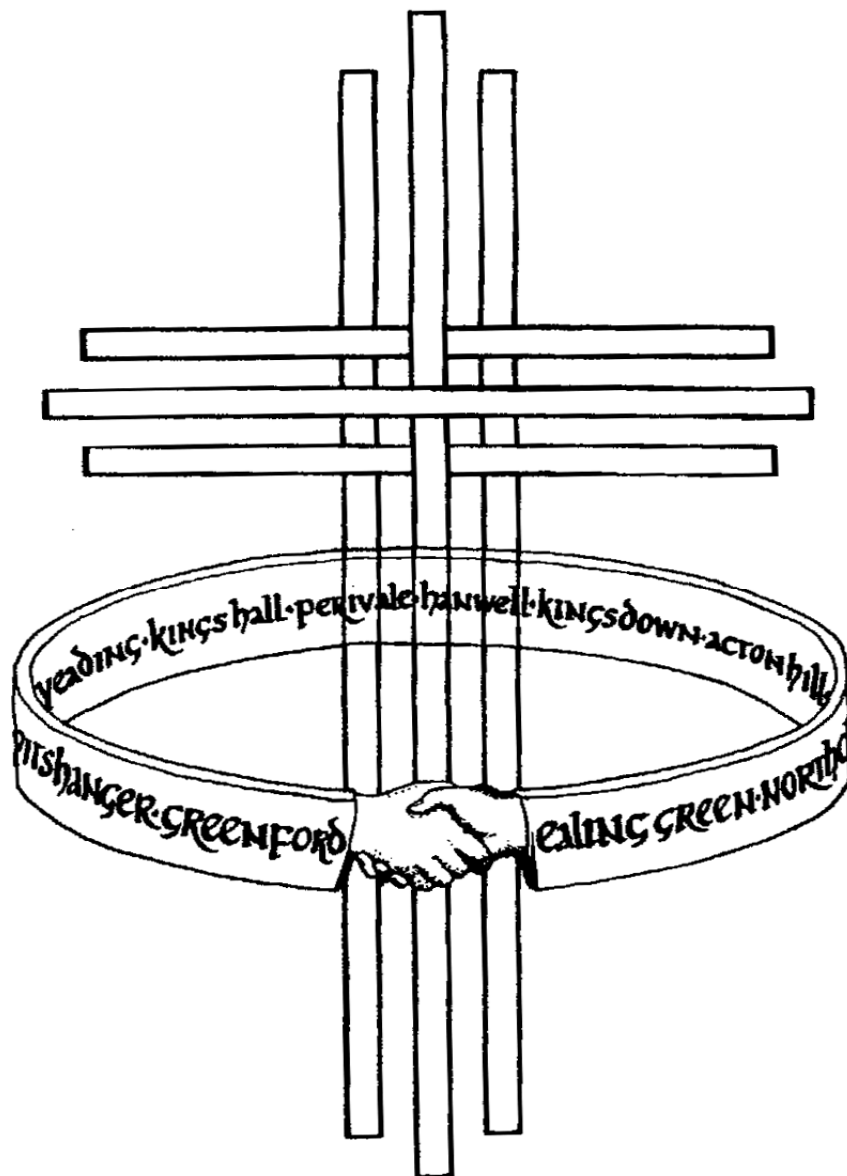


# In-touch

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June - August 2011



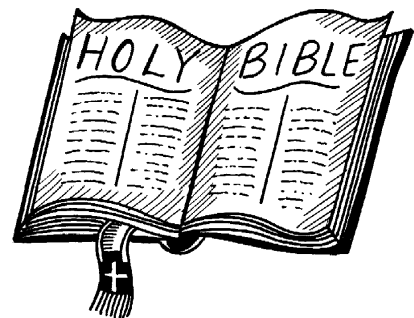
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The magazine for *all* the Ealing Trinity Circuit.

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**Celebrating 400 years of  
the King James version  
of the Bible in English**



Front Cover designed by Marion Narain

## From the Superintendent

What a lot we have to celebrate! In the last few weeks we have been reminded of the life-giving love of God as we thrilled again at the Easter story. When the world seemed a dark and despairing place, hope was reborn as Mary met the risen Christ in the garden. The rumours and whispers of resurrection continue to spread and bring transformation in people's lives today.

The Ealing Churches' Night Shelter went really well and made a great difference in the lives of vulnerable men and women - another outworking of the love of Christ and a wonderful way for so many Christians in Ealing to work together. I hope that more people and buildings within the Circuit will be able to help with next year's Night Shelter.

Jarel Robinson-Brown, our newest Local Preacher, has been accepted to train as a Methodist minister and we wish him every blessing as he continues his studies. We have had a great Lent course in the Circuit, well attended and producing some lively discussions and thought-provoking stories. Our Circuit Membership Course is about to take place. We continue to train 8 local preachers and hope to add another Worship Leader at Hanwell – there is always something to do!

Ealing Green church is moving forward with development plans, Kingsdown is about to start the long-awaited second phase of its redevelopment and Hanwell has had masonry repaired and the front of the building is now clean and looks splendid. Let's pray that God can help us to use our buildings as a means of mission and hospitality. There are of course many challenges as well. We continue the painful work of helping Moullin come to a close, whilst wanting to give thanks for 60 years of work. King's Hall is in a very poor state as a building, though there is some interest from other churches in the area to work more closely together in using the building for mission and worship in Southall – watch this space, and pray hard!

One challenge that we face is that we don't always have enough preachers to lead all the acts of worship that churches want and this new plan was particularly difficult, resulting in a number of local arrangements, where churches will need to organise their own service. Training will be offered to help churches do this – look out for the date. What does help is that King's Hall were willing to move their service time to 9.30am which means ministers and local preachers can cover more than one service in a morning. I will be looking for a similar flexibility from other congregations in the months to come. Please do think about ways in which we might use the resources of preaching and worship leading in the circuit in creative ways and in ways that don't leave our preachers exhausted or dispirited.

The resurrection of Christ did not end the challenges that the disciples faced – but it gave them the knowledge that in God all things are possible. So we celebrate and pray as we face the challenges of serving God in this present age.

Blessings,



# Ealing Churches Winter Night Shelter

*Mary Blackwell, Hanwell*

On the morning of 31<sup>st</sup> March at St Anselm's Church in Southall, the Night Shelter closed its doors for this season. There was much sadness at saying goodbye to the guests, even though many of them had found places to stay and would not be returning to the streets. Volunteers had quickly found that guests became friends and were concerned for them and sorry to be saying goodbye.

Everyone concerned had found working in the Night Shelter a great joy and privilege, although if you suggested before the Shelter started that it might be a privilege to make up lots of beds, cater for 20+, stay up all night with just a couple of hours sleep on an airbed, or get up at 5 o'clock in the morning to cook breakfast or wash mattresses, it is doubtful that any of us would have agreed with you.

Most revelatory of all was the discovery that the guests were exactly like the volunteers. Many of us had been apprehensive, not having had contact with homeless people, and were relieved and humbled. Name badges for guests and volunteers were written in a different colour. They had to be in order to distinguish between us, and at one point a hopeful, but unREFERRED gentleman was mistaken for a volunteer.

All the venues were different and all entertained the guests in their own way. One folded napkins in a fancy way, others always had flowers and fruit on the table. Some offered nibbles. Some served dinner from a trolley announcing the menu beforehand, some waited at table, at some you queued up at the hatch. One venue offered television and a chance to see the football. Another had wii. Always there was a real family feel in the shelter. Guests would arrive uncertain and wary, sometimes distressed, but after a couple of nights they would relax and become a family member, chatting and sharing.

The atmosphere in the Shelter varied depending upon the kind of day the guests had had. It tended to be very quiet every other Sunday as there was nowhere during the day for the guests to shelter so that they were very tired when they arrived and would just read the papers, eat and go to bed. On other nights there would be conversation, merriment and games – cards, Jenga (our Polish guests were expert at this), and Scrabble were popular and some played draughts and chess.

During the twelve weeks it was open, the Shelter accommodated 34 guests, usually 12 at a time, although at times there were 14 guests in the Shelter. Of these, 17 were found accommodation, 2 got jobs as well, several had their identification and benefits sorted out by Acton Homeless Action – vital for seeking accommodation because of the need for funds to pay rent, 15 returned to the streets, mostly from choice, but were grateful for the respite and dignity that the shelter had afforded them during the cold winter nights. The Shelter was popular, partly because of the bus passes which it supplied, and these were felt by the management and Shelter

staff to have been beneficial in allowing guests to shelter on buses on cold rainy days, to travel to appointments and soup kitchens and the next Shelter, and to have saved wear and tear on footwear which was often not in the best condition. However, they gave rise to some jealousy among other homeless people outside the Shelter, and on occasion people would come to the Shelter doors unreferralled in the hope of getting in. The referral system worked well except at weekends when all but St John's soup kitchen shut down, meaning that if a guest left the Shelter at the weekend their bed was difficult to fill. That said, the Shelter was very rarely undersubscribed during the twelve week period.

Most churches and volunteers found the experience uplifting and have asked to be contacted for the next season when it is hoped to open in mid-November. One or two are more guarded, knowing that there's a lot of water to go under the bridge before then. New churches are beginning to volunteer their premises for the next season, wanting their church to share the joy that their members experienced volunteering.

There was a Service of Thanksgiving at St James church in West Ealing on Friday April 8<sup>th</sup> to celebrate the work of the Night Shelter.

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## **Gift Aid – Expiry of Transitional Relief**

When the basic rate of income tax was cut from 22% to 20% in 2008, the then Chancellor of the Exchequer, Alistair Darling made a concession to charities which meant that they were able to continue reclaiming tax for Gift Aid donations at the old rate of 22%. This concession was known as 'transitional relief'. However, the concession was for a limited period only and expired on 5<sup>th</sup> April at the end of the 2010-11 tax year. This means that as from April this year, the amount of tax that can be reclaimed for every £1.00 donated under Gift Aid falls from 28p to 25p.

If you make donations under Gift Aid, the total value (donation plus tax reclaimed) of each £1.00 you donate is now less than it used to be by 3p. In order to maintain the total value of your donations you need to increase your donations by 2.4%. This will have the effect of keeping the total value of your donations constant.

Many of us regularly donate by Gift Aid to our churches. Unless we make at least this small increase in our donations our churches' incomes will fall as a result of the expiry of transitional relief. It's something to think about and you may rest assured that your Church Treasurer would be very happy if you increase your giving by that amount, or perhaps a bit more.

## **Celebration for 60 Years of Moullin House**

This year sees the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Moullin House. There will be a special Circuit Celebration to be held at Moullin to mark this occasion on Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> June at 3.00pm to which you are all invited. There will be a short service followed by a special strawberry tea.



Moullin House is a 'hall of residence' operated by the Circuit for people aged 18 – 35 coming to London to study for periods of up to 3 years. It was financed and donated to the Ealing Broadway Trust of the Ealing Broadway Methodist Church by Mr Thomas & Mrs Ada Moullin and the foundation stone was laid in 1950. The original intention was to provide a Christian home with a family atmosphere for young people primarily, but not necessarily from Methodist backgrounds coming to London to study or for training.

The Moullin family had its origins in Guernsey and in 1864 Thomas Moullin became one of the founders of Pearl Assurance. The family moved to Ealing in 1888 by which time it had become very prosperous. One of the daughters, Ada married a widower cousin also from Guernsey and coincidentally also named Thomas. Apart from donating the funds to build Moullin, Thomas and Ada also funded the building of what is now Kingsdown Methodist Church.

With the passage of time, responsibility for Moullin moved firstly to the Ealing & Acton Circuit and from 1998 to the current Ealing Trinity Circuit. Also, the role Moullin plays has altered and its clientele is now largely made up of foreign students coming to London for a period of study or training.

In celebrating 60 years of Moullin, we will also be marking its final chapter. Because of the need for significant investment along with ongoing financial losses, the Circuit has decided that it can no longer sustain Moullin, and the house will close on 31<sup>st</sup> August. That said, there is still much to be celebrated in having provided a secure, Christian home for many students over Moullin's 60 years.

Moullin House is at 24 – 26 Mount Park Road, Ealing W5 2RT.

### **At the Rising of Your Sun**

Lord God, Creator of light,  
at the rising of your sun each morning,  
let the greatest of all lights - your love -  
rise, like the sun, within my heart.

## Circuit Finances

For many of us, the 'Circuit' may seem a long way away from the life of our individual churches. Circuits are, however one of the fundamental building blocks of Methodism in Britain. Churches are grouped into Circuits for providing our ministers and our local preachers. The Circuit also provides support to individual churches with training for people such as Junior Church leaders and others, and in terms of grant aid for particular projects.

Importantly, the Circuit provides the vehicle through which our ministers are paid. How much ministers are paid is a matter governed by the Methodist Conference and the Circuit has no direct influence over that. However, the Circuit must raise the funds to support its ministers. It must also provide a fair contribution to the running of the London District and to the Methodist Church centrally.

So, how the Circuit fares financially is of direct importance to all of us in each individual church within the Circuit. The following table sets out the Circuit's finances for the last two Methodist financial years (these run from 1<sup>st</sup> September to 31<sup>st</sup> August the following year).

		<b>2008/9</b>	<b>2009/10</b>
<b>Income</b>	Church Assessments	£189,140	£194,002
	Property rents	£65,650	£58,889
	Interest	£12,587	£5,027
	Other & Misc	£5,158	£7,119
	<b>Total Income</b>	<b>£272,535</b>	<b>£265,037</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>	Ministers' stipends & expenses	£117,970	£146,436
	LEP's – URC Assessment	£38,940	£13,455
	<i>LEP's Refund from URC for 2008/09</i>		<i>(£12,048)</i>
	Methodist Church Fund	£31,166	£32,027
	District Advance Fund Levy	£11,719	£11,206
	District Expenses Fund	£4,068	£4,548
	Circuit Office	£11,957	£12,449
	Property expenses	£49,141	£68,994
	Other & Misc	£7,133	£6,835
	<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>£272,094</b>	<b>£283,902</b>
<b>Surplus/(Deficit)</b>		<b>£441</b>	<b>(£18,865)</b>

The first thing to note is that although assessments paid by churches went up in 2009/10, overall income fell. This is explained by reductions in interest received and from letting property (ie former manses no longer needed for ministers). On the other hand overall expenses rose, and the Circuit ended the year with a deficit of just under £19,000. This had to be made good by drawing on reserves. That's OK in the short run, but it's a slippery slope best avoided. Things were better the year before when there was a tiny surplus.

You can see that expenditure on ministers went up in 2009/10, but this was offset by a drop in the amount paid to the URC for providing a minister (Rev Alan Spence was provided by the URC who was minister at Ealing Green until September 2008). Add the numbers together and the overall cost of providing Circuit ministers rose slightly from £156,910 in 2008/09 to £159,891 in 2009/10. Note that during 2008/09 the URC was overpaid because of the gap between Rev Alan Spence leaving Ealing Green and Rev Jen Smith arriving – hence the refund from the URC in 2009/10.

Most other items of expenditure were at similar levels in the two years, although property expenses increased in 2009/10. This reflects refurbishment work carried out on Circuit manses.

In conclusion, we all need to be aware of the financial needs of the Circuit overall. This is difficult at a time when many of us, particularly those who rely on income from savings, are feeling the pinch. However, we all perhaps need to consider how much we are able to contribute to our churches and through them, to our Circuit.

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## **From Women's Network to Methodist Women in Britain *Address given at Pitshanger on 27th March 2011***

*Blossom Jackson*

Methodist Women in Britain is the new organisation, which combines Women's Network and the British arm of the World Federation of Methodist & Uniting Church Women. It will be launched on the 1st July this year and a series of nationwide Road Shows will follow, the first of which will take place at Westminster Central Hall on September 18<sup>th</sup> this year.

Over 2 years ago, the Methodist Church of Great Britain decided that it would no longer support a post for a nationwide secretary for Women's Network at connexional level. Consequently, a project officer was appointed to oversee the transitional phase as new directions were sought for Women's Network. Last year, it was agreed that Women's Network would merge with the British unit of the World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women to form a new organization – Methodist Women in Britain (MWiB). Since then, a shadow committee, made up of representatives from both organisations together with a project officer has been engaged in sorting out policies and overseeing the work for the new organisation in an interim period. These changes inevitably have created some unease within Women's Network even though it has representation on the amalgamated organisation and so far, its current structure and functioning has not changed.

To put things in perspective, I will now give a brief overview of Network and World Federation, touch on some of the reasons that have led to the enforced change and attempt to offer a view of what I consider MWiB will mean for us at all, at Church and Circuit levels.



As most of you probably already know, Women's Network was established at the Methodist Conference 23 years ago and was the result of the merging together of Women's Work and Women's Fellowship, which still operates in some churches. People such as Hilda Porter, who worked in China were engaged in the former - some of these women were missionaries, whilst others were engaged in medical or nursing work including training. It perhaps worth noting, that Methodists arrived in places such as China nearly a century after the Roman Catholics.

It was natural therefore that Network's goals which evolved 23 years ago should have embraced the concept of 'encouraging, enabling and equipping women, to participate fully in the life of the church.' It has done this through organising conferences, Quiet Days, workshops, skill training and the offering of widely different approaches to worship.

From this scenario, it can be seen that at the heart of Women's Network is the fundamental distinction of what Methodist teaching is all about - that people must use logic and reason in all matters of faith. Up to this year Network has devised the Easter Offering Service and through its envelope system has raised thousands of pounds for World Mission. Network also raises money in a variety of other ways. The caretaker MWiB organisation planned this year's service. Network is also involved with the Women's World Day of Prayer Service nationally and locally and has also been engaged in the planning of the annual Daffodil Day service at Westminster Central Hall.

It is probably an understatement to say that some people at the grass roots level feel some unease about the changes. However, it has been said, 'It is better to light a candle, than curse the darkness.' It is my opinion that MWiB could be just one of those candles.

Whenever I have tried to broach the subject of Women's Network with a good number of people, and have had negative comments, I have not been surprised. This is because from my observation Network has not been promoted in churches purposefully. Some even see it as a feminist organisation in a most negative way. Truthfully, most women in individual churches have had little knowledge of the work of Network except for the Easter Offering service.

In Contrast to Women's Network, WFMUCW is a worldwide organisation of Methodist Church woman. Its motto is 'to know Christ and make him known'. A wide remit indeed! WFMUCW operates on a global scale, and uses world conferences as the medium for exchanging ideas on worship and the free exchange of the Christian work of Methodist women across the world. This work encompasses healing ministry, education and social services, promotion of mission and the development of bonds with other women from other faiths (note the overlap with Network). But perhaps one of its most crucial aspects of WFMUCW is that of having a seat at the United Nations. This allows it to press for the attainment of the Millennium Goals. There is also further current focus on global warming and the elimination of the trafficking of women and children.

The launch of MWiB will take place after the model is presented to representatives from each District in the UK for debate and acceptance in May, and the officers have been already appointed. The raisons d'être of MWiB are "Bringing women together, to know Christ and to make him known; encouraging, equipping them to serve God in the church, the community and the world; enabling women in the Church, the community and the world and connecting women in Britain with Christian women worldwide." All of which are to be achieved through the medium of worship and prayer; sharing experiences; collaborative working; mutual encouragement; training for discipleship; social action; gender justice; World Mission and Global vision. This realistically represents a more holistic model.

For me, one of the most important ideals of MWiB however, is the encouragement to attract young people from within and outside the church. It can be argued, that the young people in today's society, on the whole, are some of the most accomplished in the field of technology, but they are faced with a rapidly changing and sometimes frightening world, more and more. The question can be asked whether MWiB can help provide a moral compass on which the young adult 18 - 30 can shape their lives?

The Methodist Church places great emphasis on missionary work and other forms of spreading the word of God and his love for others, across our world. The challenge for us is to determine how we can tool our young people from the adolescent years onwards, so that they can grow in faith in the ensuing years and find Christ's teaching relevant to their everyday lives.

There is nothing wrong with a woman's organisation within the church, as long as the women can be credible role models to their daughters, nieces and others. It is in our homes, our church and our communities that girls learn how women should behave and boys learn how to treat women.

A candle has been lit and it is for us women, with the support of our men to be able to make best use of the opportunity to give some of our time to shape MWiB, so that it can become a more dynamic organisation than can enliven the spiritual life in our churches. One in which we can all purposely learn from each other and find true fellowship for the furtherance of God's work here on earth.

### **Women's Network - Dates for your Diary**

Methodist Women in Britain Road Show - Westminster Central Hall 18<sup>th</sup> September 2011, 2.00pm

Sector 'A' Quiet day led by Rev Jennifer Smith - theme 'Discipleship' at Ealing Green Methodist/URC Church on 8<sup>th</sup> October 10.00am – 3.00pm

Women's Network- London District President's Induction Service Wesley's Chapel on 15<sup>th</sup> October at 2.00pm (please note change of date)

## **Lendwithcare – a different kind of support**

*Gerald Barton, Editor*

In January I became an International Microfinancier. Whilst this gave me images of smoking slender cigars and sipping thimbles of champagne, this is not, for me at least, a money-making venture. As some of you may know, microfinance is about lending small amounts of money to people who need to borrow small amounts of money to start, extend or continue small-scale businesses in the developing world, particularly where poor people would otherwise have no access to financial services. People in the UK can now join this process as lenders through Lendwithcare, an initiative set up by CARE International UK.

CARE International was set up in the wake of World War 2 to assist people desperately trying to rebuild their lives. Since then, its focus has extended to 70 countries in 5 continents. Its initial focus was response to emergencies and disasters, but has gradually evolved to embrace the need to tackle the root causes of poverty. Microfinance is not charity, but is a way of helping people improve their lives through developing small businesses to serve their local communities.

So, what is microfinance? Basically, it refers to the provision of financial services for poor and low-income clients. In addition to providing small loans, microfinance also includes the provision of other basic financial services such as savings, money transfer and insurance for poor people. Improving access to such services allows poor and low-income people to finance income-generating activities, build assets, stabilise consumption and protect against risks. Microfinance is now widely recognised as a powerful solution to alleviating poverty among the working poor.

Microfinance is usually aimed at economically active poor and low-income people in developing countries who have limited or no access to the services provided by formal financial intermediaries such as banks. Since such people have few salaried work opportunities, they are usually self-employed 'micro-entrepreneurs' often working from home. Typically, they operate small businesses such as grocery shops, market stalls, car repair, carpentry or other workshops, and in rural areas they tend to focus on food processing, agriculture and raising livestock and poultry. Around two-thirds of microfinance clients worldwide are women.

CARE International works with locally-established microfinance institutions (MFI's), all of whom are expected to adopt CARE International's code of conduct. In the first instance, a 'micro-entrepreneur' will approach an MFI with a plan for starting or extending a business. The MFI quickly assesses the plan and, if satisfied that it is promising and sound will provide an initial loan. The next step is for the micro-entrepreneur, assisted by the MFI to construct a profile that will appear on Lendwithcare's website. This is where UK lenders step in.

On Lendwithcare's website, you can find a list of entrepreneurs. You decide which you want to support and offer a loan to help cover the initial loan from the MFI. Your loan can be as little as £15.00, or more if you wish up to the total amount required

by individual entrepreneurs. Once the total loan has been covered, the money is transferred to the MFI who then replaces their initial loan with the money lent through Lendwithcare's website. The MFI can then use that money to extend loans to other micro-entrepreneurs.

The borrower does, of course have to repay the loan and has a repayment schedule to do so, usually over 12 months. Thus, your money is gradually returned to you, although you don't earn any interest and, because not all businesses flourish, you might not get all of your money back. However, once you start getting your money back, you have a choice – you could withdraw it, donate it to CARE International's charitable work, or you can lend it again, which is what most people supporting microfinance opt to do.

The MFI charges interest on its loans – it has to in order to cover its own costs and risks. Sometimes the rate of interest can be high, particularly if the loan is very small. This reflects the fact that the work involved in setting up a loan is much the same irrespective of the size of loan requested.

Lendwithcare currently works with MFI's in Togo, Benin, Indonesia and the Philippines. They hope to add Guatamala to the list shortly. Having joined up, we are currently supporting six micro-entrepreneurs – four in Togo and two in the Philippines. All but one are women running market stalls for food or clothing. Their individual loans range from about £350 to £650 – three of these have now been covered in full and one is gradually getting there.

The inspiration for doing this comes from a book titled 'Half the Sky' by Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl Wudunn lent to us by Kathleen Loveridge at Kingsdown. This describes the position of women in the developing world and the hazards they frequently face with education and health care, or the lack thereof, plus the risk of trafficking for prostitution, rape as a weapon-of-war, etc – all pretty harrowing stuff. It also describes how it is frequently women who seek to better their, and their families' lives by starting small businesses. Microfinance is a key support for their efforts. Hence the decision to look for a way of supporting microfinance.

One of the key features of engaging in microfinance is that it works right down at the individual level. Rather than supporting a project aimed at supporting a group of people, large or small in some part of the developing world, this is about supporting particular people and their particular efforts to improve their lives. You know their names and what they hope to do. You also know that what they really want is not charity, but help to get their businesses going. This makes the process somewhat unique.

Have a look at Lendwithcare's website ([www.lendwithcare.org](http://www.lendwithcare.org)) and think about it. You don't have to lend large amounts – you can start with just £15.00 if you wish. So, why not give it a go?

# The Big Sing

*Susan Lavelle, Hanwell*

When did you sing your first Christmas carol last year? Some people in choirs may have spent a few months rehearsing for a Christmas concert, but I'm sure not many could claim to have sung the "12 Days of Christmas" in September. Well this is what a small group of people from the Ealing Trinity Circuit found themselves doing last year.

The "Big Sing" is an event, which happens every year. The BBC records two "Songs of Praise" programmes at the Albert Hall. One is transmitted in October and the other around Christmas. For the recording the Royal Albert Hall is filled with people who enjoy singing hymns but to improve the quality of the singing a certain amount of rehearsing takes place. Basically the singers fall into three groups. There are four choirs who are invited to sit in the choir seating to lead the singing. Then there are the keen amateur singers who sit in the arena and spend the afternoon rehearsing and finally there are the people who just turn up in the evening for the recording.

In Ealing Trinity Circuit we are lucky to have Christina Tom-Johnson who every year organises a group from our circuit to go to the Royal Albert Hall for the "Big Sing". So one Sunday in September after our morning service at Hanwell Methodist a small group of us climbed into a minibus and set off for the "Big Sing". This was my first time so I did not know quite what to expect.

Once there we were shown to our seats in the arena and we joined in with the rehearsal which was already underway. For the first programme we rehearsed hymns such as "*Let all the world in every corner sing*" and "*How great thou art*". Then it was time to sing the Christmas carols such as "*Joy to the World*" and the "*Calypso Carol*". They put Christmas decorations up on the stage and people put on their Christmas hats. I enjoyed singing the hymns and carols with the orchestra even though it felt strange singing "*Good King Wenceslas*" in September. We had to make sure our songbooks were as low as possible so that the cameras could see our faces. Aled Jones was the presenter and there was an amusing part at the beginning when he was asked to put a tie on as the director thought he looked too casual with an open necked shirt.

After we had been rehearsing for about three hours we had a break to eat our packed tea. The area underneath the arena is very confusing and I think we ended up in the area reserved for the 'proper' choirs, as there was free tea and coffee. But no one asked us to move so we ate our food and then went back to our seats ready for the recording.

By this time the rest of the Albert Hall was filling up and there was an air of excitement as the time for the recording approached. The conductor Paul Leddington Wright, who was hearing the director through his earpiece gave us our instructions. Whether we were told to sing, smile, clap, stand or sit I tried to

concentrate so that I wouldn't make a mistake. Although it sounds stressful, it was great fun and if I get a chance I'd like to go again this year.

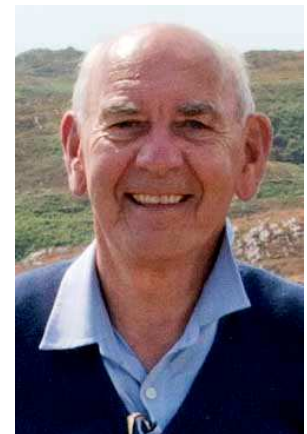
About six weeks later Mum, Dad and I all sat watching the first "Big Sing Songs of Praise" on TV, wondering if we would catch a glimpse of any of our friends from church. We did see some of our group and then to my astonishment there was a close shot of just Mum and me singing "O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing". Well, the phone didn't stop ringing after the programme and I had another look at it on iPlayer. So thank you Christina for arranging the trip. It was a great day and a thrill to see myself on television.

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## Lifestyle for a Christian Professional

*Osmond Mulligan*

*Osmond is a retired surgeon now working in the Home Missions Department of the Methodist Church in Ireland. He is also a local preacher. One of our local preachers, Anita Oji suggested he write an article for In-touch following a discussion she had with him at the British Medical Association.*



Osmond Mulligan

What is it that distinguishes a Christian disciple from a non-believer? St. Paul gives us the pattern in his epistles, when he introduces himself as a bond slave (servant) of Jesus Christ. After witnessing the death of Stephen, the first Christian martyr, he met with Christ on the Damascus road and identified with those who found fulfilment by living as a witness to the person of Jesus as Lord. He also was prepared to die, if in him Jesus was to be alive and continue His ministry in the world.

From childhood in a Methodist household I had been able to observe what it meant to 'follow Jesus'. Christian workers lived in our home, and shared their motivation for what they did. My parents frequently entertained Cliff College evangelists, as two of my uncles plus my brother and one cousin had been Cliff College students. It was a 'given' that a Christian's life, as well as their words were a witness to the reality of God's call upon our lives. So, when I became a doctor my first question was 'How can I bring the presence of Jesus into the modern world?' One of the first bits of theology I learned after yielding my life to Jesus as personal Saviour was about 'incarnation'. Jesus wants to take on *our* flesh, and through us to live and speak again in the modern world.

Initially, after a short period in the NHS, my wife and I identified with the underprivileged of this world and went to mission hospitals in Israel (Nazareth) and Nigeria (Wesley Guild, Ilesha). I insisted that I wanted to communicate the good news of the gospel in words that the people could understand, so spent time learning the local language before starting work in the hospital. I was finally able to take responsibility for a village church as pastor, while also fulfilling my role as

surgeon and teacher of medical and nursing students. This involved, firstly, a clear conviction about what my priorities were and then planning to balance the conflicting demands. The hospital superintendent and the Circuit Superintendent had also to give their approval to this! There is no place for the 'lone ranger' in Christian service.

In addition to **incarnation** I soon learned that discipleship of Jesus means taking up a cross (**crucifixion**) and some pain, if not quite suffering. After a night 'on call' it would have been easy to excuse myself from some duties, especially one which involved me getting up early once per week before going on the wards, to take a Bible class for older ministers who wanted to learn from someone who had a scientific training and still was prepared to teach them the Bible as the credible Word of God. After my first tour to Nigeria my health did break down and I had to be flown home with physical exhaustion, but it was then that I discovered the experience of **resurrection** and was soon able to return, until the time when family circumstance dictated our return to the UK and the NHS, where I was appointed a Consultant General Surgeon within one year of return from Nigeria.

When I appeared for interviews there was amazement that a missionary doctor had found the time to do, and to publish, credible research in co-operation with the MRC in London. My attitude was very simple; nobody had reported on the lessons that I, along with others, had gained in a tropical setting. Predecessors in the hospital such as David Morley had set an example for me, so I collected the data and did the analysis, usually at night before going to bed. Maybe it meant an hour or two less sleep, but I wanted to share with other, especially trainee, doctors the lessons learnt, so that future patients could benefit from our experience. Doing research can appear very esoteric, but when others benefit we have a duty to be involved. Christian faith must involve our head as well as our heart!

As a Christian Surgeon I continued to have an interest in teaching. My NHS team was often dubbed 'the all blacks', not because of my love for rugby, but because overseas students appreciated the time I gave to them to help with their sometimes-limited initial understanding of English, and by concentration on relevant lessons for their future tropical practice. Because of experience of hospital administration overseas, I got drawn into administrative duties in the NHS. Not a lot of clinicians enjoy this, but in getting involved I was able to help in creating a mutual understanding between doctors and administrators. Christians must be peacemakers, even though this can be very demanding. Initially I relaxed by getting involved in our local rugby club as medical adviser, especially when my son was playing, and I was involved in policy making for neck injuries. I had to give up this 'hands on' commitment as other priorities, with greater church involvement, later dictated a different use of 'free time'.

As an ex-Mission Partner I was frequently in demand as a speaker in churches, on top of my duties as a local preacher on my own circuit. With a young family I got involved with them in youth work, especially in a local non-denominational club, which crossed the religious divide in Ulster — a rather unique set-up! If my wife had not been fully in sympathy with what I was doing, it would never have been possible

to do it. We made it a rule that I would come home for lunch together at least three times per week (I lived only 10 minutes from hospital). During these meals we shared our united vision and worked out priorities, especially for our own family. We tried to have a family breakfast and evening meal together each day. The children shared their experiences with us, as we did with them as parents. We have had the joy of seeing each of the three coming to personal faith in Christ, and also getting involved in work and witness among their own peers.

In public life it is tempting to seek approval. Personally, I have always tried to share with colleagues and friends why I am what I am - by the enabling grace of God. People soon recognise, and ask questions about, our attitudes and our priorities. Not everyone agrees with us all the time, even in church, but when the Holy Spirit, God's gift to believers in Jesus, lives in us we have the resource to exercise love in all our relationships. Love suffers long and is kind. As God has been patient with me so I am encouraged to reflect to others His treatment of me.

In conclusion, I am daily reminded of the reality of God's personal love when I read the Bible each morning. I pray that the lessons taught there will be applied in my behaviour and planned agenda for that day. God confirms His will by giving real peace. He prompts us when we make our decisions, and so He will be glorified and honoured in our words and actions.

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## **mediawatch-uk**

*Graham Preedy, Greenford*

mediawatch-uk campaigns for good standards of decency in the media. In particular it campaigns against glorified, fictional violence, sexually explicit material and obscene language in multimedia images. In addition, it seeks to initiate and stimulate debate on the effects of television, computer games and the internet on society and children in particular.

Founded in 1965 by the late Mary Whitehouse, the organisation is funded by donations and membership subscriptions. Unfortunately, its income has been insufficient to cover its costs during the last two years and it needs to boost its membership in order to carry on its work. It would be good if people from our Circuit could subscribe to mediawatch-uk. The annual subscription is only £15.00 and if you would like to join, send a cheque payable to 'mediawatch-uk' to mediawatch-uk, 3 Willow House, Kennington Rd., Ashford, Kent, TN24 0NR.

You can find out more about mediawatch-uk and its work on the internet at [www.mediawatchuk.org.uk](http://www.mediawatchuk.org.uk).



# Dietrich Bonhoeffer

*Gerald Barton, Editor*

Like me, you've probably heard of the German theologian, Dietrich Bonhoeffer. I knew he was executed by the Nazis during the Second World War, and have always assumed that this was simply because he opposed the Nazi Party and all its doings. As I probed a bit into his life, I was surprised to learn that he had been implicated in plots to kill Hitler and had worked for German Military Intelligence, the *Abwehr*. This organisation contained, or so it seems quite a few people opposed to Hitler and Bonhoeffer used his position to further his anti-Nazi activities. This makes for an intriguing story so I probed further.



Dietrich Bonhoeffer was born on 4<sup>th</sup> February 1906 to a prominent upper-class family in Breslau (now Wroclaw in Poland). His father, Karl Bonhoeffer was a distinguished neurologist and psychiatrist and his mother, Paula von Hase the daughter of a countess and granddaughter of Karl von Hase, a distinguished church historian and preacher to the court of Kaiser Wilhelm II. Dietrich was an exceptional pianist and his family thought he might pursue a musical career, although they expected him to follow his father as a psychiatrist. As they were not particularly devout, they were surprised when, at the age of 14, Dietrich declared that he intended to become a theologian and pastor. "Why waste your life in such a poor, feeble, boring, petty, bourgeois institution as the church?" asked his elder brother. The reply *"If what you say is true, I'll reform it!"*

Bonhoeffer studied at Tübingen and Berlin, gaining his doctorate in 1927 at the age of 21. During the following two years he was curate with the German community in Barcelona. Whilst there, he witnessed the effects of growing social chaos, a decline in traditional values and the impact of the international financial crisis. At the same time, he started becoming critical of the church for its poor response to the situation.

Following a brief return to Berlin, and still being too young for ordination, Bonhoeffer went to the USA in 1930 to further his studies. Although he found his seminary there not up to the exacting standards of Germany, he was strongly influenced by his time at the Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem where he taught in the Sunday School. During this time he became sensitive to the social injustices suffered by minorities and the inept response of the church. He began to see things "from below" — from the perspective of those who suffer oppression. He observed, *"Here one can truly speak and hear about sin and grace and the love of God...the Black Christ is preached with rapturous passion and vision."*

Bonhoeffer travelled extensively through the US and Mexico and also visited Cuba, Italy and Libya around this time. As a result he became interested in ecumenism. On his return to Berlin in 1931 to teach systematic theology, he was appointed one of three Youth Secretaries to the World Alliance for Promoting International

Friendship through the Churches, a forerunner of the World Council of Churches. Doubtless influenced by what he saw and learned in his travels, Bonhoeffer experienced a personal conversion moving from being primarily attracted to intellectual theology to become a man of faith resolved to carry out Christ's teaching as revealed in the Gospels. He was ordained on 15<sup>th</sup> November 1931.

Just over a year later, in January 1933, Hitler was installed as Chancellor. Bonhoeffer was one of the few churchmen to oppose Hitler from the start. Two days after Hitler's installation he warned in a radio broadcast of the dangers of the cult of the leader (Führer), who might easily turn out to be an 'anti-leader' (Verführer). He was, perhaps already too late – the broadcast was cut off whilst he was in mid-sentence.

Around this time there was a struggle going on in the German Protestant established churches between the nationalistic 'German Christians' and the 'Young Reformers' – a struggle with the potential for schism. There had been elections for presbyters and church officials in 1932, but these were unconstitutionally annulled by Hitler and new elections imposed in July 1933. Bonhoeffer campaigned vigorously for the election of independent, non-Nazi officials, but the elections were rigged and the overwhelming majority of church positions went to the Nazi-supported 'German Christians'. Come the finish, only a handful of church synods weren't dominated by Nazi-supported officials. In September 1933, the national church synod at Wittenburg approved the Aryan paragraph prohibiting non-Aryans from taking parish posts. When Bonhoeffer was offered a parish post in eastern Berlin, he refused it in protest against this racist policy.

In response to the Nazification of the church in Germany, Bonhoeffer along with Martin Niemöller formed the *Pfarrernotbund*, a forerunner of the Confessing Church which was formed in May 1934 at Barmen in opposition to the 'German Christians'. Although not large, the Confessing Church did represent a major source of Christian opposition to the Nazis. The Barmen Declaration, drafted by Karl Barth and adopted by the Confessing Church, insisted that Christ, not the Führer, was the head of the church.

Disheartened by developments in Germany, in the Autumn of 1933 Bonhoeffer accepted a two-year appointment as pastor to two German-speaking Protestant churches in Britain – St Paul's in London and Sydenham. He felt he needed "a *while in the desert*", although Karl Barth for one urged him to remain in Germany to continue the struggle for the soul of the church in Germany. Bonhoeffer, however used his time in Britain to further ecumenical support for the Confessing Church running up huge telephone bills in the process. He attempted to rally opposition to moves by the German Christian Movement to merge Nazi racist ideology with the Christian Gospel. The head of the German Evangelical Church, Bishop Theodor Heckel travelled to London to urge him to abstain from ecumenical work not authorised by Berlin. He may as well have saved his fare.

In 1935, Bonhoeffer returned to Germany to head an underground seminary for the Confessing Church at Finkewalde. What followed was a kind of cat-and-mouse

game between the Confessing Church and the Nazis who were attempting to suppress it. Karl Barth was driven out of Germany to Switzerland in 1935; Martin Niemöller was arrested in July 1937; and in August 1936, Bonhoeffer's authorisation to teach at the University of Berlin was revoked after he was denounced as a "pacifist and enemy of the state" by Theodor Heckel. In August 1937 Himmler decreed the education and examination of Confessing ministry candidates illegal. In September 1937, the Gestapo closed the seminary at Finkenwalde and by November had arrested 27 pastors and former students.

Bonhoeffer spent the next two years secretly travelling from one eastern German village to another to conduct "seminary on the run" and supervision of his students, most of whom were working illegally in small parishes. A landed family, the von Blumenthals hosted the seminary in their estate of Gross Schlönwitz, whilst pastors there and in neighbouring villages supported the seminary by employing and housing the students. In 1938, the Gestapo banned Bonhoeffer from Berlin. By summer 1939 the seminary was able to move to Sigurdshof, an outlying estate of another landed family, the von Kleists. However, in March 1940 the Gestapo closed it down following the outbreak of World War II.

In February 1938, Bonhoeffer made an initial contact with members of the German Resistance when his brother-in-law Hans von Dohnanyi introduced him to a group at Abwehr, German military intelligence, who were seeking Hitler's overthrow. Bonhoeffer also learned from Dohnanyi that war was imminent and was particularly troubled by the prospect of being conscripted. As a committed pacifist opposed to the Nazi regime, he could never swear an oath to Hitler and fight in his army, although not to do so was potentially a capital offence. He also worried about the consequences his refusing military service could have for the Confessing Church, as it was a move that would be frowned upon by most Christians and their churches in Germany at the time.

It was at this juncture, in June 1939 that Bonhoeffer left for the United States at the invitation of Union Theological Seminary in New York. Amid much inner turmoil, he soon regretted his decision despite strong pressures from his friends to stay in the U.S. He wrote to Reinhold Niebuhr "*I have come to the conclusion that I made a mistake in coming to America. I must live through this difficult period in our national history with the people of Germany. I will have no right to participate in the reconstruction of Christian life in Germany after the war if I do not share the trials of this time with my people... Christians in Germany will have to face the terrible alternative of either willing the defeat of their nation in order that Christian civilization may survive or willing the victory of their nation and thereby destroying civilization. I know which of these alternatives I must choose but I cannot make that choice from security.*" He returned to Germany on the last scheduled steamer to cross the Atlantic

Back in Germany, Bonhoeffer was forbidden to speak in public or publish and was required to report his activities to the police. In the meantime, however he joined the German military intelligence, the Abwehr. This seems a surprising move for an avowed pacifist and opponent of the Nazi regime, and perhaps even more

surprising that he was allowed to join. However, Abwehr was a centre of resistance to Hitler, and under its cover, Bonhoeffer served as a courier for the German resistance movement. He used his ecumenical contacts outside of Germany to reveal the existence of the resistance and to put out feelers towards securing possible peace terms with the Allies for a post-Hitler government. In May 1942, he met the Bishop of Chichester, George Bell, an ally of the Confessing Church, who had been contacted by Bonhoeffer's exiled brother-in-law Leibholz. Feelers were sent to the British foreign minister Anthony Eden, but these were ignored, as were all other approaches from German resistance. In addition, both Bonhoeffer and Dohnanyi were involved in Abwehr operations to help German Jews escape to Switzerland.

Being a member of Abwehr, Bonhoeffer got to know of the full scale of the Nazis' atrocities, advocated the assassination of Hitler and knew of the various plots against him. He concluded that *"the ultimate question for a responsible man to ask is not how he is to extricate himself heroically from the affair, but how the coming generation shall continue to live."* He did not justify his action in joining Abwehr, nor in advocating the assassination of Hitler, but accepted that he was taking guilt upon himself as he wrote *"when a man takes guilt upon himself in responsibility, he imputes his guilt to himself and no one else. He answers for it... Before other men he is justified by dire necessity; before himself he is acquitted by his conscience, but before God he hopes only for grace."*

On 6<sup>th</sup> April 1943, Bonhoeffer and his brother-in-law, Dohnanyi were arrested. The reasons for their arrest had more to do with rivalry between the SS and Abwehr and suspicions of financial corruption. However, in their investigations, the SS stumbled on more serious evidence - Bonhoeffer was suspected of evading military call-up, using Abwehr to circumvent the Gestapo's injunction against speaking in public, and using Abwehr to further Confessing Church works, amongst other charges. For the next 18 months, Bonhoeffer was held in the Tegel military prison awaiting trial. He continued his work in religious outreach among his fellow prisoners and guards. Sympathetic guards helped smuggle his letters out of prison and a guard named Corporal Knobloch even offered to help him escape from the prison and "disappear" with him. Plans were made, but Bonhoeffer declined fearing Nazi retribution on his family, especially his brother Klaus and brother-in-law who were also imprisoned.

Following the failed plot to kill Hitler in July 1944, secret Abwehr documents relating to the conspiracy were discovered. These revealed Bonhoeffer's connections to the conspirators, although it is not clear that he was actually one of them. Further damaging evidence came to light in April 1945 with the discovery of the diaries of Admiral Wilhelm Canaris, head of the Abwehr. In a rage, Hitler ordered the destruction of the conspirators. Bonhoeffer was condemned at a drum-head trial held on 8<sup>th</sup> April and hanged the following morning. The camp doctor who witnessed the execution wrote: *"I saw Pastor Bonhoeffer kneeling on the floor praying fervently to God. I was most deeply moved by the way this lovable man prayed, so devout and so certain that God heard his prayer. At the place of execution, he again said a short prayer and then climbed the few steps to the gallows, brave and composed. His death ensued after a few seconds. In the almost*

*fifty years that I worked as a doctor, I have hardly ever seen a man die so entirely submissive to the will of God."*

Not surprisingly, Bonhoeffer's reputation as a pastor and theologian who lived as he had preached has been an inspiration to Christians across a broad range of denominations and ideologies. Central to his theology is Christ, in whom God and the world are reconciled. Bonhoeffer's God is a suffering God, whose manifestation is found in this-worldliness. He believed that the incarnation of God in flesh made it unacceptable to speak of God and the world "*in terms of two spheres.*" He stressed personal and collective piety and revived the idea of the imitation of Christ. He argued that Christians should not retreat from the world but act within it. He believed that two elements underpinned faith - the implementation of justice and the acceptance of divine suffering. Bonhoeffer insisted that the church, "*had to share in the sufferings of God at the hands of a godless world*" if it were to be a true church of Christ.

In his prison letters, Bonhoeffer also raised questions about the role of Christianity and the church in a "world come of age", where people would no longer need the idea of a metaphysical God as a stop-gap to human limitations; and mused about the emergence of a "religionless Christianity", where God would be unclouded from the metaphysical constructs of the previous 1900 years. He had a critical view of the phenomenon of religion and asserted that revelation abolished religion (which he called the "garment" of faith). Having witnessed the complete failure of the German Protestant church as an institution in the face of Nazism, it is perhaps not surprising that Bonhoeffer should look beyond organised religion for an expression of the core of Christianity.

For Bonhoeffer, the only way forward was complete submission to the will of God. He said that "*if a man asks God humbly, God will give him certain knowledge of His will; and then, after all this earnest proving there will be the freedom to make real decisions, and [this] with the confidence that it is not man but God Himself who through this proving gives effect to His will.*" Whilst Bonhoeffer towers over most of humanity as not just a man of faith, but a man willing to live it and die for it, his theology can clearly be unsettling. Not just because it is deeply demanding, but also because he seems to suggest that Christianity as we know it through the church is potentially flawed and perhaps beside the point. Equally, the quotation in this paragraph is unsettling. Although Bonhoeffer clearly believed that if we humbly seek it, we can know for certain the will of God, I can't avoid the feeling that many who truly believe that they seek the will of God may still disagree on what it is. Also many may believe they seek humbly, but delude themselves and arrive at arrogant and rigid conclusions.

Whatever conclusions one might draw from his theology, and I confess I know little of it, what will always remain is the man who truly lived as he believed, and finally suffered and died for it.

## Concert at Kingsdown Methodist Church

Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> July at 7.30pm

## Rogue Valley Chorale

The Rogue Valley Chorale from Medford, Oregon will be singing at Kingsdown as part of its 2011 tour of the UK. This versatile chorale was founded in 1973 and performs music ranging from classical to Broadway, contemporary, folk and spirituals. The programme for its 2011 tour includes inspiring American and English anthems.

You can find out more about the chorale, and hear it singing, on its website at [www.roguevalleychorale.org](http://www.roguevalleychorale.org). Tickets £5.00 including light refreshments.

For more information call 020 8579 4056

## Hammond Organ going for Free

This organ is free to anyone who wants it and can take it away. If you're interested contact Bill Cocking on 020 8248 7983, or e-mail [bill413@btinternet.com](mailto:bill413@btinternet.com).



Whilst it's free, if you'd like to make a donation to your church, that's at your own discretion.

**Greenford**

# **Walk for Water**

**Last year we had a ball!**

The sun shone, the steel band played, the burgers sizzled on the barbecue, and we carried over 2 tons of water from the River Brent up to Greenford Church.

More importantly, more than 100 of us had a taste of what it is like to take a bucket to the river and carry it home, sharing the experience of the 900 million people for whom that is their only source of water.

We also raised enough sponsorship money to enable **Operation Wellfound to dig a new well** for a village in Africa, and put an end to their daily walk for Water.

**Come and help us do it again**

So the plan is simple – we want as many people as possible to walk from Greenford Methodist Church down to the River Brent and come back with a container of water. Let's see how we would like it, if every drop of water had to be carried two-thirds of a mile. Everyone welcome.

## **Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> May 2011**

From 10am onwards

**Operation Wellfound**

is working to bring fresh clean drinking water to those who need it.

More information from Alex Wright at Operation WellFound, 020 7998 7376,  
the website [www.operationwellfound.org](http://www.operationwellfound.org),  
or Kip Bennett at Greenford Methodist Church 020 8813 1946

## Circuit Website

Our Circuit does not currently have a website.....

Would you like to be involved in creating and setting one up?

If you're interested, please contact Rev Micky Youngson to learn more.

Tel 020 8992 0006, e-mail michaela.youngson@mac.com

## Circuit Directory Update

*No updates this time.*

## Forthcoming Events around the Circuit

[as notified to, or discovered by, the Editor]

### June

6<sup>th</sup> Mon 8.00pm **Circuit Meeting at Ealing Green**

19<sup>th</sup> Sun 3.00pm **Circuit Celebration at Moullin House**  
in celebration of 60 years of Moullin

### July

5<sup>th</sup> Tues 7.30pm **Kingsdown:** Concert by Rogue Valley Chorale  
Tickets £5.00 including light refreshments

3<sup>rd</sup> Sat 10.00am **Kingsdown Book Fair** with *bric-a-brac* and cake stalls  
12.30pm *In aid of Redevelopment Fund*

### August

Articles for '**In-touch**' **Issue No 57 (September - November)** should be sent by e-mail headed '**In-touch**' to the Editor, **Gerald Barton**, or as hard copy to the Circuit Office.

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Office hours: Tues & Thurs 09.00 – 14.00

**Deadline for next issue: July 28th**