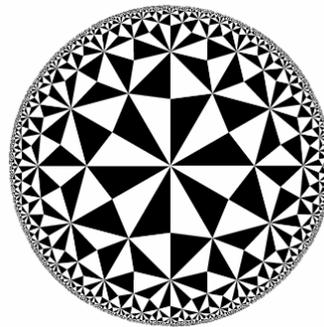


The Message

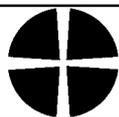
June 2006

The quarterly magazine of the Bolton Methodist Mission

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God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. Genesis Ch 1 v31



THE VICTORIA HALL
BOLTON METHODIST MISSION

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

Member of Christians Together in Bolton Town Centre

Superintendent's prologue

Not just 1 hour of Worship; but 24/7 Mission

At a recent all age act of worship we looked at logo's and branding for many different companies. Taking away all the names and just leaving the logo, it was amazing to see how easily we still recognised what was being advertised and which company was behind the branding. The challenge within the act of worship was to ask the question what do people see when they look to us? Do they recognise who we represent as Christians? When people look at us collectively within the Church, do they see the values of the faith we proclaim?



One of the most recent successful advertising campaigns is that of Marks & Spencer. Just look at the figures that have been released that identify their profit increase. This is not just food; this is M&S food. I know your mouth is watering as you think of the images of the food on those adverts. Taking that very clever advertising strap line, what should we be saying about our Mission?

Your M&S

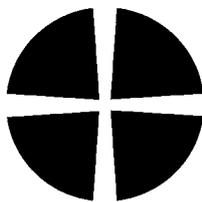
This is not just 1 hour of Worship, this is 24/7 Mission.

It is true to say that our Worship is at the very heart of all that we do and indeed, for us as individual Christians, is an expression of giving to God. God is worthy of our worship because of all that has been given to us through Him. God is the reason for our very being and, through Jesus Christ, we recognise His constant love for us. We worship to offer our praise and thanks for all that God is and gives. However, that cannot just be about one hour each Sunday. Our lives must reflect that commitment to God for the days that follow, 24/7.

Our work within the Mission too is not just one hour on a Sunday, we are now open seven days a week with a whole range of activities and projects serving the needs of people within Bolton.

This is 24/7 Mission, that seeks to serve people where they are and to offer God's love. All this work comes at great cost in terms of time, with many volunteers, and resources, particularly financial. The full extent of the cost for our work is outlined on Pages 22 to 23 with the challenge for us all to consider greater giving.

The Revd Graham Horsley, Evangelism and Church Planting Secretary of the Methodist Church, in a recent service said that he



your Mission

felt "the Methodist Church is at a crucial time in its history. It has to take brave steps to move forward and try new ideas beyond conventional Church. It is messy". Within our Mission activity we are having a go at new things and trying to reach people through very different ways of working. All this requires commitment and dedication. It is messy and some

things will work, other things will not, but we must have a go. When we look ahead to all the new developments within Bolton Town Centre, we are in a unique position to work with other churches and partner agencies to experiment in mission beyond the conventional, with some activities within our building and others taking place in and around Bolton, touching people where they are.



Pray for commitment and dedication.

The Revd David Deeks, General Secretary of the Methodist Church says, "If we hold our nerve, in ten years time Methodism will be seen as a really innovative Christian community and not boringly predictable....We have to ask the question: How can we do this differently?"

I very much believe we have exciting days ahead. This is not just 1 hour of worship. This 24/7 Mission. Get on board.

God Bless you. Phil Mason, Superintendent Minister

Growth is the only evidence of life. John Henry Newman (1801-1890), Cardinal, theologian and writer

Visit to Pinetown Methodist Church South Africa – July 2006

The excitement mounts as the time of the South Africa trip draws nearer. This excitement started simmering last Summer when Glenda Howieson came over from our link church in Pinetown and Light Years made a scrap book with letters and photographs for her to take back to the young people over there. This led to Tracey, our



Pinetown Methodist Church's logo

Youth Worker, feeling called to take a group of our young people to Pinetown.

As time went on, it became more of a possibility for the trip to take place and now there is a group of nineteen of us booked to go: ten young people and nine adults.

We do not expect this visit to be a holiday but we are going as representatives from our church to their church to join in with activities with their children and young people.

Their Youth Group meets three times a week with a large attendance so it will not only be great fun but also a wonderful experience that our young people will learn a lot from and get so much out of.

We will be staying in homes of members of the congregation and we are going to contact them before we go. At present we are enjoying learning some songs, dances and a short drama that we can share at the youth meetings.

 *Pray for the party going to South Africa, that they take our love and return blessed by their experiences.*

To help with the visit, we have arranged a number of fundraising events so we can support our young people with some of the cost and also buy educational materials for use after our visit.

We have had two very successful cake sales after the Church ser-

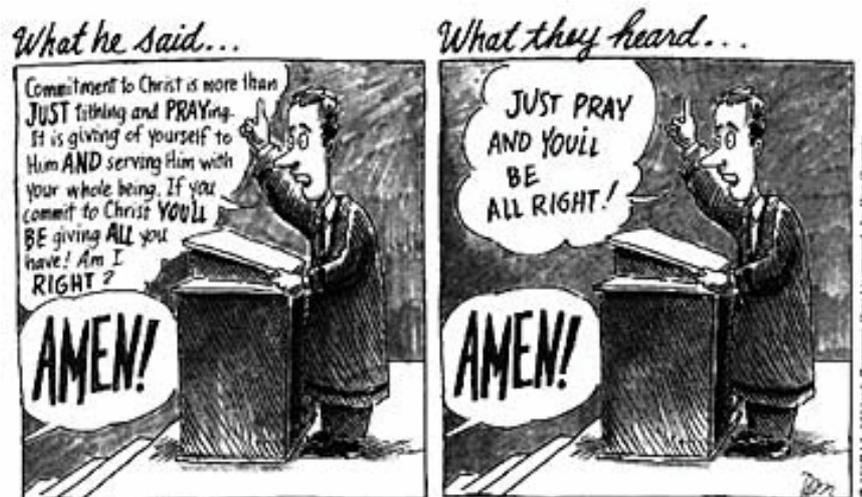
vice in the coffee bar and will hold another one on Sunday 3rd July 2006. Our thanks go to everyone who has helped and is still helping with fundraising by making bookmarks, preparing meals and generally participating in the events- the number of talents that were brought to light at our event at the end of March was amazing!



On Friday 23rd June 2006 there will be a film-themed family fun night in the Walker Suite at Victoria Hall when we hope as many as possible will be able to attend and join in the fun. There will be music, quizzes and those who want to will be encouraged to dress up, along with everyone going to South Africa, as their favourite film character and prizes have been donated by local businesses for best costumes and other winners. Keep your eyes open for the posters advertising this fun night and please come along to give us a good send-off.

We really appreciate your support both financially and in your prayers and hopefully this will be the first of more visits in the years to come.

Christine Heppollette



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Apple

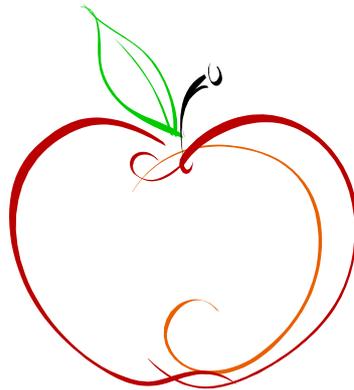
Apple, that's my name. Please don't laugh, I get enough of that at school, well actually everywhere I go. "Apple!" they will say and burst into heaps of laughter. The people that know me will call me other names too like rosy cheeks or fatty! I suppose I am fat and I do have rosy cheeks and I sometimes think that that's the reason that I got my name, because I'm just like a bright red, round apple.

I stand in front of the mirror for hours in the morning, staring helplessly at myself and trying to find some clothes that don't make me look like an elephant! Nothing I own is decent though; my mother makes everything herself so I end up walking around in old curtains, pillow cases and some of my mothers' or even grandmothers' clothes! It's dreadful!

At school I dread p.e. when I have to undress in front of all of the other girls. They sit, in their beautiful, trendy clothes and giggle between themselves. I sometimes tell them to shut up but it never works they just laugh more to see me going red with anger so now I have learnt to keep my mouth shut. I hardly talk except to answer the register in the morning otherwise I don't say anything.

Everything I say comes out wrong and everything I do looks bad. I just can't do anything the way others can!

All of my sisters are beautiful and very popular too. It's not fair that I am the odd one out! They hate being seen with me and make me stand well away from them in public and you can tell my parents don't like me either because I spend my weekends and holidays with my grandma. At least she's the one person who loves me for who I am and who takes time to talk and comfort me, not like any-



one else I know!

Apple, Apple, Apple, of all names I really don't understand why my mum called me that. My sisters are called, Lisa, Caitlin, Sarah and Mandy so why can't I have a decent name to. I would be called anything as long as it wasn't the name of a fruit. I hate fruit and I never eat them anymore because of my name so that is probably why I am so fat! My mum doesn't mind, she doesn't bother about me or what I do, she says goodnight and good morning and that is about all I hear from her. Dad's just the same. He goes to work really early and comes home really late so the only time I hear his voice is when he is shouting at me and that's not the most pleasant greeting in the world is it?

The thing I wish for the most though is not for a new name or parents who love me but for a friend. Someone I could talk to and explain all of my problems to, someone who I could have a laugh with and tell all of my deepest secrets to and someone who would stick up for me through thick and thin but everyone in my class would never even think twice about being my friend. Even teachers ignore me and they never listen to my opinion about anything. They just tell me to stop being a drama queen.

My life seemed so awful, so terribly hard and lonely. That was until I eventually found a friend. Yes, me, Apple, found a friend. I will tell you how shall I?

Well one weekend I was staying with my grandma and on Sunday she asked me if I wanted to go to church with her. She practically begged me so eventually I gave in and said I would go with her if she wanted me to. I had never been to church and didn't know what to expect but when I got there and entered the neatly decorated room all of my troubles seemed to leave me and my worries vanished. I was stunned at the large cross on the wall and the smart suit that the preacher wore. Everything seemed won-

derful.

I sat down on a comfy seat next to my grandma. She greeted a lot of people and introduced them to me. I smiled but I was too shy to say anything back. When the service began everyone went quiet and the preacher stepped onto the small platform, gave a warm welcome and began saying some prayers. I looked around me and saw everyone with their eyes shut and heads bowed so I did the same and listened to the preacher's words, taking in every thing he said.

He spoke about a man called Jesus who had died to save us and his father, God who had given us his only son. My eyes were filled with tears as the preacher began to tell us the story of Jesus being hung on a wooden cross and being tormented and killed. Suddenly, as if like magic, a flood of happiness ran through me and I heard a voice in my head saying, you are not alone here, I am your friend Apple. I knew immediately who it was, Jesus. A man who had opened my eyes and a man who had come into my life with so many opportunities for me and a man who made me feel loved.



After that day I went with my grandma to church every Sunday and at home I prayed and spoke to my new friend. I even began to read the Bible and although my parents gave me no support and carried on ignoring me like my class-mates I didn't care. I had found a friend in Jesus and he was the only one I needed.

So even people as unpopular as me can find a friend, a friend in Jesus because he loves everyone and he's everyone's. Apple, that's my name, Apple.

Bethany Mason. Bethany wrote this as a member of the creative writing group that meets on Saturday mornings.

MethodistChildren has re-launched Rainbow, the magazine for 4 to 13 year-olds. Produced by Junior Mission for All (JMA), it has a fantastic new look with stunning images illustrating the lives of children all over the world. The focus will be on providing news and ways to learn, pray and serve for all children.

The Methodist Relief and Development Fund (MRDF) has committed £300,000 to food security programmes across East, West and Southern Africa, in response to the worsening food crisis in all three regions. The money will be spent on emergency relief, including feeding centres and medical care, as well as on longer-term initiatives to strengthen families' abilities to feed themselves.

Determined to make a difference, the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church have established the Methodist/URC Environmental Network. Launched on 8th May 2006, this initiative seeks to inspire churches and individuals to take direct action against climate change and make a commitment to caring for the environment. For more information see www.methodist.org.uk/static/econetwork.

Does Christianity clash with culture or complement it? Can faith contribute to politics? Should biblical values influence how we respond to contemporary issues? www.theinterface.org.uk provides a new forum for people to consider how Christian faith affects their understanding of today's issues. The site is an initiative of the Methodist Interface Group, which explores contemporary issues from a faith-based perspective.

Co-ordinating Secretaries Anthea Cox and the Rev'd Jonathan Kerry aim to raise over £2,000 for the Fund for Home Mission by climbing Ben Nevis, Scafell Pike and Snowdon/Yr Wyddfa - the three highest peaks in Scotland, England and Wales - in three days in June 2006.



Ben Nevis

The Evangelical Coalition for Urban Mission (ECUM) and the Methodist Church are together taking a lead in giving Christian leaders the opportunity to discuss the recommendations of *Faithful Cities*, the Report of the Commission for Urban Life and Faith. See www.urbanmission.org.uk.



Thank God for the life and work of Methodist people

BRASS—Befriending Refugees and Asylum Seekers 2006 update

BRASS seeks to relieve hardship for those seeking asylum and for those granted refugee status, particularly by providing advice, support and training. It also seeks to provide facilities for recreation and leisure time occupation. These objectives are carried out through weekly drop-in sessions, educational and leisure activities, social outings and one-to-one befriending.

BRASS has grown over the last year, with up to sixty refugees and asylum seekers attending the weekly drop-in sessions. While the number of new asylum seekers has dropped, the number of failed asylum seekers has grown, with over one hundred taking advantage of the destitution project, run in association with the Red Cross. Many of these unfortunate people have nowhere to live, no financial support and, more importantly, no

hope for the future. BRASS is very grateful to the many organisations and individuals who are contributing food, cash and vouchers to enable us to continue with this valuable service.

The Wednesday drop-in continues to be very popular and we host

Interview with Tidjani

Which country are you from?

Chad

What is your status?

I have been given permission to stay, and I am therefore a refugee.

How did you hear about BRASS?

Through a lady who works at Homes For You.

What is your impression of BRASS?

I feel like I belong here. Meeting other people here at BRASS has always had a tremendous impact on me. I socialise and meet different people from different backgrounds.

What kind of help do you get from BRASS?

Filling job application forms. Searching for jobs for me through the internet. Calling employers on my behalf. Teaching interview skills. Providing computer maintenance practical training. Advice and Guidance. Through BRASS, I was short listed for driving lessons, both in theory and practice.

What would you feel if we did not have an organisation like BRASS here in Bolton?

I think refugees, asylum seekers and failed asylum seekers would feel so alone and deserted in this town.

Interview with Karim

Which country are you from?

Iran

What is your status?

Failed asylum seeker, but I have signed "Section 4", which means that I have voluntarily agreed to be deported at the discretion of the Home Office.

How did you hear about BRASS?

I heard of BRASS from a guy who was interpreting for me when I was arrested and taken to court. He suggested that day that I should come with him in order for him to show me the place.

What was your impression of BRASS?

This is a good place for vulnerable people like me. I can say that it is a holy place where we can have peace of mind, although only for a short period of time. The staff and the Chair are great people who really understand our needs.

What kind of help do you get from BRASS?

Advice and Guidance. Before my benefits were restored, I got food every week from the drop-in. Whenever I want to know about something, I come to BRASS to enquire. If I want some clothes to wear, I also come here. If I sometimes need someone to translate for me, I come to BRASS. Free Internet access.

What would you feel if we did not have an organisation like BRASS here in Bolton?

It would be a very serious matter for my friends and I. It's unfortunate that the drop-in is only once a week. Can you imagine that we are always looking forward to meeting others at BRASS because when we meet here, we are all happy?

cooking sessions which attract a great deal of interest and participation.

In addition we offer themed sessions ranging from creative English as a second language courses to computer maintenance and internet access and tuition. Working with the University of Lancaster, we have run a drug intervention project researching drug issues amongst asylum seekers.

We plan to continue increasing the awareness of the support needs of asylum seekers and we will be offering opportunities for people, from every corner of the world, to demonstrate their culture, whether through music, dance or other activity. We will continue to seek to enhance the quality of life for asylum seekers, refugees and

failed asylum seekers here in Bolton

*Ray Collett Chair of Trustees
Interviews by Sylvie, BRASS Support Worker*



Give thanks for the caring work of BRASS

An interview with Sheila Sdu Mkhize, a Pine-town "wandering teacher"

"Hi Sdu! You are teaching in a new place now."

"Yes, my former venue, St.Wendolines, has received a lot of aid from the Reconstruction and Development Programme, so we have moved to Maphumulo, meaning The Place of Cockroaches. There are many children living here, with no education and no parents."

"Paint a picture of this new venue of yours, Sdu."

"It is an informal settlement. Most of the houses are made of iron sheeting, which is VERY hot in summer and freezing cold in winter. There are lots of holes and the rain pours in. We are scared of snakes that can easily slither through the big gaps in the sheeting. Water comes from a communal stand pipe, sometimes a 15 minute walk away, and there are no toilets, so disease is rife. All the people are unemployed, some get the government grants, which helps a little, but isshhh - many, many are sick and dying.

There is no money here. The first time I visited, Phendulu, aged 5, was scratching in the rubbish heaps looking for bones to chew because he was hungry. I think he is mentally disturbed - he watched both his parents die of 'this disease' and now he is staying with a 'granny' (older woman) who is looking after six other children - all in one room - one room to wash, cook, clean, sleep and sit! And the rain leaks into that room and the wind sometimes blows off part of the roof. This is not a good place to bring up children. Most people used to wake up and not even wash themselves - they would just start drinking and talking loudly and swearing. The children just wandered around aimlessly, with nothing to do. Of course then they got up to mischief, because they were bored! These people had no dignity or self respect."

"How is the wandering teacher programme helping the children?"

"Well, they get food, clothes; help with illness and of course an

education! Phendulu and all the other children in the wandering teacher class have bread to eat every day. Khanya, aged 7, came to school wearing adult's clothes. I thought she was being silly, so sent her home to change. She came back with newspaper around herself - she had absolutely nothing to wear. I lent her my own child's clothes and now Phakamisa has given her clothes. Her mom has died and she stays with another woman, who is 5 kms from here, looking after seven other orphaned children. None of them has a birth certificate or immunisation card, so she can't get the



A beach trip in South Africa

government grants for them. They are always hungry and were not at school. Now they are all in my class - at least they are learning and getting bread each day.

Issshhh these children are so difficult to teach. They do not know anything and there is no stimulation at home - in fact, many of the 4-6 year old children are teaching the adults new things like washing your hands and saying thanks to God before you eat; and praying before you go to sleep.

Nkanyiso was covered in sores that were bleeding and full of pus. The community did not want him admitted to the school because he is HIV+. I told them that Phakamisa is here to help exactly these types of children. I washed his sores each day with disinfectant, then I put on our special comfrey cream and bandaged them up. After three days, they were much better. He is now smiling and greets his friends. He is not sad and crying any more!"

"Sdu, how is the wandering teacher programme helping the community?"

"Amazingly, the 'grannies' have formed a caregiver group and have started a vegetable garden. They get up at 5 am to work in the garden - and some even continue in the 35 degree heat. The other day

I was amazed to hear singing outside. I stopped my class and we all listened. The caregivers were praying and singing. It is a miracle - really it is! Those same people who were drinking and swearing and hitting children are now singing and praying and working in the garden!"

"You recently had a wonderful experience. Tell us about it."

"Two groups of British people were our angels. One group raised money to hire a bus and another group of ten people from England visited us and took 20 of my children to the beach. It was like a dream. Before the visitors arrived, I washed the children and dressed them in new T-shirts, which they had given us, so we were all ready for this great adventure. It was the first time the children had seen the sea and a few were very frightened - some wet their pants or cried, but it wasn't long, before they were digging in the sand, or, having stripped off their clothes, were jumping over the waves, holding tightly on to the hands of the visitors. They loved the wide open space to run and kick a ball, or just to roll in the sand. There is no space to run at home - all the 'houses' are so close together!

Many fell asleep on the bus going home, but were wide awake and bursting to tell their 'grannies' about the big, big river with houses on it; (sea with ships) and the water that picks you up (waves). Some told their 'grannies' that they must go to the beach to get salt (seawater) - not the spaza shops. They couldn't believe the water was salty! It was a wonderful day! Phakamisa really is UPLIFTING this community. We say THANKS so much to everyone who helps us. Siyabonga!"

"Yes Sdu, but without you, the monitors, the teachers and caregivers, Phakamisa would be not exist, so on behalf of Phakamisa and all her partners: "Thank you for the great work you do."

Interviewed by Glenda Howieson

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The Victoria Hall

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Portfolio

Simeon Counselling Centre

A New Beginning

The Simeon Centre Counselling Service began in 1999 as an extension to the pastoral care offered by Bolton Methodist Mission and operated on just one morning per week.

Today the service is open Monday to Friday from 9am until 3pm and also on Tuesday and Wednesday evenings. We have twelve volunteer counsellors, some of these are fully qualified and some are students on placement. And we now have a volunteer greeter working on the evening service.

Pam Marshall, who started the service, left the Simeon Centre in December 2004 after a lot of hard work to obtain funding. What a wonderful legacy, ensuring that the Simeon Centre can continue to offer a place to be heard for the people of Bolton. This achievement marked a new beginning for the service.

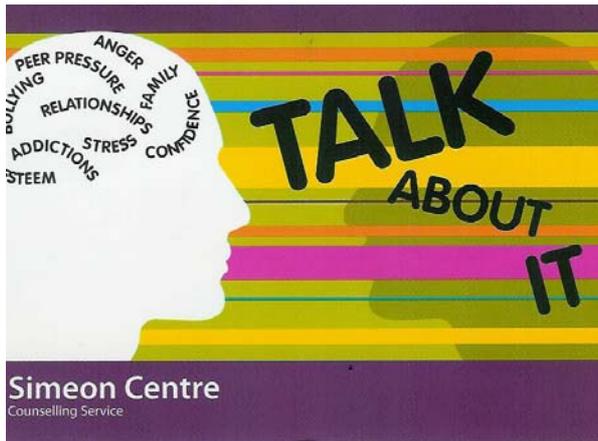
The Simeon Centre offers counselling to anyone from the age of 16, the oldest person we have seen was 91!

We are currently working on developing the service to make it more available to young people. Adolescence can be a difficult time for many as they make the transition from childhood to adulthood.

The Simeon Centre provides an environment where young people can talk confidentially about anything that is worrying them, without being judged. This can enable them to make sense of what is happening in their life and explore ways they can deal with it or make changes for themselves. The respect and acceptance they receive can help them to build self-confidence and increase their self-esteem. We always try to see young people at short notice where possible, and work with other agencies to provide crisis appointments.

The service continues to be offered to people of all ages and from

many walks of life. These people are helped through many difficulties such as bereavement, relationship breakdown, addictions, anxiety, and often, as a result of counselling, are able to come to terms



with loss and find effective ways of coping and living more resourcefully.

It is the dedication and commitment of the volunteers which make all of this possible. Having moved from an office in the Walker School to a room in the Main Hall

building, we are now in a position to take on some more volunteers and so increase the number of counselling appointments we offer.

As the Simeon Centre develops and grows we never lose sight of what is important: that each person is unique, an individual. Our aims and objectives are the same as when Pam first started the service in 1999: to offer a free, person centred counselling service where people are offered time, attention and respect. A place where they can feel accepted and safe to talk about themselves and whatever is troubling them.

The Simeon Centre is of course part of a much bigger picture. As one of the projects of the Methodist Mission, we work alongside the other Mission projects, Bolton Steps and BRASS as well as the Mission itself. Collectively we bring much needed help and support to the people of Bolton and surrounding areas.

Kath Bond Simeon Centre Manager

If we show love to people and don't tell them that it comes from God, they will think it comes from us. Rev'd Graham Horsley, Home Missions Sunday Sermon, 21st May 2006.

Oh, what a lovely war?

Not long ago I heard a fascinating radio debate about which factors caused most change for women's lives in the 20th century. There were six possible contenders – the effect of two world wars, women getting the vote, contraception, labour-saving household devices, women's education and equal opportunities law.

It was a balloon debate, so the audience voted out one element after each round of speeches. It was no surprise when the first issue to get thrown out of the imaginary balloon was the difference that two world wars made to the status of women. Nobody likes to think that conflict can have any positive benefits – in fact, most of us would object to the very idea. If pushed, we would probably reel off a long list of the damage caused by war, particularly in the 20th century.

However, the Church history research I've been doing for more than a decade, suggests that the effects of violent conflict may not all be negative. As I explored the way in which the first women entered ordained ministry in the Congregational Church, it became clear that the fact their story started at the height of World War One was no coincidence. Constance Todd, the pioneer, was ordained as a minister in September 1917. Beyond the walls of the fashionable West End of London church where the ceremony took place there were regular zeppelin airship raids, while on the Western Front the battle of Passchendaele raged.

This was just one example of a woman starting to do a job that was normally done by a man. It was happening because the war meant there was now a serious shortage of men available. Similar things were going on



Passchendaele, the Third major battle of Ypres, took place between July and November, 1917.

in all parts of British society at the time, with women appearing as tram drivers, car mechanics, dispatch riders and even doctors. In churches, women were filling the spaces left by men by collecting the offertory, taking roles in lay leadership, keeping things going on a Sunday morning and occasionally even leading worship in some Free Church traditions. It was not a giant leap from this sort of involvement for some denominations to start allowing women to be ordained – there were Unitarian and Baptist women ministers by the early 1920s, as well as a slowly-increasing number of Congre-

 Thank God for women of the cloth and the particular spirituality that they bring to worship and service.

gational women.

By 1939, however, just before the Second World War

broke out, it looked as if this process might be coming to a halt. About twenty women were now ordained as Congregational ministers in England and Wales, but there was growing resistance to training more, both from local churches and within the colleges. Without the lasting changes to women's status that the 1939-45 war brought about, it could even be argued that women ministers might have become a failed experiment that fizzled out within a few years. In actual fact, it was the essential work that women did for the war effort during those six years which meant that lots of things about women's role in society changed permanently.

All of this leaves me with a question: can God bring good out of an evil like war? The cross suggests our answer must be 'yes'. I am sure that God detests the waste and destruction of war and sees conflict as a product of human sinfulness. God does not take sides when we fall out with each other but expertly helps us to salvage something positive from the wreckage we create. The improved status of women is one such benefit, among many others, scientific and social.

Rev'd Kirsty Thorpe, URC Minister at St Andrew and St George

Cultural reviews

The late Mrs Early

A love lorn couple desperate to marry, but facing a long standing family feud. A sudden death. Has the Victoria Hall Amateur Dramatic Society embarked into the realm of Shakespearian Plays, i.e. 'Romeo and Juliet'?

No, this was their latest production— 'The late Mrs Early', which is a black comedy telling the story of Sam and Alice Early, corporation house dwellers, whose son falls in love with the daughter of Reuben and Lucy, wealthy owners of a tripe emporium, and long standing enemies of the Earlys. Barry Massey excelled as Sam, the respected husband having to fend off his battle axe wife who is determined to put a stop to the marriage. Not only that, but he is constantly harassed by a nosey neighbour brilliantly played by Ann



Sam (Barry Massey) and his nosey neighbour (Ann Heaton)

Heaton who eavesdrops on their conversations by means of a stethoscope, and unwittingly provides the instrument of death—a faulty electric kettle.



So it is that Mrs Early goes to an early grave, or rather urn, and Sam's relief at her early demise is quite understandable.

He looks forward to a life of previously barred enjoyment such as going to the pub with his friend Joe.

However, his happiness is short-lived as his departed wife returns to haunt him, having been refused entry into the after life.

All sorts of mayhem ensues, as she is desperate to prevent the



wedding taking place, and the plot sails along with excitement, hilarity and mystery. The casting was superb, with excellent performances from everyone, and the scenery and references to Bolton gave the play a homely touch. The story culminated with all ends being tied up happily and the late Mrs Early being admitted at last through the pearly gates. All in all, a most enjoyable evening - the only regret being that there were not more people in the audience.

Dilys Tomkins

Jailbreak



The United Christian Singers in front of around 600 people at the Victoria Hall on Sunday 7th May 2006 performing the musical Jailbreak, by Roger Jones, about St Paul in Philippi, Acts Chapter 16.

Committee work is a true test of fellowship; the submerging of individual egos in a common project. Rev'd Dr Colin Morris, Past President of the Methodist Conference.

Making ends meet: continuing mission

At the Annual General Meeting I summarised the very serious financial situation to those who attended and it was suggested that the information be made available to the congregation and also to readers of 'The Message'.

Our main problem is the continual losses we make each year. This leads to cash flow problems which we are experiencing every month. We are maximising income from most of our sources, for example, rent from the shops we own on Knowsley Street, lettings of the Main Hall (for example for concerts), various rooms and rental income from our partners: BRASS, STEPS and the Simeon Centre. **The main source of income which we can affect and increase is our giving.**

The main areas of giving by church members are: the Anniversary, the Gift Day, weekly offerings and gift aiding of offerings.

Anniversary. In 1993 the Anniversary total was £8,372 and in 2005 the amount was £8,177. If the inflation rate is applied to the 1993 figure, the amount in 2005 would be £12,000.

Gift Day. In 1993 the Gift Day total was £2,014 and in 2005 the amount was £2,271. If the inflation rate is applied to the 1993 figure, the amount in 2005 would be £3,400.

Collections. Obviously the work of the Mission is vast and also its profile and impact in the town is probably as high as it has ever been. This is excellent for Methodism but it does come at a cost.

Based on the accounts to 31st August 2005, our costs per week to operate the Victoria Hall were £3,122. The income per week to contribute to those costs is shown in the table, which shows a weekly loss of £332. These figures were based on the accounts to 31st August 2005 and in the six months accounts to 28th February 2006, the costs, particularly gas, have increased by £100 per week whilst

collections have reduced by £100 per week.

Rent of shops on Knowsley Street	£779	This means that if giving does not improve, we will continue to keep reducing our reserves to meet our outgoings. Average weekly collections recently have been £600. Giving needs to increase to £1,000 per week or approximately a minimum of £8 per person per week. We also need to increase the Anniversary and Gift Day contributions considerably.
Letting of Main Hall and room lets	£714	
Free will offerings	£668	
Anniversary and Gift Day appeals	£221	
Gift Aid (tax back on giving)	£117	
Investment income	£196	
Other income	£95	
Less weekly outgoings	£3,122	In 1983 Robert Walker, my predecessor, made an appeal to the congregation and he asked in his article 'does the Lord come first or last in the claim on our pockets?'
Shortfall per week	£332	

last in the claim on our pockets?'

As you can see, this is not a new concept. We need to increase our giving and **every taxpayer should Gift Aid their giving** to increase our totals by 28p for every £1 given. Please see Deacon Janet Smith to join the Gift Aid scheme.

People suggest that we are a rich church. In monetary terms we are not. For example, our current reserves would only cover a small proportion of the required amount to meet capital expenditure on Main Hall decorations, new boilers and rewiring. This is another reason why the Central Street Development is vital to the Victoria Hall.

May I ask that we each look again at our giving and prayerfully search our hearts. Are we really giving sufficient for the Lord's work to continue at the Victoria Hall?

Ray Darby, Mission Treasurer

Deacon's epilogue

I've just been sent this amazing email from a dear friend in North Wales and the postscript allows for it to be distributed further. It is such a glorious explanation of a child's view of God. I hope you love it too. It was written by an 8-year-old named Danny Dutton, who lives in Chula Vista, California. He wrote it for his third grade home-work assignment, to "explain God." I wonder if any of us could have done as well?

Janet Smith

An explanation of God

One of God's main jobs is making people. He makes them to replace the ones that die, so there will be enough people to take care of things on earth. He doesn't make grownups, just babies. I think because they are smaller and easier to make. That way he doesn't have to take up his valuable time teaching them to talk and walk. He can just leave that to mothers and fathers.

God's second most important job is listening to prayers. An awful lot of this goes on, since some people, like preachers and things, pray at times beside bedtime. God doesn't have time to listen to the radio or TV because of this. Because he hears everything, there must be a terrible lot of noise in his ears, unless he has thought of a way to turn it off.

God sees everything and hears everything and is everywhere which keeps Him pretty busy. So you shouldn't go wasting his time by going over your mom and dad's head asking for something they said you couldn't have.

Atheists are people who don't believe in God. I don't think there are any in Chula Vista. At least there aren't any who come to our church.

Jesus is God's Son. He used to do all the hard work, like walking on water and performing miracles and trying to teach the people who

didn't want to learn about God. They finally got tired of him preaching to them and they crucified him. But he was good and kind, like his father, and he told his father that they didn't know what they were doing and to forgive them and God said O.K.

His dad (God) appreciated everything that he had done and all his hard work on earth so he told him he didn't have to go out on the road anymore. He could stay in heaven. So he did. And now he helps his dad out by listening to prayers and seeing things which are important for God to take care of and which ones he can take care of himself without having to bother God. Like a secretary, only more important.

You can pray anytime you want and they are sure to help you because they got it worked out so one of them is on duty all the time.

You should always go to church on Sunday because it makes God happy, and if there's anybody you want to make happy, it's God! Don't skip church to do something you think will be more fun like going to the beach. This is wrong. And besides the sun doesn't come out at the beach until noon anyway.

If you don't believe in God, besides being an atheist, you will be very lonely, because your parents can't go everywhere with you, like to camp, but God can. It is good to know He's around you when you're scared, in the dark or when you can't swim and you get thrown into real deep water by big kids.

But...you shouldn't just always think of what God can do for you. I figure God put me here and he can take me back anytime he pleases. And...that's why I believe in God.

People should not worry as much about what they do but rather about what they are. Meister Eckhart (c. 1260 - 1327/8), Christian mystic.

Puzzle Page

Find the Bible books that have been hidden in the grid.

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A S K T A N D P E T E R L
I T S H I S E M A J W U H
A P C E L M A R K E K L B
H H O S E G O I H E V E S
E I L S N A I T A L A G N
B L O A N Y T O H U S J A
R E S L E A E K A Y N U M
E M S O M D N H O J Y D O
W O I N O I T A L E V E R
S N A I H T N I R O C E A
S S N A I P P I L I H P C
H A S N L L S U T I T F T
I N D S E P H E S I A N S
    
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Acts	Jude	Romans	Answer
Colossians	Luke	Thessalonians	to the March 2006
Corinthians	Mark	Timothy	puzzle: Passage 1,
Ephesians	Matthew	Titus	1 Corinthians ch3
Galatians	Peter		v4; Passage 2, Ga-
Hebrews	Philemon		latians ch5 v22;
James	Philippians		Passage 3, John
John	Revelation		ch15 vv1-2.

Sayings of Jesus of Nazareth No.9

Children, how hard it is to enter the Kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God. Mark 10 v24-25.

Family news



We record with sadness the funeral of Bert Massey on Friday 19th May 2006. We also note with sadness the very sudden passing of Roy Mason, Rev'd Phil Mason's father, on 5th March 2006.

We think and pray for all those who are submitting to public examinations at this time of year.

Dictionary corner

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



Apologetics *plural noun (singular or plural)* reasoned arguments in justification of a theory or doctrine.

Celestial *adjective* belonging or relating to heaven.

Laud *verb* praise highly, especially in public context.



Siobhan Sofield, aged 9 from Astley Bridge, one of around fifteen hundred children who entered the world of Narnia through the wardrobe on Saturday 27th May

2006. The event was massively popular and included a visit to Mr Tumnus's house, re-enactment of the battle scene, story telling, code breaking, showings of the full length film and worship.

Diary Dates and Events

Thu 1st Jun	AGM of Christians Together in Bolton Town Centre
Wed 7th Jun	Worship Consultation Meeting 7pm Main Hall
Sat 10th Jun	World Cup on the Big Screen at Victoria Hall
Sun 18th Jun	Gift Day
Tue 20th Jun	World Cup on Big Screen
Fri 23rd Jun	Film and Quiz Night in support of South Africa Trip
Sun 2nd Jul	District Evangelism Roadshow at St Andrews
14th-23rd Jul	Trip to Pinetown, South Africa
Sat 29th Jul	Congolese Congregation Concert
14th –18th Aug	Kids Club

Freedom is more about wanting what we do than doing what we want. *Brother Ramon, SSF (1987).*

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)		
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