young people continued and he is remembered by staff and students at the Provincial Summer Camps for all he did there.

Br. Tate retired from full time ministry in 1997 and though he and Joan enjoyed retirement, with many holidays abroad, he continued his ministry in many different ways, serving wherever he was needed. The full church at his funeral service on November 21st, with tributes from URC and Methodist ministers as well as from Moravian colleagues, witnessed to the affection and respect in which Geoffrey was held.

This is an abridged version of Br. Fred Linyard's funeral address.

dissipates from everyday events. As January progresses the days are beginning to lengthen and some plants such as snowdrops and aconites are beginning to push their way up through the soil - a sign of hope for the year to come. In time and with prayer we too can begin to feel God's breath once more surging through us.

The new year will have triumphs and disasters for us all but as we stand on the brink of that year I am reminded of the hymn by Catherine Winkworth:

*If thou but suffer God to guide thee,
And hope in him through all thy ways,
He'll give thee strength, whate'er betide thee,
And bear thee through the evil days;
Who trusts in God's unchanging love
Builds on the rock that nought can move.*

When next you are walking in a garden, or through a park and see a clump of snowdrops, hellebores or flowering viburnum, let your heart soar in silent prayer. Happy New Year!

A word from the Editor

**"Prayer, the church's banquet, angel's age,
God's breath in man returning to his birth."**

In trying to find inspiration to write this month's editorial, I was drawn as I often am to read poetry. George Herbert's poem 'Prayer' stopped me in my tracks, it is such a vivid collection of images sketched with words. We do feast and are filled by prayer. 'God's breath in man returning to his birth' is a wonderful description of how God gives us the breath of life and through prayer, we can perhaps, return that life force to Him. The chasm between us is narrowed if only momentarily as 'heaven in ordinary' can be glimpsed as we pray. Prayer is the quiet voice of peace that calms us and allows us to feel God's presence, if only we let it.

New Year is not my favourite time of year, as winter still lies ahead of us and it seems an eternity before the shoots of spring erupt in joyful harmony. But everything must have its season and beneath the soil new growth is beginning even if the soil appears lifeless and barren. Sometimes our lives may seem to be anchored in frozen soil as we are battered by life's storms and the inner joy



MORYAC Weekend

Where: Guy Chester House, Muswell Hill

When: 17-19th May 2012

Who: Any person age 9-17 on 31st August 2012

Cost: £100 for whole weekend
£25 day fee for the Saturday only

What is it? A chance for children and youth leaders to get together, share good ideas and gain some knowledge while having fun and building friendships.

Why come? It is an opportunity to be inspired and reinvigorated for your work with children and young people, to feel that you are not alone or just a small number, and to build a support network for your work with children and young people. This is usually not a relaxing, lazy weekend but a period of thinking, reflecting and learning.

Booking forms and information from Joy Raynor
youth@moravian.org.uk 01753 553549

Summer Camp 2013

Where: Fulneck School, Yorkshire

When: 27th July - 3rd August

Who: Any person age 10-17 on 31st August 2013

Cost: £250 includes all food and activities

Discounts: £20 if you book before 31st March.

What is it? A chance for young Moravians to get together and spend a week having fun, learning together, growing in faith and making lifelong friends.

Why come? It is an opportunity to make friends or meet up with friends made in previous years, refresh your faith, be challenged, experience living with other young people from across the province, get to know a small group of adults and learn what it means to be a Moravian.

Booking forms and information will be posted out to all previous attendees or can be obtained from your minister or Joy Raynor youth@moravian.org.uk 01753 553549



One in a Million

It's very unlikely you've missed that fact that youth unemployment has made headlines. In November the number of unemployed under 25s finally crossed the threshold to 1,000,000, apparently the highest since records began.

This announcement came as researchers from Frontier Youth Trust (FYT), Church Urban Fund and Churches Together in England (CTE) were collating "One in a Million", our report about young people's experiences of unemployment. Over 100 young people from across the country told us about their experiences of unemployment and suggested changes that would make a positive difference. Alongside hearing from young people first hand, we reviewed statistics, other research reports and some projects already supporting young people seeking work.

What we found...

Young people have been hit harder by the recession than older adults, with unemployment rates of 22% versus 6%. Unemployment in early adulthood has been found to have harmful effects on future job prospects which persist for many years.

Young people's experiences of Job Centres were almost universally negative. Common descriptions were "rude", "not bothered", "viewed me like it was my fault" and "you're just a number". This may be why they repeatedly identified the need for family or friends to listen, encourage, motivate, provide practical advice and financial assistance.

Young people feel caught in a vicious cycle: they can't get work without experience, and can't get experience without work. Even voluntary work is hard to secure.



Although qualifications are helpful, they frequently reported finding that employers considered their qualifications insufficient or inappropriate preparation for employment.

The consistent message was that unemployment is about much more than not having a job or surviving on benefits. It undermines self-confidence and sense of purpose. It stigmatises. It causes a loss of hope and dignity in people who should be looking forward to their future. In response to this report, Bishop Roger Sainsbury (FYT President and Chair of CTE Urban Affairs Group) wrote: "we must recognise that if we hide our eyes from the pain of youth unemployment a whole generation of young people could reject Christianity. It should be the desire of Christians to give young people purpose, direction, order and dignity that motivates them to challenge unemployment."

What we intend to do...

Contrary to the image of a mythical 'care-free youth', the young people that took part in this research have deep aspirations and are making serious efforts to find employment. They are optimistic about work but are anxious about their futures. Please join us in standing with them as we seek to respond to these issues by:

- helping young people to voice their stories so that the impact of their unemployment is known and recognised
- equipping churches to support unemployed young people
- encouraging churches to recognise their power and influence as employers and to use it to assist young people
- asking policy-makers to ensure that those seeking work receive supportive, effective assistance

To get involved, keep informed, or read the full report, please visit www.fyt.org.uk/news or contact Debbie Garden



My Albanian Adventure

As a part of my continued training for ministry my college suggests that all students who are able should consider doing an overseas placement with the idea being that you spend some time working with a church that is in a completely different context from your own. The country that was chosen for me by the PEC in consultation with my college was Albania. I'll admit when I heard that, I had to Google it as I didn't even know where it was on a map (for the record it's just above Greece and next to Macedonia!). But with a wide mixture of nerves and excitement I agreed to it. So on the 15th of June I left to start my 5 week (and 2 days) Albanian Adventure.

The Moravian Church in Albania is a relatively new phenomenon and on the first day I arrived they celebrated their 19th anniversary of the start of the work there. The past history of Albania saw them ruled by a communist dictator who outlawed all religion. Somehow, fortunately, people still met and worshipped secretly in each other's houses and managed to keep the flames of faith alive so that when this persecution ended they were able to, with help from various missionaries, restart the church. They now have 5 churches, or centres as they often called them. The main one is in the capital Tirana, where I spent most of my time. I was also able to visit the other 4 throughout my stay. These are in Elbasan, Burrell, Pogradec and Bathore. Bathore and Elbasan are quite close to Tirana but to get to Pogradec was a four hour journey in a mini bus around some very twisty and very high mountain roads. I'm not someone who ever suffers from car sickness, fortunately, but I was pretty close on that journey.

In Pogradec they have a newly opened youth centre, a photo of which I have included. This is designed primarily for the work of the Moravian Church but they are going to rent out for other churches to use and it was funded largely by the Danish mission board, who still do a great deal of work there. In my final weekend I helped at their summer camp, which was the first event to be held in that building. Having been a leader at our summer camp four times, it was very interesting seeing the differences between the two summer camps. As you might expect, theirs had more basic facilities as we slept in tents on a thin foam mattress, but the same spirit of friendliness was there, not just between

the young people but between them and the leaders. I had met many of the young people before during my travels but I was made to feel part of the group and even those with limited English would try and talk to me and make me feel included in what they were doing. Whilst there I led a group of teenagers in a couple of sessions of "Bibleodrama" which is a relatively new thing which uses drama to help people see Bible stories in a different light. It was great to be able to interact with the young people in this way. I have also included a photo of me with all of the young people at summer camp. You may notice that we all have the same t-shirts on. This was done so that there would be no differentiation made between those who lived in the poorer parts of Albania and those from the more wealthy. It is probably also worth noting that the church pays for all of the young people to go as, without this funding, it is likely that only a small fraction of them could attend.

The trip was full of highs and lows but, overall it was a great experience. I learnt a great deal whilst I was there and mostly I learnt about my relationship with God. When I heard I was going, I'll admit I was apprehensive. There were several points where I could have quite easily come home but instead I put my trust in God and said, "ok you wanted me here I trust that you'll look after me." And guess what? He did. Although there were many times I felt far away from home I never felt far from God and I'm sure that if it were not for His help and guidance this trip would've been much harder.

I'm extremely grateful for those people who made the trip possible - to the PEC for organising it, to the people of Albania who welcomed me with open arms and made sure I was welcomed and to my wife for putting up with me being away for so long. This truly was a great experience and one that I'm sure will live with me forever. So I ask that you keep the church in Albania in your thoughts and prayers and that, with God's help, they will continue to grow in faith and in numbers.

If you want to know more about my trip, I kept a blog whilst I was out there that you can access by visiting, <http://jameswoolfordmoravian.wordpress.com>.

James Woolford

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

In 1987, at a meeting in Swanick in Derbyshire, the church leaders present adopted a declaration on Christian unity, which acknowledged that churches are of different traditions and theologies, but that they were none the less committing themselves to a journey towards full and visible unity. As we know there are many Christian Denominations but the vast majority have the same basic calling to worship God, share the Good News about Jesus Christ and to work for the good of all people. Churches often need to work together and to co-ordinate the work that they each do separately so as to be more effective in their service of the Lord.

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is traditionally observed between the 18th and the 25th January and groups of churches usually come together to worship during that week. Christian Aid and Churches Together have provided some worship resources and this year the main worship material comes from an ecumenical group in South India. The contributors have reflected on their own circumstances and they offer a theme that calls for worshipers to act justly in the world. The biblical text is Micah 6, 6 - 8, which concerns what God wants from us and ministers of most denominations will be preaching about this passage throughout the nation, and Northern Ireland will no exception.

According to The Tear Fund, Northern Ireland is the most religious part of the United Kingdom, which is not hard to believe when you consider that 45% of the population claim to regularly attend church. Christianity is still the main religion in Northern Ireland and, according to the 2001 Census, 40.3% are Roman Catholic, 20.7% are Presbyterian, 15.3% are Anglican and 3.5% are Methodist, Members of other Christian churches make up 6.1% and 13.8% stated that they have no religion or did not state a religious affiliation and 0.3% said that they were members of non-Christian religions.

Across Northern Ireland there are various groups that are working towards church unity and one of the most famous is the Corrymeela Community, which was founded in 1965 by Rev. Dr. Ray Davey. The Corrymeela mission is to embrace difference, heal division and to enable reconciliation. The Irish School of Ecumenics is a multidisciplinary all Ireland graduate school within Trinity College Dublin and is committed to research at the intersection of theology, religion, politics and social research. The school is concerned with dialogue, peace and reconciliation and have campuses in Dublin and Belfast. Each year in South Belfast seven of the churches, including University Road Moravian Church, come together for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity and the various congregations take it in turn to host the service. The churches

of the BT14 Group in North Belfast, which includes Cliftonville Moravian Church, also worship together during the week, although they always worship at Deanby Catholic Church. The other BT14 Group churches host three other services throughout the year in their turn as well.

Also, many congregations and groups of congregations take part in The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity worship services but it is fair to say that many churches find the whole idea of ecumenism a big problem and too much of a challenge in Northern Ireland. In the order of service in 2006 it explains political and religious aims and aspiration have torn communities apart and have caused real hurt on all sides. God has been present in the midst of the pain and has brought healing to many of the physical and psychological wounds that have been inflicted. In small gatherings of two or three as well as in greater gatherings, the comforting, gracious presence of God has been experienced. God calls His people together and shows that love and forgiveness go hand in hand. The experience of Jesus on the cross calls to the people of Christ to reach out and forgive. In villages, towns and cities Christians are called to find a way forward that recognizes and acknowledges the hurt and pain of people, and in that understanding seeks to find forgiveness, wholeness and the new way of Christ.

Churches along the so-called 'peace wall' in Belfast are joining to worship together for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, as will so many throughout the country, and this is a real sign of hope for a broken and fractured society. The fact that different denominations and from different communities are coming together for worship is a true testament to this. The churches in Northern Ireland have, in their different ways, become engaged with issues of justice and peace, with the challenges of the future of the world around them and with offering hospitality to the stranger. Psalm 34 states that we are afraid as strangers come into our midst, we do not understand their cry for justice, we cannot hear their fear and pain and yet they are our brothers and sisters. Lord let the Holy Spirit bring about unity of Christian denominations. May we be brought together in a new understanding of love and forgiveness. Let there be hope that we are moving forward together as Christians.

Hopefully more and more congregations in Northern Ireland will take up the wonderful idea of worshiping together during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. And, because, as Zinzendorf himself said, we Moravians are Ecumenical Pioneers, perhaps we could offer our motto for this special week: In Essentials: Unity, in Non-Essentials: Liberty and in All Things: Love.

Patsy Holdsworth

Around the District Conferences

NEWS FROM THE PROVINCIAL BOARD

Calls: Br. Peter Gubi has accepted a call to serve Dukinfield in a non-stipendiary capacity. Br. Graham Kent has accepted an extension of his contract with the Moravian Church for a further 12 months until August 2013.

Future dates: A serving ministers' and lay worker's conference will be held at High Leigh from May 13th to 16th May, 2013. The Provincial Renewal Weekend will take place from 5th to 7th April, 2013. The MWA Day will take place at Hall Green on 13th April 2013. The Provincial Men's Fellowship will take place on 22nd June 2013 at Fulneck.

Messenger: A reminder that at the last Synod Sr. Judith Ashton stood down as Editor of the Moravian Messenger. There is now a great opportunity to serve the Province as the new Editor. For more details contact Br. Robert Hopcroft at Church

House on 0208 883 3409 or by e-mail at bob.hopcroft@moravian.org.uk.

Management Structure: the Provincial Board are currently preparing a paper, as a follow up to the paper presented at Synod, regarding the structure of the church. It is hoped to have the paper ready for discussion at District Conferences and Provincial Committee meetings in the Spring of 2013.

Ecumenical: The Church of Ireland Bishop of Meath and Kildare, Right Rev. Dr Richard Clarke, has been elected as New Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland and is known to a number of the brothers and sisters in the Irish District as the immediate past President of the ICC.

Unity News: Br. Ebenezer Gangmei, having been accepted as a candidate for full time ministry in the Moravian Church, is currently on a one year placement with the Moravian Church

Sunday school membership has risen. A Friday night youth club for 8-13 year olds is proving to be very successful with no shortage of youngsters wanting to join.

Horton reported a membership of 40 - three fewer - than last year. The manse has finally been sold and a gift day in summer had raised more than £4,000. Horton continues to support the Inn Churches project, which provides overnight accommodation for the homeless of Bradford.

Baildon reported 36 members, a loss of 4, with an average attendance of 31 adults and 7 children. Total giving was down 15% on the previous year, a cause for concern.

Reporting for Gomersal, Br. Michael Newman said that the congregation had gained a new member and now stood at 34. On the last Sunday in January, March, May and July morning worship had been in the form of Family Cafe Church, run by members of the congregation. Junior Church had 21 children on its

in Kathmandu.

Following Br. Shanti and Sr. Vanti's visit to the British Province which included attendance at Synod, the British Mission Board were able to send just over £2,000 in support of the Pre-School in Kathmandu. This included the collection taken at Synod (£580); a donation from the YPMA for playground equipment (£600); the collection from Swindon's Mission Sunday (£350) and a donation towards the minibus from the MWA (£500). Many thanks for all your generosity from all in Kathmandu.

During the All Tanzanian Partners Conference in September, 2012 Br. Moise Mukadi Tshimanga was consecrated Bishop at Mabibo Congregation in Dar Es Salaam, Southern Tanzania Province. Bishop Tshimanga is the first Bishop in the Congo Province. Sr. Gillian Taylor attended on behalf of the Mission Board.

roll. Conference was told that the church garden had been given a make-over with money given in memory of Sr June Brown.

Turning to Fulneck, Br. Newman reported that the congregation stood at 86, three fewer than last year. The average attendance was 41 adults and 31 younger people, an increase on last year. An extension of Junior Church is Baby Church, which started in May. There has been a busy round of fund-raising and the much used Boys' Brigade building had been redecorated. The new burial ground extension has been fenced off and trees planted around its perimeter. The Conference was told that 45 youngsters had attended Summer Camp at Fulneck. The summer's 10-mile sponsored walk had raised £1,473. Some £589 of that was sent to Kathmandu, the rest had been divided between the six Yorkshire congregations.

There were also reports and comment on the growing issue of poverty in Britain.

Richard Porter

IRISH DISTRICT

The autumn meeting of the Irish District Conference was held at Cliftonville on Saturday 20th October. Br. Paul Holdsworth welcomed all present and led the worship and then the meeting followed the usual course through the agenda. There was a lot of discussion about lay preachers, especially in light of the new Lay Training Course, which has been updated by Br. Len Broadbent. Two groups are now taking the course, one based at Gracehill led by Sr. Groves and one made up of members of the other four congregations led by Br. and Sr. Holdsworth. The success of the Lay Preachers Weekend was discussed especially the involvement of the lay preachers in the closing service at Shallowford House.

In the absence of Br. Broadbent, the Treasurer's Report was read by Br. Holdsworth and it was agreed that contributions would remain at £30 per congregation. Sr. Deborah Groves was also unable to attend but her Youth Report was read by the Chair. There had been a good turn out from the Irish District at Summer Camp, some of whom received financial aid from ID Youth Funds. There have also been events such as a youth service at Gracehill, a Summer Camp Taster

Day at Kilwarlin and a BBQ at University Road. An ID Youth Weekend was held in October as well as the ID 18+ Weekend in November. It was also noted that Br. David Costley had run the Belfast Marathon for ID Youth Funds. There was a long discussion about how funds are raised and Distributed by ID Youth. Young people from the District had also benefitted from the Carol Holdsworth Memorial Trust over the summer.

Sr. Gillian Taylor presented the PEC Report. It was stated that Northern College would be the college of choice for Moravian ministerial students in the future. There was discussion about the work of Elim Home and Star Mountain. Sr. Taylor also spoke about her recent visit to Tanzania and gave details about the work taking place in the hospital and school there. It was especially gratifying to see the work Moravians are doing with regard to HIV and AIDS, especially with testing and education. The Provincial Renewal Day was discussed and it was a very good event but it was a shame that there were no young people or children present.

Sr. Eunice Hoey led a discussion about homelessness in Northern Ireland and the UK. There was also

discussion about the letter sent by Br. Alan Holdsworth challenging the Moravian Church to spearhead an end to child poverty in the UK. It was agreed that the Chair should write to the Social Responsibility Committee in order to ask them to consider this matter.

In the absence of the Renewal Secretary, Sr. Lizzy Mewha, Sr. Groves reported that there might be a retreat to Holy Island in 2013. It was hoped that there would be another District Renewal Meeting to arrange events.

Ecumenical matters were discussed both at local and provincial levels. There has been more progress towards closer ties between the C of I and Moravians on the island of Ireland and Sr. Groves assured us that more progress would be made in 2013.

At a local level meetings and services are still being held by groups near all five congregations and we, as Moravians continue to play our part. We are also represented at the Irish Council of Churches, the Women's Link, Christian Aid in Ireland. Another full and busy meeting closed with the saying of the Grace together and a lovely lunch was served by the ladies of Cliftonville.

Joan Brown

Notice Board

BIRTHDAY GREETINGS

On January 8th, Br. Thom Stapleton will be 60 years old. Happy Birthday from the Brockweir and Kingswood congregations!

THANK YOU

Following the death of Rev Geoffrey Tate, Joan and family would like to sincerely thank everyone who has recently expressed love and prayerful support during this time.

Kathryn Fantom

Spoken Through the Silence

A look at a well-known New Year hymn with PAUL GUBI

STANDING AT THE PORTAL

(Frances R. Havergal - MHB 579)

Imagine standing waiting at the door, perhaps wondering what to expect. Then, as the door opens, you are greeted with a warm embrace which says everything, leaving words almost superfluous. That in essence is the picture which Frances Havergal sets before us in the opening verse of this hymn:

***Standing at the portal of the opening year,
Words of comfort meet us, hushing every fear,
Spoken through the silence by our Father's voice,
Tender, strong and faithful, making us rejoice.
Onward then, and fear not, children of the day,
For his word shall never, never pass away.***

I miss the New Year's Eve Watchnight Service. It is one of the special services that I used to enjoy. That silence before midnight, when the old year is 'laid to rest' with its mixture of memories, and, in the blink of an eye, without a pause, the new year begins, bringing hope, curiosity, and possibly some anxieties, makes it a potent moment. Through that silence the voice of God speaks in a way that brings inner calm and a spirit of rejoicing trust to all willing to receive it. The whole hymn revolves around the divine assurance beautifully expressed in the second verse:

***"I, the Lord, am with thee, be thou not afraid;
I will help and strengthen, be thou not dismayed;
Yea, I will uphold thee with my own right hand;
Thou art called and chosen in my sight to stand."***

The recurring chorus, whilst encouraging any with faltering steps, underlines the complete reliability of God's Word for the faithful. It hardly needs to be elaborated upon.

The two remaining verses are directly linked to this one. Following those 'hopes and fears' regarding the unknown, and with the promise of God fresh on our lips, we come to the splendid declaration in verse three of what it means to us.

***For the year before us O what rich supplies!
For the poor and needy living streams shall rise;
For the sad and sinful shall his grace abound,
For the faint and feeble perfect strength be found.***

Should any be tempted to wallow in a sense of helplessness, uselessness, self-pity, nothing-to-look-forward-to-ness, there comes the chorus again, urging us to get on with life by putting that life into the hand of God and acting like children of the day, not the night. We might do well to call to mind the words of the apostle John: "See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are." (1 John 3.1) Let us not forget it then. That is the pervading message of this hymn and the final verse gathers it all up in a big "Yes!"

***He will never fail us, He will not forsake;
His eternal covenant He will never break.
Resting on His promise, what have we to fear ?
God is all-sufficient for the coming year.
Onward, then, and fear not, Children of the day,
For His word shall never, never pass away.***

There is a ridiculous rumour going around that the music edition is going to be even bigger and clumsier than the word edition of the new hymnbook, needing two volumes. Now there's a 'fear' to take into the new year! I hope that the tune "Hermas" will be restored as the proper tune for this hymn, which it is. Apart from being a stirring tune in its own right, its composer is Frances Havergal herself. The unjustifiable alteration in the new book to verse two ("So be not afraid ... So be not dismayed ... Yes, I will uphold ...") has an air of 'testiness' about it that detracts from the perfectly well-written and intelligible lines of the author. When sung it also puts an unnecessary, almost aggressive, emphasis on "So" - not well done. At the outset of another year may you know the all-sufficient and loving presence of God as you continue your pilgrimage with confidence and joy, and perhaps with this song in your heart it may give a fresh spring to your step.

Open Book

2 PETER

From very early in the history of the Christian church there has been some doubt about the authorship of the book known as the Second letter of Peter. No mention is made of it by Christian writers during the first 200 years of the church's existence. Not only are the style and content very different from First Peter, but there is a reference to St. Paul's letters being a part of the Scriptures (Chapter 3, verses 15 and 16), which would not have been the case until those letters had been collected and been widely known. In chapter 2, there is also a reference to events recorded in the Letter of Jude, which was written toward the end of the first century. The subject matter dealt with is more suited to the second century than the first although the heresy of Gnosticism had begun to creep into the church by the late first century. It is also well to remember that several other books claimed to have been written by Peter, such as The Gospel According to Peter, The Preaching of Peter and The Apocalypse of Peter. These didn't make it into the Scriptures as we know them but are included in the New Testament Apocrypha. It was quite common among the Greeks and Romans as well as the Jews, to claim that a work, either religious or secular, was produced by some recognised authority, particularly if it was the product of that person's disciple or student or apprentice. Today it would be classed as a forgery but that was not the thinking in days gone by. It is also generally agreed among scholars that second Peter is the last book in the New Testament to have been written and that there was some doubt as to whether it should be included or not. On the other hand there are many today who accept this book as the work of Peter but not written by the same scribe who wrote First Peter.

From chapter 1, verse 1, we learn that the letter is written by a Jew and addressed to non Jewish people, 'Those to whom has been given a faith equal in honour and privilege to our

own.' Gentile converts particularly, were targeted by the Gnostics who claimed that matter was evil and that as long as our thoughts about God are alright, then it doesn't matter what we do with our bodies. We can starve them or we can indulge them. Gentiles had grown up in a culture where sexual promiscuity and the satisfaction of all our appetites was the norm. Jews had grown up in a culture where certain standards of morality were expected, so that Gentile converts were more likely to revert to type, given the opportunity and the authorization to do so. It was this 'soft underbelly' of the early church that Gnosticism attacked.

The first letter of Peter warned the church against persecution from those outside and this second letter warned the church against corruption from inside.

The other important matter that is addressed in this letter, in chapter 3, is the return of Christ. (The term 'second coming' does not occur in the New Testament.) In the very early church, Jesus was expected to return soon and to instigate the Day of Judgement, but as time went on and nothing seemed to be happening, there were those who claimed that if it was going to happen, then it would have taken place already. The conclusion to which they came was that the teaching about Christ returning was untrue. The writer's response to that is that God is patient with people, verse 9, that he wants everyone to have the chance to repent, and that he is outside of time, verse 8. A thousand years and a day are much the same as far as God is concerned, a quote from Psalm 90, verse 4.

The first letter of Peter warned the

church against persecution from those outside and this second letter warned the church against corruption from inside. It is a warning that is repeated over and over again in the New Testament, beginning with Jesus himself in Matthew 7, verse 15. 'Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves.' Paul also spoke about wolves coming among the flock in Acts 20, 29. In one of his letters to the people in Thessalonica, and in his letters to Timothy, he warned that people holding positions of responsibility in the church, would lead many people away by false teaching. Chapter 2 deals with false teachers as if they are already at work in the church but verses 1 to 3, claim that they are yet to come. This may simply be a way of saying that things are going to get a lot worse than they already are.

Several verses of chapters 2 and 3 deal with the punishment that lies in wait for those who have corrupted the church and led many people astray, sometimes just for money (chapter 2, verse 3). Instances of God punishing people, from the Old Testament and also from Hebrew legends, are recorded in chapter 2 and many of them occur in the letter of Jude and in almost identical words. It may be that one copied from the other or that this had become the subject of conversation among the church leaders. The letter ends with the assurance that the long awaited Day of the Lord will come, and that just as the world was once destroyed by water, so its destruction will again take place, this time by fire, so great that even the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn. But a new earth and a new heaven await the godly who survive and in the new earth, only righteousness will dwell. As the readers await this day, the need is to make sure that they are found without spot or blemish, and at peace, growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Peter M Gubi

Congregation News

Cliftonville

Some highlights of the past few months include the following. On Sunday 20th May we welcomed Br and Sr. Linyard and Br. Fred took the service. Sr. Eunice Hoey, accompanied by her husband and grandson, was the speaker at the Gift Day service on 17th June and Br. Livingstone Thompson, with his wife, daughter and friends, came to preside at the Anniversary on 2nd September. The Harvest Service was on 30th September and Br. Len Broadbent, accompanied by his wife Sheila, was the speaker. Lunch was in the church hall after these special services. We thank them all, and the lay preachers, without whose willing help we would not be able to maintain weekly services.

On European Heritage Week-end the Church was open from 1 - 4 p.m. on Sunday 9th September. While the number of visitors was not large, all, and particularly those from the locality, were very interested in the local history display and leaflet explaining the development of the Oldpark/Cliftonville area from Old Park House Estate and earlier Deer Park.

Another display of pictures and family trees showed the descent of the British and many of the European Royal families from Maximilian Erasmus, Lord of Zinzendorf & Pottendorf 1633 - 1672, (grandfather of Count Zinzendorf),



Visit of Br. Eckhard Buchholz

through Queen Victoria who was his 4 times Great-Grand-daughter. Prince Charles is his 9 times Great-Grandson.

On 7th October we were delighted to welcome our past minister Br. Eckhard Buchholz to the morning service. Cliftonville hosted the Irish District Conference on 20th October and the Council Meeting was held on 18th November after the

morning service.

A past member, Sr. Maud Taylor celebrated her 100th birthday on 28th October, and was delighted with a greeting card containing pictures of members she knew when she lived in the area. The Sunday School children packed 106 shoe boxes for Romania.

Edna Cooper



Br. and Sr. Livingstone Thompson and friends at Anniversary lunch

Ballinderry

Two happy events were celebrated at Ballinderry recently. On 8th July George Philip Thomas Brown McCaughey was baptized and Kathy Bates married Mark Wilson on 14th September.

Gifts of Bibles were presented on June 19th to those children leaving Ballinderry Primary School at the end of the summer term.

On August 4th the MWA held a very successful car boot sale which raised £750. Funds were boosted with other activities on the day which included pony rides, a tea stall, bouncy castle and a barbecue. Also in August there was a very enjoyable walk along the Lagan canal towpath organised by Sister Holdsworth for members of the congregation.

On Heritage Weekend in September there was a healthy interest in the history of the church shown by a number of visitors.

The Irish district MWA rally was held in Ballinderry on 15th September and the guest speaker on this occasion was Heather Loney the wife of a Methodist minister.

Harvest was held on the last Sunday of September. Our thanks go to all of those who contributed in whatever fashion in helping to make the church look so beautiful including the arranging of flowers and decoration of the church. Brother Paul Holdsworth preached at the morning harvest service and Sister Patsy in the evening.

We would also like to express our thanks to Br. Henry Wilson who has raised funds for the church through the giving of history lectures.

Annual Gift Day in November raised a substantial £2741.35

Marilyn Marshall

Gracehill

11th March, 2012 was Y.P.M.A Sunday when our young people, who collected a total of £2626.40 during 2011, received their awards.

Our services during Holy Week were very well attended by members and friends from the local community. The early morning service on Easter Day was enhanced by the band quartet who supplied the music in God's Acre. Then back down to Cennick Hall for a wonderful Ulster Fry which was cooked by Br. Trevor and Sr. Barbara Gillan and their band of helpers. We had a good congregation for the 11 a.m. service when the young people went out half-way through and came back at the end of the service with a large wooden cross decorated with paper flowers. This was then erected in the Manse garden for all of Gracehill to see. The morning finished with an Easter egg hunt in the Square.

Both the Boys and Girls' Brigades ended their year with their display and parent evenings in the Hall.

On Sunday, 3rd June we celebrated the Queen's Diamond Jubilee with a special service in Church and then with a 'Big Lunch' celebration in the Village Square.

Our annual Village Fair, which is our main fund raising event, was held on Saturday 23rd June and was opened by the Mayor of Ballymena, Alderman P.J.McAvoy. The rain poured down as tents and booths were put up during the week. The rain ceased late on Saturday morning and thankfully stayed off for the afternoon activities and again this was a great success.

Riverside Farm was the venue for a barbecue hosted by Br. John and Sr. Rhebe Clarke and family on Friday, 17th August. It was a great night with entertainment from various artists and again a great total for our Building Fund.

The annual auction, organised by Br. Billy Kitson, was held on Friday, 31st August, 2012 and again was a great success.

Sr. Mollie Spencer had a birthday surprise for her 90th birthday at Church on Sunday, 5th August. We sang a selection of her favourite hymns during the service and then at the end, she was presented with flowers and a birthday cake with 9 candles - one for each decade of her life. Sr. Mollie is an inspiration to us all.

During week commencing 13th August, we ran a Holiday

Bible Club for the first time. This was the brainchild of Sr. Rachel Hamilton, one of our Bible Class teachers. This was a really successful event and Rachel and her team of leaders were amazed and delighted with the response from all the young people. The theme for the week was "On Your Marks".

A new venture, Youth Fellowship, has recommenced every 2nd Sunday evening. We are most grateful to Sr. Rachel Hamilton and her band of helpers.

Harvest was held on Sunday, 23rd September when our guest preacher was Sr. Patsy Holdsworth. A full church appreciated both her service and the wonderful harvest decorations around the church. Following the service a lovely soup and bread lunch, prepared by Br. Trevor Gillan and his team, was laid on in Cennick Hall. Harvest continued in the evening with a service of favourite prayers, readings and hymns for harvest that a number of members contributed to. On Monday evening, the harvest gifts were auctioned by Br. Billy Kitson and the proceeds were given to the Youth Fellowship to boost their funds.

Church Anniversary was celebrated on Sunday, 4th November when our guest preacher was Sr. Jan Mullin and this was followed by a soup lunch in Cennick Hall. It was nice to see Sr. Jan again and this enabled her to speak to all her old friends in the congregation.

Br. Sean Tranter played the trumpet at the wreath laying ceremony on Remembrance Sunday with the wreath being laid by Br. Stephen Barr and Br. Billy Kitson. Girls' and Boys' Brigades Enrolment Service was held in the evening. Again a full church and we, as a congregation, are most grateful to the officers/helpers, who week in, week out, give of their time to the Brigades. Again, this can be said of all in the congregation who give of their time for Church Service.

We have welcomed 9 new members into Church membership during the year - Wesley and Jacqueline Thompson, Mary Miller, Beryl Corbett, Pat Reid,

Deborah Jones, Lizzie Mewha and Chris and Louise Boreland. During 2012 Br. Ivan Bell, Br. Stanley Bell and Br. Jim Scullion passed away. We also welcomed Isaac Boreland and Colby Gordon into Church membership through infant baptism.

Sally Weir

Sparkhill, Birmingham

We were saddened in November by the deaths of Geoffrey Tate a former minister of Sparkhill United Church and Bernell Burroughs. Br. Bernell Burroughs died unexpectedly in Kazakhstan where he was working. When we think of Bernell we will remember his beaming smile, and his preaching. We thank Geoffrey and Bernell for their invaluable service to the Church over many years. Both men will be sadly missed and we extend our sympathies to the families and remember them in our prayers.

The numbers attending the funerals bore witness to the high regard in which both brethren were held.

Ashton McIntosh

CONGREGATION REGISTERS

BAPTISM

8th Jul. ☐ **George Philip Thomas** ☐☐☐ *Ballinderry*
Brown McCaughey. ☐ *Gracehill*
 12th Aug. ☐ **Colby Maxwell Gordon.** ☐ *Gracehill*

MEMBERSHIP

3rd Jun. ☐ **Mary Miller.** ☐ *Gracehill*
 3rd Jun. ☐ **Beryl Corbett.** ☐ *Gracehill*
 3rd Jun. ☐ **Pat Reid.** ☐ *Gracehill*
 11th Nov. ☐ **Elizabeth Mewha.** ☐ *Gracehill*
 11th Nov. ☐ **Deborah Groves Jones.** ☐ *Gracehill*
 11th Nov. ☐ **Christopher Boreland.** ☐ *Gracehill*
 11th Nov. ☐ **Louise Boreland.** ☐ *Gracehill*

MARRIAGE

1st Aug ☐ **Philip Beattie & Suzanne Aicken.**☐*Gracehill*
 14th Sep.☐ **Kathy Bates & Mark Wilson.** ☐ *Ballinderry*

DEATH

21st Jul. ☐ **Ivan Bell.** ☐ *Gracehill*
 14th Aug. ☐ **Stanley Bell.** ☐ *Gracehill*
 3rd Nov. ☐ **James Scullion.** ☐ *Gracehill*
 12th Nov. ☐ **Kenneth Potts** ☐ *Royston*

PRAYER NOTES

January 1st New Year's Day

Through Christ who can make all things new we praise you Lord for giving pardon for the past and a fresh start for the future, to all who repent. Be with us today, as we come to you with our tiny resolutions and enormous fears, our small achievements and huge tasks ahead. May we enter this New Year as your people entered the Promised Land, with the promise of your presence and a renewed sense of our calling. Guide us as we travel to the heavenly city that we may know Jesus, the true and living way. Amen.

January 6th Epiphany

Heavenly Father we thank you that you gave your Son, at his birth, the name of Jesus, which means Saviour. May it be to us the name that is above every name, the name to be honoured, trusted and obeyed. As you led the wise men from the ends of the earth to the cradle of Jesus, we remember that you want all people everywhere, to be saved. Bring nearer the day when the knowledge of you will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. In the name of him who said that, if he was lifted up from the earth, he would draw everyone to him, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen

January 13th First Sunday after Epiphany

God of salvation, in the river Jordan you bathed Jesus in glory and revealed him as your Son. We marvel at the way you chose such simple things to reveal your greatness. A river of water as the place to make known the nature and work of your Son. Help us, who have dipped a foot into the water of life, to plunge in over our heads, dead to the old life and fully alive to the new, walking with Him the path of obedience and serving you in the world. For His sake, Amen

January 20th Second Sunday after Epiphany

Lord Jesus, who sent out your first disciples to proclaim your kingdom, we believe that you speak still, calling even people like us into your service. Open our hearts to what you are saying to us today. As your disciples left their nets and followed you, break into our lives with your disturbing call and show us which things to abandon and what new things to do, that we may share with others what we have been taught by you, to the glory of your Name and the spread of your Kingdom. Amen

January 27th Third Sunday After Epiphany

Almighty God, whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain, and yet whose love encompasses the tiniest creature, we thank for the gift of our human bodies and remembering that they are your temples, we ask for your help in caring for them as your dwelling place. We thank you too for those other temples, our churches. May we care for them and have them stand as worthy witnesses to a living faith, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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