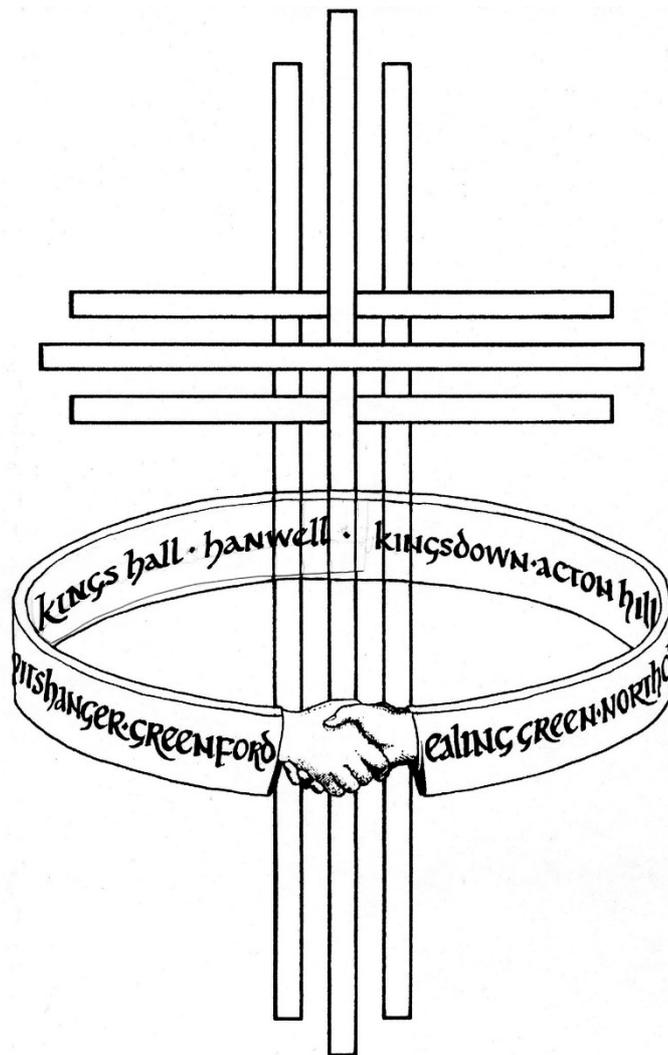


In-touch

No 88

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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

Bible musings and a call to action

Dear Friends,

In the final chapter of John's Gospel Jesus meets Peter where he is in his confusion and uncertainty. Peter has lived through Jesus' arrest and a mistaken attempt to prevent it violently, has followed Jesus as he stood trial but then Peter has denied his own identity as a friend and follower of Jesus as he stands by a charcoal fire. Now, having witnessed Jesus's death, been into the empty tomb and been among the disciples when Jesus came and blessed them with peace and God's Spirit, my guess is that Peter is having a hard time working out who he is. The whole world has been turned on end several times until nothing feels solid or secure. So he goes back to fishing - at least in a boat he can trust his reflexes, act with that kind of 'second nature' knowledge and response that comes from long years of life and experience.

Just when he thinks he's found solid ground, or at least the familiarity of a boat deck and the usual disappointment of an empty net, Jesus comes and fills the net and turns his world upside down again. Round another charcoal fire, at another cockcrow daybreak, Peter is brought face to face with the denial that shattered his identity and his sense of connection and relationship with Jesus. Having been brought to face with the disconnect, he is brought also to reconnect with fresh ties across the chasm he created. Each "I love you" becomes stronger and more vehement as he feels met, seen, held, as the relationship is reformed and reaffirmed and his confidence in it grows.

Wonderful as that healing is, it is not an end product. The relationship is important, life giving, but life given must be lived and shared. Those who are disciples of the Good Shepherd must themselves become good shepherds for they, we, are made in his image and likeness. "Feed my sheep" resounds through the passage growing in volume and imperative in the same way as "I love you" does.

Today we, like Peter, live in a fragmented, grief-shattered world. We may have many times when we lose track of who we are, many times when we deny or separate ourselves from who we are meant to be, many times when our action or inaction causes rifts and chasms between ourselves and others or God - in effect separating ourselves from the abundant life God offers through Jesus. We, like Peter, are asked "Do you love me?" and asked to reconnect to our true selves, to God's love and God's life. If we answer "I love you" we find ourselves part of a life and love that overflows our lives, our world, our universe, our understanding. But with that connection comes responsibilities - to be changed, to become the good shepherd - caring for all, protecting all, feeding all, giving our lives for all. It means having the courage to speak with God's voice to each other, asking God's question "Do you love God?" So hurts and dislocations are healed, chasms bridged and hope restored. It comes with the responsibility to feed the hungry, to give sight to

the blind, to help those who limp to dance, to shelter the homeless, to declare the time of God's love.

This is not just some nice mental, theological dance to be preached in sermons, sung about in hymns and to go no further. It is the very ground of our lives as disciples. We cannot be followers of the Good Shepherd if we are not good shepherds ourselves. Knowing ourselves loved by God, knowing that we love God and becoming good shepherds is the perpetual circle dance of disciples. In our Circuit we already seek to show God's love to our communities in many ways:

- the MHA Ealing Live at Home Scheme
- the Foodbank
- the Ealing Churches Winter Night Shelter
- our new project raising money for the Christian Aid education programmes in Iraq and Lebanon
- the Ruby Project seeking to show care for sex workers on the streets of Southall
- Ealing Street Pastors
- community lunch

and so many more. There are articles later on in this edition of In-touch about some of these.

If you would like to get involved in any of these please talk to Deacon Lemia Nkwelah who leads our Circuit in its outward facing mission and she'll point you in the right direction. If there are other ways you think we should be heeding Jesus's calling to us then please talk to Lemia or myself and let's see how we can make this happen.

In your prayer and reflection time, I invite you to read through John 21 for yourself and imagine Jesus asking you "Do you love me?" Then to hear his instruction "Feed my sheep" and to think what you are already doing and what else you might do to fulfil it.

We are richly blessed with the abundant gifts of God, loved more deeply than we will ever know or understand. So let us live as God's good shepherds.

With love, gratitude and prayers for all that you are

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rachel". The ink is dark and the writing is fluid, with a large initial 'R'.

I Hear You Differently – Nine Days of Prayer



Thy Kingdom Come is a global prayer movement in which Christians pray that people would come to know Jesus. Taking place between Ascension and Pentecost, Thy Kingdom Come this year falls between **30th May and 9th June**. The Methodist Church has produced a prayer book “I Hear You Differently – Nine Days of Prayer” written by our President-elect, the Rev Barbara Glasson. Below is an extract from the introduction. If you would like a copy of the book, Rev Rachel Bending has a number of copies to give away on a first come first served basis.

We live in uncertain times. Does faith in Jesus transform the world for us? How can faith change how we love and understand our neighbours? The time between the first Easter and Pentecost was a time of uncertainty when the disciples were left asking, “What does all this mean?” Life is an uncertain endeavour and our faith in the risen Jesus involves ongoing discovery, which takes time and attention. The prayers included in ‘I Hear You Differently’ are designed to open up some space for our own reflection and questions. We are invited to breathe deeply and give space for silence and focus each day.

On the day of Pentecost, the crowd heard the apostles speaking and asked: “And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language?” (Acts 2:8, NRSV) The miracle was not so much that people were speaking in different languages, but rather that all those who were listening could understand each of them. Let’s pray that as we live through this season together we will each discover a new way of listening to ourselves and to others that gives fresh insight; that we will all take a step closer to being able to love our enemies and, most importantly, discover the God who listens to us with profound attention.

Thy Kingdom Come is a global initiative, in which Christians are called to pray for the nine days between Ascension and Pentecost. We are invited to pray for God’s Spirit to move within the Church, equipping us to share God’s love with others and to pay attention to how God is speaking to us today.

To find out more about Thy Kingdom Come, visit www.thykingdomcome.global or www.methodist.org.uk/thykingdomcome

Mission is more about how we listen than what we say. When we give each other and our environment attention, then we become aware of God’s ongoing presence. We see, and are seen, with fresh eyes. We come to understand the enormity of God’s grace... we crack open spaces of transformation and we are transformed! You can use these daily prayers, readings and reflections at any time of the year.

Witnessing to God's Love in Southall

Over the last two months the people of Southall have come together to witness to God's love and against hatred, intolerance and racism. Following the attack in Christchurch New Zealand, people of many faiths came together outside one of the mosques to show our solidarity in standing against hatred and violence of this kind. Sadly, just a month later we were back together following the attacks in Sri Lanka to again raise our voices against such atrocities and to pledge to work together for peace and understanding.

On Good Friday we marched with Christian friends across Southall as a witness to our faith and God's love shown in Jesus's death and resurrection.

Bible passages were read as we walked and we were led not just by traditional crosses but by a cross of balloons. The crowd was a true image of God's kingdom with people from so many cultures gathering together.



Then on 27th April we joined members of the community from Southall and beyond as we commemorated the deaths of Gurdip Singh Chaggar and Blair Peach and the racism and intolerance and violence to the community that surrounded them. In doing so we declared our God given call to stand up against injustice, racism and intolerance.



The Bombings in Sri Lanka

Rev Michaela Youngson and Bala Gnanapragasam, the President and Vice-President of the Methodist Conference were deeply saddened by the news of the bombings in Sri Lanka. This is Bala's country of birth and these atrocities affect us both deeply and seem especially cruel on Easter Day.

As Christians worldwide rejoiced on the day of resurrection, we also mourn for all who lost their lives in churches and hotels that day. We offer prayers and send greetings to our sisters and brothers in the Methodist Church, Christians and all people of faith and good will in Sri Lanka. We call for respect to be accorded to all religions, their worship and their festivals and we commend the ongoing, respectful work of the congress of religions and the NCC. All religions oppose the taking of innocent lives and we affirm the work of local inter faith groups in promoting positive action based on our shared values.

We invite all people of faith to speak out against violence, be it name-calling and stone-throwing as in Anuradhapura last week or senseless bombing as on Easter Day in Colombo, Negombo and Batticaloa. Methodists have contributed to the building of a caring, healthy and educated society in Sri Lanka for over 200 years. It pains us to see attempts to force change through acts of violence against innocent people. We therefore commit ourselves to continuing support for peacebuilding and reconciliation whenever and wherever we can.

A prayer for the people of Sri Lanka, written by Steve Pearce, Partnership Co-ordinator for Asia and the Pacific, World Church Relationships of the Methodist Church.

Creator God, who loves peace and concord,
We bring before you the people of Sri Lanka.
Just as your Son suffered betrayal and agony on Good Friday,
They have faced brutality and violence on Easter Day.
May the church and hotel communities who have faced attack, find
reassurance and healing;
May the bereaved friends and families, find consolation after tears,
May those who believe terrorism changes things, discover the power of love
and hope.
Loving God, who hates nothing you have made,
We bring before you the divisions we have created,
Ethnic, religious, national, class and many more.
May we be hopeful rather than harsh,
May we avoid the barbed word in favour of affirming phrases,
May we offer a smiling eye rather than an uncaring glance.
Compassionate God, who brings healing and peace for all,
Look now on the bereaved, the injured and the fearful in Sri Lanka.
We pray in the name of Jesus, friend and companion.
Amen

Christian Aid Lebanon and Iraq Project

Rev Shirlyn Toppin

In January, the Circuit confirmed its support for the Christian Aid Lebanon and Iraq Project which was outlined in the last edition of In-touch. The Circuit has agreed to contribute £5,000 to the project between now and 31st December 2020. This will be matched 6:1 by Bread for the World, a US charity aimed at ending hunger. Thus, a contribution of £5,000 from the Circuit is worth around £35,000 to Christian Aid with the matching. Individual churches in the Circuit will be asked to raise a share of the target amount of £5,000.

The Issue

Huge numbers of people have poured into Iraq and Lebanon to escape war-torn Syria. There are more than 300,000 Syrian refugees in Lebanon which has been dealing with the fallout from the Syrian conflict since 2011. In addition, the number of people registered as displaced is upwards of 300,000 in Iraq. This brings the total number of people in need of humanitarian assistance to 1 million in Iraq alone.

The Project

Christian Aid has been working with its partners in Iraq and Lebanon for over 20 years and has been responding to the Syrian refugee crisis since 2012. The funding will be supporting the internally displaced people by strengthening social structures in order to cope with the huge additional influx of people from neighbouring Syria. Support will be provided in the area of, for example, employability skills; health and the specific services needed to support people who have experienced trauma.

Specifically

Iraq: To build on existing work by working with the partners who will:

- Support 18-35 year olds into employment via vocational skills training, life-skills training (including sessions on peaceful co-existence) and start-up business kits worth £450.

Lebanon: To build on Christian Aid's existing work by collaborating with partners who will:

- Run two centres which will provide support to around 800 children and their parents/carers. Psycho-social support will also be provided to the children. Parents and carers will be given support around life skills, self-esteem and conflict management.

- Continuing the work with children through Christian Aid partner MSL. These children will receive educational support, child protection and psycho-social services.
- Work with local businesses to help empower refugees.

The Impact:

The support from our Circuit will help to reduce the level of and the feeling of marginalisation by displaced people.

- 3,816 people who have been displaced will directly benefit from support to achieve a better livelihood
- Both projects will also support efforts to build social cohesion to ease tensions between the refugees and host communities.

Finally, note that our support for this project is completely separate from the fundraising undertaken by our churches during Christian Aid Week and at other times during the year.

From the Circuit Meeting

The most recent Circuit Meeting took place on 28th March at Hanwell.

Rev Rachel Bending began the meeting by reminding members of the Circuit's mission as set out in the Annual Report and Accounts:

The Circuit's mission is to be a powerful spiritual influence in the community and a visible expression of God's inclusive love. We aim to achieve this by encouraging, through the churches in our Circuit, the worship, social, and outreach activities that currently exist; seeking new ways to extend to others the fellowship of the Church family; and through these to develop the life of the Circuit and its churches.

The Circuit exists to:

- *Increase awareness of God's presence and to celebrate God's love;*
- *Help people to learn and grow as Christians, through mutual support and care; and*
- *Be good to people in need and challenge injustice.*

Following on from this, the meeting heard that further thought had been given to the Christian Aid Iraq and Lebanon Project and how the agreed amount of money to be raised should be apportioned between the various churches in the Circuit. The target date for each church to raise its share was set as November 2020. The Staff

will organise a Barn Dance and a Staff (plus others) Concert, as well as a fun Awards Evening at the conclusion of the challenge. Rachel would like as many people as possible to be involved, particularly the young people in our churches.

Deacon Lemia Nkwelah, along with two lay members from the Circuit attended the London District day on the theme of 'Sanctuary'. The theme encompassed a wide definition of 'sanctuary' including protection from exploitation, trafficking, domestic abuse etc. Locally, the Ministerial Prayer Breakfast group has also discussed the issue, and is likely to bring proposals for action in Ealing Borough.

Whilst recognising the frustrations caused by the delays to the redevelopment of the King's Hall building, Rachel Bending re-affirmed the Circuit's commitment to 'build the building' and its support for both King's Hall congregations. She presented an outline vision for mission in Southall as part of a broader overall vision for the Circuit. This would build on existing projects such as the Interfaith Educator, the Ruby project aimed at street sex workers, Hope for Southall Homeless etc, but would also need to encompass outreach to the new communities which will form on the re-developed site of the old gasworks and around Sunrise Radio. The redeveloped King's Hall building itself will need to provide a safe, welcoming space for the community perhaps including a café possibly with a soft play area and a bookshop.

The outline vision involves the whole Circuit supporting mission work in Southall as this is the area of current greatest need and mission potential. Furthermore, this needs to be developed at the same time as the redevelopment of King's Hall and should not be seen as following on from it. In addition to existing projects, thought is being given to a Saturday street mission outside King's Hall. In developing this work, however it needs to be recognised that resources are finite and that some current activities may need to be discontinued so that resources can be more appropriately focussed.

Although the redevelopment of King's Hall has been a long time in coming, it needs to be remembered that a building project such as this costing around £15m and including 40-70 residential units is a major scheme that would inevitably demand a long timeline.

The meeting expressed its enthusiasm for this vision for Southall and prayers were offered for the King's Hall congregations, for the people of Southall and for all the work that was planned or would proceed from the vision.

On safeguarding, a new Circuit safeguarding policy was adopted by the meeting. One further training session for those who have not yet undertaken the training will be arranged shortly. Note that with the departure of Cathy Snow, there is an urgent need to appoint a new Circuit Safeguarding Officer. People were asked to consider possible candidates for the position and pass their names to the Circuit ministers.

The meeting expressed its thanks to Colleen Hicks who stood down as a Circuit Steward at the meeting. Blossom Jackson and Derek Nicholls are also due to stand

down as Circuit Stewards over the next few months. Members of the meeting were asked to consider prayerfully possible candidates to replace Colleen, Blossom and Derek and to pass their names to Rachel Bending.

On property matters, there was considerable discussion on the subject of Havelock House, a block of 7 flats owned by the Circuit which was originally acquired in the 1960's in connection with the former hostel at Moullin House. In recent years the Circuit has found it difficult to manage the property adequately both in term of time and resources. In addition, the building now requires significant work. The meeting decided to seek advice on possible options for the future of Havelock House and a report will be presented to the Autumn Circuit Meeting.

Dissatisfaction was expressed with the auditors for the Circuit's annual report and accounts. Despite paperwork having been handed over last October, the accounts were still not available for formal presentation and signature. This was partly because the auditors had raised a number of questions which could have been raised earlier late in the day. Authority was delegated to the Circuit Stewards to sign off the accounts when they have been finalised.

Stephen Sears, the Circuit Treasurer reminded the meeting that the Circuit's financial position remains weak and that over the coming year there must be a clear plan to reduce expenditure. It was noted that this is likely to include a review of Circuit staffing.

The 5% across-the-board increase in church assessments – the money churches pay towards the cost of our ministers and other Circuit costs – was confirmed. Attempts to re-work the increase based on the formula used a few years ago had proved unsuccessful and had had to be dropped. There was disquiet about the impact on church finances of the increase in assessments. In response it was emphasised that the whole Circuit, as well as individual churches, need not only to look for savings, but also for new means of raising income. Church treasurers were reminded that there was an obligation under charity law, to achieve 'best value' when setting fees for outside lettings.

Finally, it was decided that the Circuit Policy Group should be replaced with a Circuit Leadership Team. This will comprise the Circuit staff, the Circuit Stewards and the Circuit Administrator acting as an observer. This was felt to be more in line the model used across the connexion. In particular, there would no longer be representatives from churches attending the meeting. Attendance of church reps has become patchy over time and also created anomalies as the Policy Group has comprised a mixture of people who are trustees of the Circuit and others who are not. The interests of local churches will continue to be represented through their ministers.

The next Circuit Meeting will be on 11th July (venue to be advised).

London Methodists' Hopes of Becoming a District of Sanctuary

Deacon Lemia Nkwelah

***'For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'* (Matthew 25:35-36)**

The Rev'd Dr Inderjit Boghul, former President of the Methodist Conference, is the founder of the City of Sanctuary Movement which promotes a culture of welcome, safety, inclusion and hospitality within communities.

London District of the Methodist Church has run the theme of Moving Stories for a while now. Further to this theme, the London District has opened a discussion on the concept of becoming a District of Sanctuary. The hope, by His Grace, is that we are allied with the Cities of Sanctuary movement. This is with a love to focus on the life and well-being of those who are fleeing various forms of persecution.

In Ealing Trinity Circuit we focused on this theme in our Bible Studies during Lent. The resources we shared were introduced by the Rev'd Dr Inderjit Bhogul and were aimed at leading us to reflect theologically on welcome, sanctuary and hospitality. We would all agree that while the theme of Sanctuary calls us to focus on those seeking refuge, the whole concept of hospitality and welcome is what we are called to do as the people of God.

In his introduction to these resources, Inderjit expresses his familiarity with *'the fears, frustrations, and pains of people of all backgrounds around the decisions to leave home.'* Inderjit encourages us to build this initiative into the work that we are already doing in our churches and circuits. The resources we shared during the Lent season helped us to reflect on our call to discipleship and to continue with our zeal to be advocates for justice, mercy and humility.

I would like to emphasise the concept of Sanctuary towards the *refugee*. Who is the *refugee* in our midst? Who is this *persecuted stranger* in our midst? The term *refugee* does not apply only to those fleeing persecution from war but includes those fleeing any kind of persecution. The *refugee* in my experience in this circuit includes vulnerable men, women and children; trafficked men, women and children; rough sleepers; women and young girls on the streets (Ruby ministries); older people; people on low income (Foodbank users); asylum seekers, refugees; men, women and children affected by domestic violence; those physically unable; people fleeing wars; people fleeing religious persecution etc. This circuit is already applying this theme of Sanctuary in many such areas of our ministry.

In the theological reflections we shared, God is revealed as a companion who accompanies us in our life journeys. We encounter God in one another along the

way. Matthew 25:40 reminds us that we are blessed by serving Christ whom we see in those who are different from us. We see the face of Christ in the *suffering stranger*. In the third week of our Lent Studies, we shared our thoughts about welcoming the *stranger* and the gifts the *suffering stranger* brings. Many a time our communities have been blessed and enriched by welcoming those who are different from us.

Where we serve the least of these brothers and sisters, there we encounter God. Examples of safe spaces already in our circuit include the Foodbank, Night Shelters, Ruby Ministries, Ealing MHA Live at Home Scheme, soup kitchen, Bright Hour, Fellowships, Boys Brigade, Brownies and Girl Guides etc and the list goes on. Our hope is to journey alongside the London District as we reflect on the idea of becoming a (Circuit) District of Sanctuary.

This initiative encourages cohesion through integration of people of all faiths and cultures. In its invitation to the first District gathering of Becoming a District of Sanctuary, the Social Responsibilities Committee wrote that:

‘City of Sanctuary UK holds the vision that our nation will be a welcoming place of safety for all and proud to offer sanctuary to people fleeing violence and persecution. It aims to support the creation of a culture of welcome and inclusion across every sector and sphere of society to ensure that wherever sanctuary seekers go they will find places of safety. It seeks to promote the voices and celebrate the contributions of people seeking sanctuary and to increase understanding of such people and the difficulties they experience while living in the UK.’

May Almighty God continue to be our ever-present guide in all our journeys with one another and with those whom we meet along the way. May Ealing Trinity Circuit continue to be a hospitable and welcoming safe space for those seeking sanctuary.

Reflections of a Visit to the Holy Land

Rev Yemi Jaiyesimi

Nathaniel Wolf, Pastor of Gateway Centre Church said, “One of the insights I brought home with me from my last trip to the Holy Land was the sad reality that people can live just a few hundred feet from where Jesus was born, lived, ministered and died and was raised from the dead and still never have one meaningful encounter with the living Christ”. I was in the Holy Land from 18th to 27th March this year and for me, being there deepened my understanding and love for Jesus and the living Christ, the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. It was amazing to see so many coaches full of pilgrims who had come to Israel for one reason: to visit the land where Jesus was born, where he lived, where he served, and where he died and rose again.

The highlights of my trip were:

A visit to the village of Nazareth where Jesus lived as a boy and as a man. It was wonderful to know I was walking where Jesus had walked, played and worked. In the village we met a shepherd, a carpenter and farmers dressed very similarly to how Jesus would have dressed and doing what he would have done. When Nathaniel in the Bible asked the question, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Philip answered, “Come and see” (John 1:46). Truly, in Nazareth village I did see. I saw history come alive where Jesus lived – and he still does. He lives in me.

A visit to Mount Tabor where Jesus was transfigured. From the top of the mountain, beholding the splendour of God’s creation and remembering how the disciples saw Jesus in all his glory. We sang, “O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder..... How great thou art.”

A trip to the Sea of Galilee – the very sea that Jesus crossed on many occasions and once said, “Peace, be still.”

Visiting Talga where Jesus fed 5,000 and I had a surprise meeting with the mother of two of my ex-students at Methodist Boys’ School in Lagos. Mrs Awonuga had come with a group of Nigerian pilgrims. I taught her sons in the 1990’s.

A visit to the River Jordan where our Lord was baptised and where I had the privilege and joy of baptising three of our group.

A visit to the tomb of Lazarus where I had to crawl to get inside and remembered the words of Jesus in John 11:25, “I am the resurrection and the life.”

Visiting Christ Church, Jerusalem, the oldest Protestant church in the Middle East and having the opportunity to worship with so many other pilgrims and local people, all of whom are bound together by the Lord Jesus Christ in whose name and land we were together lifting our voices and singing, “It is well with my soul.”

Walking through the streets of Bethlehem during our free time and being approached by a 16 year old boy called Wasef who asked whether I was lost and needed help. I wasn’t lost but must have looked lost, looking here and there. This kindness of a stranger, of a teenager is a testimony to the fact that ultimately we are one big human family, called to look after each other as Jesus did.

The greatest highlight was visiting the garden tomb on our very last day. The garden tomb is the site where Jesus is believed to have been crucified and buried - and then he rose. I had the privilege and joy of leading a communion service where we sang, “He lived and died to buy my pardon, an empty grave is there to prove my Saviour lives.”

What an experience. Can anything good come out of Nazareth? Come and see!

Microfinance with Lendwithcare

Gerald Barton, Editor

In the BBC's wonderful adaptation of Anthony Trollope's novel '*The Way We Live Now*' Augustus Melmott, a rather dubious financier who is the central character of the story holds a banquet at which he tells his guests that they have 'a duty to make themselves rich'. To do this he exhorts them to 'invest, invest and invest again and,' he tells them, "It will be returned to you ten-fold, a hundred-fold, a thousand-fold!"

Well, investing in small-scale entrepreneurs in developing countries through Lendwithcare and its microfinance partners won't make you rich as it pays no return at all, but I have to confess I quite enjoy lending, being paid back, then lending again and again and again making my initial input go round and round and round.

Microfinance is all about lending to small entrepreneurs for whom borrowing from a conventional institution is problematic or impossible because of the small scale of their businesses. It aims to give them the finance they need, however small so that they can develop their businesses and improve the lot of themselves and their families at the same time as bringing benefit to the communities around them. It is not charity in that borrowers must pay back their loans plus interest. From the point of view of those of us who put up the money to finance the loans, however it is clearly altruistic as we receive no return on our investment. Similarly, it is not a substitute for the work done by charities in promoting development, just another way of helping people better themselves.

People in the developing world with ideas for starting or expanding a business approach a microfinance institution for a loan. If their ideas show promise, a loan will be agreed along with a repayment schedule. The details of the entrepreneur and their business then get posted on Lendwithcare's website. Lenders decide which business they want to support and put up an amount towards the loan – contributions start at £15 and go up in £15 steps. Once the loan is fully financed the borrower will receive the money and put it to use in their business.

As loans get repaid, your share of the repayments is credited to your Lendwithcare account and you can then lend it again.

Lendwithcare, which is run by the development charity CARE International UK operates with microfinance partners in a range of countries in Africa, Asia and South America including Pakistan, Cambodia, Vietnam, the Philippines, Ecuador, Peru, Rwanda, Malawi, Zimbabwe and the Occupied Territories of the West Bank and Gaza. The priority for Lendwithcare is to work with partners that focus on improving the lives of poor people. Microfinance institutions are carefully vetted before partnerships are agreed. This includes desk research, consultation with local CARE offices and 'due diligence' field visits lasting between 1-2 weeks to carefully examine the operational policies and procedures of microfinance institutions. Once a partnership is established partners are requested to submit quarterly reports on a

range of financial and social indicators. Further visits are made at least once every 12 months to ensure that all is going well. Although most attention is on the provision of small loans, microfinance also includes other basic financial services such as savings, money transfer and insurance.

My Lendwithcare account tells me how many loans I've made, how much has been paid back etc as a way of encouraging my continued participation, not that there's much chance of me stopping. It tells me that since I began lending at the start of 2011, I have made 158 loans to 308 entrepreneurs who collectively have 1,149 family members. In addition, it tells me I have helped create 308 jobs.

As time has gone by I have added to the amount of money I initially put in and my total now stands at £829. The amount I have lent, however comes to £4,330 which means I have lent the money I have put in more than 5 times over. So far a total of £3,535 has been paid back with no borrowers defaulting on their loans. That's what I like about it – you make the money go round and around so that it benefits multiple people and their businesses.

To give a flavour of the kind of people supported by Lendwithcare, here are some examples of the some of the people I have lent to.

Kokou Akpo-Adjati is a small-scale farmer in Atakpane, Togo who borrowed £220.00 repayable over 12 months. My contribution to the loan was £15.00. At the time of the loan (March 2011), he was 46 and married with three children who were all still at school. He grows market garden produce such as carrots, lettuce and cabbages. He needed the loan to buy equipment and fertiliser so that he could farm a larger plot of land.

Venus Carillo runs a motor spares shop in Balamban in the Phillipines. Venus borrowed £1,744.29 repayable over 3 months – my contribution to the loan was £30.00. When she took out the loan in September 2012 she was married with a six year old daughter at elementary school. Together with her husband she had built up a successful business selling car and motorcycle spares and supplies and had employed three people to help serve customers. The loan was needed as working capital to buy new stock.

Sajid Badr runs a small hair dressing salon in Jabalya in Gaza. In early 2017 he borrowed £2,598.43 repayable over 2 years – I contributed £15.00. At the time he was 21 and living with his family. His salon consisted of a single barber's chair and some chairs for customers waiting plus the usual scissors, razors, hair straighteners, hair dryers etc. He wanted the loan to buy two more barber's chairs, hair dryers and other supplies so that he could expand his business.

These few examples give you an idea of the kind of people and businesses applying for small loans through microfinance institutions. If you're interested in the idea of lending to small entrepreneurs and seeing your loans used over and over again, you can find out more about Lendwithcare by going to their website at lendwithcare.org.

Remember in Summer 2019

Compiled by Mary Newman, Pitshanger

The I AM

He walked on water, stilled the storm,
Wherever He went the blessings came
He touched the leper, brought sight to the blind,
Whoever He met was never the same.

His teaching had never been heard before,
He spoke as one with authority,
They listened enrapt to His every word,
He was not like the scribes or the Pharisees.

He healed on the Sabbath; it upset them all
And then He said the unthinkable thing,
They could hardly believe their ears when He said
“I am the I Am and can forgive man’s sin’.

Enough was enough, they plotted His death,
‘This blasphemous talk must end’ they said.
‘Crucify Him and that is the end’
But He proved them all wrong – and He rose from the dead.

Megan Carter

Of all the things that will surprise us in the Resurrection morning, this I believe, will surprise us most: that we did not love Christ more before we died.

*Bishop J C Ryle
Taken from Parish Pump, Romsey Diocese*

Joy Meets Joy

In my hurry, I often forget that you desire
to seek those who have gone astray,
even me, and that my work is to free
myself of myself so that You can be
born in me, and so your joy in seeking
meets my joy in having been found.

*Meister Eckhart
from ‘Book of the heart; meditations for a
restless soul’*

St Augustine

Augustine's mother, Monica, was praying every day that he would change his ways and become a Christian. Monica had to learn patience and to trust in God's plan for Augustine. She asks a bishop to speak to Augustine about returning to the Church but the wise bishop declines, knowing it would push her stubborn son even further from the right path. He answers Monica with words that she understood to be inspired by God: "Surely the son of so many tears will not be lost."

*Benignus O'Rourke OSA
From out of the Depths: The Conversion Story of St. Augustine
(Austin Forum, 2018)*

Not Like Yesterday

In 'Our Daily Bread' on 25th April 2019 David Roper wrote that his grandson Jay had been given a new T-shirt for his birthday, which he liked and wore all day. Next day his grandson came down in the morning in the same T-shirt. The boy's father asked him, "Does that shirt make you happy?"

Jay replied, "Not as much as yesterday."

David Roper wrote that the world offers happiness through material possessions. In his words, "No material acquisition can make us as happy as it did yesterday. True satisfaction is found in God and His riches."

The Joy of the Resurrection

In the Spring edition of In-touch I quoted Mother Teresa's thoughts on the resurrection, which contained the lines, 'Never let anything so fill you with sorrow as to make you forget the joy of the Risen Christ.'

These words came back to me last week following the unspeakable tragedy which happened on Easter Sunday in Sri Lanka. Our thoughts and prayers are with those who lost family and friends and with those whose lives will be changed forever by the terrible injuries they suffered.

A Prayer for Our Own Country and the World

Father we pray for our own country and the world. We pray for the families and children in countries where injustice and cruelty are increasingly being revealed. We pray for women in the world who are oppressed and mistreated; where they are treated like chattels with no rights of their own.

We pray for the people who are living in corrupt countries where those in power deprive the citizens in order to benefit themselves.

We pray for all who do not understand the power of your love and where Christians are persecuted for practising their faith. Father, we ask that you be with them and sustain them in their faith.

Help us to work for peace and justice in your name Lord. Be with those who are brave enough to stand up as Christians and show the way forward Father, and know that we understand that without you as our guide in life we will also lose our way.

*Lynda Blackburn
Preaching at Pitshanger 1st April 2012*

Facing Your Fears

A few years ago my husband and I took our three grandchildren to Tate Modern where there was an installation in the huge turbine hall comprising three helter-skelters, varying in size. Naturally the children wanted to go on them and of course the highest (which was very high) was most appealing to them. We joined the queue and one by one Bob and the children went down with no problem. The queue behind me had got longer and longer.

It came to my turn. I have many irrational fears (mice, bats, walking in the dark etc) and the fear of heights is one of them. "I can't do it" I said. "Yes you can," said a member of staff as he gave me a gentle push and I went screaming down and down and round and round to the bottom.

Sometimes in life all we need is a little push to help us overcome our fears. That push may come in the form of a helping hand; "I'll come with you when you go to hospital to get the result of the tests you've had." It may come as a word of encouragement or maybe just for someone to know you're saying a prayer for them.

Readings for Summer 2019

Jesus said, "I am the bread of life." John 6: v 35

And "I am the way, the truth and the life." John 14: v 6

Find the other times in the New Testament when Jesus said "I am-----"

My Thanks to Mary Newman

Mary Newman will be moving house shortly and this will be her last 'Remember' for In-touch. As editor, I would like to express my thanks to Mary as I am very grateful to her for submitting her thoughts and prayers for inclusion in each edition of In-touch and I'm sure you, like me will have enjoyed reading them. If anyone would like to take the challenge of sending something similar, please let me know! - Editor

Your Circuit Needs You!

Our Circuit has a great team of **Circuit Stewards** which we'd love some new people to join. Circuit Stewards are the lay leadership of the Circuit and work together on the stationing of ministers, Circuit property and finance and Circuit vision and direction.

Could you be part of the team or do you know someone you think would be a good Circuit Steward?

Phone Rev Rachel Bending for more information and to have a conversation about it on
07986 461787

Forthcoming Events around the Circuit [as notified to, or discovered by, the Editor]

June

9th Sun 16.00 **Circuit Service for Pentecost** – *venue to be confirmed*

6th Thurs 19.30 **Circuit Policy Group at Kingsdown**

July

6th Sat 10.00 **Kingsdown Bookfair**
12.30 *in aid of Action for Children*

11th Thurs 19.30 **Circuit Meeting**

28th Sun 18.30 **Circuit Service for the end of the Connexional year at Greenford**

August

18th Sun 10.30 **Circuit Service at Kingsdown**

29th Thurs 19.30 **Circuit Leadership Team Meeting at Kingsdown**

Articles for '**In-touch**' Issue No 89 (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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