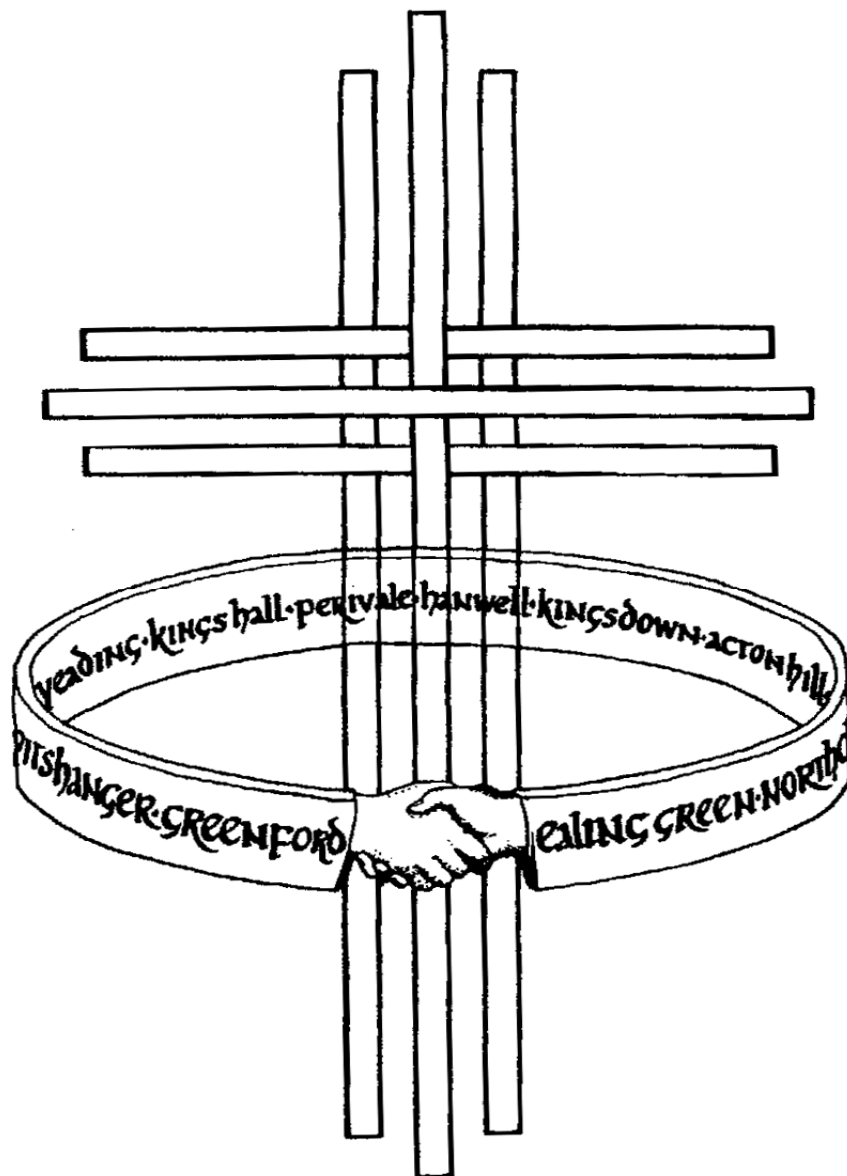


In-touch

No 60

June - August 2012



The magazine for *all* the Ealing Trinity Circuit.

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Circuit website

www.ealingtrinity.org.uk

Front Cover designed by Marion Narain

From the Superintendent

Returning from a sabbatical is a strange time. Some things have moved on, people have had experiences that I would normally know about but I find myself clueless! Other things have stayed just the same. My overwhelming feeling is gratitude. Gratitude to the Methodist Church for the gift of time and space to pray, reflect, play and be with family and friends, especially those who I rarely see because working most weekends means not being able to get together.

Most of my sabbatical was focused on using my glass fusing kiln to make art pieces related to Holy Week. Items include a jar and nard, remembering the anointing of Jesus; a pieta – remembering Mary holding Jesus after he was taken down from the cross, a crown of thorns mounted on a piece of glass that is broken to represent the curtain torn in the temple on Good Friday. My favourite piece is a towel and bowl to portray Jesus washing his disciples' feet at the last supper. It was a real challenge to make glass look like fabric and drape over the bowl! It has been a great joy to learn and use new skills to create items that I hope are beautiful, but also challenging and that help us focus on the events of Jesus' life as he chose to give up his life for his friends.

We are created as people of complex needs – physical, emotional, psychological and spiritual. Not all of us are able to take three months out of our normal lives but we all need to pay attention to the balance of our lives. After all, even God rested on the Sabbath day. Taking time to pray, reflect and to be creative – in whatever way suits us – is important if we are to be healthy and live life in all its fullness, as God intends.

I am also immensely grateful for my colleagues in the staff team, Circuit Stewards and Church Stewards who have done more than just keep the show on the road, whilst I've been away – they have moved our Circuit policy forward and will continue to work together to establish good working practices for the future.

Some things need to be taken care of over the next few weeks and months – getting manses ready for new ministers, completing the sale of Moullin House and training all office holders in the basics of the Methodist Church's Safeguarding policy. Please look out for announcements of dates for training and meetings and, if you have a particular skill in property, finance, training or in pastoral care and worship leading – do get in touch with myself, Jennifer Smith or Peter Chadburn.

Every blessing for the Easter season.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Michael".

From the Circuit Meeting

The most recent Circuit Meeting was held on 15th March.

Peter Green made his last report to the Circuit Meeting in finance – as reported elsewhere in the edition of In-touch, Peter is standing down as Circuit Treasurer and David Street is taking up the mantle. In short, the results for the 2010-11 connexional year showed the Circuit as having incurred a deficit of £38,625. Circuit income for the year was £252,719 (down 4.6% on the previous year), and expenditure £291,344 (up 2.6% on the previous year). Peter noted that the coming year would also be difficult for the Circuit financially.

One point for Church Treasurers to note in particular is that donations to connexional funds (eg Methodist Church Fund for World Mission, etc) should be sent via the Circuit Treasurer as they have to be recorded and reported to the London District.

The Meeting voted on a special 'Deferred Conference Resolution' designed to clarify the legal status of deacons in relation to presbyters within the Methodist Church. All Circuit Meetings and Church Councils are being asked to vote on this issue and the results will be fed back through Districts to the annual Methodist Conference. In short, the resolution amends the founding documents of the Methodist Church to recognise both deacons and presbyters as 'ministers' whilst affirming the differences between the two roles. It all sounds rather arcane, but historically changes such as this would have required a special Act of Parliament, so it was important that we gave the issue due weight. Needless to say the meeting voted in favour of the resolution.

As you will all know, we have 4 new ministers coming into the Circuit in September. Whilst each will have pastoral responsibility for nominated churches in the usual way, they will also work more as a team to make the most of their particular strengths. As this approach develops, each church can expect more than just their 'own' minister to be involved in their life and activities. This process will be explained in more detail in a future edition of In-touch.

The changeover of ministers will create some particular pressures during the summer after our current ministers leave in mid-July and before the new ones arrive at the start of September. To help churches through this period, a series of 6 pre-planned Worship Services will be available to Local Preachers and Worship Leaders responsible for local arrangements.

The meeting agreed to the creation of some 'short life' groups to cover some defined tasks. The first of these will coordinate the preparation of manses for our new ministers, including all communications with them about that. The second will look after the disposal of Moullin House and the third the requirements for people to undertake Foundation module in safeguarding training. Setting these up is being coordinated through the Circuit Administrator.

In addition to most of our ministers, all of our Circuit Stewards will be changing in September. The new stewards will be David Street as Circuit Treasurer, Mike Brown and Barbara Quartey. Peter Chadburn has agreed to continue as a steward for 6 months from September to help the new stewards get into their roles. As noted elsewhere in this addition of In-touch, there is still a vacancy for a fourth steward.

Preparations are in hand to market Moullin House for ongoing use as a hostel or similar. Whilst the Circuit's strategy is sell the site with planning permission for alternative uses, this is an essential step in order to establish to the satisfaction of Ealing Council that there is no 'taker' for Moullin for continued as a hostel. Of course, it is possible that a buyer will come forward who is prepared to take Moullin on as a hostel. A number of reports have had to be commissioned (eg on asbestos in the building, its energy performance etc) as part of this process. The final report, on a restrictive covenant in the original conveyance for the site is awaited. Once that is received marketing can go ahead.

Finally, the meeting expressed its thanks to a number of people for their work – Peter Green, Peter Chadburn, Rachel Kamara and Lynda Blackburn as Circuit Stewards, Graham Preedy and David Groves for their work as Local Preachers and Harold Blackburn for his advice and work on property matters. The meeting also sent it congratulations to Daniel Bennett, one of our Local Preachers on being awarded his Doctor of Philosophy degree.

The next Circuit Meeting will be held at Kingsdown on 14th June starting at 8.00pm.

Free Lunches at Acton Hill

Acton Hill church has joined forces with the charity FoodCycle to offer free vegetarian lunches to homeless people and others on Saturday afternoons from 1.00pm – 2.30pm. The scheme has initially run for a trial period from 14th April – 5th May with the possibility of extending the trial should it prove successful. The scheme complements the service provided by Acton Homeless Concern at Emmaus House and the Damien Centre, neither of which are open on Saturdays.

The mission of FoodCycle is to reduce food waste and food poverty by reclaiming edible surplus food and using it to provide meals for people who need it in local communities. After some months looking for a suitable location, FoodCycle was delighted to be able to team up with Acton Hill.

If you're interested in knowing more, or volunteering to help, go to www.foodcycle.org.uk, or e-mail acton@foodcycle.org.uk or call the church on 020 8896 3669.

New Treasurer and Circuit Stewards

Following his move to Hazlemere, Peter Green has stood down as Circuit Treasurer. David Street is taking up the mantle and will be the new Circuit Treasurer once arrangements have been completed to transfer financial authority to him. David's contact details are on back cover of this edition of In-touch – note especially his new e-mail address – treasurer@ealingtrinity.org.uk.

From September we will also have new Circuit Stewards – Mike Brown and Barbara Quartey will be joining David Street in that role. Because all the stewards will be new to the role, Peter Chadburn has agreed to continue for 6 months from September to help them. In the meantime, the search is on for a fourth steward to join David, Mike and Barbara.

'Medal 2012' Conference **Highleigh Conference Centre 17th - 19th February 2012**

Jill Richardson - Women's Network Rep. - Kingsdown

M Methodist
E Equipping
D Disciples
A as
L Leaders

A phone call! Would I, could I, be available for the Medal 2012 Conference at Highleigh. A weekend away, in a lovely house and grounds, sounded good to me! I met up with Blossom Jackson to travel together, arriving with anticipation.

Friday

125 delegates from London District gathered together on our first evening- quite a diverse group with differing ages and cultures.

Ruth Pickles, Vice President of the Methodist Conference, welcomed us and explained more on what the conference was about and explained that the focus would be on:- leadership for lay people within the church and groups including, youth clubs, class leaders, Sunday School etc. She went on to say that this ultimately could make a difference in our churches.

After this we were directed to groups where we explored what leadership meant, skills and attributes that was required and each group were asked to illustrate their ideas on posters that were discussed in the general feed back and then hung around the main conference room for all to see.

Saturday

A bright and early start! Commencing with morning prayers, followed by a hearty breakfast. Mike King, vice-President elect for the Methodist Conference, expanded on leadership, difficulties, role models, role of lay leaders and helping to free up ordained staff. In the workshops that followed, we looked at leadership styles, diversity, difficult situations, building a team, meetings and spiritual leaderships. There was a good buzz in the respective groups, followed by a general feedback.

This was followed by lunch and responses to questions to a panel on -What did we thought of the conference so far? And more questions on lay leadership. The feedback gave us the opportunity for further discussions.

The evening concluded with a drama by Phil Summers of Apple Cart - a story teller who used stories from the Bible and the Leytonstone Youth Choir (which has sung at Kingsdown), which was a real treat!

Sunday

The morning session commenced with an interview with Henry Olanga - writer, musician and former Zimbabwean cricketer. His thoughts and ideas, moral courage and perceptions on leadership, were inspiring and moving. This concluded with questions from the floor.

Before lunch, group discussions were focussed on how delegates could take back to their respective churches ideas gleaned at the conference. There was lots of enthusiasm for the future of Methodism in the final assembly.

As you can see this was quite a full conference and an inspiring one – and there was lots of lovely food! People were congenial and the conference provided a good way of networking and making new friends.

Thanks for the opportunity! The conference ended with Holy Communion and the Medal 2012 Prayer -

God of our continuing journey

We thank you for the generations of lay leaders who have shaped our Church.

As we hear your call to serve, help us to use our gifts and skills to work together to:

Build up your body in love.

Recognise and encourage the gifts of others.

Share the good news of Jesus Christ.

And improve the wellbeing of all people and their communities.

May the grace of your son inspire us.

The wisdom of your spirit teach us,

And the strength of your presence sustain us today and always. Amen

PS Look out for Blossom's forthcoming article on the Third Phase of Medal 2011-2013 Programme – 2013 - Development and training work with churches and circuits on lay leadership.



Methodist Women in Britain: Ealing Trinity Circuit

Blossom Jackson, Circuit Champion



Easter Offering Service – Ealing Green on 10th June at 6.30pm.

This year's Easter Offering Service will be held at Ealing Green and is titled '*Entertaining Angels: Transforming Encounters in Mission.*' The service is planned by representatives of Methodist Women in Britain and before this year, by Women's Network. The offering is part of the Methodist church contribution to World Mission and goes back to 1883, when women in Manchester first collected £32 (a large sum in that era!) from 'Christmas pennies' at a gathering on Christmas Day at lunch for Missionary work- overseas. The Address this year, will be given by- Rev. Jennifer Smith

'Stop the Traffik' Concert at Kingsdown - Saturday 14th July- 7.30-10.30pm

The cause for which the London District Women's Network is raising funds, is 'Stop the Traffik'. As in previous years, when funds raised for the 'Fight against Gun and Knife Crimes' were divided between two charities, sums raised will be given to charities that are working to stop this evil trade.

Stop the Traffik defines trafficking as 'being deceived or taken against your will and forced to work in places such as the sex industry, factories, sweat shops, private houses, restaurants or on the streets'.

At this concert, MWiB will also say 'goodbye' to Rev. Roger Dunlop, who has been very supportive of Women's Network at Kingsdown and the Circuit over the past 6 years. Further details about the concert will be given nearer the date. Admission will be free and there will be collection at the end for 'Stop the Traffik.'

Medal 2012

I attended the Medal 2012 Conference at High Leigh, though not as an Ealing Circuit delegate and as Jill Richardson says in her article I too, found it to be stimulating, thought provoking and rewarding. **Medal 2012** is 'a District programme devised by lay people for lay people. Its purpose is to find and nurture new leaders who are motivated by their calling as disciples, foster their passion for helping others to grow and encourage those who are committed to team work'.

It was encouraging to see the contributions made by enthusiastic young people, at the conference. The task for Circuits in 2013 will be a period of development and training work with churches and circuits on lay leadership'.

2012 Olympics - More than Gold

By now everyone have had the opportunity to be aware of the Olympic Torch's

Journey through the Borough of Ealing. Perhaps it would be a good idea for participating churches to publish their calendar of events during the Olympics, so that others may have the option of supporting these endeavours.

We are still looking for hosts for athletes' families - if you're interested you can check out the More Than Gold website for more information.

We also know that a Prayer Baton and Praise Bus will precede the Torch cavalcade and as soon as more details are available, I will let people know.

And a note from the Editor.....

Tony Plews, who is Boys Brigade captain at Kingsdown will be carrying the Olympic Torch through Hillingdon on 24th July. Congratulations to Tony!

Maltese Memories

Gerald Barton, Editor

Some years ago we visited Malta staying for a few days in Valetta. One of the things we couldn't help but notice was that the Maltese seemed to show their religiousness fairly prominently. For example, in Senglea we came across a small grocery store named 'Redeemer Self Service', which made it sound like it might be an emporium for "pick 'n' mix" religion, rather than a supplier of more humble fare.

Then there were the buses. At the time, many, though not all of these, were fairly ancient machines which would take you for very economical fares all over the island. Quite a few of these had Biblical quotations on the side by the door or on the windscreen. This, rather more modern example caused us some amusement. Boldly displayed above the windscreen is an adaptation of John 3:17 "Only Jesus can Save you". The question that immediately sprang to mind was whether that was "save you from your sins", or "save you from the driver".



A Challenge to Live 'Below the Line'

Anita Oji, Ealing Green

This year, the Methodist Relief and Development Fund (MRDF - www.mrdf.org.uk) challenged Methodists to live for 5 days on £1/day. Similarly Christian Aid issued the same challenge - see www.livebelowtheline.co.uk/christianaid.

What is its purpose?

One aim was to motivate people to donate to the charities. However it could be a start for church members and others to get to know one another because as the 'Superscrimpers' (I guess I watch too much TV) advise – it is cheaper to buy in bulk and then divide the items among a community. Another reason may be to start a diet! It certainly got me thinking – how to do it. Perhaps you have other ideas but here are a few.

Ground Rules (and general thoughts)

- What are the normal costs of food per day for one person? Should add on costs be excluded? The add-on costs include heating food, transport to shops, wear and tear, washing up stuff.
- What number of calories would be needed? It would not be playing the game to lie in bed all day and languish so that calorie reduction would not be noticed! How many calories are needed to get by? If fats are most efficient at providing calories would this not be an unhealthy diet?
- If food is limited to a few basic items that provide a reasonably balanced diet would this not get monotonous? Would distractions be needed – Bible study? When does boredom set in? Should I discuss menus with others?
- Are there other ways of obtaining food apart from shop purchases? Illegal activities notwithstanding, Walpole Park now has a lovely kitchen garden section. Food for thought!
- Eating out is not an option. Aha, the church soup kitchen?
- Is it legitimate to search for all the reduced price items or go begging?
- A little tasty stuff may be best.

Basic foods and menus

The foods that come to mind and cost less than a pound to purchase include: bread, eggs, potato, yoghurt, beans, sardines, offal, flour, oats. In one day I could perhaps have porridge for breakfast (only basic oats, perhaps water rather than milk), followed by soup (water should be free?), potato and yoghurt (plain, 3 small spoons) for lunch (is tea too costly? Or perhaps I should re-use my tea bag), then scones or pancakes for tea with a piece of fruit and early to bed. The next day would be more of the same?? And the next???

(continues after the Quarterly Plan)

Support network

If survival is possible I need help. Help to practically work through some menus and help to continue motivation. And will I have time for spiritual development? Perhaps that is most important and the reason for fasting.

Have you taken up the challenge?

A Pilgrimage to the Holy Land

Esther Ackah, Kingsdown

I first wrote this article in September 1990 and it appeared in the Magazine of St. Andrew's United Reform Church in Mount Park Road, Ealing and was also published in the Christian and Jews Council Journal. The article is about my pilgrimage to the Holy Land of Israel, with the Christian and Jewish Council who were visiting Israel on a fellowship tour for the first time in history, to try and reconcile the differences between the Christians and the Jews over the controversial circumstances surrounding the crucifixion of our Lord Jesus. I was very privileged and humbled to be part of that historical visit to the Holy Land.

What was it all about?

Words alone could not describe the vast experience gained with the Council of Christians and Jews Fellowship Tour to Israel in June 1990. The Tour, in my view, gave us a sense of unity, peace and joy as children of God despite our diverse cultural back grounds.

“Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.” (Psalm 133-1) Deep is the meaning of this precious psalm.

In the group, Christians and fellow Jews were in oneness with God, our Creator, experiencing his peace and joy. Our group was drawn from various of various social backgrounds, such as clergymen, Rabbis, women and men, a doctor, State Registered general nurses, a midwife, teachers, accountants, writers, etc. The Christians were headed by a Canon and the Jews by a Rabbi. In addition to our scheduled visits to some biblical and historical places of the Holy Land, we had the opportunity of meeting with the people of the land (Kibbutz) and some of the local Christians and Jewish leaders of various organisations. We also visited the Mayor of Bethlehem, the British High Commissioner and the then Israeli Foreign Minister. All the people we met gave us excellent lectures on the history of Israel and gave their views on the dispute involving the Jewish, Arab and Christian groups in Israel. In spite of having Jewish members in our group, it was a joint effort that the group remained impartial to all parties involved in the conflict in Israel. We just listened carefully, raised some questions and reasoned purely on humanitarian grounds,

In my opinion, it was a well organised tour, which gave us all an opportunity to familiarise ourselves with Jewish as well as the Christian traditions. Let me give you an insight of some of the biblical and historical places we visited. We had the opportunity to visit the Dead Sea, (called 'The Salt Sea in Genesis'14:3). It was a phenomenal experience for me to find myself floating on the surface of the Dead Sea unaided! According to John Walden's '*Handbook for the Visitor to the Holy Land*', the water level is 1,291 feet below sea level. The deepest point is 1,300 feet below sea level. It measures approximately 48 x 12 miles and has eight times the concentration of normal salt water. This explains why people would only float on the surface. Some of my tour colleagues were too scared to take on the challenge to swim in the Dead Sea but I thoroughly enjoyed the mystery of it all!

In Capernaum we visited the place (the biblical home of Simon) where Our Lord Jesus Christ healed Peter's mother-in-law's high fever (Mark 1:29-31, Matthew 4:38-40). I had the pleasure to read Mark's Gospel of this story to the tour group, on request from the Canon heading the Christian Group. We also journeyed to Jericho to see historical places recorded in the Bible. For example, in the Old Testament it is written that Joshua captured the city as the wall collapsed to offer them entrance, (Joshua 6:20). The New Testament speaks about blind Bartimaeus receiving his sight from Our Lord Jesus Christ (Mark 10) and Our Lord's famous story of 'the Good Samaritan', depicting a man who was attacked by robbers on his way from Jerusalem to Jericho.

I was very inspired by the solemn songs sung by the choir of the Great Orthodox Synagogue; that emotionally moved us to tears; and equally inspired by a moving service we attended at the Garden Tomb of Our Lord Jesus Christ. There were other interesting places that we were honoured to visit in our scheduled tour which cannot be covered here due to space limitation.

To sum up, the whole experience was tremendous and widened my horizon and enabled me to share such knowledge gained with my fellow Christians back in the United Kingdom. Finally, in my opinion, one of the most important tasks which the members of the Council of Christians and Jews and other religious fellowship tour groups to the Holy Land could perform would be to make a realistic appraisal of the rich experiences gained from visiting the biblical/historical sites. Such diverse experiences could be shared with our fellow Christians or other religious groups on return to our homes in an effort to work towards the goodwill and common understanding of all concerned in the Holy Land of Israel.

It will be appropriate to end here with a brief prayer to ask the Lord to promote peace, understanding and unity in Israel and in other disturbed parts of the world. May the Lord have mercy on us all and hear our prayers. Amen.

Pontius Pilate's Dilemma

In late February Les Goodchild led a 'local arrangement' at Kingsdown. His talk was about the dilemma Pilate faced when presented with the prospect of trying Jesus. As we don't hear a great deal about Pilate, I thought I would reproduce it for you all to read in In-touch.

"I find no crime in this man". The words drone on through time immortalising the dilemma of a man poised between right and wrong. As Roman governor of Judea, it was his distasteful duty to judge the Messiah. As a result, his name remains a household word.

The phrase "suffered under Pontius Pilate" has been part of the Christian creeds since the end of the 2nd century, originally serving as a means for dating the Lord's Passion. Although we know that he presided at history's most famous trial, the picture we have of Pilate's personality is nebulous and incomplete. Who was the real Pontius Pilate? Why did he send Jesus to the cross? Ironically, his role during the final stages of Christ's ministry is his chief claim to fame. In fact, he was a minor figure, one of hundreds of administrators sent out by Rome to run its far-flung empire. No marble bust preserves his features, nor was his profile even stamped on a coin. We may imagine Pilate as a well-educated Roman of medium height, athletic build, with a clean shaven face, dominated by keen dark eyes.

The Pontii family had its roots in southern Italy. They were of plebeian origins but had lately attained moderate importance in the empire's service. His other name, Pilatus may denote a man armed with a javelin (pilam), or one deprived of hair (pilus). As other governors along the empire's frontier were usually military men, Pilate was probably an army officer before he entered the colonial service.

The job of governor (Procurator) of Judea to which Pilate was assigned in AD26 was not an enviable one. The little colony, a strip of land in southern Palestine roughly 120 miles by 55 miles wide, was a notorious trouble spot. Its 1 million people, proud heirs of Solomon and David, prayed to a single unseen god steadfastly refusing to worship Rome's god-emperor whose cult had been enforced throughout the rest of the imperial realm. They were considered fanatical, rebellious and quick to riot, especially over matters of religion.

Pilate and his wife Procla made their home in Caesarea, a pleasant town on the Mediterranean coast, a half day's journey northwest of Jerusalem. As the administrative capital, Caesarea with its villas, temples, baths and colonnaded squares had a home from home air for its Roman residents. The procurator commanded a force of some 4,000 soldiers and personally dispensed justice, having the power of life and death of all except Roman citizens. Pilate's chief task was to get along with his subjects. In this, however he had failed dismally even before the trial of the Nazarene.

At the outset of his tenure, he ordered a detachment of his troops into Jerusalem publicly to display their regimental banners – the gilded busts of the god-emperor

affixed to their bronze standards. These offended the laws of Moses governing the worship of graven images and, as a result, a group of angry Jews marched on Caesarea and staged a sit-in under Pilate's window. For five days Pilate would not listen to them and on the sixth day the demonstrators were surrounded by soldiers and told to go home – or else. The Jews threw themselves to the ground, baring their throats demanding to be slaughtered. Pilate, unprepared for such defiance hurriedly ordered the offensive images to be withdrawn and lost considerable prestige in the process.

His next clash with Jewry was over an enterprise dear to his Roman heart. He conceived an ambitious scheme for a lofty 23 mile aqueduct that would bring parched Jerusalem a year round flow of fresh cool water. To finance the scheme, he dipped into the treasury funds which were earmarked for the city's needs. He was within his rights and probably expected gratitude particularly as his subjects lacked the skills to tackle such a project themselves. However, he went about it the wrong way, failing to consult the high priests, although by that time the Jews were probably convinced that no good could ever come from Pilate. The upshot was a massive protest against the plan with more than 10,000 Jews assembling in Jerusalem shouting insults and threats. The flustered procurator, although reluctant to use armed troops posted soldiers 'in mufti' at strategic points. At a given signal they drew heavy clubs and lashed out. Many Jews died as a result.

This it was in an atmosphere already tense with ill will and suspicion that Pilate met the moral challenge of his life. He had gone to Jerusalem to be at hand during the Passover when the city, packed with worshippers was always in danger of exploding in a riot. On the Friday he had risen early and the day's business began with a case against one Jesus, called the Christ. Jesus had been arrested the previous night in the olive garden of Gethsemane and taken before the Sanhedrin, the supreme Jewish council of 71 distinguished citizens, law experts and priests. The accused had admitted that he was the son of the Blessed and the high priest had torn his clothes, crying 'Why do we still need witnesses – you have heard his blasphemy!'. The verdict: death.

The chief priests, followed by a sensation-hungry mob, brought Jesus to Pilate since, to carry out a death sentence they needed the Procurator's sanction. The priests and their attendants remained outside in the large public square, lest they should be defiled by entering non-Jewish premises. The prisoner was led before the Procurator. Looking up from his papers, Pilate saw a man in his early 30's, bound, dishevelled and obviously tired after terror-crowded night. Was this the public enemy deserving death as a blasphemer under Jewish law? There was something odd about the accusation? Pilate, with a flicker of interest asked Jesus if he was the 'King of the Jews'. "You have said so," came Jesus' reply and went on to explain, "For this I was born, for this I have come to the world, to bear witness to the truth." Pilate mused, "What is truth?" The interrogation convinced the Procurator that the accused was a harmless desert preacher. From the top of the steps Pilate informed the waiting priests of his verdict – "I find no crime in him." An angry howl went up from the crowd. When calm had finally been restored, the chief priests changed their accusation – "He stirs up the people, teaching

throughout all Judea from Galilee even to this place!” In other words, the prisoner had been fomenting political rebellion and should be dealt with as a subversive and, under the laws of Rome be condemned to death. The Procurator pricked up his ears – Galilee. That state was outside his jurisdiction and ruled by Herod Antipas, a ‘puppet king’ of Rome who happened to be staying at the old palace in Jerusalem. With a sigh of relief, Pilate sent Jesus to the palace, a few steps away.

King Herod had heard of Jesus and had long wanted to witness one of his miracles. He tried to engage the prisoner in conversation, but Jesus also knew about the wily king – “That fox,” he had once called him. Herod, up against an icy silence, lost his temper. He mocked Jesus, let his guards throw a royal robe over his shoulders and, waiving his jurisdiction, sent him back to Pilate.

Pilate again attempted to reason with the priests. “You brought me this man as one who was perverting the people, and after examining him before you, behold I did not find this man guilty of any of your charges against him, and neither did Herod.” But the priests were adamant. As a compromise, Pilate offered to scourge the prisoner and then release him, but they wouldn’t hear of it.

By now it was clear to Pilate that there was a conspiracy against Jesus. Determined to save his life and groping for a way to do so without offending the high priests, he recalled the custom of pardoning one Jewish criminal at Passover. A certain Barrabas was then in gaol – a well-known murderer and insurrectionist. “Whom do you want me to release for you – Barrabas or Jesus who is called Christ?” A mighty cry went up, “Barrabas!”. Almost desperately Pilate demanded, “Then what shall I do with Jesus?” “Let him be crucified!” the mob roared back. Then Pilate’s final question, “Why? What evil has he done?”

Sharp voices answered from the front ranks, “If you release this man, you are not Caesar’s friend – everyone who makes himself a king sets himself against Caesar.” The barefaced threat took Pilate unawares. Caesar, the Emperor Tiberius was an oppressive and suspicious ruler, apt to end the most trusted officer’s career and life with a snap of his fingers. If the high priests complained to Caesar about Pilate’s leniency in freeing a political subversive, he would be done for. So, when Pilate saw that he was gaining nothing, but rather that a riot was threatening to begin, as Matthew’s Gospel relates, he took water and washed his hands before the crowd.

Pilate conceded defeat with a symbolic gesture. He had been in Judea long enough to know the Scriptures. For all to see, he was citing Deuteronomy – “And all the elders of that city nearest to the slain man shall wash their hands, and they shall testify. And our hands did not shed this blood, neither did our eyes see it shed.”

The rest was rapid. Pilate released Barrabas and solemnly sentenced Jesus. He then turned Jesus over to the soldiers who tied him to a pillar in the courtyard and scourged him mercilessly, echoing Herod’s earlier mockery, then draped him in a scarlet robe and crowned him with a wreath of thorns, shouting, “Hail! King of the Jews!”

The Procurator had one more duty to perform, a brief notice to go above the victim on the cross – “Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews.” When the priests asked him to change it to “This man said he was the King of the Jews”, Pilate curtly replied, “What I have written, I have written.” At high noon, outside the city gate at Golgotha, the beating of a heavy hammer broke the stillness.

Down the centuries, the man who sentenced Christ to die has been a controversial figure. The Gospels present him as an essentially well-meaning man who lacked the strength of his convictions. Clumsiness marked his dealings with the Jews from the start – he did not understand the Jews. Perhaps he did not care to understand them. No doubt he hoped that by staying out of trouble a grateful emperor would eventually promote him to a more rewarding position.

Pilate never got his promotion. His tenure was cut short after only 10 years - by a disgraceful incident. A scoundrel in the north of his domain had promised to lead a treasure hunt to the top of Mount Gerizim where Moses, so he claimed had buried gold and silver vessels. A crowd of gullible Samaritans, many of them armed to protect their future riches, prepared to follow him. Pilate, sensing an uprising, blocked the ascent with heavily armed soldiers. There was a massacre and leaders of the group taken alive were later put to death. At this the people of Samaria, part of the Roman province of Judea, filed a complaint against the Procurator.

Pilate was summoned to Rome to explain this latest outrage to the emperor. However, arriving at the capital he learned to his relief that Emperor Tiberius had just died. History does not tell us whether Pilate was ever tried or even questioned. The Christian chronicler Eusebius writing in the 4th century suggests that after more misadventures, Pilate committed suicide.

In 1961 Italian archaeologists working in the ruins of old Caesarea unearthed a stone slab with the names of Tiberius and Pontius Pilate in 3” chiselled letters – the rest of the inscription was illegible. It was the first such evidence to come to light and confirmed no more than the existence of the hapless Procurator, whose character remains suspended midway between good and evil.

Knowing me better

I thank you, Lord,
for knowing me better than I know myself,
and for letting me know myself
better than others know me.
Make me, I pray you,
better than they suppose,
and forgive me for what they do not know.

Abu Bekr

The Order of St John

Gerald Barton, Editor

A little while ago we visited the Museum of the Order of St John in Clerkenwell. This small museum is relatively small and is housed in St John's Gate, not far from Farringdon station. It covers the history of the medieval Order and links it to the development of what we now know as St John's Ambulance. I'd been vaguely aware that St John Ambulance was connected to the medieval Order, but have never been certain exactly how this came about. As I was to discover, in many ways the connection is really rather tenuous.

The origins of the Order can be traced to AD 600 when Pope Gregory I commissioned Abbot Probus to build a hospital in Jerusalem for the care of Christian pilgrims visiting the holy sites. This hospital was expanded over the years but was destroyed in 1005 by Caliph Al Hakim, along with 3,000 other buildings in Jerusalem. However, in 1023 Italian merchants were given permission to rebuild by the Egyptian Caliph Ali az-Zahir. The site chosen was the monastery of St John the Baptist and the new hospital was staffed by Benedictine monks. The Order itself, known then as the Knights Hospitaller, or more simply as the Hospitallers was founded after the First Crusade (1096-99) by the Blessed Gerard. Gerard's successor, Raymond de Puy de Provence, established the first significant Hospitaller infirmary near the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. Initially the Order cared for pilgrims in Jerusalem, but this was quickly extended to providing armed escorts for pilgrims. These escorts soon grew to become a substantial force. By the middle of the 12th century the Order was clearly divided between the brothers who cared for the sick and the military monk-knights.

After the fall of Jerusalem to the Muslims in 1291, the Order was forced out of the Holy Land and initially moved to Cyprus, Finding themselves embroiled in local politics, they fairly quickly sought a new home and fixed on the island of Rhodes. After a two year campaign, the island surrendered to the Order in 1309 and they were finally able to settle in their new domain. The Knights of Rhodes, as they became known became gradually more militarised as they spent much of their time countering Barbary pirates.

In 1312, the parallel Knights Templar was abolished and the Hospitallers were granted much of their property, thus significantly increasing the Order's wealth. Its property holdings were organised into eight *tongues* or *langues* (one each in Crown of Aragon, Auvergne, Castile, England, France, Germany, Italy and Provence)). Each was administered by a Prior. The home of the English *langue* was the monastery of St John in Clerkenwell.

Meanwhile, the expanding Ottoman empire kept the Order in its sights. After a couple of failed invasion attempts, the Ottomans finally forced the Order out of Rhodes in 1522. The Order moved from place to place for 7 years before finally settling on Malta. From there, the Order continued its activities fighting Barbary pirates and also resisting Ottoman expansion. In 1565 Sultan Suleiman the

Magnificent sent a major force to besiege and take Malta. Despite having a significant numerical advantage, the Ottomans failed in their attempt. The Order was now firmly established on Malta, but had become completely devoid of its original purpose of assisting pilgrims to visiting the holy sites of Jerusalem.

The Order continued to operate as a naval force policing the Mediterranean – there was a continued role in countering Barbary pirates and also Ottoman shipping. Over time, however, the Order went into moral decline and many of its knights took to piracy themselves and also fighting in foreign navies. Its position on Malta was pretty much ended in 1798 when the French under Napoleon took Malta, although they were soon expelled by the British who made the island a colony.

Back in England, the Order's base at the monastery of St John in Clerkenwell had garnered significant lands throughout the country and had become one of the wealthiest houses in the land. This came to an end with the dissolution of the monasteries by Henry VIII, which was completed in 1538. There was a brief attempt to revive the Order in England under Queen Mary, but that lasted only a very brief period. To all intents and purposes, the Order was finished so far as England was concerned.

At this point, we have to 'fast forward' three centuries to 1826 when the 'Council of the French Langues', a self-proclaimed revival of the Order tried to raise sufficient capital to restore a homeland for the Order. This was, however a ploy to attract ex-soldiers from Britain to form a mercenary army to fight in the Greek War of Independence (1821 – 1832) against the Ottoman Turks. Anyone who subscribed to the scheme and all the officers of the mercenary army were allowed to call themselves 'Knights' of the Order. By the time anything very much had happened, the Greek war had been won without the assistance of this mercenary army. Nonetheless, in January 1831, the 'Council of the English Langue' was inaugurated at St John's Gate in Clerkenwell, which at that time housed the Old Jerusalem Tavern. The Council sought the recognition of the Catholic Sovereign Military Order of Malta, but was rebuffed. Not to be put off, the Council then declared itself to be the '*Sovereign and Illustrious Order of Saint John of Jerusalem, Anglia*'.

Quite what the revived Order spent its time doing at that point I find a little unclear, although it attracted growing membership amongst the 'great and good'. Presumably they had a good time conferring titles on each other and having good dinners. However, at some point they had a bright idea – revive, in some form, the ancient purpose of the Order. This led, in 1877 to the foundation of the St John Ambulance Association based in large railway centres and mining districts with the purpose of training railwaymen and miners to treat victims of accidents in their industries. In 1882, the Order went a big step further and established a hospice and ophthalmic dispensary in Jerusalem that continues today as the St John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital Group. This move made a tangible connection to the original purpose of the Order – care of the sick in Jerusalem. The Group is now the leading provider of eye care in the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem. Back in Britain, by 1887 the St John Ambulance Brigade had been formed to undertake practical life-saving work.

The Order received a major boost in 1888 when Queen Victoria granted it a Royal Charter, thus putting it firmly on the establishment map. In 1961 the Order joined with the remaining continental branches of the original Order to form the Alliance of the Orders of St John of Jerusalem, which was formally recognised by the Order of Malta in 1963.

The head of the Order in Britain is the Queen with, since 1974 the Duke of Gloucester as Grand Prior. Then follows a whole hierarchy of ranks, each with its own distinctive robes and insignia as befits a chivalric order. In many ways, this seems to inhabit a kind of 'parallel universe' alongside the St John Ambulance with which most of us are familiar and which many of us might regard as the 'real' Order of St John.

The work the St John Ambulance undertakes is wide-ranging. The work of training volunteers in first aid that began in 1877 continues with some 575,000 people undertaking training each year. Many of these go on to provide first aid at major public events or to become Community First Responders – people who are trained to attend emergency calls and, working in partnership with NHS ambulance services provide assistance until an ambulance arrives. The St John Ambulance also gets heavily involved in responding to major emergencies. For example, throughout June and July 2007, volunteers provided 24-hour support to communities hit by heavy flooding, helping people struck by the disaster and setting up many rest centres for those evacuated from their homes. At a more mundane level, volunteers also provide transport services for patients needing to attend hospital for non-emergency medical appointments. In all the St John Ambulance has 23,000 adult members and around 20,000 young members and over 1,000 ambulance and support vehicles.

The Museum of the Order of St John gives an insight into both the history of the Order from its medieval origins and the ongoing work of the St John Ambulance, thus bringing these two aspects of its history together. It is housed in St John's Gate, St John's Lane, London EC1M 4DA and is open Monday – Saturday from 10.00am – 5.00pm with free admission. On Tuesdays, Fridays and Saturdays at 1.00am and 2.30pm there are tours of St John's Gate taking in the chambers of the Order and the nearby Priory Church of St John.

God our Father,
you call each of us by name,
and you treasure each of us individually
as though no-one else exists.

Inspire us
to respect and value
each person who comes into our lives this day.
Amen.

Circuit Directory Update

New Circuit Treasurer:

Forthcoming Events around the Circuit

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

June

10th Sun 6.30pm **Easter Offering Service** at Ealing Green

14th Thurs 8.00pm **Circuit Meeting** at Kingsdown

23rd Sat 10.00am **Kingsdown: Late Spring Fayre**

July

7th Sat 10.00am **Kingsdown** – Book Fayre
12.30pm *in aid of United Anglo-Caribbean Society*

14th Sat 7.30pm **Kingsdown** – MWiB concert in aid of ‘Stop the Traffik’
Retiring collection

15th Sun 6.30pm **Kingsdown** - Circuit Service of Farewell to
Rev’s Micky Youngson, Kip Bennett and Roger Dunlop

September

2nd Sun 6.30pm **Greenford** – Circuit Welcome Service for new ministers
Rev’s Peter Catford, Chrissie Howe, Suva Catford and
Deacon Richard Goldstraw

29th Sat tba **Hanwell** - Harvest Barn Dance and Welcoming Social Ceilidh
for Peter Catford and his family
Ticket prices etc to be advised

Articles for ‘**In-touch**’ **Issue No 61 (September - November)** should be sent by e-mail
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