

# The Message

March 2006

The quarterly magazine of the Bolton Methodist Mission

Page	Contents
2	Superintendent's prologue
4	Film review: Narnia
8	Situationism
9	Nothing new under the sun! ...
11	... and the songs we sing.
12	What's so amazing about grace?
14	Reflection on Lent
16	Christian Aid
17	Greenbelt Christian Arts Festival
18	Simplicity
20	Deacon's epilogue



*Seeking to serve ... God, people, the community, the town in partnership with others*

*Member of Christians Together in Bolton Town Centre*

## Superintendent's Prologue

One of the most exciting consequences of the Anglican-Methodist Covenant has been the formation of 'Fresh Expressions'. The aim is to resource the growing movement of 'fresh expressions' of church in every Anglican Diocese and Methodist District and beyond. I am very excited that a conference to be led by the 'Fresh Expressions Team' will be taking place at Victoria Hall on Sunday 15th October 2006 in the afternoon with a special District wide evening service. This is a great day for the Conference, as it is the day we celebrate our Anniversary and the work of the Mission. It is also an appropriate day, given that the Victoria Hall grew out of the work of the Forward Movement of the Methodist Church that was itself a 'fresh expression' of the Church even before the term was invented.

Fresh Expressions recognises the need for a whole variety of shapes and sizes to churches. It also recognises that churches will focus on different ages or even activities. 'Café Church' is a growing idea, particularly amongst young people and is one that Tracey, our Youth Worker, is experimenting with using the Lower Theatre on a Sunday night. No longer is the idea that one size or shape fits all, but that we need variety. It is true to say that you can have fresh expressions of Church operating from one building. Here at Victoria Hall besides the youth work outlined above we have our growing Congolese congregation, our Thursday Fellowship group and mid-week worship in the Ridgway Chapel. Through the chaplaincy work we are seeing fresh expressions of Church, where worship takes place in a variety of ways and places within the town, including at the Reebok stadium.

The great encouragement is for the Church to be more open to new possibilities and to be willing to be turned inside out.



*The Reebok Stadium, where worship takes place*

The Rev'd Norman Wallwork, in a sermon that he gave at a recent Ordinand's Testimony Service, said this "Methodism is a plant that thrives only if half its life is spent out of doors. A Methodist Minister presides over a set of buildings where the ancillary premises are as important as the sanctuary itself, because the entire Methodist enterprise is for the community and the world. The doors are open, the rooms are available, the portcullis is rusted and never lowered, the bridges are always in good repair, and traffic is encouraged in two directions. 'For all my Lord was crucified, for all, for all my Saviour died'".

Surely that should be the description of a Town Centre Mission that is working in partnership with Churches and the Community to share God's love in dynamic and enterprising ways and looking for fresh expressions of Church.

With this in mind we are focusing on more evangelical opportunities in partnership with other Churches over the coming year. Working with Keith Wills, a local evangelist, we shall be converting Victoria Hall into the world of Narnia in May following intensive work in local schools. During the Football World Cup, we shall be showing some of the key matches on a big screen with testimonies of faith given by important players and material on the world cup. In the summer, plans are in hand for a family fun day on the Town Hall Square in Bolton, and a big festival of Songs of Praise with a whole variety of music of the Christian Faith entitled 'Sounds of Faith' at the Victoria Hall which will include local Christian bands.

All of these activities need your support and prayers as we open the doors of the Church wider than ever and help continue to make our Mission a vibrant Christian Community.



*Pray for this year's activities that will allow us to share our faith with others.*

*God Bless you. Phil Mason, Superintendent Minister*

## Film Review: Narnia

The book 'The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe' has some strong religious ties to the life of Jesus, especially the crucifixion and the resurrection - but does the film have those same ties and can you see them?

As we go on into the film, past the war scene and into the professor's house, we find the children going through the wardrobe and discovering Narnia. Edmund sneaks off. We see him tell the witch



(whom he met earlier) about his brothers and sisters and then she locks him in a dungeon, where she slaps him in the face. So, it is like Judas, he told the Priests about Jesus, but he did not feel any better about it. If you make a deal with the devil, you just get slapped in the face.

Of course soon the good guys rescue Edmund and for a while everything is good. Aslan forgives Edmund, like Jesus forgiving our sins. Right, so far the film has shown religious ties.

Next, the witch comes and claims her right to Edmund, the traitor, and Aslan sacrifices himself so that Edmund's sins can be fully forgiven and forgotten.

The witch and her troops taunt Aslan, and jeer at him, just like the crowd made fun of Jesus. Aslan dies, watched by Susan and Lucy.

Now Aslan is resurrected and breaks free of his bonds, the bonds on the table, and the bonds of death. There is a big battle and of



**Don't forget: showing of Narnia at Victoria Hall in May 2006. More details to follow.**

course, Aslan and his followers beat the witch and her monsters.

The next point of religious significance is right at the end when Aslan walks away, like Jesus ascending into Heaven, and Mr Tumnus (the faun) says, 'someday, he will return.'

*Anna Bradley*

### **153rd Psalm**

God, really do help the aged  
of all faiths, cultures and religions.  
Open our eyes to their wisdom and love;  
let us listen to their stories  
of times around the world, we never knew.

Let us respect the history on their hearts,  
and thank you they have lived all their years.  
Provide them with safety, comfort, company and loving care;  
then guide us to slow our pace and show gentleness to frailty.

God give us all dignity in old age:  
help us to find peace in the later years of life;  
provide us with fun and laughter and friendship;  
help us to show tenderness to each and everyone.

Amen.

*Sue Howarth*

There have been many discussions and legal proceedings in the USA about teaching alternative theories to evolution, for example Intelligent Design. For John Polkinghorne, theologian and former Professor of Mathematical Physics,

*"Evolution is the way God allowed the world to make itself."*

Short meditations to listen to are available on the prayer page on the Victoria Hall's web pages at:  
[www.boltonmethodistmission.co.uk](http://www.boltonmethodistmission.co.uk).



### Dictionary corner

Expand your vocabulary of less common words used in theology and hymnody:



**Seraph** *noun* Angelic being associated with light, ardour, and purity. Note to be confused with serif, serf or sheriff.

**Ordinance** *noun* A religious rite. Not to be confused with ordinance.

**Supplicate** *verb* Ask or beg for something earnestly and humbly, hence supplication.

### Fairtrade Fortnight

Fairtrade Fortnight runs from Saturday 4th to 18th March 2006. Events include a Fair World Market at St George's Centre from 11am to 3.30pm on Saturday 11th March and "Make Fairtrade Your Habit": an exhibition at the Community Gallery in the Bolton Art Gallery, Le Mans Crescent from the 11th-25th March.



*Choose products with the Fairtrade mark*

The religious person is the one who believes that life is about making some kind of journey; the non-religious person is the one who believes that there is no journey to take. *Monica Furlong (1930-2003, religious writer & journalist; from her book "Travelling In")*

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After discussion in small groups, the February meeting of the Methodist Council welcomed a report on Evangelism and Speaking of God and Faith, which calls for: increasing evangelism across the whole Church; to enable more lay people to speak of their faith while still being lifelong seekers themselves; to discover gifts and release resources for evangelism; to encourage churches to become more welcoming; and to identify and appoint more people for the work of evangelism and apologetics.

**The Salvation Army and the Methodist Church are encouraging local groups to speak out about any proposals for casinos in their communities under the new Gambling Act. The two churches have produced resources for any faith group or local action group wanting to get involved in the debate over casinos in their communities as councils submit formal proposals to the Government's Casino Advisory Panel by the end of March 2006.**

Alison Jackson, Methodist Secretary for Parliamentary and Political Affairs: "The Methodist Church opposes incitement to hatred of people for any reason, including their religious beliefs. We also support freedom of speech, including the right to evangelise. We did not share the concern that the Government's proposals would accidentally compromise the right to evangelise. Our concern is that the weaker form that the legislation has now taken may leave a loophole through which extremist groups can target those who are in a vulnerable position in society."

**The updated version of One Too Many...?, which explores the issue of alcohol misuse as well as licensing laws, now also explains the process of raising concerns over local applications for extended drinking hours. Residents are encouraged to engage positively with their local authorities and explain how they might be affected by such applications. It also contains advice about the process of making a representation to the local authority.**

Local Christians are involved in the work of the East Midlands Air Ambulance. They recently held a service of thanksgiving in a hanger, surrounded by three helicopters. A flight paramedic told the story of a rescue, and one of those rescued paid tribute to his work in saving her life. With music from local Methodist and Catholic choirs, the service was a reminder of the dedication of caring people, many of them Christians.



*The East Midlands Air Ambulance*

## Situationism

The concept of situationism was developed by Anglican theologian Joseph Fletcher in his book *Situation Ethics* (SCM Press, 1966) and resulted from his analysis of legalism and antinomianism. Legalism suggests that there are fixed moral laws which are to be obeyed at all times. On the other hand, antinomianism is the doctrine that suggests that actions are justified by faith and are not constrained by moral law.

Fletcher believed that neither legalism nor antinomianism is able to provide a reliable basis for ethics and he developed the concept of situationism as a middle way.

In an ethical situation, Fletcher believed that we can work out what is right by acting in the most loving way. If we cannot work out rationally the 'right thing' to do, we can rely on our loving response to 'tell' us the right thing to do. Agape is defined as the self-sacrificing love we should have for each other, given to us by God. Based in Agape, Fletcher thought that we would then act in the most loving



*Pray for those we know in difficult situations, may God's love shine through.*

way and this should lead to us making the right decision.

By definition, situationism is unable always to provide clear guidance. For example, if a young girl became pregnant by accident and wanted an abortion, then what would be the right thing to do? Legalism might condemn abortion in every situation, but this response might be inhuman in some circumstances. Antinomianism would respond based on a whim. Situationism would seek the most loving response. The most loving thing so far as the unborn baby is concerned would be to let the child live. But is this the most loving response so far as the girl who will be carrying the baby is concerned?

*Courtney Hargreaves*

## Nothing New Under The Sun!.....

The fairly recent introduction of projected information and hymns at our Sunday morning worship brought to mind a phrase my mother was fond of using, hence the title for these ramblings.

As most of us are aware, right at the back of the balcony way above us, there is a projection room from where lantern slides were projected when the hall first opened. At the front of the hall above the platform, if you look closely, there is a recessed channel containing lighting. In days gone by this was the channel for the screen which would be let down for services of worship using the Magic Lantern. In our own collection we have several hundred slides

which are beautifully illustrated hymns.



*Phil Glanvill's magic lantern*

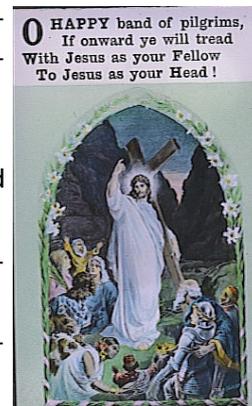
We are often asked how we became interested in the Magic Lantern and this has prompted the writing of these few words. It all goes back to the late nineteen forties when my father came home from helping at a

Cubs jumble sale, with a box full of slides which he had purchased for a 'tanner'; 'so look after them son,' he said. It was to be many years before we were able to purchase a lantern to project them, so they lay dormant in the loft gathering dust. Having now the means to look at slides it became a mammoth task finding them, trawling all the local antique fairs and centres usually without much success. In the early nineties we came across a couple of slides on a stall in the Portobello Market. Through chatting to the stall holder we learnt about the existence of a society for collectors, 'The Magic Lantern Society'.

On our return home we immediately made contact and became

members. The society is a mixture of all types of interests in pre-cinema technology from academic researchers to collectors and showmen. There are approximately 330 members worldwide, of which about a third are overseas members. Membership also includes institutional members from museums and universities. However although the membership is not large it is a feature of the society that there is always someone to give friendly advice or offer help with any problems, whether they be technical or otherwise. The services of the society include:

- a lending library of specialist books,
- video & DVD recordings of meetings and shows,
- a collection of original slide readings available to members, and
- specialist publications produced by the society which are available for purchase.

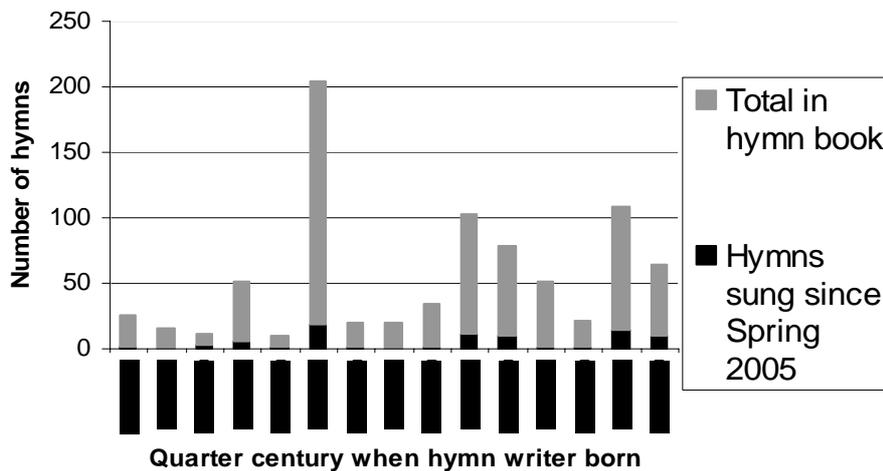


The society meets four times a year and it is on these occasions when much trading in slides takes place, as well as slide shows and talks by members. For example, at our January meeting Robert Opie showed his collection of early advertising slides. Every third year we hold an international convention over three days at which a major new book is launched and international shows are staged.

Like any collecting, the magic lantern can become an obsession as well as an expensive hobby. A single slide can cost anything from a few pence to the most expensive one we have seen at over nineteen hundred pounds. Needless to say we do not possess this one in our collection! During the winter months we continue to put on shows raising money for charity. We felt that a highlight of last year's programme was the evening service at Victoria Hall when our minister chose appropriate slides from our collection for a Victorian lantern service.

### .....and the songs we sing.

If you are burdened by an interest in quantifying everything, as I am, you may be interested to know the breakdown by age of the hymns and songs we sing. Since starting to project the hymns, I have developed a database of 147 hymns and songs, 82 of which are in *Hymns and Psalms*, the remainder being from a selection of newer hymn and song books with authors generally born from around 1930 onwards. The graph below relates the quarter century when hymn writers were born to the number of hymns in *Hymns and Psalms*. A few interesting things strike me. First, it seems that God blesses those born in the first quarter of a century with song



*Note: There are 823 hymns in Hymns and Psalms, but birth years for authors are known for only 739 hymns.*

writing skills! Second, and not surprisingly because of their theological content, we still value the hymns of Charles Wesley, who was born in 1707 and wrote 156 of the 823 hymns in *Hymns and Psalms*. Third, 31% of hymns in *Hymns and Psalms* were written by authors born in the nineteenth century.

*Not everything that counts can be counted, and not everything that can be counted counts. Albert Einstein (1879-1955)*

John Parkin

## What's so amazing about grace?

Yancey, Philip, *What's so amazing about grace?* 1997, Zondervan, ISBN 0-310-24565-6

With obvious reference to the incomparable hymn by John Newton, Philip Yancey explores the meaning of grace and contrasts, at both a personal, national and international level, the difference that grace makes.

The book is well illustrated by many stories of grace and “un-grace”, as he calls it, starting with the gracious act of Babette, a French refugee who uses all her recently won wealth to offer a feast to the ungrateful people in Denmark amongst whom she lived, and made famous in the film *Babette's Feast*. The contrast between her grace and the recipients' un-grace is stark.

Using well chosen New Testament references he demonstrates the meaning of grace in Jesus' acts and parables that transcend narrow minded legalism. He goes on to compare the difficulty of the Pharisees to accept God's position with the narrow minded legalism found in his home country of America. At a trivial level, he comments on the petty rules he had to follow in his youth at Bible College (e.g. no facial hair). More seriously he points out that the prevalence of alcoholism amongst children brought up in devout teetotal homes is three times higher than the average. Strict rule adherence has its pitfalls.

He speaks with first hand experience of the difficulties in international situations brought about because of the pride of nations not allowing leaders to speak words of forgiveness for past wrongs. He identifies how previous atrocities, for example, close to home quoting Cromwell in 1649 in Ireland, are repeated by each side in turn



through history when these sins are not laid to rest.



*C S Lewis*

He returns consistently throughout the book to the words of a prostitute desperately looking for a way out who said "Church! Why would I ever go there? I was already feeling terrible about myself. They'd just make me feel worse." With some shining examples of exception, how true this phrase can be of our general attitude. Of course by contrast, he points out that we should "Hate the sin and love the sinner". He quotes C S Lewis who says that he could not for years understand this aphorism "but years later it occurred to me that there was one man to whom I had been doing this all my life – namely myself."

*John Parkin*

## **Powerful poetry from Phakamisa**

May God bless you with discomfort at easy answers,  
half truths, and superficial relationships  
so that you may live deep within your heart.

May God bless you with anger at injustice,  
oppression and exploitation of people  
so that you may work for justice, freedom and peace.

May God bless you with tears to shed  
for those who suffer from pain, rejection, starvation and war  
so that you may work for justice, freedom and peace.

May God bless you with enough foolishness  
to believe that you can make a difference in this world  
so that you can do what others claim cannot be done.

May God bless you with awe and wonder  
as you gaze upon the new born baby in the manger  
so you too can live and love as He did.

*Glenda Howieson*

## Reflection on Lent

Lent - the forty days preceding Easter – is observed by many Christians as a time of fasting, or self-denial in preparation for Easter. The Lectionary, or set readings for the first Sunday in Lent are on the temptations of Jesus, who, after his baptism by John the Baptist, was led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness where Satan tempted him for forty days.

During Lent there are days of special significance. Perhaps the first special day is Shrove Tuesday, the day before the first day of Lent, which receives its name from the old custom known as “shriving” which means the confession and forgiveness of sins. In England the day has been associated with making pancakes.



Following Shrove Tuesday is Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent. In the sixth Century, Pope Gregory the Great made an injunction that ashes were to be sprinkled on the head as a sign of penitence – hence the name Ash Wednesday.

Two weeks before Easter we have what is know as Passion Week when we think about the sufferings of our Lord Jesus leading up to the cross. During that week Jesus made his way to Jerusalem, and the next day of special significance is Palm Sunday, when Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey and was greeted by crowds of people calling “Hosanna in the Highest! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” Palm Sunday is then the beginning of Holy Week.



On the Thursday of Holy Week, which we call Maundy Thursday, we remember in particular the Last Supper of our Lord and his Disciples. The word “Maundy” comes from the command (mandatum) to his disciples on that day to love one another, and we remember how Jesus took a bowl of water and a towel and washed his disciples’ feet. It became the custom in monasteries for monks to wash the feet of the poor on this day, and for centuries

the Kings and Queens of England have distributed money food and clothing to as many poor persons as the years of the Sovereign's life. This custom is still observed, and the distribution takes place in Westminster Abbey. This year eighty people will receive Maundy money from the Queen.

Jesus knew what lay before him and after the Last Supper we see his anguish in the Garden of Gethsemane as the horror of what he had to go through came over him. He sweated great drops of blood and prayed "How is my soul troubled. And what shall I say, Father save me from this hour? No, for this purpose I have come to this hour. Father glorify thy Name!" Then the soldiers came to arrest Him.



The following day is Good Friday, when we think about the crucifixion of Jesus, our Lord and Saviour. Why is it called "Good" Friday, when such dreadful happenings took place? The reason is, because of his love for us, Jesus died in your place and in mine, making it possible for us to be reconciled to Almighty God. The Saturday before Easter is the end of Lent.

Perhaps we have been Christians for a long time and like Peter the Apostle are sure that no matter what happens we will never forsake our Lord; or perhaps like the other disciples we want to reach a high position in the Church; or may be we are proud of the position we hold and the work we do for the church, so much so that it is more important to us than the Lord himself; or may be, like Judas Iscariot, we have never really understood what it is all about and we have never asked the



Ask the Lord to search our hearts that we might see ourselves as we really are, but at the same time, let us ask Him to show us the true meaning of all that took place on that first Good Friday and that First Easter Day.

Lord Jesus Christ to come into our hearts to make us into the kind of person he wants us to be.

*Brenda Cooper*



This year's House to House collection will be in the week commencing 14th May 2006. Last year over £15 million was raised during

May	
MONDAY <small>MAY DAY BANK HOLIDAY (UK)</small>	1
TUESDAY	2
WEDNESDAY	3
THURSDAY	4
FRIDAY	5
SATURDAY	6
SUNDAY	7
MONDAY	8
TUESDAY	9
WEDNESDAY	10
THURSDAY	11
FRIDAY	12
SATURDAY <small>VISARNA PUNJA (INDIA/15-11)</small>	13
SUNDAY	14
MONDAY	15
TUESDAY	16
WEDNESDAY	17
THURSDAY	18
FRIDAY	19
SATURDAY	20
SUNDAY	21
MONDAY <small>VICTORIA DAY (CAN)</small>	22

**CHRISTIAN AID WEEK**

CAW, in Bolton the total was nearly £26,000. As the national sum is significantly increased by Gift Aid declarations (we have no local figure), we are obviously an important, albeit small, cog in the machinery.

The theme this year, as last year, is **“You add. We multiply.”** The funds raised will be directed at putting into practice that theme — raising funds for those in most need.

We have always been grateful for the level of response to our appeal for help in collecting CAW envelopes. We are sure that this year will be no different. If you haven't collected before and can spare a couple of hour during the week to collect—either individually or as part of a team, we would be pleased to welcome you.

On Friday 17th March and Saturday 18th March 2006, the Bolton Committee has been given permission to have a collection at the Tesco Horwich Store. If you can help for a time—no stint will be longer than an hour—we would be most grateful

*Gill and Peter Gardiner*

.....Don't miss the .....Easter Musical.....

.....Thursday 5th and Friday 7th April 2006



Youth festival, music festival, political festival, evangelical festival, development festival,

harvest festival... there's something in all these myths about Greenbelt that is accurate, but nothing entirely true.

Greenbelt has been for many a kind of epiphany – an earthy sacrament, a rocking religion,

*Quest, not formula; journey, not destination; dance, not doctrine. John Bell, 2004*

an unruly faith in an untamed God, Spirit of wonder and compassion, celebrated with noise and passion, argument and laughter.

In a materialistic, anti-institutional era, where the church is marginalised and mocked, and religious icons of substance and charisma



*The Greenbelt Festival is held every year over the August Bank holiday weekend at Cheltenham Racecourse.*

are hard to find, at its best Greenbelt remains singular in its faith-affirming, politically engaged, life-transforming experience.

With many understandings of Christian community dying, one way people anticipate a new way of being church is through alternative meeting places and movements like Greenbelt.

*The Parkin family were festival goers last year and intend to go again this year. Cheaper tickets can be obtained before the end of April*

"It's a long way off," writes RS Thomas in his poem The Kingdom. "But inside it / There are quite different things going on." Greenbelt helps us glimpse some of those different things.

*Words and pictures from www.greenbelt.org.uk*

## **Simplicity**

*"O Lord, don't ever let us move into stone houses" (A poor man in Nairobi)*

This quotation comes from the header page of *Simplicity* by Richard Rohr (Crossroad, New York 2003 ISBN 082452115 3) which re-examines the fundamentals of our faith. It reminds us of the constant need to be open to change. It points us to a way of vulnerability, openness and simplicity. In the words of T S Eliot, "A condition of complete simplicity (costing not less than everything)" (Little Gidding).

Richard Rohr points to ways in which we pick and choose which bits of the Gospel we take deep into our being and act upon. This is as true of the institution of the Church as it is of the way in which we order our worship and our personal faith and secular lives.

Richard Rohr is an American Franciscan who has come to understand that "it is just as hard for the Church to believe as it is for the individual". I had not had that thought before, but the more I look at that phrase the truer it seems. Why should we expect the institutional church to be more holy, closer to God, and more open to the spirit of wisdom and truth than the individuals who make up its membership?

Richard Rohr instances in America "Bishops who proclaim their pro-life stance and calmly sanction the murder of Iraqis by the US government. They claim to be certain about God's will in regard to birth control, married priests, women priests, and all manner of sexual conduct (about which Jesus says little or nothing) and yet live in comfortable doubt about God's will in regard to war, riches, and non-violence (about which Jesus is absolutely clear)."

Turning to our worship, Rohr contrasts the traditional pattern of worship with the character of many current successful therapeutic programmes in the States, many based on the twelve step pro-

gramme pioneered by Alcoholics Anonymous. Think first of the different seating plans: the 12 step programme has a circle with no leader. Each member is listened to with respect and without interruptions, much more like our House Groups. Rohr writes "We don't need pyramids; we need circles. Pyramids don't create community; circles do. The same is true for ministers, priests and deacons. They need places where they can be brothers and sisters like all the others."



In our personal lives Rohr encourages us to hold lightly to rights and wrongs of dogma, but firmly to faith: "When Jesus healed sick people, he said 'Your faith has made you whole'. He did not say, 'Your correct doctrine, your orthodoxy and your dogmatism have healed you'. I believe we totally missed Jesus' major point when we made a religion out of him instead of realising that he was giving us a message of simple humanity, vulnerability and non-violence that was necessary for the reform of all religions. We need to be concerned more with following Jesus, which he told us to do seventeen times, and less with worshipping Jesus - which he never once told us to do." This last statement may feel quite wrong, but it is set in the context of a chapter in which Rohr is writing about the contradiction between what some Christians say they believe and how they live their lives. He quotes a non-Christian from the Third World who challenged him at the end of a service with "Why should we believe in your Christ? You Christians have waged the most wars, you use up the most resources in the world, and you've raped the planet. And then you say you love your poor Jesus."

In our secular life-style Rohr warns of the danger of becoming infected with power, prestige and possessions: the three things that prevent us from recognising and receiving the Reign of God, the God who brought the message of humanity, vulnerability, non-violence and love.

*Jeremy Plummer*

## **Deacon's epilogue**

### **The Growing Season – to live is to grow**

Have you seen these words somewhere else? They might seem a bit familiar. If so, give yourself a pat on the back, as they are the theme of our current Spiritual Programme.

What does it mean, though? Well, as we begin our journey through Lent, which traditionally has been used by the church to think about our walk with God, does this connect with you, and where you are in any way? Life is so busy and it is so easy to keep God squarely in his box on Sundays. However, Sunday in our society has changed forever and so have we. The Iona Community, which embraces all Christian traditions and has created its own inclusive style of worship that leaps over denominational boundaries, reminds us that either everything we do, or nothing, is sacred. The whole of life is sacred. I find this way of thinking particularly freeing, as I live in Bolton and find distinctions between life and work no longer meaningful. Life has taken on new dimensions and purpose. God is both interested and involved in everything we do and think, or nothing. The choice is ours.

There might be some nagging doubts over the whole point of carrying out a journey through Lent. Doubts are helpful, as they hint at restlessness, and can be the reason we challenge what we read, or hear, or previously thought. Doubts can be the starting point of digging deeper, of altering our prayers into a real conversation instead of being 'a shopping list' of 'please do this or that, God.'

Margaret Silf in her book on prayer entitled 'Taste and see – adventuring into prayer' talks about our personal circumstances as being the 'soil' that nurtures and supports us. She reminds us that seeds have everything they need inside them to develop into the plant that God created, however, they need soil and water as enrichment for growth. The hard seed shell opens with the softening effects of

water, the nutrients in the soil are absorbed, and it grows. She suggests that we too have everything inside us to develop. God is longing to help us examine our lives, and see that everything that has happened to us in the past is our soil for growth into the person he intends us to be. Our hearts might wish we had done things differently, but our minds know this cannot be so. Our shell, or heart, just has to soften and open up too.

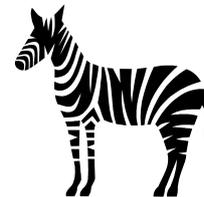
Why not spend some time this Lent thinking about how your 'soil' feels? Margaret Silf suggests that we should not suppress or judge our feelings, as they are pointers to our deepest self. A scary thought perhaps, to encounter our deepest self, but surely it is the next step in real personal growth, and in our relationship with God. Maybe this Lent could be the start of a journey of growth that continues during the rest of our lives.

*Janet Smith*

## **African meal and auction**



**Meal 7.00pm**  
**Auction 8.30pm**  
**Friday 24th**  
**March 2006**



**£5 & £3 concessions.**



**Proceeds to support the Summer visit to Pine-town, South Africa and the purchase of educational games and equipment for use during and after the visit.**



### Family news



We report the funerals of Ada Wilkinson on 6th December 2005, Raymond Fairhurst on 9th December 2005 and Marion Nisbet on 3rd February 2006.

We rejoice with Emma, daughter of Phil and Mary Glanvill, on the birth of her first son, Oliver.

We congratulate Karen Cambray and Stephen Nisbet on their engagement to be married.

### Thank you!

Thank you to those who contributed to Network and Adult Missionary Work through box collection or donation. The total raised in the year ended 31st August 2005 was:

Network: £617.80

Adult boxes: £ 86.38

Anyone wishing to take a box to collect money for the above please contact **Olive Edge**.



### Sayings of Jesus of Nazareth No.8

I have come that you may have life, and have it to the full.

*John Ch 10 v10.*

### Portable Appliance Tester (PAT) required



We are seeking a suitable person to undertake periodic testing of plug-in electrical equipment within the Victoria Hall and will make use of equipment we own for this purpose. Some electrical experience is preferred, but further training would be offered. Please speak to Stephen Lee, Hall Manager, 01204 522569, for further details

## Dates and Events

Thu 2nd Mar	Lent Reflection at Parish Church Hall, 12.45pm
Sat 4th Mar	Ceilidh for "Wheels for Africa" at Bolton Cricket Club, Green Lane
Thu 9th Mar	Lent Reflection at Parish Church Hall, 12.45pm
Thu 16th Mar	Lent Reflection at Parish Church Hall, 12.45pm
Fri 17th Mar	Hot Potato — Supper and discussion, 7.30pm
17/18th Mar	Christian Aid collection at the Horwich Tesco Store.
Thu 23rd Mar	Lent Reflection at Parish Church Hall, 12.45pm
Fri 24th Mar	African meal and Talent Auction, 7.00pm and 8.30pm
Thu 30th Mar	Lent Reflection at Parish Church Hall, 12.45pm
Thu 6th Apr	Easter Drama and musical at St Andrew & St George URC
Fri 6th Apr	Easter Drama and musical at Victoria Hall
Wed 12th Apr	Christian Passover meal at Parish Church, 12.45pm
Thu 13th Apr	Maundy Service at 2.30pm
Thu 13th Apr	Maundy Service at Parish Church (evening)
Fri 14th Apr	Good Friday Service 11.00am
4/5/6th May	Drama Group Play
Sun 14th May	Annual General Meeting

### Ministry team

Superintendent:	Rev'd. Philip R. Mason	01204 493 271
Deacon:	Janet Smith	01204 841 619
Minister:	Rev'd. Dr. Brian Tomkins	01204 667 296
Supernumerary:	Rev'd. Bryan Ashberry	01204 520 376
Lay worker:	Mrs Dilys Tomkins	01204 667 296
Director of music:	Mr Jeremy Plummer	01204 602 743
Congolese Minister:	Pastor Hubert N Kayonda	01204 465 790
Local Preachers & Worship Leaders: Geoff & Brenda Cooper, Nikki Bradley, John Cambray, Sylvia Fairhurst, Phil Glanvill, Tricia Harper		
Victoria Hall office: 01204 522 569 (9:00 am to 3:15 pm)		
E-mail: <a href="mailto:victoria.hall1@virgin.net">victoria.hall1@virgin.net</a>		
<a href="http://www.boltonmethodistmission.co.uk">www.boltonmethodistmission.co.uk</a> (colour version of The Message available)		

The Message is published four times a year on the 1st of September, December, March and June. Copy should be with the editor by **noon on the last Sunday of the previous month**, preferably emailed, though hand written or typed material is welcome.