

MWA PRESIDENT'S LETTER APRIL 2014

WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM MY FRIENDS

Dear Sisters,

One Easter about thirty years ago, Phil and I went on a pilgrimage. We were both assistants for children with disabilities on a pilgrimage to Lourdes. It was one of the most exhausting but enjoyable weeks of my life as we experienced the daily lives of these children and tried through fellowship and worship to show them something of God's love. I don't know if Lourdes has changed but thirty years ago it was one of the most disability unfriendly places I have ever visited with high kerbs, narrow pavements, flights of stairs etc, all of which made pushing wheelchairs incredibly difficult. On one of the days we took the group to view the Stations of the Cross. Usually these are a series of fourteen pictures in a Church depicting Jesus' journey from the moment he is condemned to death to his crucifixion. In Lourdes they are a series of sculptures situated at various intervals up a steep hill. As I am sure you can imagine it was incredibly hard work to push wheelchairs and assist children with a variety of physical and learning disabilities up this hill. We stopped at each station to pray and sing and it was a wonderful experience. In some small way, I felt that I experienced some of the physical pain Jesus endured as he made his way to the place of his death. It is an experience which will stay with me forever and I hope has stayed with the children I accompanied.

Pilgrimage is a word not used so much these days. It usually involves a physical and spiritual journey, a time when we take ourselves "out of our comfort zone" and hopefully learn something important as a result. In Manchester this year there is a Passion Arts Trail around various venues in the City. I hope to walk this trail myself sometime before Easter. If you can not get to Manchester or indeed your walking days are over, the trail can be viewed online at www.PassionArtTrail.co.uk. There are reflections on all the pieces of art which may help you in your preparation for Easter.

Of course in the Moravian Church we have a "pilgrimage" of our own during Passion Week with the daily service comprising of readings from all four gospels which tell the story of the last days of Jesus' earthly life. If you can possibly attend these services I encourage you to do so. Easter really is the greatest of all the Christian festivals, the events of Easter are the heart of our faith and the message of Good News for the world. I end with this blessing by Kate McIlhagga:

How beautiful is the blossom spilling from the tree, the hidden primrose and the bluebell ringing out the news.

He is risen

He is alive

We shall live for evermore.

The dark winter is past, the slow cold, foggy days are over.

May the warmth of your resurrection touch our hearts and minds as the warmth of the sun blesses our bodies.

Happy Easter

Sr Janet Cooper